Heraklion Travel Guide

Heraklion: Gateway to Minoan Civilization

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Things to do in Heraklion

Ancient & Historical Sites

Explore the birthplace of European civilization with world-class archaeological sites featuring Minoan palaces and artifacts that shaped Western culture.



Must See

Knossos Palace

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

The Minoan palace complex, traditionally the home of King Minos, in its main form dating to about 1700 BCE. Marvel at the reconstructed frescoes depicting bull-leaping ceremonies, intricate staircases, and the mysterious **Labyrinth**. The multi-level palace features vivid throne rooms, ritual chambers, and storage magazines showcasing advanced Minoan architecture and artistry.



Top Pick

Phaistos Palace

1.5-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Second-largest Minoan palace perched on a hilltop offering panoramic valley views. The Phaistos Disk was discovered at Phaistos and is now displayed at the Heraklion Archaeological Museum., a mysterious clay artifact with undeciphered symbols. The palace showcases central courtyards, storage areas, and residential quarters from the 1700-1450 BCE period, with excellent preservation of architectural elements.



Notable

Malia Palace

1 hour No Booking Needed

Map

Smaller yet fascinating palace ruins from 1700 BCE featuring distinctive architecture including a remarkable paved courtyard and wine storage facilities. The site reveals detailed information about Minoan daily life through preserved pottery workshops and administrative structures, providing insight into trade and economic systems.

Tips for Ancient & Historical Sites

- Visit Knossos early morning to avoid crowds and intense sun
- Wear comfortable shoes for uneven ancient pathways
- Combine palace visits with Heraklion Museum for complete artifact context
- Hire a guide to understand complex Minoan history and mythology

Museums & Galleries

Discover world-renowned collections showcasing Minoan artifacts, Byzantine treasures, and contemporary Cretan art in expertly curated institutions.



Must See

Heraklion Archaeological Museum

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

One of Greece's finest museums housing the world's most comprehensive collection of Minoan art and artifacts. Marvel at the celebrated **Palace Frescoes** including the blue dolphins and bull-leaping scenes. The collection spans from the Neolithic period (around 7000 BC) to Roman times (3rd century AD).



Top Pick

Museum of Natural History of Crete

1.5 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Interactive museum showcasing Crete's diverse ecosystems, fossils, and fauna including endemic species. Features exhibits on the island's geological evolution, prehistoric animals, and modern biodiversity through engaging displays and multimedia presentations suitable for all ages.



Notable

Crete Aquarium

1.5-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

State-of-the-art facility displaying Mediterranean and tropical marine life with over 2000 specimens. Features interactive touch pools, underwater tunnel, and educational programs about marine conservation and Mediterranean ecosystems, perfect for families and marine enthusiasts.

Tips for Museums & Galleries

- Book Archaeological Museum tickets online to skip queues
- Allocate sufficient time for detailed artifact study
- Take advantage of museum guidebooks for deeper historical context
- Photography restrictions apply in some sections

Religious Sites

Visit sacred spaces reflecting centuries of Cretan spiritual heritage, from Byzantine churches to Venetian fortifications housing religious treasures.



Top Pick

Church of Agios Minas

30 minutes No Booking Needed

Map

Magnificent neo-Byzantine cathedral completed in 1895, dedicated to Heraklion's patron saint. Features stunning marble interiors, ornate chandeliers, and impressive iconostasis. The spacious interior accommodates hundreds of worshippers and hosts important religious ceremonies and pilgrimage occasions throughout the year.



Notable

Monastery of Arkadi

1.5-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Historic 16th-century monastery located in the Rethymno region, roughly 1.5 hours from Heraklion, serving as a symbol of Cretan resistance during Ottoman occupation. Features impressive Venetian-baroque architecture with ornate stone facades and a beautiful courtyard. Contains religious relics, museum exhibits, and peaceful gardens perfect for contemplation.

Tips for Religious Sites

- Dress respectfully when visiting active religious sites
- Check opening hours as they vary seasonally
- Photography may be restricted during services
- Many monasteries provide traditional hospitality with refreshments

Squares & Streets

Explore vibrant plazas and waterfront promenades that form the social heart of Heraklion, lined with tavernas, shops, and historic architecture.



Must See

Fountain Square (Plateia Venizelou)

1 hour No Booking Needed

Map

Historic central plaza featuring the iconic **Morosini Fountain, built in 1628. Surrounded by elegant Venetian architecture, traditional tavernas, and cafés, this animated square serves as the city's cultural and social center, perfect for people-watching and soaking in local atmosphere.**



Must See

Old Harbor (Venetian Port)

1.5-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Picturesque waterfront promenade featuring the historic Venetian **Koules Fortress** anchoring the harbor entrance. Lined with traditional seafood restaurants, cafés, and shops housed in charming stone buildings, the harbor offers stunning sunset views and authentic maritime atmosphere reflecting centuries of trade and cultural exchange.



