ECOTOURISTIC GUIDE IN CRETE
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ECOTOURISTIC GUIDE IN CRETE

INTRODUCTION

The island of Crete lies at the center of the eastern Mediterranean basin. The south most point of Europe is to be found on one of Crete’s satellite islands, Gavdos, with its south cape Tripiti stretching out into the Libyan Sea. Crete is particularly mountainous and has many high peaks, three of which are over 2,000 m. high. The summit of Idi (Psiloritis) rises up to 2,456 m. above sea level. Calcareous substrates that easily erodes has shaped many canyons and caves throughout the island. The seashore is full with bays and gulfs steep slopes, caves and many seastrands. There is a significant number of bigger or smaller islands surrounding Crete, the most important being: Pontikonisi, Gramvousa, Dia, Psira, Paximada, Koufonisi, Hrissi, Paximadia, Gavdos, Gavdopoula and Elaphonisi. Crete is one of the largest Mediterranean islands, with many distinctive features: it has a unique geological configuration, rich history documented well through archeological sites and unique anthropological elements. Almost any aspect of Crete is unique and distinctive, starting from prehistoric age until nowadays. Homer mentions it not as an island but as a land.

The climate is typically Mediterranean. Nevertheless, one can notice great differences in climate driving only for a short while from west to east, or from the lowlands towards the mountains. This becomes particularly obvious in the latter case, as the climate of the upland areas, in the four great mountains, resembles the climate in continental Greece because of the high elevation, at the same time; the shore has an insular climate, especially in terms of temperatures. The weather changes
often and is at times unpredictable, as Crete is located in the middle of the Mediterranean and has central mountain massifs stretching along an east-west axis; the combination of these two factors shapes the general weather conditions on the north and south coast respectively, but also brings about frequent local weather conditions.

The main vegetation consists of phrygana and macquis that can sustain great period of drought. The cypress trees (and hollies) are locally abundant in some mountains. Phrygana covers the arid and most pastured grounds in Crete from the sea level up to the highlands. Endemic species are abundant and numerous, and are encountered throughout the island. The flora of Crete is of great significance for the overall European flora, both because of the diversity, i.e. total number of species, and number of endemic species. Approximately 1750 species and sub species are listed for Crete, with a percentage of endemism reaching as much as 10%. Avi-fauna is very rich, particularly in sea birds raptors, primarily because of the great variety of habitats and availability of prey. Some of those, like the Bearded Vulture (Gypaetus barbatus) and Eleonora’s Falcon (Falco eleonorae) are endangered species in Europe and the World, and are the subject of elaborate conservation programs on Crete. Crete is also a crucial staging site for migratory birds traveling between Africa and Europe in spring and autumn, with almost all of the European migrants stopping over to refuel and replenish their energy reserves for the enduring trip. Other important and characteristic animals are: From the rest fauna we can mention Monk seal (Monachus monachus), Cretan white toothed shrew (Crocidura zimmermanni), Cretan wild goat (Capra aegagrus cretica), Loggerhead turtle (Caretta caretta), Stripe-necked terrapin (Mauremis rivula), Cretan marsh frog (Rana cretensis), Cretan tree frog (Hyla arborea cretensis).

**HUMAN ACTIVITIES**

The sea was a blessing and a curse for Crete and has directly influenced her route in history. The sea has brought glory and fame but also wars and suffering to Crete. From the Neolithic age 9,000 years ago Crete has been present in the history of the World; throughout this period man has inhabited the island and affected with his activities the natural environment. The greatest impact was the destruction of the forests, and according to old travelers, this was even more widespread than today.

Crete has a privileged position in the history both because of the old Minoan civilization but also because of the struggle and sacrifices for liberty and independency in the recent history. The development of the coastal tourism, industrialization and urbanization has been attracting the population form villages in the mountains to the seashores, so that more than 50% of the total
population of the island lives there. Both industrial sector and sector of services seem to have benefited from this population migration, while the primary one shows a decline.

**WETLANDS OF CRETE**

Numerous natural small-sized wetlands are dispersed throughout the mountainous Crete, surpassing the number proportional to the size and position of the island. This can be accounted to pronounced hilly and mountainous relief (and specific weather conditions). Wetlands can be found mostly on the shoreline where little rivers and streams flowing from the mountains slow down and spill over a water-saturated substrate. There are also some salt marshes and old saltpans on the shore, while the remaining wetlands are found in a couple of plateaus in the mountainous areas. Finally, there is only one natural lake with fresh water, lake Kournas close to Chania.

Until recently three greatest wetland areas in the island where: the delta of Geropotamos in Messara plain at the south coastline of the island, the outfall system of marshes and springs in Georgioupoli with Kourna lake, and the outfall area of Almyros in Iraklion and lake Ayia in Chania. From the last decade a great number of reservoirs and dams have constructed or planned to be constructed according to the topography, the history and kind of each area and some of them often ended up to be important biotopes. Among the artificial lakes and reservoirs constructed recently, the reservoirs of Bramiana in Ierapetra stand out.

**THE CHARACTER OF CRETAN WETLANDS**

The small size is something that describes the most wetlands in Crete. At the same time, various microenvironments meet in this very small area, and combine to form important habitat types. Some of them (reeds, mediterranean temporary ponds etc) have been characterized as priority biotopes, and are protected by the EC directive 92/43 as sites of remarkable (in species number) flora and fauna.

The wetlands of Crete are further very important for migratory birds, both for those that use Crete as a stop-over site on their journey to and from breeding areas, and for those that spend the winter on Crete. The migration imposes great energy demands on birds, and they strongly depend on the network of staging areas along the migratory route for resting and replenishing their energy reserves. The wetlands in Crete, with their great productivity and biodiversity support large numbers of short and long distance migrants, and are of crucial importance for their successful migration both in spring and in autumn. The importance of wetlands for migrants is further
emphasized by their distribution on the North – South axis of the island, connecting the north and south coast in a passage opening to the Libyan sea; form there, refueled migrants depart to cross the final stretch of the Mediterranean and the vast Sahara desert.

Beside their great importance as biotopes, wetlands are nowadays internationally recognized as natural resources necessary for the social, economical and cultural development. It is urgent to maintain their conservation with appropriate management, after a scientific evaluation has been conducted. However, the wetlands of Crete suffer from an increased disturbance in the last years. A number of interventions, mostly in the (off) shoreline areas, have restrained their size and reduced their biodiversity, which has especially affected the birds breeding or visiting these wetlands. The changes have caused drastic declines both in the numbers of birds and their diversity. It is estimated that more than 50% of the existing wetlands have disappeared since 1950 when a great number of them had been drained in disease eradication programs or had been turned into agricultural lands. The current threats for the remaining wetlands include the garbage disposal (for agricultural expansion), development of coastal tourism, pollution from town or agricultural sewage, particularly damaging being the waste waters from oil factories. The natural beauty, and unique flora and fauna of these remaining wetlands attract many visitors, particularly bird watchers from all over Europe.

The exact number of wetlands in the island (according to the modern standard definition of a wetland) is not registered but it’s approximated to exceed 120.

According to the census carried out by the Greek Center for Biotopes and Wetlands (EKBY) that gives a gross underestimation, 37 wetlands are recognized on Crete, and there are data for 17 of them.

As mentioned before, the number of the wetlands in Crete is much larger (more than 100), and although most of the wetlands are rather small, both their individual and combined ecological value is very big on the local, national and international level. The number and the condition of the wetlands of Crete has been changing in the last decades chiefly due to human activities: both degradation and creation of new wetlands have been taking place, and the devastating effect of drainage, pollution and general deterioration of existing wetlands has been diminished by the construction of new reservoirs and artificial lakes that have developed, or will develop wetland functions in time. From the perspective of the biological value and importance, the wetlands of Crete are very important social, economical and cultural resources. As they are extremely threatened, it is urgent and necessary to improve the future planning and management towards sustainability. To achieve these goals, it is essential to gain the knowledge of the existing situation and condition of each wetland on Crete through their regular monitoring.
WETLANDS OF CRETE
1. IERAPETRA HARBOR and BRAMIANA RESERVOIR

LOCATION-DESCRIPTION: Ierapetra lies on the south coast 38 km from Agios Nikolaos. The Bramiana reservoir is situated on the west side of Ierapetra. To go direct to Bramiana turn right at the traffic lights on to the bypass. Turn right at the junction. Follow the main road west and after about 1 km turn right at the circular church signposted to Bramiana. It can also be reached from the north coast via Kalamafka, turn off at Istro. Ierapetra lies in the same place where are the ruins of an ancient city, which prospered particularly in the archaic and Hellenistic period. Establishee according to mythology was Kirvas who came from the island of Rhodes with Rea. From the establishee comes the name of Kirva – Pitna – Ierapitna. The second century B.C. was far stretched as no other city of Crete. In 66 B.C. Romans conquered and demolished Ierapetra, for all that it was rebuild and prospered again. In Byzantine period kept its importance and composed house of bishopric, which was established, from Apostle Titus. It was demolished again in 828 from Saracen pirates and was rebuild from them in order to help them in their pirate operations. The greatest and total destruction caused because of an earthquake in 1508.

Reservoir: After the dam take the second road right. It is possible to drive around the reservoir clockwise or anti-clockwise depending on the sun and use the car as a hide. The sheltered area, which attracts most birds lies in the north after the first chapel and farm, near the second chapel. A hide and nature trails are planned.

