

# A Yachting Pilot For **CRETE**

## Crete Pilot

This yachtsman's pilot for the Greek island of Crete was begun originally as a set of cruising notes following our trip around Crete in October and November 2007 in our 45ft sailing yacht "Little Roundtop". Since that date the cruising notes have been gradually updated and added to as more ports and anchorages were visited, either by ourselves or by trusted close friends, and in 2010 it was felt that they were complete enough to be useful as a yachting pilot for Crete. The information in here is regularly updated, either through our own visits or by those of trusted friends, and the information in here is as up-to-date and as complete as we can make it. No pilot is ever "finished" of course and your input would be useful, so if you have any amendments, additions, useful photographs or general comments about this pilot please send them to me at [tonycrossuk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:tonycrossuk@yahoo.co.uk).

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The table of contents that follows contains hyper-links, you can click on any entry to go directly to that page. At the bottom of each page you will find a "[back to contents](#)" hyper-link that will take you straight back to the table of contents (as will this one).

All the Google Earth port and anchorage images and the location charts of Crete are shown with True North up. The lat/long positions are in the standard *ddd mm.m* format (degrees and decimal minutes, seconds are not used). The positions given for each location relate to the position of the yellow "cross-hair and circle" symbol shown on each Google Earth image. These are plotted using the WGS84 datum (which is the datum used by Google Earth and most paper charts and chart-plotters). However, the charts available for Crete are mostly based on very old surveys (including the charts used on chart-plotters) and experience has shown that they are inaccurate in many of the remoter areas of the island. We recommend using the "standard eyeball" when piloting close to shore!

Enjoy discovering the Crete we love!..... *Tony & Tessa Cross*



## **Crete Pilot**

### **A Note On Port Fees**

Apart from dedicated marinas (which have their own fee rates) the fee you should be charged for staying in a harbour or port anywhere in Greece is based on the length of your vessel (LOA) in metres. The fee is calculated as €0.30 times the LOA as a port entry fee (payable once per visit) plus, either €0.36 times the LOA (if you berth stern-to) or €0.45 times the LOA (if you berth alongside) per day you stay in the port (plus VAT of course, currently 23%). You may also be required to pay an €0.88 tax (once per visit) and this has to be paid at the local tax office (you cannot pay this at the port police office). The official chargeable period for berthing is midnight to midnight, most port police interpret this as “overnight” so that one night's stay is a one-day fee. You will find however that some port police stick rigidly to the midnight to midnight rule and they will charge you two days fee for an overnight stay. Heraklion is currently the only place on Crete with port police known to operate this way (which is one reason we avoid it). If you visit any of the south-coast ports check carefully what you are being asked to pay. They rarely see visiting yachts and they are well-known for getting the mooring fees calculation hopelessly wrong (charging the one-off €0.30 port entry fee for every day of your stay is a common mistake).

### **The Standard Disclaimer**

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information presented here, you use this pilot entirely at your own risk. Neither Tony Cross nor any of the contributors provide any guarantee or warranty as to the suitability or accuracy of this information. You alone are responsible for the navigation and safety of your vessel.

### **Acknowledgements**

The original and continuing research for this pilot is done mostly by ourselves, however since its publication we have received information from many people, and we're always grateful for input from others. We would particularly like to say a big thank-you for the information, updates, corrections, and photographs provided by the following people. Thanks guys!

**Mike Cooper** (*Sun Of Legende*)  
**Peter & Chris Heinzel** (*Talisker*)  
**Mike & Annie Paterson** (*Kandeed*)  
**Alois & Syliva Gasser** (*Algasi*)  
**Phil & Barbara Manby** (*Karma*)  
**Geoff Baldwin & Pamela Black** (*Dream*)  
**Mike & Grace Tompkins** (*Two Moons*)

**Alan & Jeannie Gee** (*Aldebaran*)  
**Edward & Ina Heukels** (*Gypsy Lady*)  
**Janez Zupancic** (*Delos*)  
**Gustaf & Harriet Enholm** (*Miss Sophie*)  
**Robin & Pauline Davis** (*Flapjack*)  
**Jan Grieveson & Elaine McKeith** (*Mychi*)  
**Ray & Hilary Groves** (*Koala*)

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## General Information On Crete

Crete is the largest of the Greek Islands and the fifth largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. It is located around 35 degrees North and 25 degrees East making it one of the most southerly places in Europe\*. Measuring 138 nautical miles long and 32 nautical miles wide (that's at its widest point, it is only 7 nautical miles wide at its narrowest point) with a total coastline length of 567 nautical miles, Crete has long north and south coasts and quite short east and west coasts.