Top Pick

25 Avgoustou Street

1-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

The city's main pedestrian shopping boulevard, bustling with retail stores, boutiques, and street vendors. This tree-lined street forms the commercial heart of Heraklion, perfect for shopping, people-watching, and discovering local establishments, connecting major plazas and landmark sites.

Tips for Squares & Streets

- Visit Fountain Square early morning or evening for best ambiance
- Try waterfront restaurants for fresh seafood with harbor views
- The Old Harbor is especially beautiful at sunset
- Main shopping street is busy mid-day; visit morning or late afternoon

Neighborhoods & Districts

Discover distinct neighborhoods each reflecting unique character, from historic Venetian quarters to vibrant local communities.



Must See

Venetian Quarter

1.5-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Historic district preserving medieval Venetian architecture with narrow winding streets, Renaissance buildings, and atmospheric plazas. The quarter showcases authentic stone facades, carved doorways, and hidden courtyards offering glimpses into medieval daily life, perfect for photography and exploration.



Top Pick

Port Area

2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Revitalized waterfront district combining historical fortifications with modern amenities. Features contemporary restaurants, bars, and cultural venues alongside historic maritime structures, creating dynamic blend of old and new ideal for dining, entertainment, and experiencing cosmopolitan Cretan culture.

Tips for Neighborhoods & Districts

- Get lost in Venetian Quarter backstreets for authentic discoveries
- Bring comfortable walking shoes for cobblestone streets
- Port area is lively in evenings with live music and dining
- Photography opportunities abound in historic quarters

Parks, Gardens & Natural Spaces

Experience green oases and natural landscapes offering respite from urban exploration and connection with Crete's Mediterranean environment.

Tips for Parks, Gardens & Natural Spaces

- Bring plenty of water and sun protection to beaches
- Best beach weather May through October
- Use public transportation to reach beaches from city center

Tours & Activities

Participate in guided experiences, cultural activities, and adventure pursuits revealing the depth of Heraklion's heritage and natural treasures.



Must See Book Ahead

Minoan Palace Guided Tours

2-3 hours Book Ahead

Expert-led archaeological tours of Knossos and other palace sites with professional guides explaining complex Minoan history, mythology, and architectural significance. Tours include skip-the-line access, detailed artifact interpretation, and cultural context bringing ancient civilization vividly to life.



Top Pick Book Ahead

Wine Tasting Tours

3-4 hours Book Ahead

Immerse in Cretan wine culture visiting local vineyards and traditional wineries producing renowned varieties like Vidiano and Kotsifali. Tastings include expert commentary on production methods, regional characteristics, and food pairings with local specialties, offering insight into Crete's winemaking heritage.



Top Pick Book Ahead

Traditional Cooking Classes

3-4 hours Book Ahead

Hands-on culinary experiences teaching authentic Cretan cooking techniques using fresh local ingredients. Classes typically include market visits, preparation of traditional dishes, and dining on creations, providing intimate knowledge of Mediterranean cuisine and cultural food traditions passed through generations.

Tips for Tours & Activities

- Book tours in advance during peak season
- Private tours offer personalized experience vs. group tours
- Cooking classes popular with foodies and cultural enthusiasts
- Wine tours best accompanied by designated driver or group transportation

Day Trips & Excursions

Explore captivating destinations within easy reach of Heraklion offering diverse experiences from mountain villages to pristine beaches and sacred caves.



Top Pick

Spinalonga Island

4-5 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Historic island fortress accessible by boat featuring Venetian fortifications and fascinating leper colony history. The island's maze of buildings, cannons, and fortification walls document centuries of Mediterranean military architecture and medical history, with beautiful surrounding turquoise waters.



Top Pick

Lasithi Plateau

Full day No Booking Needed

Map

Scenic mountain plateau 900 meters elevation featuring traditional windmills, agricultural landscapes, and mountain villages. The extensive plateau surrounded by dramatic peaks offers stunning views, hiking opportunities, and authentic rural Cretan experiences, with traditional tavernas serving local specialties.



Top Pick

Dikteon Cave (Zeus Cave)

2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Sacred limestone cave steeped in Greek mythology, legendary birthplace of Zeus. The descent reveals spectacular stalactite formations, subterranean lakes, and atmospheric chambers, with archaeological evidence of ancient religious rituals and worship practices spanning millennia.

