



Royal
Botanic Garden
Edinburgh



Springtime in Crete

14 – 21 April 2018

from £1585.00

Everywhere you look on the high mountain plains and along the country roads that wind among them are bright splashes of colour, countless floral treasures just waiting to be discovered. One of the largest islands in the Mediterranean, Crete is a place of great, unspoilt natural beauty, offering the plant lover an absolute treat in terms of the variety of flora to be found, thanks to the island's climate, position, altitude and terrain. The northern coast has been cultivated since biblical times. Here olives, grapes and melons are among the principal crops lending a typically Mediterranean air. Many of the 1500 flowering plants on the island are endemic.





Itinerary

Day 1 – Saturday 14 April 2018

Depart on an afternoon flight from Edinburgh to Heraklion. On arrival we will be met by our local guide and coach and transferred to our comfortable accommodation in the historic town of **Rethymnon**. Fortunately the tourist developments have spared the centre of the city and at its heart Rethymnon remains one of the most beautiful of Crete's major cities.



A light supper will be served on arrival.

Day 2 – Sunday 15 April 2018

This morning following breakfast explore the historic town of **Chania** before returning to the hotel. The main square of the Old Town is Eleftherios Venizelos Square. Next to this lies the Topanas district, which was the Christian quarter during the Ottoman period, a picturesque area with many narrow alleys and old buildings, some of which have been restored as hotels, restaurants, shops and bars.

Dinner will be served in the evening.





Day 3 – Monday 16 April 2018

This morning following breakfast we will visit **Gious Kambos** to explore the beautiful wildflower meadows with cyclamen, fritillaries and orchids. We will enjoy a lunch at **Taverna Aravanes** with spectacular views of the Psiloritis and Kedros mountains before continuing with our botanising in the afternoon.



We return to the hotel in time for dinner.

Day 4 – Tuesday 17 April 2018

Following breakfast we will visit the **Botanical park and gardens at Skordalou** before continuing onto the **Omalos Plain** with attractive upland villages, which leads to the start of the **Samaria Gorge** - Europe's longest gorge. This is a spectacularly beautiful natural feature with stunning views and magnificent wild flowers. We will not go into the gorge as it does not open until May but will have an easy walk in the vicinity looking at the abundant flora.

We return to the hotel where dinner will be served in the evening.

Day 5 – Wednesday 18 April 2018

Today after breakfast we will visit the **Akrotiri peninsula** where there are olive groves and a profusion of interesting flowers, including Ballota, orchids, bulbs and Anemones. On the return to the hotel we will have the opportunity to visit the very beautiful gardens of the **Souda Bay commonwealth war cemetery**.

Dinner will be served at the hotel in the evening.



Day 6 – Thursday 19 April 2018

Today after breakfast we will check out of the hotel and travel to **Heraklion** and the magnificent **Minoan palace of Knossos**. Barely a hundred years ago, the palace existed only in mythology. Knossos was the court of the legendary King Minos, whose wife Pasiphae bore the Minotaur, half-bull, half-man. The discovery of the palace and the interplay of these legends with fact, is among the most amazing tales of modern archaeology. It was left for Sir Arthur Evans, whose name is indelibly associated with Knossos, to excavate the site from 1900 onwards. Not to be missed also in the **Heraklion Archeological Museum**, which houses the finds from Knossos and many other of the Minoan sites in Crete.



Later we check in to our hotel in Heraklion. Dinner will be served in the evening.

Day 7 – Friday 20 April 2018

Following breakfast we will visit the private garden of **Princess Alicia di Sirignano** in Lerapetra. We will take a scenic route to Lerapetra travelling across hills which provide the opportunity to see both the north and south coasts at the same time and also enjoy some botanising as we go.

We return to the hotel this evening in time for dinner.



Day 8 – Saturday 21 April 2018

On our final full day after breakfast, we travel to the slopes of **Mount Ida** and explore the beautiful surrounding area. At a height of 2,456m (8,057ft), Ida is the highest mountain on Crete. On its slopes is a cave which is one of the putative sites of the birthplace of Zeus.



We return to Heraklion airport in time for our evening flight back to Edinburgh where on arrival the group will disperse.

Included in the price

- Five nights' dinner, bed and breakfast at the 4-star Bio Hotel, Rethymnon. All rooms have private facilities
- Two nights' dinner, bed and breakfast at the 4-star Atrion Hotel, Heraklion. All rooms have private facilities
- Lunch at Taverna Aravanes
- Return flights from Edinburgh to Heraklion
- Daily excursions including private use of a coach throughout the tour
- Entry to the Palace of Knossos, Heraklion Archeological Museum and Botanical gardens at Skordalou
- Services of a local guide for Palace of Knossos and Heraklion Archeological Museum
- Services of a Sabina Gardner from RBGE as guide plus a local tour manager

Not included (per person)

- Single room supplement £140.00
- Insurance £58.00 (Under 65); £116.00 (65 – 74); £173 (75 - 90)

Please note a reasonable level of mobility is required for this holiday as there are botanical walks each day.