AVI FAUNA: Ierapetra sea front can pick up terns and gulls. The reservoir attracts a gull roost. Waders, herons and terns are passage migrants. Many species of ducks now winter at the reservoir. Little Egret, Glossy Ibis, Garganey, Wood Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Black Tern, Herring Gull, Mediterranean Gull, Black-headed Gull, Crested Lark, Tawny Pipit, Little Stint, Wigeon, Gadwall, Teal, Mallard, Pintail, Garganey, Shoveler, Pochard, Ferruginous Duck, Tufted Duck, Black-winged Stilt, Ruff, Purple Heron, Eleonora’s Falcon.

REST FAUNA: Cretan marsh frog (Rana cretensis), Common tree frog (Hyla arborea), Green toad (Bufo viridis), Striped-necked terrapin (Mauremys rivulata), Turkish Gecko (Hemidactylus turcicus), Balkan Green Lizard (Lacerta trilineata), Occelated Skink (Chalcides ocellatus), Balkan Whip Snake (Coluber gemonensis), Leopard Snake (Elaphe situla), Dice snake (Natrix tessellata), Cat Snake (Telescopus fallax), Budger (Meles meles), Weasel (Mustela nivalis), Beech Marten (Martes foina), Eastern Hedgehog (Erinaceus concolor), Lesser white toothed Shrew (Crocidura suaveolens), Pygmy white toothed Shrew (Suncus etruscus), Brown hare (Lepus europaeus), Cretan Spiny Mouse (Acomys minous), Wood Mouse (Apodemus sylvaticus), House Mouse (Mus musculus), Black Rat (Rattus rattus).
FLORA: **At the top of the dam** in a head stream of constant flow it has grew riverside vegetation with canebrakes (*Arundo donax*), plane trees (*Platanus orientalis*), smilax (*Smilax aspera*), Blackberries (*Rubus sanctus*) and Horse-tailed trees (*Equisetum ramosissimum*).

**At the seasonal marsh southeast of the dam** there are a lot of riverine species as: Tamarisk trees (*Tamarix parviflora*), Reedmace (*Typha domigensis*), Fine-leaved Rush (*Juncus subulatus*), Grass Poly (*Lythrum hyssopifolia*) and reeds (*Phragmites australis*), (*Saccharum ravenae*).

**Into the Lake** there are rooted plants under water as *Potamogeton perfoliatus* and *Potamogeton pectinatus* and gene species of *Chara*.

**The area round the dam** includes characteristic brushwoods of the hot Mediterranean zone as *Cistus (Cistus creticus)*, (*Cistus parviflorus*) and Thorny Burnets (*Sarcopoterium spinosum*) while among them grows the not so common of genus agrostis *Lygium spartum*.

**TIME:** Every season is appropriate for bird watching, while for flora the best time is spring.
General view from the northeast

Bramiana reservoir
Bramiana in low water level

Waterbirds in Winter
Ferruginous ducks and Pochard

Seasonal marsh west of the reservoir in summer
Seasonal marsh west of the reservoir in spring

Bird-watching
Feeder from the rivers of Myrtos and Kalamafka

Flamingo
Gathering of wintering waterbirds

Artificial nest
Nesting of a Coot

Bramiana reservoir in a very low water level
2. AGIOS NIKOLAOS HARBOR and ALMYROS MARSH

LOCATION: Agios Nikolaos is 56 km east of Heraklion on the main coast road. The harbor is in the center of the town. Almyros marsh is about 3 km east along the Sitia road. It is possible to walk along the shore from the bus station to the marsh.

DESCRIPTION: Agios Nikolaos started to abide after the revolution of 1866 from the people of nearby Kritsas village. It is settled in the place of ancient city Lato and took its name from the homonymous church in Ammudi, which comes from the 9th century a.c from the iconoclasm period. Almyros marsh has a small reedbed and a spring, which feeds the central small pool and then flows out into the bay. The small beach is disturbed so do visit early or late. For such a small area, it has produced a very good list.

AVI FAUNA: The town of Agios Nikolaos is very touristic, but the harbor is worth checking for Aoudin’s Gull and Kingfishers, which often perch on pipes of the harbor wall. Alpine Swifts nest in the cliffs below the Mirabello Hotel on the road out towards Elounda. 

REST FAUNA: Cretan marsh frog (Mauremis rivulata), Turkish Gecko (Hemidactylus turcicus), Balkan Green Lizard (Lacerta trilineata), Occelated Shink (Chalcides ocellatus), Balkan Whip Snake (Coluber gemonensis), Leopard Snake (Elaphe situla), Dice snake (Natrix tessellata), Cat Snake (Tellescopus fallax), Bullfrog (Rana catesbeiana), Badger (Meles meles), Weasel (Mustela nivalis), Beech Marten (Martes foina), Eastern Hedgehog (Erinaceus concolor), Lesser white toothed Shrew (Crocidura suaveolens), Pygmy white toothed Shrew (Suncus etruscus), Brown hare (Lepus europaeus), Wood Mouse (Apodemus sylvicatus), House Mouse (Mus musculus), Black Rat (Rattus rattus).

FLORA: Reeds with characteristic specie Phragmites australis, sedges (Juncus sp), vegetation of sanded beach, tamarisk, eucalyptus trees.

TIME: The best time to visit is spring, from early March until middle of May and in autumn at the end of tourist period. However winter and summer months offer good opportunities for bird watching. In summer the visit is recommended early in the morning.
Map 2. Agios Nikolaos harbor and Almyros marsh

General view of Almyros wetland
Swans (*Cygnus olor*) winter occasionally at the wetland

Swan at the wetlands outfall

Return to the map

3. ELOUNDA SALTPANS and SPINALONGA PENINSULA

LOCATION: 10 km north of Agios Nikolaos. Turn off the new road at the edge of Agios Nikolaos. Elounda can also be reached from Neapolis. Turn off onto the old road at Neapolis and follow signs. Just off this route there is an interesting pool near Limnes and the area is a good for
Kestrel, Lanner and other birds of prey. In the area was settled the ancient city of Olus. Olus was an independent and self-governed city with coins of its own. There were periods that were in conflict with the neighbor city of Lato in Agios Nikolaos area. There is also an epigraph of 134 b.c. where it is acknowledged for Knossos the right for arbitrage between Olus and Lato. In Olu’s coins in one side was portrayed Vritomartis Diana a Daedalus work according Pafsanias (IX 40, 3-4) and in the other Zeus or a dolphin with a sign “olontion”.

**DESCRIPTION:** Elounda saltpans lie between the village and Spinalonga Peninsula. The old saltpans are reached from the village by walking towards Agios Nikolaos and turning left towards Spinalonga. Walk round the back of the pans to check on the dry areas. Then continue on around the path at the back of the pans and follow the walls and track back to the road across to the peninsula. The rough fields to the right before crossing the bridge are worth checking for pipits, wagtails, buntings, wheatears and even quail. If arriving by foot or bus, walk to the old saltpans from the main road just past Krini Hotel. Spinalonga Peninsula can have interesting breeding birds and migrants if they are moving through. The tracks on the peninsula lead through to small fields and rocky bays.

Elounda could be a good center. Tracks along cape Ag. Ioannis and up to the windmills above Plaka, which is a good watching point, lead into good country for migrants and eagles. Plaka bay is also a migrant roost area for herons and ducks. The valleys behind Elounda to the west and north are also interesting. The track up to the Elounda rubbish tip leads up to a pass and a hidden valley where raptors and migrants pass through and drink at the wells.

**AVI FAUNA:** Saltpans: Night Heron, Squacco Heron, Little Bittern, Black-winged Stilt, Wood Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Little Stint, Temminck’s Stint, Ruff, Curlew Sandpiper, Little Ringed Plover, Ringed Plover, Kentish Plover, Cirl Bunting, Quail, Red-throated Pipit, Crested Lark, Short-toed Lark, Tawny Pipit, Black Tern, White-winged Black Tern, Whiskered Tern, Yellow Wagtails, Sardinian Warbler, Rupell’s Warbler, Ortolan and Corn Bunting.


**REST FAUNA:** Green toad (Bufo viridis), Moorish Gecko (Tarentola mauritanica), Turkish Gecko (Hemidactylus turcicus), Balkan Green Lizard (Lacerta trilineata), Occelated Skink (Chalcides occelatus), Balkan Whip Snake (Coluber gemonensis), Leopard Snake (Elaphe situla), Dice snake (Natrix tessellata), Cat Snake (Telescopus fallax), Badger (Meles meles), Weasel (Mustela nivalis), Beech Marten (Martes foina), Eastern Hedgehog (Erinaceus concolor), Lesser white toothed Shrew (Crocidura suaveolens), Pygmy white toothed Shrew (Suncus etruscus),
Brown hare (Lepus europaeus), Wood Mouse (Apodemus sylvaticus), House Mouse (Mus musculus), Black Rat (Rattus rattus).

**FLORA:** In salt pans area certain interest bring out the halophyte (plants with great resilience in sea salt) *Salicornia, Tamarix, Salsola cab* as well as the hydrophyte plant *Posidonia oceanica.*

In the area of Spinalonga Peninsula, it is worth checking vegetation that consists of a particular example of abandoned wheat fields (something that can be told from the many threshing floors in the area) and where through the lack of human interference the natural vegetation has come up again (mixed brushwood and makia), carobs, lentisk, cypress and thyme.

**TIME:** The best time to visit is spring from March until early May and in autumn from August until November although winter offers good opportunities.