Tips for Day Trips & Excursions

- Rent car or join organized tours for mountain excursions
- Ferry boats to Spinalonga depart early morning; book tickets ahead
- Bring sturdy shoes for cave exploration and hiking
- Plateau best visited spring/autumn; very hot in summer

Beaches & Coastal Areas

Discover diverse beaches offering sandy shores, crystal waters, and coastal Mediterranean beauty within easy reach of Heraklion.



Top Pick

Agia Pelagia Beach

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Golden sandy beach 25km west of Heraklion featuring calm turquoise waters ideal for swimming and snorkeling. The beach offers water sports facilities, beachfront restaurants, and scenic backdrop of green hills, making it popular with families and water sports enthusiasts seeking accessible coastal recreation.



Notable

Matala Beach

3-4 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Distinctive beach famous for Rock-cut caves that were originally tombs dating to the Greco-Roman period; Matala also served as a port for Minoan Phaistos, creating natural shelters used as dwellings in ancient times. The scenic cove combines archaeological interest with excellent swimming, attracting history enthusiasts and beach lovers seeking unique coastal character.

Tips for Beaches & Coastal Areas

- Beach season best May through October
- Bring umbrella or rent beach sunbeds for shade
- Swimming conditions safest mid-day when sea calmest
- Beaches fill quickly mid-summer; arrive early

Food & Dining

Real, highly-rated Restaurants in Heraklion, sourced from Google Places (rating above 4★).



Leonis IV★★★★★ 5 (391)

1-2 hours

Map

Leonis IV is a highly-rated restaurant in Heraklion, rated 5★ from 391 reviews. Located at Pl. El. Venizelou, Iraklio 712 02, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM
- Tuesday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM
- Wednesday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM
- Thursday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM
- Friday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM
- Saturday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM
- Sunday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM



Spora’★★★★★ 4.9 (748)

1-2 hours

Map

Spora’ is a highly-rated restaurant in Heraklion, rated 4.9★ from 748 reviews. Located at Γεωρ. Παπανδρέου 64, Leof. Ionias 11, Iraklio 713 06, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 2:00 – 11:20 PM
- Tuesday: 2:00 – 11:20 PM
- Wednesday: 2:00 – 11:20 PM
- Thursday: 2:00 – 11:20 PM
- Friday: 2:00 – 11:20 PM
- Saturday: 5:00 – 11:20 PM
- Sunday: Closed



Μεζεδοπωλείο Η Αυλή★★★★★ 4.9 (1,626)

1-2 hours

Map

Μεζεδοπωλείο Η Αυλή is a highly-rated restaurant in Heraklion, rated 4.9★ from 1626 reviews. Located at Smirnis 31, Iraklio 712 01, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 1:30 PM – 12:00 AM
- Tuesday: 1:30 PM – 12:00 AM
- Wednesday: 1:30 PM – 12:00 AM
- Thursday: 1:30 PM – 12:00 AM
- Friday: 1:30 PM – 12:00 AM
- Saturday: 1:30 PM – 12:00 AM
- Sunday: Closed



Sir Papafigos★★★★★ 4.9 (952)

1-2 hours

Map

Sir Papafigos is a highly-rated restaurant in Heraklion, rated 4.9★ from 952 reviews. Located at Λοχαγού Μαρινέλη 1, Iraklio 712 02, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 5:00 – 11:00 PM
- Tuesday: 5:00 – 11:00 PM
- Wednesday: Closed
- Thursday: 5:00 – 11:00 PM
- Friday: 5:00 – 11:00 PM
- Saturday: 1:00 – 11:00 PM
- Sunday: 1:00 – 11:00 PM



Peskesi★★★★★ 4.8 (14,855)

1-2 hours

Map

Peskesi is a highly-rated restaurant in Heraklion, rated 4.8★ from 14855 reviews. Located at Kapetan Charalampi 6-8, Iraklio 712 02, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 1:00 PM – 1:00 AM
- Tuesday: 1:00 PM – 1:00 AM
- Wednesday: 1:00 PM – 1:00 AM
- Thursday: 1:00 PM – 1:00 AM
- Friday: 1:00 PM – 1:00 AM
- Saturday: 1:00 PM – 1:00 AM
- Sunday: 1:00 PM – 1:00 AM



Lola★★★★★ 4.8 (753)

1-2 hours

Map

Lola is a highly-rated restaurant in Heraklion, rated 4.8★ from 753 reviews. Located at Kidonias 21, Iraklio 712 02, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 12:30 PM – 1:00 AM
- Tuesday: 12:30 PM – 1:00 AM
- Wednesday: 12:30 PM – 1:00 AM
- Thursday: 12:30 PM – 1:00 AM
- Friday: 12:30 PM – 1:00 AM
- Saturday: 12:30 PM – 1:00 AM
- Sunday: Closed



