

ISEA FULL DAY EXCURSION, WEDNESDAY 21/5/2008

**Spinalonga/Agios Nikolaos– Full Day excursion
approx. 08:30am – 07:00pm**

We will visit parts of eastern Crete



One may choose between the following 2 parts, and join either Group A or B. Both groups will meet noontime at Elounda and remain for the rest of the excursion together. PLEASE INDICATE YOUR PREFERENCE AT REGISTRATION.

A. Departure at 08:45 am – Archaeological site of Malia and Kremasta Monastery

First we will visit the archaeological site of Mallia. This is the third largest palace of Minoan Crete after Knossos and Phaistos. It occupies 7500 square meters at the edge of a fertile valley near the present town of Malia in Northern Crete. The palace's proximity to the sea was obviously important in the development of the site into a cultural hub for its ancient inhabitants. It was first built around 1900 BC, a time of feverish development for the entire island population. It subsequently followed the same cycle as the other palaces of the time, and it was destroyed by unknown reasons around 1650 BC.



On our way to Elounda, we will make a brief stop and visit the Kremasta Monastery, situated near the town of Neapolis. The monastery was built in the end of the sixteenth century (the year 1593 appears over the main entrance to the monastery, and the year 1622 in the church). The monastery is situated on the slope of a hill that overlooks Neapolis and a beautiful valley of adjacent olive groves.

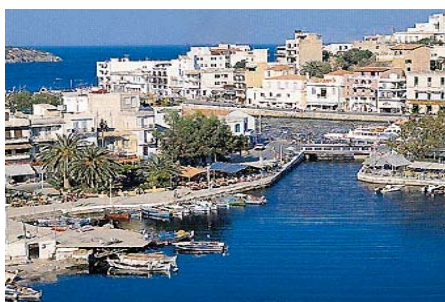


B. Departure at 08:30am – Visit the Lassithi Plateau and Dikteon Andron

This is a longer and more tiring tour as you will spend more time on the bus. We will visit the Lassithi plateau which is located at about 850 m altitude (a green spot in Crete during May and June) surrounded by mountain peaks. Because of its special geomorphology, this small plateau retains the rainfall and becomes a fertile land that has kept 15 villages and 5000 inhabitants living there through the centuries. It is known for its special, locally made, 6 to 8-sail windmills, used to pump the water from numerous wells and irrigate its numerous small potato fields. A few decades ago there were at this small plateau about 7000 such windmills which, unfortunately, over the last years have been gradually abandoned and replaced by ordinary electrical pumps. Still however we can see a few of them flapping upwind. At Lassithi, we will visit the "Dikteon Andron" near the village of Psychro. This was one of the most important cult places in Minoan Crete and the Cave where, according to mythology, Zeus was kept hidden by his mother in order not to be eaten by Saturn, his father. Afterwards, we drive through some authentic Cretan villages and some picturesque mountainous landscapes towards east and north, down to the sea and to Elounda where we will joint Group A for the rest of the day.



Afternoon. At about 12:00, both groups will meet at the village of Elounda, from where a 20 minute boat trip will bring us to Spinalonga, a small fortified island with an interesting history. The Venetian Fortress, which still stands, was built in 1579 to protect the strategic gulf of Elounda. After the departure of Ottomans at about 1900, the island became synonymous to human pain. In 1903, Spinalonga developed into a gathering place for lepers from all over Crete and Greece. There, they patiently waited for their ultimate liberation through death. We will walk around Spinalonga, and then make a small boat trip by the nearby coasts. At some point, the boat will drop anchor and stay for 30 minutes for those interested to swim while the rest will relax on deck. At about 2:00pm, we will reach the small village of Plaka, situated across Spinalonga, for lunch at a seaside Taverna. Around 3:30 - 4:00 pm we will board the boat back to Agios Nikolaos through the blue bay of Mirabello. In Agios Nikolaos, you will have about an hour free time for leisure and shopping or to enjoy a coffee or a drink by the see-lake of the town. Around 06:00 pm we will take the buses back to the Hotel.



The ISEA Excursion will be run by : PANHELLAS Tourism and Congress

If you have questions and need more information please contact

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