The island is very mountainous consisting of three ranges of high mountains inter-spaced with high, but fairly flat, plateaus. Psiloritis (Mount Ida) at 2452m (8044ft) is the highest, but all three ranges have peaks well over 2100m (6890ft). They are thus as high as or, in the case of Psiloritis, higher than the British peaks of Snowdon (1085m) standing on top of Ben Nevis (1343m)! In the west of the island behind the town of Chania are the White Mountains (Lefka Oris, highest point 2452m) in the centre, behind the town of Heraklion is the Psiloritis range and in the east close to the town of Agios Nikolaos are the Oros Dikti (highest point 2148m). Between these ranges are high plateaus and lower plains, especially on the northern side of the island where the mountains are mostly set back from the sea a mile or two behind fairly flat, low-lying, coastal plains. The south side of the island is much more rugged and mountainous, the high mountains come almost to the coast, especially on the western end of the south coast.

The north coast contains several safe harbours/ports whilst the south coast has only three. That said, there are only three places in Crete where it is completely safe to leave a yacht unattended over winter, these are; Rethimnon, Heraklion† and Agios Nikolaos – all on the north coast. All the other harbours/ports are safe in normal weather but become less safe with strong winds in a specific direction (Chania is not safe in strong northerlies for example). We have indicated the dangerous wind conditions in the port descriptions.

The north coast is the route most yachts typically take when travelling the length of Crete. The safe ports and several relatively safe anchorages make for easy journeys in either direction along this coast. The south coast can be extremely dangerous, partly because of a near 200 mile fetch to the coast of Libya which can bring very large seas onto the south coast, and also because of the lack of safe ports. Palaiochora, on the western end of the south coast, has a fairly narrow entrance (about 35m wide) and depths of barely 4m in the entrance. Ierapetra, near the eastern end of the south coast, also has a narrow entrance (30m) and barely 2m depths in the entrance. The most secure and easily entered port, in the centre of the south coast, is Aghia Galini which has a 150m wide entrance, a huge enclosed area and depths of 5 to 6m almost everywhere.

The 17 Nm long eastern coast of Crete is fairly barren as far as yachts are concerned, there is one fishing harbour and two or three safe(ish) anchorages. The 25 Nm long western coast contains numerous bays, many of which are attractive anchorages, but they all face the prevailing summer wind direction which makes them unsuitable for overnight stays.

When all that is said Crete is not, as I have heard it described, “*a dangerous place to be in a yacht*”. It is no worse than almost anywhere else, you must treat the winds and the seas here with respect, but provided you do that Crete is a treasure-trove of sights waiting for you to find them.

For the purpose of describing the ports and anchorages here we have divided the island into four quarters; the north-west, north-east, south-east and south-west and, starting with the north-east quadrant, we will travel around the island in a clockwise direction. If you are planning your own circumnavigation we would suggest you also travel clockwise. This is because on the relatively exposed south-east corner (and assuming you cannot enter Ierapetra) if the weather deteriorates when travelling clockwise you are heading towards the safe port of Aghia Galini. Travelling anti-clockwise from Aghia Galini if the weather deteriorates you are heading only for fairly exposed anchorages until you reach Sitia.

\* Nisis Gavdos, off the south coast of Crete and administratively a part of Crete, is the most southerly place in Europe.

† The inner harbour/marina at Heraklion is completely full of local boats and it is extremely unlikely that you will find a winter berth here.

# Cretan Weather

The four seasons all have fairly distinct weather patterns on Crete. Generally speaking, in the summer the predominant winds are northerly and strong, in the winter they are often southerly and very strong, and in the spring and autumn they are variable but are usually light and there are many calm days. Those used to Cretan weather arrange their transits to and from the island in the spring (May/June) and autumn (October/November) calms.

## Summer Weather (July, August & September)

The principal weather feature in these months is the northerly Meltemi wind that blows usually in the afternoons, typically at force 6, but often at force 7 and sometimes even stronger. It doesn't blow every day but it does blow most days. On the northern coast of Crete this wind veers to north-easterly at the west end of the island as it forces its way through the Kithera Straits. Here it typically accelerates and brings with it large and confused seas (4m and up). On the east end of the island the Meltemi backs to the north-west as it forces its way through the Karpathos Strait. Here again it typically accelerates and produces equally large and confused seas (4m and up). On the south coast of Crete the Meltemi blows over the high mountains and produces very strong and unpredictable gusts all along the south coast, but these are particularly strong on the more mountainous western end. In addition, the many large and small gorges that open on the south coast accelerate the Metemi and produce very localised but nevertheless very fierce gusts. During the night and early morning the Meltemi is typically absent, though strong gradient winds, usually north-westerly, can often be found at these times.