Chalali★★★★★ 4.8 (1,271)

1-2 hours

Map

Chalali is a highly-rated restaurant in Heraklion, rated 4.8★ from 1271 reviews. Located at Θεσσαλονικης, Pl. Rhga Feraioi 5, Iraklio 712 01, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: Closed
- Tuesday: 1:00 – 11:15 PM
- Wednesday: 1:00 – 11:15 PM
- Thursday: 1:00 – 11:15 PM
- Friday: 1:00 – 11:15 PM
- Saturday: 1:00 – 11:15 PM
- Sunday: 1:00 – 11:15 PM



Merastri★★★★★ 4.8 (2,696)

1-2 hours

Map

Merastri is a highly-rated restaurant in Heraklion, rated 4.8★ from 2696 reviews. Located at Chrisostomou 17, Iraklio 713 06, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 6:00 – 11:45 PM
- Tuesday: 6:00 – 11:45 PM
- Wednesday: 6:00 – 11:45 PM
- Thursday: 6:00 – 11:45 PM
- Friday: 6:00 – 11:30 PM
- Saturday: 6:00 – 11:30 PM
- Sunday: 6:00 – 11:45 PM



Chagiati★★★★★ 4.8 (1,296)

1-2 hours

Map

Chagiati is a highly-rated restaurant in Heraklion, rated 4.8★ from 1296 reviews. Located at Erotokritou 12, Iraklio 712 02, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 6:00 PM – 12:00 AM
- Tuesday: 6:00 PM – 12:00 AM
- Wednesday: 6:00 PM – 12:00 AM
- Thursday: 6:00 PM – 12:00 AM
- Friday: 6:00 PM – 12:00 AM
- Saturday: 6:00 PM – 12:00 AM
- Sunday: Closed



Archipelagos Seafood Restaurant★★★★★ 4.8 (836)

1-2 hours

Map

Archipelagos Seafood Restaurant is a highly-rated restaurant in Heraklion, rated 4.8★ from 836 reviews. Located at Leof. Sofokli Venizelou 11, Iraklio 712 02, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 11:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Tuesday: Closed
- Wednesday: 11:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Thursday: 11:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Friday: 11:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Saturday: 11:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Sunday: 11:00 AM – 11:00 PM



Cooking with love★★★★★ 4.8 (937)

1-2 hours

Map

Cooking with love is a highly-rated restaurant in Heraklion, rated 4.8★ from 937 reviews. Located at Koroneou 21, Iraklio 712 02, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 1:00 – 5:00 PM
- Tuesday: 1:00 – 5:00 PM
- Wednesday: 1:00 – 5:00 PM
- Thursday: 1:00 – 5:00 PM
- Friday: 1:00 – 5:00 PM
- Saturday: 1:00 – 5:00 PM
- Sunday: Closed



Pasiphae Restaurant★★★★★ 4.7 (4,872)

1-2 hours

Map

Pasiphae Restaurant is a highly-rated restaurant in Heraklion, rated 4.7★ from 4872 reviews. Located at Leof. Knosou 329, Iraklio 715 00, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
- Tuesday: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
- Wednesday: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
- Thursday: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
- Friday: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
- Saturday: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
- Sunday: Closed



Apiri Greek Eatery★★★★★ 4.7 (3,388)

1-2 hours

Map

Apiri Greek Eatery is a highly-rated restaurant in Heraklion, rated 4.7★ from 3388 reviews. Located at Αγίων Δέκα 5 &, Kagiampi, Iraklio 712 01, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 1:00 – 11:30 PM
- Tuesday: 1:00 – 11:30 PM
- Wednesday: 1:00 – 11:30 PM
- Thursday: 1:00 – 11:30 PM
- Friday: 1:00 – 11:30 PM
- Saturday: 1:00 – 11:30 PM
- Sunday: 1:00 – 11:30 PM



Kastella Seafood Restaurant★★★★★ 4.7 (2,294)

1-2 hours

Map

Kastella Seafood Restaurant is a highly-rated restaurant in Heraklion, rated 4.7★ from 2294 reviews. Located at Leof. Sofokli Venizelou 9, Iraklio 712 02, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 11:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Tuesday: 11:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Wednesday: Closed
- Thursday: 11:30 AM – 11:00 PM
- Friday: 11:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Saturday: 12:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Sunday: 12:00 AM – 11:00 PM



Thigaterra - The Art of Slow Food★★★★★ 4.7 (3,283)

1-2 hours

Map

Thigaterra - The Art of Slow Food is a highly-rated restaurant in Heraklion, rated 4.7★ from 3283 reviews. Located at Leof. Andrea Papandreou 109, Ag. Dimitrios 714 14, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: Closed
- Tuesday: 1:00 – 11:30 PM
- Wednesday: 1:00 – 11:30 PM
- Thursday: 1:00 – 11:30 PM
- Friday: 1:00 – 11:30 PM
- Saturday: 1:00 – 11:30 PM
- Sunday: 1:00 – 10:30 PM

Beach Bars

Real, highly-rated Beach Bars in Heraklion, sourced from Google Places (rating above 4★).



