



Chania

A cross-road of civilizations, but also a contemporary urban center, Chania can welcome visitors and guide them to its rich history during all seasons of the year. The mountainous wild beauty, the untouched endless beaches and the hospitality of Crete meet on this piece of land, with the impressive venetian port and the picturesque narrow streets. The city of Chania is considered to be one of the most beautiful in Greece and one of the warmest, even during winter.

APART FROM THE CITY, the natural beauty of western Crete is the ideal place for people who love to explore high mountains, with the scattered little villages where the local people live in a style that reminds of other times. The city of Chania combines the comforts of a modern tourist resort with the tradition and history one may discover walking down the narrow medieval streets of its five districts. The Topana neighborhood is full of venetian mansions and shops selling folklore art articles, the famous stivanadika and traditional knife shops. In the Jewish district the synagogue is still preserved, while in the district of Chalepa, with the 19th and 20th century mansions, there is the palace of prince George and the house of Eleftherios Venizelos. In the Kastelli or Kanevaro district the visitor may see the remains of the venetian walls, where at their highest point there was the palace of the venetian governor. In the

Koum Kapi district, which in Turkish it means Sand Gate, in the old times there was a whole arab village, although today it is a pole for attracting tourists, since there are dozens of restaurants and cafeterias on the coastal zone.

THE MOST PICTURESQUE SITE is the port of Chania, with the imposing light-house of the 16th century and the venetian castle, where the greek flag was raised in 1913, when Crete was officially united with Greece, and today it houses the Nautical Museum of Crete. Going through the Tombazi coast, there appears the Moslem temple, the Kiouchuk Hasan Mosque (1645). All who visit the city, also go to the Municipal Market, built in a cross-shape, ideal for buying local products.

THE PREFECTURE OF CHANIA offers to lovers of ancient greek and cretan civilization, a journey into time. Apart from the minoan antiquities and the scattered findings from the historic period of ancient

Kydonia, under the contemporary city, more settlements of greek classic and roman world also appear at every corner of the prefecture. One of them is ancient Aptera, near the village Megala Chorafia, at a location which dominates the bay of Sou-da and the valley of Armeni and with a view of the great range of the Lefka Ori (White Mountains). In Chania, there is the world renown canyon of Samaria, 16 kilometers long, which is accessible most months of the year. At a journey that takes 4-5 hours, crossing a part of Lefka Ori, where once the revolutionists of Crete used to hide, today the famous

partially explored until now Cave of the Elephants, near Plaka Apokoronou, since apart from the impressive white and red stalactites, it has all four of the unique species of elephants, *Elephas Chaniensis* and many dwarf deer that lived tens of thousands of years ago.

IT IS ALSO WORTH VISITING the Land of Sfakia, known for the natural wild beauty of its landscape and its unique closed little harbor, where the small caiques anchor, to take the hikers from the Samaria canyon. At Sfakia many dances and songs flourished, rizitika and mandinades, that are still sung today. At places like Vamos,



kri-kri, gier-eagles and many other rare bird species seek shelter. At the western end of the prefecture, there lay the impressive remains of the ancient city of Falasarnas, with the four strong towers of the harbor. At Chania there is a very active mountaineering club for climbing, while there are four shelters in the Lefka Ori. In the winter, Lefka Ori offer the opportunity for mountain-ski crossing.

ALL THOSE WHO LOVE EXPLORING, may visit the canyon of Imvros at Sfakia, the canyon of Aradena, of Therisos and others, and over 1500 caves and sea-caves, among which are those of Apokorona, Agios Ioannis, and Arkoudospileo near the monastery of Gouvernetos. Chania is also known as the prefecture of Caves, since there are more than 1500 land and sea caves. Among those is the famous but



Milia, Keramia, Kastelli and other villages of the mountainous inland island, the visitor may get to know the cretan life, in the simplicity and the uniqueness of the people, to enjoy cretan food with a glass of tsikoudia and take part to celebrations and festivities that take place in honor of a patron-saint of every village, or the making tsikoudia, wine-making, or the picking of cherries, oranges, chest-nuts and other local products.

You may reach Chania by plane or ship. The airport is 15 kilometers from the center of the city and there are flights daily, while the port of Souda is connected with Peiraias every day. Transportation from the city to the beaches and the picturesque villages is done by bus at a regular and continuous timetable.