



Blue Dot Travel





\$13,650 pp

Twin-share, excluding
international airfares

Single supp \$2,100

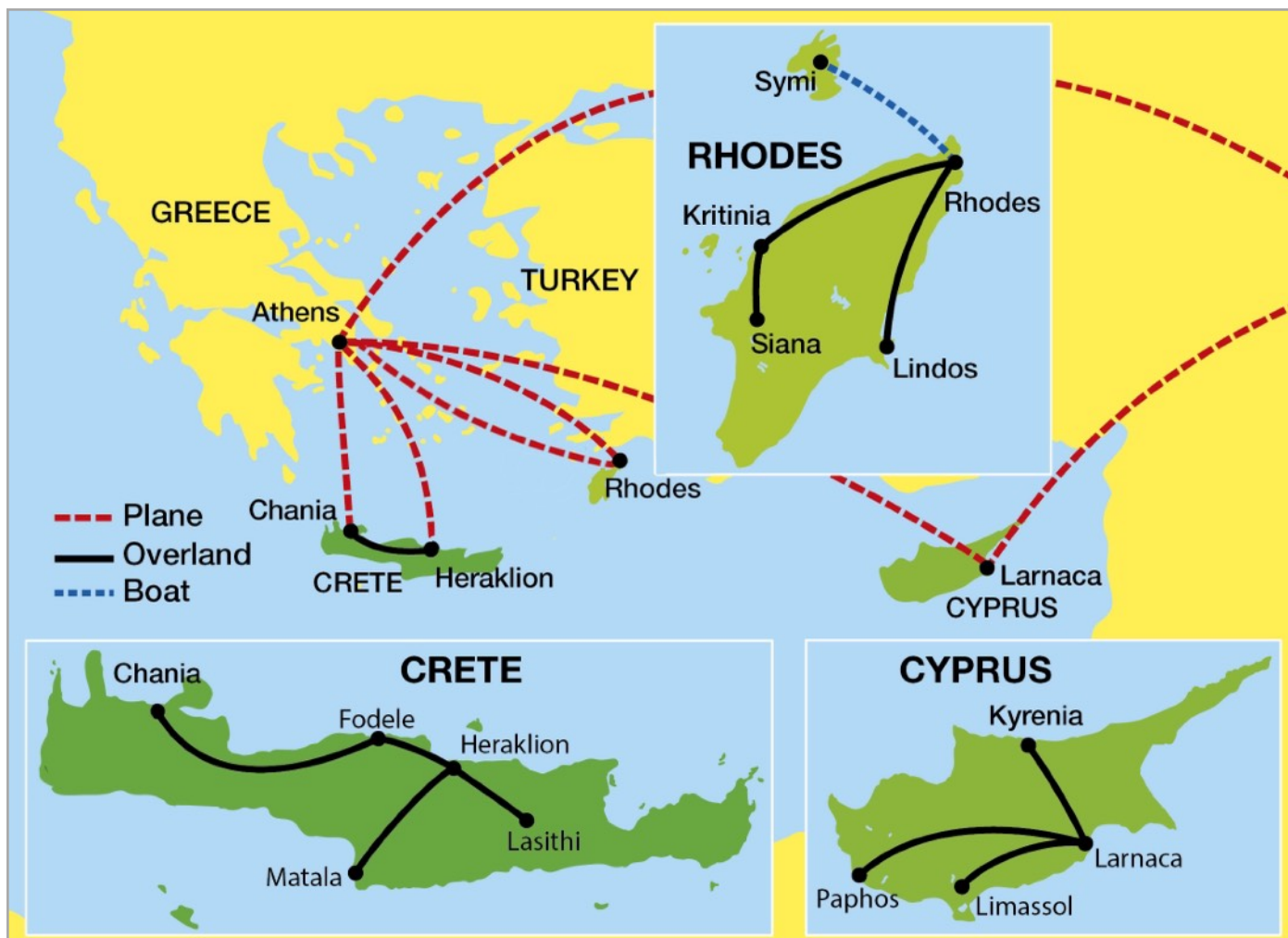
CYPRUS, CRETE AND RHODES

The story of Cyprus' tumultuous past is told through its historic sites, its Roman ruins, its multi-faceted museums and its dusty urban streets. This ease of accessibility is highlighted in Paphos, where one of the most important archaeological sites sprawls like an ancient theme park next to a tourist resort. Experience the intrinsically different Greek and Turkish societies of modern Cyprus with its fractured identity, a passionate people and culture, and beautiful landscape and lifestyle.