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**Map 3. Elounda salt pans and Spinalonga Peninsula**
Colony of seagulls and Audouin’s gull

Little Egret
4. MALIA MARSH

LOCATION: On north coast east of Heraklion. 2 km east of the town of Malia. Turn off to the sea traveling east between 173 and 174 km, at the turning point signposted Malia Antiquities. The area has been excavated and a Minoan palace has found in much similar as the ones in Knossos, Phaestos and Zakros. According to S. Marinatos here was reigning the dynasty of Sarpidon, in Knossos the dynasty of Minoa and in Phaestos the dynasty of Radamanthis. From the findings it is certified human presence and settlement in the area from the Stone Age. This presence is confirmed until the early Byzantine period where the people left this settlement in order to protect themselves from the danger of piracy. The name of Malia is first mentioned in historic document in 1390 and in 1577 from Fr. Barozzi and Kastrofilaka. There is room for parking at Minoan car site car park.

DESCRIPTION: This is an area of rough and cultivated fields and a rapidly diminishing marsh, with a recently tarmaced road between it and the beach. A small stream flows through the marshy area and has an outlet to the sea across the beach. Do not be put off by the draining and encroachment, it is still a very productive area.

DIRECTIONS: Walk west towards the sea from the car park. Once past the edge of archaeological excavations, the fields on either side of the track can be productive. Tree Pipit, Tawny Pipit, Red-throated Pipit, Yellow Wagtails. Turn towards the sea and then walk east. This area of cultivated
fields and scrub, which is also the area where the famous bee pendant was excavated usually, has
Return by walking along the shallow shore cliffs towards Malia. In rough weather there can be
Mediterranean and Cory’s Shearwaters in the bay. Early in the morning the beach can be good for
waders and herons.
Malia marsh, east: Can be overlooked from the rough field next to the taverna and walk along the
path to the concrete bridge. West: Another overview point is from the old sand dunes near the
Malia Bay Hotel. The tarmaced road allows access by car through the area, however it is better to
park and walk.
**AVI FAUNA:** Marsh Harrier, Red-footed Falcon, Grey and Purple Heron, Little Egret, Garganey,
Wood Sandpiper, Collared Pratincole, Stone Curlew, Red-throated Pipit, Tawny Pipit, Red-backed
Shrike, Woodchat Shrike, Lesser Grey Shrike, Yellow Wagtail, Hirundines, Short-toed Lark,
Crested Lark, Woodchat Shrike, Cetti’s Warbler, Fan-tailed Warbler, Reed Warbler, Kingfisher,
Kestrel, Cirl Bunting.

**REST FAUNA:** Turkish Gecko (*Hemidactylus turcicus*), Balkan Green Lizard (*Lacerta
trillineata*), Occelated Skink (*Chalcides occelatus*), Balkan Whip Snake (*Coluber gemonensis*),
Leopard Snake (*Elaphe situla*), Dice Snake (*Natrix tessellata*), Cat Snake (*Telescopus fallax*),
Budger (*Meles meles*), Weasel (*Mustela nivalis*), Beech Marten (*Martes foina*), Eastern Hedgehog
(*Erinaceus concolor*), Lesser white toothed Shrew (*Crocidura suaveolens*), Pygmy white toothed
Shrew (*Suncus etruscus*), Brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*), Wood Mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*),
House Mouse (*Mus musculus*), Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*).

**FLORA:** Reeds, tamarisk trees, sedges, renunculus, vegetation of sanded beach.

**TIME:** The best time to visit is spring (March-May) when the water overflows the nearby area and
there are a lot of blooming plants.
Map 4. Malia marsh

Reeds in Malia marsh
5. GOUVES LAGOON and APOSELEMIS RIVER

LOCATION: On north coast 21 km east of Heraklion between 156 and 157 km on the old coast road. Turn off the new National Highway at Gouves. For the lagoon turn off towards the sea at sign to Creta Sun Hotel. For the river continue along the main road for another km. The east bank of the river and the site can also be approached from the village of Analipsi. Follow the tarmaced coast road west along the seashore until you reach the Europa Beach Hotel. Park near a taverna / snack bar on the left, just before the tarmac stops.

DESCRIPTION: The Aposelemis river runs permanently at the part after the bridge. In winter during hard rain it can be noticed overflow. There is much rubbish and builder’s rubble and the water level can be very low but many migrants and breeding birds are still attracted to this area. West of the outfall seasonal marshes as well as a great seasonal salt marsh can be formed. There are secondarily pools southwest of the river mouths near the football pitch. The Gouves lagoon is formed by the shore shingle damming the river as it enters the sea. This lagoon picks up a good variety of waders and interesting vagrants, and it is usually dry by the end of May. Current species list is +150. Do not be put off exploring this site by the general depressing appearance. Despite the dumping there are underground springs, which mean that there are usually hidden seasonal pools.
There are different habitats types in this small degrading but very important area. South of the bridge there is an interesting valley for sight seeing and after the new national road a small canyon where we can find vulture’s nests and other raptors.

**AVI FAUNA:** Cory’s Shearwater, Mediterranean Shearwater, Little Crake, Purple Heron, Griffon Vulture, Buzzard, Booted Eagle, Honey Buzzard, Snipe, Great Snipe, Whimbrel, Gull-billed Tern, Caspian Tern, Glossy Ibis, Little Ringed Plover, Ringed Plover, Ruff, Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Garganey, Ferruginous Duck, Teal, Pintail, Tufted Duck, Red-rumped Swallow, Gr Flamingo, Marsh Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, Kentish Plover, Temminck’s and Little Stint, Grey Plover, White-tailed Plover, Sociable Plover, Whinchat, Stonechat, Sardinian Warbler, Bonelli’s Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Woodchat shrike, Red-throated Pipit, Yellow wagtail, Fan-tailed Warbler, Garden Warbler, Collared Flycatcher, Starling, Corn Bunting, Wryneck, Short-toed Lark.

**REST FAUNA:** Common tree frog (Hyla arborea), Green toad (Bufo viridis), Striped-necked terrapin (Mauremys rivulata), Moorish Gecko (Tarentola mauritanica), Turkish Gecko (Hemidactylus turcicus), Balkan Green Lizard (Lacerta trilineata), Occelated Skink (Chalcides ocellatus), Balkan Whip Snake (Coluber gemonensis), Leopard Snake (Elaphe situla), Dice snake (Natrix tessellata), Cat Snake (Tellescopus fallax), Badger (Meles meles), Weasel (Mustela nivalis), Beech Marten (Martes foina), Eastern Hedgehog (Erinaceus concolor), Lesser white toothed Shrew (Crocidura suaveolens), Pygmy white toothed Shrew (Suncus etruscus), Brown hare (Lepus europaeus), Wood Mouse (Apodemus sylvaticus), House Mouse (Mus musculus), Black Rat (Rattus rattus) and many bat species. At the seashore takes place egg-laying of turtle (*Caretta caretta*).

**FLORA:** Wetland vegetation with reeds, Tamarisk trees, Rushes, Buttercups and many species of annual plants in rocky surfaces and in sandy beach.

**TIME:** The best time for visiting the area is Spring from the late February until the end of May and especially the period from early April until the first week of May. The river is also worth checking in autumn because the migration starts early already from the middle of July. From July until October you must prefer the first morning hours. Also in winter there are many possibilities of watching some important bird species.
Map 5. Gouves lagoon and Aposelemis River

Outfall of Aposelemis River
View of the outfall with the island of Dia at the background

Aposelemis seasonal salty marsh
6. KARTEROS RIVER MOUTH

LOCATION: 8 km east of Heraklion on the old coast road. From Heraklion town follow signs to airport, turn right just before the airport signed to Agios Nikolaos to follow the old coast road. After 8 km there is a small church built into the rock, on a bend on the right. The marshy area begins on the left from this corner. The river runs between two football pitches. From the Heraklion bypass after the picnic site on the seaward side and the public weigh bridge follow signs to Karteros. At junction turn left, for the church. Best visited early morning or early evening. In ancient times the name of Karteros stream was Amnissos. The seashore was good for pooling up the ships and also a suitable shelter for Minoan fleet as it is mentioned from ancient geographer Stravon. According to Homer in this seashore were disembarked Theseus and Ulysses in the time of his wanderings. In the same seashore was also landed general Karteros with his army for liberating the Crete from Saracen pirates. The first historic reference of this settlement comes from a contract of a notary in Handax (=Heraklion) Benv. De Brixano in 1302. At the time of Turkish occupation the village and the stream was named Hiyarli Dere (=cucumbers river). You can park at the roadside for the stream at Amnissos.

DESCRIPTION: A river mouth just passed the chapel at Amnissos and a small rough area / marsh between Karteros and the sea. The marshy area is best approached from Karteros. It is also possible to walk down the river to the sea, starting at a track by an agave plant (large cactus) just before the turn off for Prases.

AVI FAUNA: Little Egret, Garganey, Yellow Wagtail, Short-toed Larks, Marsh Harrier, Great Reed Warbler, Common, Wood and marsh Sandpiper, Black-winged Stilt, Little Stint, Night, Squacco and Purple Heron.

REST FAUNA: Turkish Gecko (Hemidactylus turcicus), Balkan Green Lizard (Lacerta trilineata), Occelated Skink (Chalcides ocellatus), Balkan Whip Snake (Coluber gemonensis), Leopard Snake (Elaphe situla), Dice Snake (Natrix tessellata), Cat Snake (Telescopus fallax), Budger (Meles meles), Weasel (Mustela nivalis), Beech Marten (Martes foina), Eastern Hedgehog (Erinaceus concolor), Lesser white toothed Shrew (Crocidura suaveolens), Pygmy white toothed Shrew (Suncus etruscus), Brown hare (Lepus europaeus), Cretan Spiny Mouse (Acomys minous), Wood Mouse (Apodemus sylvaticus), House Mouse (Mus musculus), Black Rat (Rattus rattus).