Beach Bar & Club in Creta★★★★★ 4.8 (81)

1-2 hours

Map

Beach Bar & Club in Creta | Cocktails, Sunbeds & Sunset Vibes in Greece , HAWAS BEACH HALL is a highly-rated beach bar in Heraklion, rated 4.8★ from 81 reviews. Located at Παραλία Αρίνα, Κοκκίνη, Iraklio 712 01, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 9:00 AM – 6:30 PM
- Tuesday: 9:00 AM – 6:30 PM
- Wednesday: 9:00 AM – 6:30 PM
- Thursday: 9:00 AM – 6:30 PM
- Friday: 9:00 AM – 6:30 PM
- Saturday: 9:00 AM – 8:30 PM
- Sunday: 9:00 AM – 8:30 PM



Swing Thing★★★★★ 4.8 (937)

1-2 hours

Map

Swing Thing is a highly-rated beach bar in Heraklion, rated 4.8★ from 937 reviews. Located at Arkoleon 13, Iraklio 712 02, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 6:30 PM – 1:30 AM
- Tuesday: 6:30 PM – 1:30 AM
- Wednesday: 6:30 PM – 1:30 AM
- Thursday: 6:30 PM – 1:30 AM
- Friday: 7:00 PM – 2:00 AM
- Saturday: 7:00 PM – 2:00 AM
- Sunday: Closed



Ammothiness Cocktail Beach Bar★★★★★ 4.7 (364)

1-2 hours

Map

Ammothiness Cocktail Beach Bar is a highly-rated beach bar in Heraklion, rated 4.7★ from 364 reviews. Located at Παλαιά ΕΟ Ρεθύμνου Χανίων, Επισκοπή 741 50, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 9:00 AM – 11:30 PM
- Tuesday: 9:00 AM – 11:30 PM
- Wednesday: 9:00 AM – 11:30 PM
- Thursday: 9:00 AM – 11:30 PM
- Friday: 9:00 AM – 11:30 PM
- Saturday: 9:00 AM – 11:30 PM
- Sunday: 9:00 AM – 11:30 PM



Boho Beach Bar★★★★★ 4.6 (583)

1-2 hours

Map

Boho Beach Bar is a highly-rated beach bar in Heraklion, rated 4.6★ from 583 reviews. Located at Matala 702 00, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 9:00 AM – 3:00 AM
- Tuesday: 9:00 AM – 3:00 AM
- Wednesday: 9:00 AM – 3:00 AM
- Thursday: 9:00 AM – 3:00 AM
- Friday: 9:00 AM – 3:00 AM
- Saturday: 9:00 AM – 3:00 AM
- Sunday: 9:00 AM – 3:00 AM



Kahlua Beach Bar & Party Restaurant★★★★★ 4.6 (1,577)

1-2 hours

Map

Kahlua Beach Bar & Party Restaurant is a highly-rated beach bar in Heraklion, rated 4.6★ from 1577 reviews. Located at 25 Martiou, Giampoudaki &, Chersonisos 700 14, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 9:00 AM – 4:00 AM
- Tuesday: 9:00 AM – 4:00 AM
- Wednesday: 9:00 AM – 4:00 AM
- Thursday: 9:00 AM – 4:00 AM
- Friday: 9:00 AM – 4:00 AM
- Saturday: 9:00 AM – 4:00 AM
- Sunday: 9:00 AM – 4:00 AM



Manitu Sunset Bliss★★★★★ 4.6 (1,165)

1-2 hours

Map

Manitu Sunset Bliss is a highly-rated beach bar in Heraklion, rated 4.6★ from 1165 reviews. Located at Leof. Sofokli Venizelou, Iraklio 712 02, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 7:30 PM – 2:30 AM
- Tuesday: 7:30 PM – 2:30 AM
- Wednesday: 7:30 PM – 2:30 AM
- Thursday: 7:30 PM – 2:30 AM
- Friday: 7:30 PM – 2:30 AM
- Saturday: 7:30 PM – 2:30 AM
- Sunday: 7:30 PM – 2:30 AM