There is something undeniably artistic in the way the landscape of Crete unfolds, from the sun-drenched beaches in the north to rugged canyons spilling into the cove-studded south coast. In between the valleys, villages are cradled in the landscape and the gorges have a cave where Zeus was born. Crete's natural beauty is equalled only by the richness of its history. The island is the birthplace of the first advanced society on European soil, the Minoans, who ruled over much of the Aegean some 4,000 years ago. You'll find vestiges of this mysterious civilisation all over Crete, including the famous "Palace of Knossos" and the legend of the labyrinth of King Minos and the slaying of the Minotaur by Theseus to save the king's daughter, Ariadne. At the crossroads of three continents, Crete has been coveted and occupied by consecutive invaders.

History imbues the air in the old towns of Chania and Rethymno where a labyrinth of laneways, laid out by the Venetians, are lorded over by mighty fortresses and where gorgeously restored Renaissance mansions nestle beside mosques and Turkish bathhouses. In the end though, it is the people that create the most vivid memories. Crete's people champion their unforgettable unique culture, customs and time-honoured traditions.

Rhodes is rightly celebrated for the splendour of its medieval architecture and evocative old town and it is generally considered one of the most beautiful of the Greek Islands. The crusader Knights of St John (1309-1522) called Rhodes home after their expulsion from the Holy Land, and it is their legacy of massive castles and the old town that we enjoy today. Here, according to legend, stood the Colossos of Rhodes, a bronze statue of Helios, the Sun-God, erected in 290BC, standing astride the harbour entrance and one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.



DEPART AUSTRALIA

Friday 17th April

Depart Australia for Larnaca, via Dubai.

Day 1, Saturday 18th April

ARRIVE LARNACA

Welcome to Cyprus!

Arrival and group transfer (15-minute drive) to the Hotel Lvadhiotis (or similar) for check-in and rest after a long flight. In the afternoon, our guide will meet the group at reception for an afternoon stroll around Larnaca. An official welcome dinner is at a local tavern within walking distance from the hotel - the Livadhiotis (or similar), where you'll stay for three nights. **D**



Day 2, Sunday 19th April
KYRENIA – NICOSIA

Today, we'll drive to the Turkish-occupied region of Northern Cyprus. Passports are required today and tomorrow as you are entering Turkish territory. We'll drive past the beautiful landscape of the Pentadaktylos, meaning 'Five Fingers,' mountain range. The first stop in the North is to Bellapais Abbey, situated in the village of Bellapais. It is considered one of the best-preserved examples of Gothic architecture on the island and is built almost entirely out of local limestone. Then we'll explore the picturesque town of Kyrenia with its horseshoe-shaped harbour, its spectacular medieval castle and its maze of narrow streets with exquisitely preserved stone

houses. The most important monument within the town is the Kerynia Castle Museum, which features, among other exhibits, a famous Shipwreck dating to circa 300 BC. From Kyrenia, we'll next visit Nicosia ("Lefkosia"), the world's only divided capital city. We enter the city by driving along the Green Line, the capital's dividing borderline, passing by the newly restored Famagusta Gate. We continue to the Archbishop's Palace to view St. John's Cathedral (exterior). Our tour continues to the picturesque old quarter of "Laiki Yitonia," where we'll have time to walk around the charming, winding alleyways lined with numerous traditional houses, shops, and galleries. Dinner at a local tavern. **B/D**



