

"The Contrasts of Crete"

**23rd - 30th June,
2015**

This trip takes in the comfort and sophistication of Hania with the stunning remoteness of the Kallergi Refuge high above the Samaria Gorge and the wonderful traditional retreat of the eco-village of Milia.



ITINERARY:

Day One

Arrival at Hania airport and transfer to Amphora Hotel – a beautifully restored Venetian merchant's house situated on the harbour, overlooking the old Lighthouse. The Amphora Hotel is situated in a central position in old Hania, but it is quiet and comfortable; tastefully and sympathetically restored and decorated.

Day Two:

A day spent in Hania with its shops, museums, covered market and excellent restaurants. A second night at the Amphora.

Day Three:

A spectacular drive into the White Mountains, stopping for refreshments at an excellent roadside taverna. The White Mountains support a wonderful wildlife – rare, endemic flowers, Golden Eagles, Buzzards and Vultures. We will take time to look around and enjoy the remote mountain scenery and to savour the fresh, clean air and the scent of wild thyme and sage. First night at the mountain refuge of Kallergi. This refuge is maintained by the Greek Mountaineering Club of Hania and is situated in a position that feels like 'the top of the world'. Surrounded by rugged mountains and looking down on the Samaria Gorge, it is a wonderful experience – especially at night when the sky is filled with stars and moonlight bathes the cliffs with light. A traditional Cretan meal will be waiting for us when we return to the Refuge for the night. The Kallergi Refuge is at a height of 1,680 m. According to their leaflet 'You will find that this close encounter with such wild country, exotic fauna and wild life is a powerful way to put your busy life into perspective'.

Day Four:

A walk along goat tracks around the refuge to look for wild flowers, with time to sketch, draw and photograph. A packed lunch will be provided from the refuge. A second and final night at the refuge with a delicious meal and local raki and wine.



Day Five:

Leaving the refuge, we will drive further west and high into the mountains to the award-winning eco-village of Milia. The peace and tranquillity of this village, set in another stunning setting, makes it an ideal centre for unwinding and relaxing. Each bedroom has its own shower room and a large open fireplace with an endless supply of wood, should the evening turn cooler.

Day Six:

Today we will take a short drive to the famous lagoon of Elafonissi. This area is now a designated nature reserve and contains many rare and endemic flowers, insects and birds. There will be a chance to swim in the blue waters and to wade across to the islands for photographing, drawing or sketching – or simply relax amongst the sand dunes. A packed lunch will be provided. We will take a traditional meal in the taverna at Milia, where only local and organic foods are served. Our second night at Milia.

Day Seven:

We will take the drive back to Hania and to the Amphora Hotel, where we will spend out last night. We will enjoy a farewell dinner at Well of the Turk – a superb restaurant set in an old Turkish house and decorated in a striking, eclectic style. The food here is a fusion of eastern flavours, from Moroccan to Turkish, taking in Cretan on the way.

Day Eight:

This morning we will have a chance to buy gifts and souvenirs in Hania town and share a coffee and meze before the short trip back to Hania airport.

Please note that accommodation at the Refuge is very basic and designed as a shelter for mountaineers and walkers. However, it is clean and comfortable and its superb setting more than compensates for the basic accommodation. Staying there is a once in a lifetime experience and will provide a fund of memories to savour.

The cost of the week: £1,150

(excluding flights, alcoholic drinks and telephone calls, but including all guided trips, accommodation, and meals). Guests are recommended to take out their own travel insurance.