FLORA: Degrading wetland vegetation with Reeds, Tamarisk trees, Rushes. Stand out the species of annual plants.

TIME: The best time to visit is spring (March until middle of May) as well as the autumn (September-October). Sometimes in winter you can also find a significant variety of birds.
Map 6. Karteros river mouth

Outfall of Karteros River
7. ALMYROS RIVER – HERAKLION POWER STATION

LOCATION: 5 km west of the Heraklion city on the old coast road. Traveling west from Heraklion exit at Chania Gate and turn off following signs to Akti Zeus Hotel. Traveling east or west on the new road turn off at the power station.

DESCRIPTION: An area of rough land between the Akti Zeus Hotel and the power station, and east of the hotel towards Agapi Beach Hotel there are rough shore fields. A river curves round behind and across the site towards the sea. There is a Gull roost offshore at the power station. The station has been enlarged and developed. The whole area looks rather scruffy and is disturbed during the day, but waders continue to feed on insects in the floating weed on the river, herons use the pools scattered throughout the area, warblers and shrikes continue to use the area.


REST FAUNA: Green toad (Bufo viridis), Striped-necked terrapin (Mauremys rivulata), Turkish Gecko (Hemidactylus turcicus), Balkan Green Lizard (Lacerta trilineata), Occelated Skink (Chalcides ocellatus), Balkan Whip Snake (Coluber gemonensis), Leopard Snake (Elaphe situla), Dice Snake (Natrix tessellata), Cat Snake (Telescopus fallax), Budger (Meles meles), Weasel (Mustela nivalis), Beech Marten (Martes foina), Eastern Hedgehog (Erinaceus concolor), Lesser
white toothed Shrew (*Crocidura suaveolens*), Pygmy white toothed Shrew (*Suncus etruscus*), Brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*), Cretan Spiny Mouse (*Acomys minous*), Wood Mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), House Mouse (*Mus musculus*), Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*).

**FLORA:** It is very interesting the number of palm trees (*Phoenix Theophrasti*) near the river dam. We can see the below endemic of Crete: (*Allium burgeaui ssp. creticum Centaurea idaea, Cyclamen creticum Dianthus fruticosus ssp. Creticums, Ferulago thyrsifoli, Petromarula pinnata Phlomis lanata Scutelaria sieberi Staehelina petiolata*) as well as some endemic species of South Aegean (*Alyssoides cretica, Ornithogalum ceticum, Sedum ceticum, Valeriana asarifolia*). In the sand dunes of the coastal zone we can see different kinds of sand dunes as *Ammophila arenaria, Elymus ferctus* and *Otanthus maritimus*. In the calcic marshes of the area we can see *Cladium mariscus, Carex davalliana*.

**TIME:** The best time to visit is spring (March-June) as well as autumn (August-November) but sometimes in winter you can also find interesting species for bird watching.

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**Map 7. Almyros River**
Almyros River

Turnstone (*Arenaria interpes*)
Cattles Egret at the Almyros outfall

Seasonal marshes and reeds at the Almyros wetland
A flock of seagulls at the seashore

Turtles (*Mauremys rivula*)
8. THRAPSANO RESERVOIR

LOCATION: On the east side of Thrapsano. There is parking area at the pool. Turn off after a BP garage and before Thrapsano to a new church on the east edge of Thrapsano. Follow the tarmac track for 1 km to the pool. The village is first mentioned in documents from the ducal record in Handax in 1379. It is mentioned from Fr. Barozzi in 1577, in Kastrofilaka in 1583 and in Basilicata in 1630. In Turkish census of 1671 it is mentioned as Comlekci—the pottery village. The name of Thrapsano comes from the verb thlapo, thrapso = warm up. Thrapsanos then indicates the person who works in kiln. In Venetian period Thrapsano was benefice that belonged in Kornaros family. Not far from the village is the church of Virgin Mary the Pigadiotisa. The area from which comes the potter’s clay was property of a Turkish official Elhatz Ali who took the permission from Sultan to take advantage from this area called Livada, and it is the same place where the new reservoir is settled.

DESCRIPTION: An irrigation pool, which is filled by winter rains. Water levels may vary. There are some surroundings scrub and tamarisks on the south side. This site has been enlarged and deepened. Often in winter and spring you can see in the nearby fields marshes because of the water overflow.


FLORA: The intense mankind activities as well as the great rise and fall of water level have caused the lack of well-developed hygrophyte societies. At the west side of the reservoir in silty grounds with periodic water coverage we meet species as *Cyperus fuscus* and *C. Longus* that go with species as *Mentha plegium*, *Plantago lanceolata*, *Scirpoides holoschoenus* και *Heliotropium supinum*. At the most open areas we meet annual species as *Echium plantagineum*, *Galactites*
tomentosum, Cynodon dactylon, Ater squamatus, Lythrum junceum, Bellis perennis, Solanum nigrum, Dittrichia graveolens. There is a shrubby area with Tamarisk trees at the south side of the reservoir. From the rest species the most characteristic ones are: Echium plantagineum, Mentha pulegium, Plantago lanceolata.

**TIME**: The best time to visit is spring, from March until June but also in autumn and in winter is worth checking.

**Map 8: Thrapsano pool**
View before the duplication of the reservoir’s size

An occasionally overflowed area
Information board for the LIFE ENVIRONMENT project

Red-breasted gooses (*Branta ruficollis*)
9. PARTIRA AND AMOURGELLES RESERVOIRS

LOCATION: It’s about two new reservoirs that have been constructed recently. Partira reservoir lies north of the homonymous village and you can go there by taking the road from Archalochori-Agia Semni-Partira, and turning right towards Mikri Episkopi settlement. Following this road westwards you can approach Amourgelles reservoir that lies east of the village.

DESCRIPTION: Archalochori is the biggest Municipality in Heraklion Prefecture and covers about the 9% of the total county extension. Municipality of Archalochori stretches in the middle of prefecture and its southest point reaches until Libyan sea. The main occupation of the people, approximately 90%, concerns agriculture and cattle breeding and only a small part of the total economic activity have to do with manufacture (small manufacture and repairing firms etc). The whole area is scattered with old Byzantine churches that remain though unexploited. A monument of a particular architecture value is the Venetian bridge in Demati. In Panorama and in Kastelliana there are deserted ruins of Byzantine castles. A sight of a significant value is castle Belvedere that was built in 1206-1210 from the pirate Enrico Pescatore from Geneva. Furthermore at the coastal settlement of Tsoutsouros there was the ancient city of Inatos, harbor of Priansos. The small
Partira dam lies in a small beautiful valley surrounded from grapevines and olive trees. The small river that feeds the dam is covered with trees. Amourgelles dam is a bigger one and is supplied from a river and three streams of seasonal flow.

**AVI FAUNA**: Impressively rich for the short time of these reservoirs. Among the wintering birds we meet the threatened Ferruginous Duck, Mallard, Shoveler, Wigeon. Among the others nest Cetti’s Warbler, Olivaceous Warbler, Flycatcher, Turtle Dove, Little Grebe, Coot, Moorhern and perimetric Wood pigeon, Stone Curlew, Red-rumped Swallow, Scops Owl, Black-eared Wheatear. Among them that are passing through: Bee Eater, Hoopoe, Kingfisher, Wryneck, Hen Harrier, Montagu’s Harrier, Honey Buzzard, Hobby, Little Egret, Squacco Heron, Little Bittern, Night Heron, Purple Heron, Glossy Ibis, Lapwing, Black-tailed Godwit, Wood Sandpiper, Redshank, Spotted Redshank, Common Sandpiper, Little Stint, Dunlin, Snipe, Whiskered Tern, Ruff, Little Gull, Garden Warbler, Yellow Wagtail, Tree Pipit, Icterine Warbler.


**FLORA**: At Partira reservoir there is a very good preservation of riverine vegetation with reedbeds (*Phragmites australis*), fine-leaved rush (*Juncus sp.*), blackberries (*Rubus sanctus*), myrtles (*Myrtus communis*), tamarisk trees (*Tamarix parviflora*) and white poplar (*Populus alba*).

At the west side of the reservoir apart from the rushes we can see species as (*Lythrum hysopifolia*) and (*Polygonon maritimus*) as well as species like aromatic inula (*Dittrichia viscosa*). In shallow silty areas with depth until 40 cm prevail charophytes (*Chara sp.*).

Between the bank and the olive grove sprout various clovers (*Trifolium sp.*), slenders (*Lythrum junceum*) and the species of (*Ammi majus*) and (*Imperata cylindrica*) while in salty marshes we have plant societies with species *Juncus heldreichianus*, *Schoenus nigricans* and *Scirpoides holoschoenus*.

At Amourgelles reservoir the parts of natural riverine vegetation are rather limited. At both sites we can see a lot of wild flowers in spring as orchids, iris and tulips. At Partira reservoir the
riverine vegetation is well preserved with willow trees, plane trees, blackberries, tamarisk trees, reeds and rushes while there are enough poplars.