Stone Project★★★★★ 4.6 (335)

1-2 hours

Map

Stone Project is a highly-rated beach bar in Heraklion, rated 4.6★ from 335 reviews. Located at Korai 14, Iraklio 712 02, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: Closed
- Tuesday: Closed
- Wednesday: 7:00 PM – 3:00 AM
- Thursday: 7:00 PM – 3:00 AM
- Friday: 8:00 PM – 3:00 AM
- Saturday: 8:00 PM – 3:00 AM
- Sunday: 7:00 PM – 2:30 AM



Beachcomber Bar Restaurant Stalis★★★★★ 4.6 (2,688)

1-2 hours

Map

Beachcomber Bar Restaurant Stalis is a highly-rated beach bar in Heraklion, rated 4.6★ from 2688 reviews. Located at Agiou Ioanni 11, Stalida 700 07, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM
- Tuesday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM
- Wednesday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM
- Thursday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM
- Friday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM
- Saturday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM
- Sunday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM



Pleasure Beach Club Restaurant★★★★★ 4.5 (1,738)

1-2 hours

Map

Pleasure Beach Club Restaurant is a highly-rated beach bar in Heraklion, rated 4.5★ from 1738 reviews. Located at klotzani 1, Malia 700 07, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 8:00 AM – 12:00 AM
- Tuesday: 8:00 AM – 12:00 AM
- Wednesday: 8:00 AM – 12:00 AM
- Thursday: 8:00 AM – 12:00 AM
- Friday: 8:00 AM – 12:00 AM
- Saturday: 8:00 AM – 12:00 AM
- Sunday: 8:00 AM – 12:00 AM



King Scorpio Beach Club Restaurant★★★★★ 4.5 (3,955)

1-2 hours

Map

King Scorpio Beach Club Restaurant is a highly-rated beach bar in Heraklion, rated 4.5★ from 3955 reviews. Located at 25is Martiou, Limenas Chersonisou 700 14, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM
- Tuesday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM
- Wednesday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM
- Thursday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM
- Friday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM
- Saturday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM
- Sunday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 AM



Dolphin Beach Bar★★★★★ 4.5 (1,003)

1-2 hours

Map

Dolphin Beach Bar is a highly-rated beach bar in Heraklion, rated 4.5★ from 1003 reviews. Located at Malia Central Beach, Chersonisos 700 07, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 9:00 AM – 8:00 PM
- Tuesday: 9:00 AM – 8:00 PM
- Wednesday: 9:00 AM – 8:00 PM
- Thursday: 9:00 AM – 8:00 PM
- Friday: 9:00 AM – 8:00 PM
- Saturday: 9:00 AM – 8:00 PM
- Sunday: 9:00 AM – 8:00 PM



Heaven Beach★★★★☆ 4.4 (3,565)

1-2 hours

Map

Heaven Beach is a highly-rated beach bar in Heraklion, rated 4.4★ from 3565 reviews. Located at Μήλου 26, Iraklio 714 14, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 9:00 AM – 1:00 AM
- Tuesday: 9:00 AM – 1:00 AM
- Wednesday: 9:00 AM – 1:00 AM
- Thursday: 9:00 AM – 1:00 AM
- Friday: 9:00 AM – 1:00 AM
- Saturday: 9:00 AM – 1:00 AM
- Sunday: 9:00 AM – 1:00 AM



A Paradise Bar★★★★☆ 4.4 (911)

1-2 hours

Map

A Paradise Bar is a highly-rated beach bar in Heraklion, rated 4.4★ from 911 reviews. Located at Karteros 715 00, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 10:00 AM – 9:00 PM
- Tuesday: 10:00 AM – 9:00 PM
- Wednesday: 10:00 AM – 9:00 PM
- Thursday: 10:00 AM – 9:00 PM
- Friday: 10:00 AM – 9:00 PM
- Saturday: 10:00 AM – 9:00 PM
- Sunday: 10:00 AM – 9:00 PM



Mare Coffee Bar & Food★★★★☆ 4.4 (5,019)

1-2 hours

Map

Mare Coffee Bar & Food is a highly-rated beach bar in Heraklion, rated 4.4★ from 5019 reviews. Located at Leof. Sofokli Venizelou, Iraklio 713 03, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 8:30 AM – 12:00 AM
- Tuesday: 8:30 AM – 12:00 AM
- Wednesday: 8:30 AM – 12:00 AM
- Thursday: 8:30 AM – 12:00 AM
- Friday: 8:30 AM – 12:30 AM
- Saturday: 8:30 AM – 12:30 AM
- Sunday: 8:30 AM – 12:00 AM



PLASTELINA★★★★☆ 4.4 (1,081)