Day 3, Monday 20th April
FAMAGUSTA – SALAMIS – AYIA NAPA

On the island's eastern side lies the beautiful coastal town of Famagusta, trapped in a time-lock since the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. We'll explore the old city medieval walls, the spectacular Gothic Cathedral of St. Nicholas, now operating as a mosque and the famous 'Othello's Tower'. Stroll through narrow streets, shop in the Bazaar and then drive close to the 'Ghost Town', the sealed-off area of Famagusta. Together, we will discover the medieval walls of the old city, the spectacular Gothic Cathedral of St. Nicholas, now operating as a mosque, and the historical background of Famagusta, with visits to the ancient capital, Salamis, founded in the 11th Century BC, right after the Trojan

War. Then, we'll visit the archaeological site, which includes a beautiful ancient Greek theatre, Hellenistic theatres, and Roman Colonnades. Our last stop will be Asia Napa, one of the most well-known resorts in the Mediterranean Sea. Around 1500 AD, a monastery was built around the cave, in honour of the Virgin Mary of Ayia Napa. Dinner is at a restaurant. Overnight at Livadhiotis Hotel, Larnaca. **B/D**



Day 4, Tuesday 21st April

**KOLOSSI – KOURION –
PETRA TOU ROMIOU –
PANAYIA – PAPHOS**

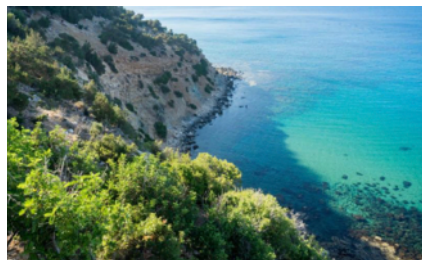
Today, our excursion will be all about history, legends and the spectacular views over some of the most beautiful parts of Cyprus. The first visit will be at the Crusader Castle of Kolossi, a fine example of military architecture. Then we stop at the ancient city of Kourion, where we'll see the

famous Greco-Roman theatre and mosaics, and enjoy the views the Greeks and Romans had of this amazing ancient city. Archaeological evidence and historical sources depict Kourion as one of Cyprus's most important ancient kingdoms. Our journey will continue past the Episkopi, a British military base and then to Aphrodite's Rock, one of the island's most famous attractions. Here we will see the place where the Goddess of Love and Beauty was born from the foam of the sea. Then on to the stunning Chrysorogiatissa Monastery, established in 1152. Lunch is at a family-owned winery, Vouni Panagia. Our last stop is at Paphos, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Discover the remarkable history of this city, passing by the Catacombs of St. Solomoni, the Pillar of St. Paul, and the House of Dionysos. Check in to the hotel in Phassos for a two-night stay. Dinner will be at a local restaurant. **B/L/D**



**Day 5, Wednesday 22nd April
THE BATHS OF APHRODITE – AKAMAS**

Today, there's an optional morning trek appropriate for the fitter members of the group. (Importantly, this is only



suitable for those who can walk through bushland and up and down hills for a few hours). The trek will wind its way through beautiful forests, canyons, and deserted beaches of the

Akamas Peninsula. Those not joining will have a morning at leisure. Then, the group will all meet up for a boat cruise that will include a light lunch, before taking a jeep safari around the Akamas region. Dinner tonight is at a seafood restaurant. **B/L/D**



**Day 6, Thursday 23rd April
KAKOPETRIA – KYKKOS – OMODHOS**

After breakfast, we drive to Chrysorogiatissa Monastery, established in 1152, before heading to the Troodos Mountains, the biggest mountain range in Cyprus, located in the centre of the island. Troodos' highest peak is Mount Olympus at 1,952m, and it is considered to be the green heart of the island. There are many famous mountain resorts, Byzantine monasteries and churches on mountain peaks, and villages nestling in its valleys cling to terraced hill slopes. Our first stop is at Kakopetria, a well-preserved village with traditional, picturesque houses dating back to the 14th century AD. Following Kakopetria, we will experience one of the wealthiest monasteries in Cyprus, Kykkos. The Holy Monastery of the Virgin of Kykkos was founded around the end of the 11th century by the Byzantine emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081 – 1118) and lies at an altitude of 1318m on the north-west face of the Troodos Mountains. The day ends with a stop in another traditional village called Omodos, known as one of the best wine-producing villages on the island. To top off our day, we step into a winery where we'll learn the history of the island's wines. And of course, there'll be a chance to try and buy some while you're there! **B/D**