**TIME:** Spring, autumn seems ideal for making a visit. Also in summer you can watch enough bird species.

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**Map 9: Partira & Amourgelles**
Partira reservoir

Amourgelles reservoir
Input of fish population in Amourgelles reservoir

Coots (*Fulica atra*)
10. KARAVADOS & SKINIAS RESERVOIR

LOCATION: South of Karavados village, off the Pyrgos / Skinias to Viannos road. In the village turn right, and cross a ford to the dam. You can park at the outskirts of village and walk. The reservoir lies north of the village of Skinias towards Ano Viannos. The river is dammed to form the reservoir.

DESCRIPTION: The Karavados reservoir attracts ducks in winter and waders and herons on spring passage. A forked dirt track leads down to a long narrow reservoir with a dam at the Skinias end. There is a track alongside the south bank. Skinias village is first mentioned in a document of the ducal record in Handax in 1373. The name of Skinias comes from a plant name (Skinias=lentisk).

Baritis River supplies Skinia reservoir and a tributary the one in Karavado. The region lies in a nodal point for migratory birds and the good condition of habitats in Baritis river help the presence of a significant biodiversity.

AVI FAUNA: Karavados reservoir: Little Egret, Grey Heron, Night Heron.
Skinias reservoir: Buzzard, Little Stint, Crested Lark.

FLORA: Into the reservoir we can see plant society of *potamogeton perfoliati* that is first mentioned in Crete. The riverine vegetation in Baritis River is one of the most well preserved in Crete.

TIME: The best time for visiting the area is spring from the middle of March until late May and in autumn from early August until end of October. However winter and summer months offer good opportunities for bird watching.
Map 10. Karavados and Skinias Reservoir
Baritis River while it flows beside Skinias reservoir
Skinias reservoir

Skinias reservoir with a rainbow
(Trynga erythropus) in breeding plumage

White Pelican in Skinias reservoir
11. PLAKIOTISSA DAM & ANAPODARIS RIVER

LOCATION: From Pyrgos to Ligortinos road, turn off through Plakiotissa village. Follow the main road through the village continue on the dirt road.

DESCRIPTION: The village is first mentioned in Monofatsiou province in 1577 from Fr. Barozzi and in 1583 in Basilicata. This dam is well hidden in a secret valley. Birds are attracted to the river and reeds, which feed the reservoir. The dirt road allows views across the reservoir without undue disturbance. There is a natural promentory, which gives good views.

AVI FAUNA: Woodchat Shrike, Herons, Kestrel, Buzzard.

concolor), Lesser white toothed Shrew (*Crocidura suaveolens*), Pygmy white toothed Shrew (*Suncus etruscus*), Brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*), Wood Mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), House Mouse (*Mus musculus*), Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*).

**FLORA:** *Hydrophyile vegetation close to the dam.* Into the water close to the dam the *chara sp.* Come along in swallow silty areas with depth until 40 cm. When the water draws back we can see annual species as aromatic inula *Dittrichia viscosa*, heliotrope *Heliotropium supinum*, Bermuda grass *Cynodon dactylon*, cockscomb *Amaranthus retroflexus*.

*Hydrophyile vegetation out of the reservoir.* In small marshes with depth less than 1 m. close to the riverbanks there is a small floating society with *Potamogeton nodusus*. This small plant society covers no more than 4 m² is at risk from the intense human activities in the around area.

**Round the reservoir.** In the neighbor area we can see canebrakes (*Arundo donax*), (*Phragmites australis*), (*Arundo plniiiana*), myrtles (*Myrtus communis*) and blackberries (*Rubus sanctus*). Close to these tufts grow Greater Plantain (*Platango major*), (*Lythrum junceum*), Pennyroyal (*Mentha pulegium*), (*Pulicaria dysenterica*) and the one of genus agrostis (*Lolium perenne*). This vegetation is related with the human activities (paths, narrow streets etc) in the region. In more open areas we can see species as: Dorycnium (*Dorycniun rectum*), Ripwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Dock (*Rumex pulcher*) and Horsetail (*Equistem arvense*).

**Riverine vegetation.** Under the dam we can see Plane trees (*Platanus orientalis*) and in small wet sandy areas in riverbanks there are fine leaved rush (*Juncus articulatus*), *J. bufonius J.subulatus*, (*Lytrum hyssopofila*), horsetails (*Equisetum arvense*) and other species as *Doricnium rectum*, *Pitatherum miliaceum*.

Before and after the dam in riverine vegetation prevail oleanders *Nerium oleander*, Tamarisk trees *Tamarix parviflora*, Chaste trees *Vitex agnus-cactus*, Docks *Rumex pulcher*, *Pulicaria dysenterica*, blackberries *Rubus sanctus* as well as in riverine societies of canebrakes *Arundo donax* and *Phragmites australis*. In the river over the dam at the west bank we come along with the reed specie (*Saccharun ravenae*) that is known only from the east Crete. Southeast of the dam there is an area with firewoods that holds a great biodiversity of rooted plants. A common one is shrubby sainfoin (*Ebenus cretica*), an endemic one of Crete.

Remarkable riverine and wetland vegetation is traced at the south part of the dam. We can see Willows, Plane trees, Oleanders, Rushes, Tamarisk trees and other species.
TIME: Every season is good for visiting the area especially early in spring and in autumn where we can see the most species of migrant birds.
Old Plakiotissa dam in winter overflow

Anapodaris River through Plakiotissa dam
12. LAKE DIGENI and GERGERI RESERVOIR

LOCATION: The village of Gergeri is the head of Municipality and lies 39 km southwest of Heraklion. You can reach to Gergeri via Heraklion-Agia Varvara-Gergeri country road.

DESCRIPTION: Rouvas Municipality stands at the foothill of mountain Psiloriti. Economic activity is based mainly in agriculture and to all these activities that are related with this sector. Cattle’s breeding is well developed because of the highland and mountainous terrain of the region. Rouva’s forest, which is a part of Zaros forest, presents the ability of developing special forms of tourism. This is one of the greatest kermes oak forests of Greece while in this area we can see a lot of endemic species of flora and fauna. This area is included in the zone of Natura 2000 and is considered as a special community interest area. The area of the Municipality overlooks plain Messara, has a significant value and represents the gate for the southwest Crete. The settlement of Gergeri is declared as a traditional village and in the wider region there are many Byzantine churches with interesting frescos that are being dated from 15th century as Panagia Kera or Hanutia and church Metamorphosis that is partially constructed with marble pieces of an ancient temple.

AVI FAUNA: This area attracts a lot of migratory birds as well as raptors. It is also ideal for the watching of the great raptors that resort in mountain Idi (Psiloritis). Among these species we can
see: Bearded vulture, Griffon vulture, Golden Eagle, Peregrine, Kestrel, Falcon, Hen Harrier, Grey Heron, Night Heron, Moorhen. Among those that nest: Black eared Wheater, Linnet, Black Kite.


**FLORA:** The Lake of Gergheri has not developed up to date any kind of wetland vegetation except for some human related species that come across in the slopes. In the neighbor area of Vromolimni that is used as an overflow the vegetation consists mainly of Phrygana, (among them grow a lot of orchids and endemic species) and a few rooted plants as wild almond and olive trees.

**TIME:** Spring and autumn is appropriate for bird watching although there are chances during the whole year.
Map 12. Lake Digeni and Gergeri Reservoir
Gergheri reservoir

Digeni to Mnima Lake
13. PHAESTOS, AGHIA TRIADA and GEROPOTAMOS

LOCATION: 62 km south from Heraklion. You can park at the archaeological sites.

DESCRIPTION: Phaestos car park is a good viewpoint for raptors and the hillside below the archaeological site on the left has low scrub for warblers and pines for serins and finches. To the east is an area of open fields and damp pools. The hillside at Phaestos is good for orchids. Take the track to the right at the top of the car park in the direction of Aghia Triada. It is possible to follow red painted spots over the hillside to Aghia Triada. This is difficult to follow in parts, but it is an interesting walk. Aghia Triada is 3 km further south. From the car park, the track, on either side of which many orchids grow, leads downhill towards orange groves and the river Geropotamos. In 2000 the ford was dry with only stagnant pools and rubbish dumps. At the ford you can follow tracks along the east bank towards the sea. The area then becomes a military zone.

Phaestos is one of the famous and most important cities of the pre-historic Crete. The name of the site where the palace was, named Kastri and the city was stretched out in the lowland and in the foothills southeast. In this area flows Geropotamos River the Venetian Malonitis that is wrongly reported as Litheos. Phaestos is first mentioned from Homer, St. Vizantios and Diodoros Sikeliotis. The origin of the name Phaestos comes out from the ancient Greek word faos, which means light and the word Faethon that is the adverb of sun. Seaport of Phaestos was Matala and Kommos. Phaestos was the homeland of diviner and theosophist Epimenidis contemporary of Solon who was invited in Athens to save the city from the Cylonian curse in 596 b.c. He died at the age of 150 and according to others at the age of 299 and was one from the seven wise men.

Phaestos fought many times against Gortys and finally they destroyed all over Phaestos in about 200 b.c. In Phaestos reigned the dynasty of Zeus son’s, Radamanthis. Phaestos had also its own coins and the most of them were portraying Europe wearing a pallium and sitting on a bull. Phaestos also took part with the other Cretan cities in Trojan war with leader of the army, Idomeneas and was a member in alignment with 30 other cities of Crete with the king of Pergamos Evmenis 2nd in second century b.c. The people of Phaestos were celebrating “Ecdysia” in honor of Fitiis Latus who transformed Galatia’s daughter into a lad. The palace of Phaestos had approximately the same size as Knossos and is west oriented exactly as the orthodox churches and that makes us think that minoan palaces were not only resident of king – archpriest but also had a certain functional use, which was straight related with minoan religion. The palace was build up in successive levels and is characterized for the rich decoration and in luxury. A characteristic archaeological finding is the disk of Phaestos where is drawed a kind of writing likely Greek which is until now not decoded.
In Aghia Triada in early twentieth century, Italian archaeologists discovered a king villa with rich findings. A typical sample of these findings is a sarcophagus of Aghia Triada with showings from the worship of the dead and rich decoration from the vegetive world. The village of Aghia Triada is first mentioned from Fr. Barozzi, Kastrofilaka and Basilikata and with a greater population than the one of Tymbaki.