1-2 hours

Map

PLASTELINA is a highly-rated beach bar in Heraklion, rated 4.4★ from 1081 reviews. Located at Ideou Antrou, Iraklio 712 02, Greece.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 9:00 AM – 12:00 AM
- Tuesday: 9:00 AM – 12:00 AM
- Wednesday: Closed
- Thursday: 9:00 AM – 12:00 AM
- Friday: 9:00 AM – 1:00 AM
- Saturday: 9:00 AM – 1:00 AM
- Sunday: 9:00 AM – 1:00 AM

Practical Information

Ideal Season: Late April to Early June & September to October

Spring offers pleasant temperatures (20-24°C), blooming wildflowers, and manageable crowds. Summer (June-August) brings hot weather (28-35°C) with peak tourism; beach days are perfect but archaeological sites are scorching. Autumn features warm seas, comfortable temperatures, and reduced crowds ideal for exploration. Winter (November-February) is mild (10-15°C) with occasional rain but lower prices and minimal tourists.

Peak Season: July-August requires advance bookings and expect crowded attractions. **Shoulder Season:** May, June, September offer ideal balance. **Off-Season:** November-March suitable for budget travelers accepting unpredictable weather.

Airport Access: Nikos Kazantzakis Airport (HER) is 5km east. Taxis, buses, and rental cars available. Budget 15-30 minutes to city center.

City Transport: Extensive bus network covers city and suburbs with affordable fares. Taxis plentiful but use meter or agree prices beforehand. Rental cars ideal for exploring Crete's interior and day trips.

Ferry Services: Regular ferries connect to Greek islands and mainland. Port located at Old Harbor with daily connections to Rhodes, Santorini, and Athens.

Practical Tips: Download bus apps for schedules. Hire drivers unfamiliar with Greek roads. Parking available but expensive in city center. Drive on the right; overtake on the left.

✈ Airport Transfer

Heraklion International Airport, Nikos Kazantzakis (HER) to city center:

- **Local Bus:** Runs regularly to Heraklion city center (check the airport bus line and times) in about 15-20 minutes, The airport is within the city bus operator’s A zone: €1.30 if bought outside the bus, or €2.30 on board, according to fares effective 23 March 2026.
- **Taxi:** The airport information page lists €15–€20 by taxi to the city center, and about €25 at night, journey takes roughly 10-15 minutes
- **Private Transfer:** Pre-booked car service to city center or nearby resorts in 15-30 minutes, typically €25-40
- **Rental Car:** Major agencies have desks in arrivals, city center reachable in 10-15 minutes, from around €30/day

What to Buy: Olive oil (superior Cretan varieties), local honey, raki (traditional spirit), Cretan cheese (graviera), wine, handmade crafts, leather goods, and ceramics.

Shopping Areas: 25 Avgoustou Street offers mainstream shops and boutiques. Old Harbor features artisan shops and souvenir vendors. The municipality describes the Agora on 1866 Street as a daily market street.

Bargaining: Common in markets and with street vendors; acceptable practice. Retail stores have fixed prices. Expect 10-20% discounts for bulk purchases or cash payments in local shops.

Practical Notes: Shops close 2-5pm for siesta. Sunday closures common. VAT refunds available for purchases over €50 at tourist shops. Traditional products offer best value compared to islands.

Annual Celebrations:

- **Carnival (February-March):** Three weeks of parades, costumes, music, and street celebrations preceding Lent
- **Easter (varies):** Most important religious celebration with candlelit processions, special services, feasts, and fireworks
- **Rethymno Carnival Festival (February):** Nearby elaborate celebrations with masquerades and public festivities
- **Festival of the Virgin Mary (August 15):** Religious celebrations and festivities across the island
- **Summer Cultural Festival (June-September):** Performances, theater, music at various venues
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National Holidays: New Year (Jan 1), Epiphany (Jan 6), Independence Day (Mar 25), Easter, Labor Day (May 1), Ascension, Assumption (Aug 15), Ochi Day (Oct 28), Christmas (Dec 25-26).

Day 1: Ancient Minoan Civilization

Morning: Knossos Palace with guided tour exploring reconstructed palace, frescoes, and legendary Labyrinth (2-3 hours). Lunch at nearby taverna. Afternoon: Heraklion Archaeological Museum featuring world-class Minoan artifacts, pottery, and frescoes. Evening: Sunset at Old Harbor, dinner at waterfront restaurant.

Day 2: Venetian History & Culture

Morning: Explore Venetian Quarter's winding streets, historic squares, and Renaissance architecture. Visit Koules Fortress for harbor views. Lunch at Fountain Square. Afternoon: Church of Agios Minas, Museum of Natural History, or Crete Aquarium. Evening: Traditional Greek dinner with raki and entertainment in old town.

