

WILDLIFE TRAVEL



"amazing botany in amazing places"

16th to 23rd April 2027 (1 week)

CRETE

"delighted with the accommodation"

Crete 2026

spring flowers and ancient sites

Our very first Wildlife Travel holiday, way back in 1988, was an April week on Crete, famous for its carpets of springtime flowers and abundance of orchids. The island has held a special place in our hearts ever since, and almost four decades later, we are still being blown away by Crete's wild flowers, dramatic gorges and entrancing archaeological sites.

A highlight of any April trip to Crete is the time spent at the famous 'Spili bumps', an area of rough limestone hillside where twenty or more species of orchid can be found on a good day, alongside Cretan Iris, Cretan Arum and the beautiful red *Tulipa orphandeia*.

This year we are also making sure to visit the Omalos plateau where, close to the mouth of the dramatic Samaria Gorge, we will find the delicate pink *Tulipa saxatilis* blooming amongst the olive groves, as well as the endangered locally endemic tree *Zelkova abelicea*.

Crete has a rich and ancient history, from the Minoans through the Greeks and Romans to the Venetians and Ottomans. During our stay, we will visit several archaeological sites in the west of the island, rich not only in history and culture, but also in wildlife, with Cretan Wall Lizard sunbathing on the rocks and wild flowers aplenty amongst the ruins.

We will finish our Cretan week with a walk through one of the island's many gorges, where Cretan Cyclamen grow in the shade of the chestnut trees, before enjoying a hearty lunch at a village taverna.

We will be staying in a comfortable hotel set in a restored olive oil processing works, in an authentic, peaceful Cretan hilltop village.



Price

£2,395

Single Room Supplement

£220

Full board

Day 1	flight to Chania
Day 2	Spili and Armeni
Day 3	Aptera and Chania
Day 4	Akrotiri
Day 5	Omalos
Day 6	Polyrrhenia
Day 7	Delianon Gorge
Day 8	return to UK

Leaders

Sarah Lambert
and
Dominic Price

Group size

min 4, max 12

spring flowers,
archaeological sites



ITINERARY

Please note that the itinerary may be changed to suit the weather or other practicalities or at the discretion of the leaders.

Day 1 Friday 16th April. Our flights take us to Chania, on the north coast of Crete, from where we will continue on to our hotel in the quiet village of Spilia, approximately one hour to the west.

Day 2 Saturday 17th April. Today we head south, to one of the island's classic botanical locations, the famous 'Spili bumps'. These limestone hills are amazingly rich in orchids: twenty or more species can be found here on a good spring day! We will spend the day exploring this wonderful area, sorting through the bewildering variety of orchids, along with *Iris cretensis* and a wonderful display of the stunning red *Tulipa orphanidea*.

In the afternoon, on our way back to the north coast, we will stop at the interesting archaeological site at Armeni, a Minoan burial site dating back almost 4,000 years.

Day 3 Sunday 18th April. A little way east of Chania is the ancient city of Aptera, sitting atop a hill overlooking Souda Bay. We will spend the morning exploring the Greek and Roman remains of the archaeological site and the nearby Ottoman fortress, where wild flowers, Cretan Wall Lizard and various migrant birds can be found amongst the ruins.

After lunch, we will have time to explore the narrow lanes, craft shops and restaurants of Chania, a historic Venetian harbour town on the north coast.

Day 4 Monday 19th April. Today we will head to the far side of Souda Bay, and the Akrotiri peninsula, where we will visit two monasteries, with a walk through the countryside between the two. The vegetated gardens of the monasteries can act as a migrant trap for northbound birds stopping off to feed before continuing their journey northwards, while impressive Dragon Arum dot the dry hillsides.

Day 5 Tuesday 20th April. This morning we head up to the Omalos plateau and the mouth of the famous Samaria Gorge. Amongst the olive groves of the plateau, we will look for the lovely pink *Tulipa saxatilis* and nodding Crown Anemones, along with the endangered *Zelkova abelicea*, a tree endemic to the mountains of Crete. Nearby, we will explore the rocky hillsides, looking for *Muscari heldreichii* and *Arum idaeum*, whilst keeping an eye on the skies for passing European Griffon, Golden Eagle or Bearded Vulture.