**AVI FAUNA:** Squacco Heron, Little Egret, Montagu’s Harrier, Honey Buzzard, Buzzard, Golden Eagle, Griffon Vulture, Eleonora’s Falcon, Greenshank, Black-eared Wheatear, Nightingale, Serin, Common Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Little Stint, Ruff, Great Snipe, Penduline Tit, Alpine Swift, Turtle Dove, Golden Oriole.

**REST FAUNA:** Turkish Gecko (*Hemidactylus turcicus*), Balkan Green Lizard (*Lacerta trilineata*), Occelated Skink (*Chalcides ocellatus*), Balkan Whip Snake (*Coluber gemonensis*), Leopard Snake (*Elaphe situla*), Dice Snake (*Natrix tessellata*), Cat Snake (*Telescopus fallax*), Margined tortoise (*Testudo marginata*), Red Eared Slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*), Badger (*Meles meles*), Weasel (*Mustela nivalis*), Beech Marten (*Martes foina*), Eastern hedgehog (*Erinaceus concolor*), Lesser white toothed Shrew (*Crocidura suaveolens*), Pygmy white toothed Shrew (*Suncus etruscus*), Brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*), Wood Mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), House Mouse (*Mus musculus*), Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*).

**FLORA:** Around the Palace of Festos there are planted Calabrian pines (*Pinus brutia*) and wild almonds (*Prunus webbii*) while amongst them there are tufted a lot of Phrygana of low elevation as three-lobed sage (*Salvia fruticosa*), summer savory (*Satureia thymbra*) and many grasses and annual species of anthropogenic vegetation because of the vicinity of the Palace with the cultivated areas.

**TIME:** Every season has something to present but mostly March-April and October-December.
Map 13. Phaestos, Aghia Triada and Geropotamos

Tymbaki
Return to the map

14. AGHIA GALINI and PLATIS RIVER

LOCATION: On south coast, 62 km south of Rethymnon, in the Gulf of Messara.

DESCRIPTION: Aghia Galini is a tourist village, its bay can hold flocks of Garganey in spring. The Platis or Amanios river runs to the east of the village and was known from the ancient times.
as Elektra’s river which flows near the village and is also mentioned in old maps as Santo Galini fiume. There is a path under the cliffs where Alpine Swifts nest. The river mouth has herons, Great Snipe, Little Bittern, and picks up other migrants. There is a footbridge over the river and the surrounding scrub can also be good for migrants. The valley behind looks worthy of exploration.

**AVI FAUNA:** Little Bittern, Purple Heron, Alpine Swift, Swift, Garganey, Great Reed Warbler, Little Ringed Plover, Wood Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Avocet, Great Snipe, Cetti’s Warbler, Yellow Wagtail, Green Sandpiper, Sand Martin.


**FLORA:** Riverine vegetation with tufts of plane and willow trees. Oleanders, Myrtle trees and reeds border with the typical Mediterranean maquis (lentisk etc).

**TIME:** The best time to visit is end of March until the middle of May.
Map 14. Aghia Galini and Platis River

Aghia Galini – Platis River
15. MONI PREVELI and MEGALOPOTAMOS VALLEY

LOCATION: On the south coast 35 km south of Rethymnon and 8 km east of Plakias. Turn off on a tarmaced road just north of Lefkogia. You can park at the bridge over Megalopotamos and also at both old and new monasteries.

DESCRIPTION: the valley has a huge cliff, which can be seen from the old Turkish bridge. Griffon Vultures nest and can be seen by late morning often stacking in the thermals. The old monastery area is often good for migrant warblers, but access is no longer possible due to fencing. A lay by car park allows views over old monastery. Breeding Blue Rock Thrush.

Lower Prevelli valley: from the old bridge a rough road leads over another bridge down to the sea, about 5 km, the banks of the river and the woodland and hillsides can be good bird watching walk. 3 km further on is the Moni Prevelli monastery, which has a fine view over the Libyan sea. Unfortunately in 1985 a fire burnt the lovely hillside below the monastery, but some scrub and pines do remain. Walk 50m back from the car park and follow the track with a spring. Below here is a good area for Ruppell’s Warbler. A track also leads down to Megalopotamos. This is about 1 km back along the road from the monastery. A broad track with parking, leads across and then down a cliff path to the river mouth. The valley is full of the endemic palm *Phoenix theophrasti*. The river area has Grey Wagtail, Rock Dove and Peregrine.


REST FAUNA: Cretan marsh frog (*Rana cretensis*), Common tree frog (*Hyla arborea*), Green toad (*Bufo viridis*), Striped-necked terrapin (*Mauremys rivulata*), Turkish Gecko (*Hemidactylus turcicus*), Balkan Green Lizard (*Lacerta trilineata*), Ocelolated Skink (*Chalcides ocellatus*),

**FLORA:** In the river mouth there is the second greatest population (after the one of Vai) of endemic specie of Southeast Mediterranean palm tree (*Phoenix Theophrastii*) that is well known as Cretan Palm and is extended in about 600 m from the seashore. As long as we stand out from the sea, the palm trees are replaced from other species of riverside vegetation as: White willows (*Salix alba*), Plane trees (*Platanus orientalis*), Chaste trees (*Vitex agnus-castus*), Storaxes (*Styrax officinalis*) and oleanders (*Neium oleander*).  
At the slopes of the canyon as long as we draw away from the riverbed the riverside vegetation is replaced from the typical phryganic and makkia vegetation. It is also very interesting the autumn narcissus (*Narcissus serotinus*).

**TIME:** March-May and October is the most appropriate time for visiting the area although every season has something to present.
Map 15. Moni Preveli and Megalopotamos River

Preveli lake
16. OUTFALL and SPRINGS OF GEROPOTAMOS - RETHYMNO

LOCATION: On main road west of Heraklion between 74 and 75 km just by hotel. Just right before the bridge a turn right drive us to the river mouth. Geropotamos River has a permanent flow from two springs 2 km away from the outfall of the river. The approaching of these springs as well
as the small seasonal marshes along the river and across the springs is possible from the road towards Perama. About 1 km after the crossing at the national road there is a dirt road that crosses the river and can be passable the most time of the year. Turn right and follow the road next to the river up to the springs, on foot.

**DESCRIPTION:** The River follows an underground route up to the springs except the rain season, which lasts from December until April. However small pools and ponds remain until the summer. There is often great pollution from the waste of oil-factories in this area. However the habitats type the small ponds, the platans as well as the general morphology of the area helps attracting many bird species. The place where the springs are, offers an increased vegetation of reeds and other hydrophilic species. From the springs area until the sea the river’s route through an overgrown valley presents a lot of habitats. Finally the river mouth creates a small but deep lake in the sandy beach and the rocking formations of the coastline are appropriate in creation of habitats for bird nesting.


**FLORA:** There is rich wetland and riverine vegetation with representative wetland species as plane trees, oleanders, myrtles and various species of fine leaved rushes. Inside the water there are Pondweeds and Buttercups.

**TIME:** The most appropriate time for birds, amphibians and flowers is Spring between April and May but also autumn and winter present good opportunities for bird watching.
Outfall of the river downwards
17. PETRES RIVER and GORGE

LOCATION: On the main road 10 km west of Rethymnon between 46 and 47 km. There is room for parking at the seaward side.

DESCRIPTION: A marshy area and pool on the landward side of the road, which attracts a variety of herons, waders and migrants. A good watching point is the overlooking point on the east side of the river. A chapel is under construction at the roadside entrance. The gorge, which is reached by a track on the eastern side of the river, has breeding Griffon Vultures and possibly other birds of prey.


meles), Weasel (Mustela nivalis), Beech Marten (Martes foina), Eastern Hedgehog (Erinaceus concolor), Lesser white toothed Shrew (Crocidura suaveolens), Pygmy white toothed Shrew (Suncus etruscus), Brown hare (Lepus europaeus), Cretan Spiny Mouse (Acomys minous), Wood Mouse (Apodemus sylvaticus), House Mouse (Mus musculus), Black Rat (Rattus rattus).

**FLORA:** There are a great variety of wild flowers in the canyon, as well as the river holds a good variety of wetland and riverine vegetation with representative species: oleander, plane trees as well as myrtle and willow trees.

**TIME:** From January you can watch the nesting Griffon Vultures. March-May and September-November are good time for migratory birds.

**Map 17. Petres River and Gorge**
18. LAKE KOURNA
LOCATION: South of Georgioupolis. Lake Kourna is signposted from the village. In ancient times there was a settlement with the name Korion and lake’s name was Korisia. Em. Generalis believes that this name comes from the Arabic word kurna, which means bath. The area is
mentioned that belongs in the province of Apokoronu in 1577 from Fr. Barozzi and from Kastrofilaka. In the nearby area there are Byzantine churches with traces of frescos.