**Day 7, Friday 24th April
IN TRANSIT**

Today, we say goodbye to Cyprus and fly to Heraklion, Crete, via Athens. Flights (tbc), A3 903, 10.15 // 12.00 connect to A3 314 13.25 // 14.20.

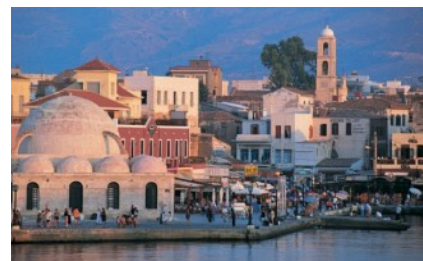
Welcome to Crete!

Arrival at the airport in Heraklion (HER) in Crete. Our group will be transferred to the hotel in Heraklion town, where we will stay for the next five nights. Dinner at the hotel and overnight. **B/D**



**Day 8, Saturday
25th April
KNOSSOS**

Our tour today starts in Heraklion, where we will visit the archaeological museum, which houses exhibits from the Minoan civilisation. This excursion continues to the island's most important archaeological and historical site, Knossos Palace. The most controversial and well-preserved Minoan archaeological site, the Palace of Knossos, is a must-see for any traveller to Crete. The size and variety of this vast palace complex's surviving layout, columns, walls, paintings, and sculptures give us an idea of Minoan life and take us back thousands of years. Afterwards, we will visit a local winery, where we will have the chance to taste different types of Cretan wine, accompanied by traditional snacks. Return to the hotel. Dinner at a local tavern. **B/D**



**Day 9, Sunday 26th April
OLIVE OIL TASTING – KARA KARDIOTISSA –
KRASI**

We'll visit a local olive oil factory in the morning to learn how the Cretan golden liquid is produced. After the tour,

we'll have an opportunity to taste the product. Our tour continues to Lasithi Plateau. Lasithi Plateau is a varied, fertile landscape with many vegetable gardens. We pass old wind turbines that just a few years ago pumped water out of the ground for the fields. We will visit the monastery Kara Kardiotissa and then take a short break and try the local cheese pie with honey, which the region is famous for. We then head to the village of Krasi, where we see the mighty plane tree which, with a circumference of 18 metres, is said to be the largest plane tree in Crete and one of the largest in Europe. Tonight, we will have dinner at a local tavern in Heraklion. **B/D**



**Day 10, Monday 27th April
GORTYNA – FESTOS – MATALA**

We will embark on a relaxing journey to the "antiquity" and sunshine of southwest Crete, beyond the mountains and through the island's unique scenery! Our first stop is at Gortys, the island's capital, during the Roman occupation. Visit the ancient Forum and Amphitheatre, the Basilica of St. Titus (dating from the 5th-6th cent. AD), and admire the famous Doric Law Code carved into stone. Afterwards, we will visit Festos, the island's second major Minoan archaeological site on a hill overlooking the fertile Messara plain and offering a wonderful view of the Ida and Asterousia mountains. The ruins of the palace complex here bring evidence of a glorious past destroyed by fire and earthquake, and rebuilt shortly after. The day tour continues to the village of Matala, well known worldwide as – among others – a favourite destination of hippies during the 70s. Enjoy the beach or stroll around in the village's narrow streets with many shops, cafes and tavernas. Dinner at a local tavern. **B/D**