Day 3: Beach Relaxation & Coastal Exploration

Morning: Beach time at Agia Pelagia or Rethymno Beach. Swim, sunbathe, water sports. Lunch: Fresh seafood at beach taverna. Afternoon: Explore coastal village, local shops. Optional sunset boat trip or seaside walk. Evening: Casual dinner watching Mediterranean sunset.

Day 4: Mountain Exploration & Local Villages

Morning: Drive to Lasithi Plateau exploring traditional windmills, agricultural landscapes, and scenic views. Visit mountain village. Lunch: Traditional Cretan taverna. Afternoon: Dikteon Cave exploration descending into stalactite chambers and legendary birthplace of Zeus. Evening: Return to Heraklion for dinner.

Day 5: Wine, Food & Local Experiences

Morning: Cretan cooking class preparing traditional dishes with local ingredients. Lunch: Cooking class feast featuring creations. Afternoon: Wine tasting at traditional winery learning about Cretan varietals and production. Evening: Farewell dinner at acclaimed restaurant featuring modern Cretan cuisine and wine pairings.

Top Photography Locations:

Old Harbor at Sunset (Golden Hour): Koules Fortress silhouetted against orange skies, Venetian architecture beautifully lit, boats in foreground. Best 1-2 hours before sunset. Bring tripod for long exposures.

Venetian Quarter Streets: Narrow cobblestone alleyways with arched passageways, weathered stone facades, hanging flowers, morning light creating dramatic shadows. Best early morning (6-9am) with soft directional light and minimal crowds.

Fountain Square (Plateia Venizelou): Iconic Morosini Fountain centerpiece surrounded by Renaissance buildings. Ideal during golden hour with cafe patrons and evening lights. Aerial views from nearby buildings spectacular.

Knossos Palace Ruins: Reconstructed frescoes, multi-level architecture, dramatic staircases, throne room. Golden hour provides warm palace stone tones. Aerial drone shots reveal layout. Early morning avoids shadows in excavations.

Samaria Gorge: Dramatic limestone cliffs, narrow passages, mountain streams, wildflowers (spring). Technical hiking photography rewarding for experienced photographers. Very early morning essential.

Mountain Plateaus at Sunrise: Lasithi windmills, valley layers, fog formations. Drone-friendly with otherworldly atmosphere before crowds arrive. Clear weather crucial.

Beach Compositions: Matala Cave formations dramatic at sunrise/sunset. Golden sand contrasts with turquoise water and red cliffs. Agia Pelagia offers calm reflections and sunset colors.

Voltage & Frequency: Greece uses 230V AC, 50Hz electrical supply.

Plug Types: Type F (European two round pins) and Type C (two cylindrical pins) are standard. Many older buildings feature mix of plug types.

Adapter Necessity: North American (120V) appliances require voltage converter plus adapter for 230V operation. UK (230V) users need only adapter. Most modern devices support 100-240V input.

Power Availability: Reliable in city center and tourist areas. Rural/island areas occasionally experience voltage fluctuations. Bring surge protectors for valuable electronics.

Practical Tips: Adapter-converter combinations available at airport and pharmacies. USB chargers simplify device charging. Power banks recommended for day excursions. Voltage issues rare in modern hotels but possible in older properties.

Must-Try Cretan Dishes:

Saganaki: Fried cheese (usually graviera or halloumi) often served flambéed tableside. Crispy exterior, creamy interior—addictive and iconic.

Pastitsio: Layered pasta baked with meat sauce and béchamel cream, Greece's comfort food classic with crispy top and tender interior.

Dakos: Barley rusks topped with tomato, feta, olive oil, oregano. Traditional breakfast staple light yet filling.

Horta: Simply boiled vegetables (wild greens, potatoes, beans) served with olive oil and lemon. Pure Mediterranean tradition showcasing Cretan produce quality.

Fresh Seafood: Grilled octopus, feta-stuffed fish, shrimp saganaki at waterfront restaurants. Daily catches guarantee freshness.

Cheeses: Graviera (hard aged), mizithra (creamy), malaka (soft). Often served before mains as part of meze.

Raki & Wine: Local firewater (raki) accompanies meals and celebrations. Sample Cretan wines like Vidiano and Kotsifali at tavernas and wineries.

Dining Tips: Tavernas near tourist areas pricier than local neighborhoods. Late dinner standard (9pm+). Mezze (appetizer platters) ideal for trying multiple dishes. Tipping 5-10% appreciated. Bargaining acceptable at outdoor markets.