**DESCRIPTION:** A curiously clear blue lake with tracks to the dam on the N side, and also on the south side past the tavernas. The area is best in late autumn / winter / early spring and famous for Black-necked Grebe and duck. Other interesting good birds can turn up on the water and in the surrounding scrub. There is disturbance from pedalos so visit early and avoid Sundays, despite all this the current bird list is over 90 species.

**AVI FAUNA:** Black-necked Grebe, Little Grebe, Ferruginous Duck, Pintail, Garganey, Coot, Coal Tit, Olivaceous Warbler.


**FLORA:** Around the Lake there are natural fences from chaste trees (*Vitex agnus-castus*), storaxes (*Styrax officinalis*), blackberries (*Rubus sanctus*), oleanders (*Neium oleander*), myrtles (*Myrtus communis*) and figs (*Ficus carica*).

At the southeast of the lake there is a kermes oak forest (*Quercus coccifera*), along with storaxes (*Styrax officinalis*), mock privets (*Phillyrea latifolia*), spiny brooms (*Calicotome villosa*) and tree spurge es (*euphoria dendroides*).

**TIME:** The best time for bird watching is late in Autumn, in Winter and early in Spring.
Map 18. Lake Kournas

General view of Kurna Lake
Water snake (*Natrix tessellata*)
Hemiptern predator insect

Return to the map

19. GEORGIOPOLIS LAKE

LOCATION: On the north coast halfway between Rethymnon and Chania.
From Rethymnon: Turn off heading west between 36 and 37 km. Take the first left in square, the lake is down a Eucalyptus avenue.
From Chania: Turn off heading east after the EKO petrol station at 30 km and continue on the old road for 4 km.

DESCRIPTION: The Lake is fed by fresh water springs and the river Almyros. The water of overflow is driving through a canal to Almyros River. The area to the east of the village has reedbeds and more springs and nearby lays the significant wetland of Perastikos River. Also there are sand dunes and seasonal marshes. This area is being encroached on by hotels and houses. The rivermouth, the beach harbor and eucalyptus avenue are all worth checking in the spring and
autumn. Towards north at the rocky coastline there is a tuft of palm trees (*Phoenix Theophrastii*). The area is in the list of protected areas *NATURE 2000* and is one of the most important areas for birds in the Greece.

**AVI FAUNA:** The list has more than 200 bird species. Little Bitern, Bittern, Little Egret, Purple Heron, Booted Eagle, Marsh Harrier, Little Crake, Spotted Crake, Black Tern, White-winged Black Tern, Little Grebe, Moorhen, Coot, Nightingale, Cuckoo, Scops Owl, Reed Warbler, Cetti’s Warbler, Golden Oriole, Woodchat Shrike, Swallow, Sand Martin, Yellow Wagtail, White Wagtail, Kingfisher.


**FLORA:** In the Georgioupolis Lake we can see various waterweeds as Myrtle, Osier, Bramble, Oleander, *Apium graveolens, Dorycnium rectum, Lythrum junceum*. In the salty marshes and in the springs grow halophyte as: *Juncus subulatus, Carex extensa, Scirpus maritimus, Fragnites australis*.

**TIME:** Every season offers the possibility of watching important species from flora and fauna but the greatest variety can be seen between April and May and from September until October.
Map 19. Georgioupolis Lake

Whooper Swans and Mute Swans
20. FRANGOCASTELLO

LOCATION: On the south coast 12 km east of Chora Sfakion. It can also be reached from Plakias, this is a wonderful scenic drive along the south coast. From this direction turn off the main road towards the Frangocastello castle. Almost opposite a petrol station there is a track leading across the old delta through irrigated olive groves towards the sea. A water hydrant half way down this track leaks and forms puddles which attract migrants to drink and bathe. The old delta can have Short-toed Larks and Stone Curlews.

DESCRIPTION: There is an area of rough and sometimes marshy ground of the castle, which can be good for herons, Glossy Ibis and pratincoles. The best area for migrants is in the scrub west of the castle and the beach can be good for waders early and late in the day. The old marsh has now been built on.

AVI FAUNA: The greatest interest is the migration birds in spring. There is a great abundance and variety. Cetti’s warbler, wagtail and stonechat nest in the reeds and at the seashore. Little Stint, Wood Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Collared Pratincole, Grey Heron, Little Egret, Glossy Ibis, Black-eared Wheatear, Wryneck, Pied Flycatcher, Collared Flycatcher, Purple Heron, Stone Curlew, Short-toed Lark, Yellow Wagtail, Red-throated Pipit, Tree Pipit.

REST FAUNA: Cretan marsh frog (Rana cretensis), common tree frog (Hyla arborea), Green toad (Bufo viridis), Striped-necked terrapin (Mauremys rivulata), Turkish Gecko (Hemidactylus turcicus), Balkan Green Lizard (Lacerta trillineata), Occelated Skink (Chalcides occelatus), Balkan Whip Snake (Coluber gemonensis), Leopard Snake (Elaphe situla), Dice snake (Natrix tessellata), Cat Snake (Telescopus fallax), Badger (Meles meles), Weasel (Mustela nivalis), Beech Marten (Martes foina), Eastern Hedgehog (Erinaceus concolor), Lesser white tothed Shrew (Crocidura suaveolens), Pygmy white toothed Shrew (Suncus etruscus), Brown hare (Lepus europaeus), Cretan spiny Mouse (Acomys minous), Wood Mouse (Apodemus sylvaticus), House Mouse (Mus musculus), Black Rat (Rattus rattus).

FLORA: In this small area there is a great variety of wetland, sandy, rocky coastline species and of phryganic ecosystems.

TIME: The best time to visit is spring from end of February until middle of May. Also in summer and winter there is great interest but make your visit early in the morning.
Map 20. Frangocastello

Little Stint
21. SOUDA BAY – VLITES

LOCATION: The British war cemetery situated at the head of Souda bay 9 km east of Chania. Turn off at 9 km from the main road or follow signs to Souda from Chania town center. In Souda follow signs to British cemetery. Room for parking there is at the olive trees at the entrance to the cemetery.

DESCRIPTION: The cemetery is a well-kept garden surrounded by trees. The olive grove at the car park and the eucalyptus trees can by busy with feeding migrants in spring. The bay and the shore can also be interesting. View from the eastern end of the wall. Souda: Turn seawards at crossroads in center of old village to fishing harbor. This area is good in winter. On the road towards the cemetery look for a small road parallel to a canal. This also leads to the shore. Souda is a new settlement. In 1872 the Turks gave a new name to the area, Tuzla=saltpan because of during Venetian occupation the whole area was full with saltpans. The name of Souda comes from the Latin word sudis-is=palo=pale, trench, fort. As it is mentioned from the Byzantine historian G. Frantzis the Arab conqueror of Crete Abu Hafs Umar, which was called from the Byzantines Apohaps, was landed in Haraka most likely in Souda.

AVI FAUNA: Little Egret, Great White Egret, Grey Heron, Osprey, Redshank, Sandwich Tern, Redstart, Wryneck, Bonelli’s Warbler, Black-eared Wheatear, Swift, Alpine Swift, Cuckoo, Tree

**REST FAUNA:** Cretan marsh frog (Rana cretensis), Common tree frog (Hyla arborea), Green toad (Bufo viridis), Striped-necked terrapin (Mauremys rivulata), Turkish Gecko (Hemidactylus turcicus), Balkan Green Lizard (Lacerta trilineata), Occelated Skink (Chalcides ocellatus), Balkan Whip Snake (Coluber gemonensis), Leopard Snake (Elaphe situla), Dice Snake (Natrix tessellata), Cat Snake (Telescopus fallax), Red Eared Slider (Trachemys scripta elegans), Badger (Meles meles), Weasel (Mustela nivalis), Beech Marten (Martes foina), Eastern Hedgehog (Erinaceus concolor), Lesser white toothed Shrew (Crocidura suaveolens), Pygmy white toothed Shrew (Suncus etruscus), Wood Mouse (Apodemus sylvaticus), House Mouse (Mus musculus), Black Rat (Rattus rattus).

**FLORA:** Halophyte vegetation with fine leaved rushes and other species that perceive at the seashore.

**TIME:** Spring, autumn and winter is appropriate time for bird watching.

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**Map 21. Souda bay – Vlites**
Great white Egret (*Egretta alba*) in Vlite sea region

Kingfisher in Moronis River (*Alcedo atthis*)
22. AGHIA LAKE

LOCATION: Southwest of Chania towards Omalos – Samaria gorge. The best site for parking lies near the church of Ayia behind a grove of Eucalyptus trees as you approach. There is also room for parking in the country road towards Kirtomados to west after we pass a small bridge with metal railings. There are paths that drive to the lake from both sides, the south one is wire closed but often with an open gate.

DESCRIPTION: The village of Ayia is mentioned in Kastrofilaka and in Basilikata in 1630. The etymology maybe comes from the arab word of aia=water and this is caused due to the rich springs that gush from this area and form the bayou of Platanias. If the etymology is right then the village was built from the Arab conquerors. The reservoir is a good area for migrants and for breeding birds in the reeds. In winter it holds a significant population.

AVI FAUNA: The Lake represents the optimal watching site for water birds in West Crete. It is a very good area for immigrant birds as it offers a great number of reproduction habitats in the reeds. In winter it holds a significant number of wild fowls and coots and is regarded as the most
significant area in Greece for the threatened with extinction Ferruginous Duck. Early in the
morning the view from the dam is prevented because of the sun, so the paths near the church are
better for bird watching. The trees and the shrub area around the lake also hold a great number of
immigrant birds. The list of recorded bird species is over 200. Between the immigrant birds stand
out: Eleonora’s Falcon, Garganey, Little Crake, Spotted Crake, Baillon’s Crane, Marsh Harrier,
Little Bittern, Night Heron, Squacco Heron, Whiskered Tern, Black Tern, White-winged Black
Tern, Ruff, Wood Sandpiper, Greenshank, Willow Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Reed Warbler,
Sedge Warbler, Moustached warbler, Sand Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, Collared Pratincole,
Yellow Wagtail, Pygmy Cormorant.