Day 6 Wednesday 21st April. On a hilltop towards the west end of the island is the site of another important ancient city, Polyrrhenia. We will take a walk around the area, with stunning views out towards the coast, enjoying the wild flowers of the area including the locally endemic *Dianthus xylorrhizus*, found only on this single hilltop.

If time permits, we will head to the coast, where the beach is home to a different suite of plants, notably *Crocodylium pumilio*, *Colchicum rechingeri* and *Juniperus macrocarpa*.



Day 7 Thursday 22nd April. There are those for whom no visit to Crete would be complete without exploring one of the island's dramatic gorges.

Neither as long nor as challenging as some of its more famous neighbours, during the morning we will walk the Delianon Gorge, lined with chestnut and plane trees, and home to *Cyclamen creticum* and *Arum italicum*. We will end our walk at a local taverna, where we will enjoy some wonderful food.

On our way back to Spilia, we will stop at Agia Lake, where various water birds sometimes stop off on migration.

Day 8 Friday 23rd April. After one last lazy morning, it is time to bid farewell to the island and head home.

Accommodation and meals, transport and weather

We will be staying in the **Spilia Village Hotel**, a wonderfully peaceful spot. All rooms are en-suite. Evening meals will be taken at the hotel and we will take picnic lunches.

We will travel by small coach or minibus.

At this time of year the weather is usually sunny but not too hot. Spring weather is always less predictable, and we may encounter cooler, windier and/or wetter weather. We will adapt our excursions accordingly.

Leaders

Sarah Lambert is an expert botanist and photographer, who has led several trips for us since 2019, including our 2026 visit to Crete. Depending on final group size, Sarah will be joined by **Dominic Price**. Dominic is an experienced botanist and Director of the Species Recovery Trust.

Between them, our leaders will ensure that you have a wonderful holiday and get the most out of your visit to Crete.



Flights

The group flights will be from London Gatwick with easyJet.

16th April depart London Gatwick 08.00, arrive Chania 13.55

23rd April depart Chania 14.45, arrive London Gatwick 17.00

It is also possible to fly from Manchester, with Jet2. Speak to us to discuss options.

Crete is two hours ahead of the UK.

Passport and Entry Requirements

Your passport must be issued less than 10 years before the date you enter the country and valid for at least 3 months after the day you plan to leave.

If you hold a British passport, you are able to travel to the Schengen area (including Greece) for up to 90 days in total in any 180-day period without a visa.

From 2027 (exact date yet to be confirmed), UK passport holders will need to apply for the ETIAS European Travel Authorisation to visit Schengen countries. This must be applied for online prior to travel. Once granted, your ETIAS will be valid for 3 years.

For up-to-date information, check www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/greece

Health and fitness

On most days, we are **walking for much of the day**, albeit at a relatively slow pace. The longest walks (day 3 and day 7) will be around 6km, with some rougher ground and slopes up and down, although none of the walking is particularly strenuous. Good (light) walking boots are recommended. All excursions are optional.

TO BOOK

Contact us to check availability and reserve a place. Complete the Booking Form and send to Sunvil Holidays (CAA-ATOL Licence 808, ABTA V6218), our tour operator, with your deposit. All details about booking are given in the Booking Pack.

**DEPOSIT £350 PER PERSON, SECOND INSTALMENT ON
CONFIRMATION OF HOLIDAY £500 (to cover committed costs)
BALANCE DUE BY 24/01/2025**

INCLUDED: Return flight from London Gatwick to Chania, as above. Local transport as specified in itinerary. Seven nights' accommodation full board (dinner day 1 to lunch day 8, with picnic lunches). Services of leaders. **NOT INCLUDED:** Refreshments. Gratuities. Travel insurance. ETIAS and associated costs.

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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Photos: all photos taken on previous Wildlife Travel holidays. Front (clockwise from top): Apteris, Eastern Black-eared Wheatear, Dragon Arum, *Tulipa orphanidea*, *Ophrys holosericea*. **Page 2** (from left): Common Tongue Orchid, European Griffon, *Centaurea redemta*, Spili scenery. **Page 3** (from top): Red-rumped Swallow, Cretan Cyclamen, Samaria Gorge, *Solenopsis minuta*, *Euphorbia spinosa*, *Petromarula pinnata*, Cretan Festoon.

Trip reports from our most recent visits to Crete can be found on our website.