**Day 11, Tuesday
28th April
KRITSA VILLAGE,
SPINALONGA
AND AGIOS
NIKOLAOS**

Our first stop for today is Kritsa village. It is a

beautiful small village in the mountain foothills, with narrow winding lanes and plenty of local character. Renowned for the skill of local weavers and embroiderers, it is also famous for its picture-perfect whitewashed buildings set against the backdrop of the mountains. Our trip continues to the eastern side of Crete, where we disembark the bus and board a boat for the small island of Spinalonga. Here, we open a new chapter in history... in front of us lies an imposing Venetian fortress that takes us back to when Crete was an important base for the mighty maritime and trading power. The old leper village on the small island, which can be visited amid the fortress walls, is impressive. The view from Spinalonga on Crete is breathtaking. After our return to Plaka, we will enjoy a traditional lunch at a local tavern. On the way back to the hotel, we will stop at Agios Nikolaos where a beautiful town awaits us. Return to the hotel. Dinner at a local tavern. **B/L/D**



**Day 12, Wednesday 29th April CENTRAL
CRETE'S VILLAGES AND TOWNS**

Today, we'll check out of the hotel and enjoy a day of discovery of the traditions and cuisine of Crete. We'll drive through small and traditional villages in central Crete to gain an authentic impression of the life of the Cretans. We will visit a farm and learn how the locals thresh using donkey labour and how they grind the wheat. There will be a demonstration of how the sheep are milked and how traditional Cretan cheese is made, with a visit to the cheese aging room. Afterwards, we will taste a selection of local, traditional products in the villages of central Crete to gain an authentic sense of local life, including the freshly prepared cheese. Later, check into the Hotel Kydon for three nights. Dinner at your leisure - we suggest the old town. **B/L**



**Day 13, Thursday 30th April
APTERA – SOUDA CEMETERY – CHANIA**

Today, we will explore the western part of the island. We will start our tour in Aptera, an ancient city with magnificent views of the white mountains. Here, you can see the wonderful ancient theatre and the equally impressive two huge Roman-era cisterns. We will continue to the Souda Bay War Cemetery to learn about the Allied history, including Australia's involvement. Continue to Chania town, the secret capital of Crete. Let's look forward to a walk through the picturesque streets of the old town. Dinner at a tavern in the Old Town. **B/D**



**Day 14, Friday 1st May MARGARITES –
MONASTERY ARKADO – RETHYMNNO**

Today, we'll visit the village of Margarites, where the art of pottery has been cultivated since ancient times, thanks to the region's abundant clay resources. In a ceramic studio, we will be introduced to the art of Cretan potters. We continue to Arkadi Monastery, located inland southeast of Rethymnon, a memorial to the Cretan struggle for freedom against Turkish rule. In Venetian times, the monastery was very prosperous and housed 300 monks. We continue to Rethymnon. Rethymnon embodies a valuable spiritual and cultural tradition rooted in the Venetian period. Here we will have a short city tour. Stroll through the small streets and enjoy the Venetian harbour. Then we will go back to our hotel in Chania. Dinner at a local tavern. **B/D**

**Day 15, Saturday 2nd May
TRANSFER TO RHODES**

After breakfast, check out and board our group transfer to the airport for the flight to Rhodes via Athens. Flights tbc, but likely to be A3 339, 12.55 // 13.45, connect to A3 206 15.20 // 16.20.

Welcome to Rhodes!

On arrival on the island of Rhodes, we'll transfer to the Hotel Mediterranean (or similar) where we will stay for the next 4 nights. **B/D**



Day 16, Sunday 3rd May RHODES CITY TOUR AND FILERIMOS

After breakfast, we'll explore the city of Rhodes, which was registered as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1988. It is considered one of

the best-preserved and most densely populated medieval European towns. A naval superpower of the Hellenistic era and a target for numerous conquerors, modern Rhodes is a cosmopolitan centre concealing many surprises. We'll begin at the Acropolis of Rhodes, where the ancient Pythian Apollo Temple sits atop an archaeological reserve where the first Pythian Games were held. We'll explore the Odeum, a school for orators, and learn about the Colossus of Rhodes, the gigantic statue named one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. At the harbour of Mandraki, we'll learn more about the history and construction of the statue before our walking tour through the paved streets of the Old Town. We will pass the Grand Masters Palace, Hospital of Knights, Gothic buildings, Byzantine churches, Turkish baths, Muslim mosques, and the beautiful town squares that are so much a part of everyday life. Finally, we will visit the ancient town of Ialysos and the hill of Filerimos, which has a medieval monastery. Dinner is at a local restaurant tonight. Overnight in Rhodes. **B/D**