REST FAUNA: Cretan marsh frog (Rana cretensis), Common free frog (Hyla arborea), Green
toad (Bufo viridis), Striped-necked terrapin (Mauremis rivulata), Turkish Gecko (Hemidactylus
turcicus), Balkan Green Lizard (Lacerta trilineata), Occelated Skink (Chalcides occelatus),
Balkan Whip Snake (Coluber gemonensis), Leopard Snake (Elaphe situla), Dice snake (Natrix
tessellata), Cat snake (Telescopus fallax), Badger (Meles meles), Weasel (Mustela nivalis), Beech
Marten (Martes foina), Eastern Hedgehog (Erinaceus concolor), Lesser white toothed Shrew
(Crocidura suaveolens), Pygmy white toothed Shrew (Suncus etruscus), Brown hare (Lepus
europaeus), Wood Mouse (Apodemus sylvaticus), House Mouse (Mus musculus), Black Rat
(Rattus rattus).

FLORA: The Ayia Lake hosts hydrophilic societies as Potamogeton spp. Myriophyllum
spicatum, Ceratophyllum demersum. In the spring we can see the blooming aquatic Ranunculus
trichophyllus while at the periphery of the wetland there are great tufts of common reeds
(Phragmites australis) and reeds (Arundo donax). Around the lake we can see the typical wetland
vegetation with myrtles (Myrtus communis), oleanders (Nerium oleander), blackberries (Rubus
sanctus), willow trees (Salix alba) and in the more wet places three leaved water crow foot
(Equisetum telmateia).

TIME: The best time for visiting the area is Spring from the middle of March until late May and
in autumn from early August until end of October. However winter and summer months offer good
opportunities for bird watching.
Aghia Lake

Aghia Lake
Pelicans

Aghia Lake – December 2002
23. KERITIS RIVER MOUTH and BEACH

LOCATION: 13 km west of Chania on old road. At 13 km sigh the main road crosses the river on a large bridge. Signed Gerani on the west bank and Platanias on the east bank. From new national road turn off at sign to Vrysses, Platanias. The river is on your right at the junction with the old road. Parking is best in Gerani. Turn left at the junction and immediately fork right. The river is mentioned from Homer as Iardanos. You can park 50m west from the bridge, or turn off directly after crossing the traveling west, into a field.

DESCRIPTION: A large river with sandbanks, which can be viewed from the bridge. Both banks of the river are clothed in Giant reed *Arundo donax* that can hide herons or feeding flycatchers and warblers. Tracks lead from the car park area past a crazy paving villa, through an area of rough scrub to the sea. The beach area and the mouth of the river and the scrub area to the west and east are all interesting areas during migration times.

AVI FAUNA: Black Kite, Grey Heron, Little Bittern, Fan-tailed Warbler, Stonechat, Whinchat, Tree Sparrow, Cirl Bunting, Pied Flycatcher, Cetti’s Warbler, Common Sandpiper, Cormorant, Cory’s Shearwater, Mediterranean Shearwater, Stone Curlew, Eleonora’s Falcon, Great Snipe, Wheatear, Kentish Plover, Chiff-chaff.
REST FAUNA: There is a significant population for Cretan marsh frog (*Rana cretensis*), Common tree frog (*Hyla arborea*), Green toad (*Bufo viridis*) and Striped-necked terrapin (*Mauremys rivulata*). It is registered the imported frog specie *Rana catesbiana*. We can also meet: Turkish Gecko (*Hemidactylus turcicus*), Balkan green lizard (*Lacerta trilineata*), Occelated skink (*Chalcides occelatus*), Balkan whip snake (*Coluber gemonensis*), Leopard snake (*Elaphe situla*), Dice snake (*Natrix tessellata*), Cat snake (*Telescopus fallax*), Badger (*Meles meles*), Weasel (*Mustela nivalis*), Marten (*Martes foina*), Eastern hedgehog (*Erinaceus concolor*), Lesser white toothed shrew (*Crocidura suaveolens*), Pygmy white toothed shrew (*Suncus etruscus*), Brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*), Wood mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), House mouse (*Mus musculus*), Black rat (*Rattus rattus*). At the beach is reproduced the sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*).

FLORA: Across the seashore there are sand dunes with *Ammophila arenaria*. In Fasa’s valley we can see hydrophilic plants with floating vegetation. At the steep schistose slopes prevail the ones of genus agrostis as *Scirpus cernuus* and many others bryophytes. The ferns cover a great area and amongst them stands out the infrequent kind of *Woodwardia radicans*.

TIME: Regardless of spring abundance every season has something unique to represent.

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Map 23. Keritis river mouth and beach
Keritis River

Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)
24. TAVRONITIS RIVER

LOCATION: 20 km west of Chania. After passing the barracks on the left, there is a sharp bend and then the road crosses the river. The new National Highway now crosses the river further upstream. There has been much disturbance on both banks of the river but the pools are still used by waders in spring, when the water levels are low enough.

PARKING: For upstream: After the bridge traveling west or on the east side of the river off the rough track. The west side roads are now tarmaced. For downstream: just after the bridge.

DESCRIPTION: The River is very good for migrant waders. Upstream: Cross over the bridge to the east side and follow the track northwards to find pools and sandbanks where migrant waders. Downstream: Drive down past the works and follow the dirt road towards the sea. Parking at Charidimos apts. Check the farm fields and the small wood to the west. Walk east at the stony beach towards the river mouth. In amongst the giant reed is a river mouth pool. The reeds is a military area to the east of the river towards Maleme and attract Marsh Harrier and Black Kite. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO ENTER THIS AREA.

AVI FAUNA: Garganey, Ferruginous Duck, Snipe, Red-rumped Swallow, Swift, Wood Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Black Kite, Marsh Harrier, Little Ringed Plover, Osprey, Cetti’s Warbler, Great Reed Warbler, Fan-tailed Warbler, White Wagtail, Crested Lark, Yellow Wagtail, Little Stint.


FLORA: There is a sufficient variety of wetland species as willows, plane trees, tamarisks, fine leaved rush, reeds. The eucalyptus trees accomplish the scene.

TIME: Spring is the suggested time for migratory birds and blooming flowers. Also appropriate time for visit is end of summer until November.
Map 24. Tavronitis River
Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*) particular breeding specie in Tavronitis
Insect in a reedmace
25. FALASARNA

LOCATION: On west coast, west of Kastelli Kissamou. In the area are saved the ruins of an ancient city. This city was the harbor of Polirrinia, which was 60 stadions far from Falasarna harbor. This name was a prehellenic one and comes from nymph Falasarni. This city was mentioned from Skilaka, from Greek Sicilian philosopher Dionysio Kallifonti, Stefano Vizantio and from Plinius. The harbor was a close one and was surrounded with a wall and connected to the sea with a canal. This unique security of the harbor with the impregnable stronghold as well as the rich lowland in the region shows that was an important naval and trading center.

DESCRIPTION: There are four main areas worth checking for birds. Firstly below the tavernas to the south is a rough area of scrub. Then to the north of the tavernas along the beach is a pool
where waders and herons can feed. Migrants can be observed following the coast north and out to sea amongst the small islands there is a possibility of Shags, Eleonora’s Falcons, Shearwaters and Gulls. Away from the shore the track through the olive groves and plastic greenhouse fields lead to the archaeological site can hold flycatchers, warblers, shrikes, wheatears and larks. The ridge of hillside above is very good for raptors and ravens. Finally the shore scrub around the archaeological site and the Hellenistic harbor has breeding Black-eared Wheatear, Subalpine Warbler, and Sardinian Warbler.

Limani: At the junction above the bay, at the right turn of Falasarna, go straight on to a small harbor and a transient pool amongst the plastic greenhouses. The substantialness of the area it seems from the many habitat types that you can find in such a small space. Reeds, seasonal marshlands, sand dunes, cedars, brushwood land, rock formations, palisades, islets and cultivations create a mosaic that offers a variety of habitats of flora and fauna. The majority of species can be found in the around reeds and marshland. Migration birds can be seen along the seashore, in the sand dunes and in the steep slopes towards north as well as in the small islets around the area.

**AVI FAUNA:** Shag, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Griffon Vulture, Lammergeier, Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Goshawk, Eleonora’s Falcon, Kestrel, Common Sandpiper, Alpine Swift, Rock Dove, Crested Lark, Woodlark, Short-toed Lark, House and Sand Martin, Raven, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Blue Rock Thrush, Black-eared Wheatear, Whinchat, Nightingale, Black-headed Bunting, Cetti’s Warbler, Great Reed Warbler, Pied Flycatcher, Woodchat Shrike, Garden Warbler, Whitethroat, Blackcap.


**FLORA:** The shoreline is one of the 3 places in Crete where man can see the beautiful endemic lily *Androcymbium Reichingert*. It is threatened with extinction and is protected with presidential enactments and from international legislation.
**TIME:** The best time to visit is spring from March until the early May and in autumn from August until November although winter as well as summer offer good opportunities of bird watching.

Map 25. Falasarna
Part of Flasarna marshes – North part

Swans in Falasarna
Falasarna