Day 17, Monday 4th May WEST SIDE OF RHODES

Today, we explore the island's west side, visiting the small harbour of ancient Kamiros and the

Castle of Kritinia, with the ruins of St. Paul's Church perched high above the sea. We will have lunch (included today) in the quaint village of Embona, high in the hills near the island's highest point, Mt Ataviros. We will visit the local winery, Embona, to see how they produce the region's wines and to taste the local produce. After this, we'll travel to Siana to stroll through the village and visit the Panteleimon Church. The local produce in Siana makes for great souvenirs and gifts. Dinner at your leisure and your own cost tonight. Overnight in Rhodes. **B/L**



Day 18, Tuesday 5th May EAST SIDE OF RHODES

Bring a torch and good walking shoes today! After breakfast, we'll head off for the East Coast to visit the charming bays, beaches and small settlements on the island's eastern side. Lindos, established around 3,500 years ago, stretches out in an azure bay. Walking through the town, we'll take in the traditional architecture, cozy shady streets, mosaic paths and house yards. Situated at the top of a steep rock, the Acropolis of Lindos harmoniously combined the Temple of Athena Lindia, the Byzantine church, Roman temple ruins, the medieval castle and a strong wall encircling the complex. From the height of the Acropolis, we can enjoy stupendous views of the sea and the mountains, as well as St. Paul's Bay. To enjoy a tour of the town or ascend the Acropolis, you can procure the services of a traditional Lindos taxi – more commonly known as a donkey – at a nominal cost. Today, we will also explore the Seven Springs. According to legend, the water in these brooks is miraculous. You might want to walk through the tunnel built by the Italians during the war. It's more than 180m long, and only for those who like a challenge (bring your torch). It leads to the shore of an artificial lake and is quite an adventure. Overnight in Rhodes. Dinner at a local restaurant. **B/D**



Day 19, Wednesday 6th May SYMI ISLAND

After breakfast, you'll transfer by ferry to the gorgeous Symi Island. You'll have a tour around the town before heading to your hotel for dinner and an overnight stay. The perfect setting to relax!

Note: We suggest you take a backpack with a change of clothes, valuables and other essentials when staying on Symi Island. The hotel in Rhodes will store your luggage, and you'll collect it upon return. **B/D**



Day 20, Thursday 7th May SYMI ISLAND – RHODES – ATHENS

We'll depart on the 10.40 am ferry for Rhodes this morning, arriving around 12.00. You'll have time to grab some lunch and collect your bags back at the hotel before transferring to the airport for an afternoon flight to Athens. Flight likely to be A3 207, 17.00 // 18.00. We will transfer to the centrally located hotel for one night upon arrival in Athens. At around 8.00 pm, you'll be provided with a drink or two and some snacks on the rooftop bar of the hotel, looking across to the Acropolis, beautifully lit up. Dinner is at your leisure tonight (but the snacks may be enough). Your time in Athens will be unguided and unhosted. **B**

Day 21, Friday 8th May ATHENS – DEPARTURE

The day is at leisure to explore this fabulous, historical city before heading to the airport. (Please check your personal flight itinerary). **B**



Icon indicates a day where there is **moderate physical exertion**. A basic level of fitness is required: eg. A trek over 'mostly flat' terrain or climbing several flights of steps without the support of handrails or elevators.



Icon indicates a day where there is a **particularly active section**. A good level of fitness is required: eg. A longer trek over non-groomed, uneven terrain, or ascending to reach a panorama. May also include exposure to higher altitude. **An alternate activity may be offered if you choose to sit out an active section.** Please call - we are happy to discuss each tour in more detail.