## Autumn Weather (October, November & December)

Autumn is generally the calmest weather period on Crete. The Meltemi usually ends sometime in September and the winter southerlies have yet to arrive. All over Crete the weather is largely calm with many continuous days of calm weather or light winds. We made our circumnavigation in October and November for exactly this reason. The predominant wind direction is still north-westerly, though at this time of year the wind could blow from almost any direction. It is rarely strong however.

*Note: The Coptic Calendar predicts a storm over Crete during the third week of October. In the seven years we have been coming here we have experienced this storm on four of those years. You should expect changeable and possibly severe weather around the middle of October and be sure you are within reach of a safe port.*

## Winter Weather (January, February & March)

Winter on Crete can be stormy with mostly north-westerly winds, though very strong southerlies are common during the winter. Rain is common in the winter, often brought by storms, many of which are thundery. Wet weather rarely lasts for more than a couple of days at a time however. If it rains on a southerly wind the rain will contain red sand (from the Sahara) and that will stain sails, decks and almost anything else it comes into contact with. It is particularly difficult to wash out of sails, so I would strongly advise taking sails (and running rigging) down if wintering here.

## Spring Weather (April, May & June)

Like autumn, spring is a time of change in the weather on Crete. The strong southerlies have usually ended by late April and the summer Meltemi doesn't normally start until late June, and even then it begins quite slowly. The weather at this time is mostly calm and settled with many windless days, morning fog is not uncommon on the western end of the south coast for example. The predominant wind direction is still north-westerly however. For those who have over-wintered here it is important to leave Crete during this period, the best advice is to get as far away as possible as fast as possible before the winds and the seas in the straights at each end of Crete have had a chance to build. Our experience has been that the weather on Crete in the spring is noticeably less settled than the autumn weather.



## Weather Forecasts For Crete

There are two main sources of weather information for Crete; the daily VHF weather broadcasts (and NAVTEX transmissions) and Internet-based services. The forecasts from the port police are typically the VHF ones.

The VHF broadcasts and NAVTEX transmissions are the same forecast and have the advantage of being prepared by real weather forecasters (the Hellenic National Meteorological Service - HNMS) and they take some account of local weather patterns and local geography. Their main disadvantage is that they are fairly light on information, forecasting only the wind speed, direction and visibility, and they are limited to the day of the broadcast, with only a very general outlook for the next 12 hours at the end.

The VHF weather broadcasts are transmitted four times a day, every day, at **0600, 1000, 1600 and 2200 UTC**. There are four VHF transmitters on Crete covering the whole island:

Moustakos (west Crete) on channel **04**

Knossos (central north Crete) on channel **83**

Sitia (east Crete) on channel **85**

Phaestos (central south Crete) on channel **27**

The NAVTEX forecast is also transmitted four times a day, every day, at **0510, 0910, 1710, and 2100 UTC** from the Heraklion transmitter (code letter **H**). They can also be viewed online at the [HNMS](#) website.

For both the VHF broadcasts and the NAVTEX transmissions the sea areas relating to Crete are labelled **Southwest Kritiko, Southeast Kritiko Ierapetra, West Kritiko and East Kritiko**.

Southwest Kritiko and Southeast Kritiko Ierapetra cover huge sea areas, all the way from the north African coast up to the south coast of Crete (actually up to the 35<sup>th</sup> parallel) and from 18° 30' E to 30° E. The border between them is at 025° E (which is just west of the longitude of Heraklion). The weather you experience close to Crete may be markedly different from the forecast for these areas (they forecast the highest winds anywhere in the sea area).

West Kritiko and East Kritiko are much smaller, covering the areas from the 35<sup>th</sup> parallel up to the 36<sup>th</sup> parallel and between the east and west ends of Crete (from 23° 30' E to 26° 20' E). The boundary between them is at 025° 20' E (just east of the longitude of Heraklion). The weather you experience here should be much closer to that forecast.

The Internet-based weather services provide more detailed and longer-term forecasts, often up to 7 or more days ahead and often with resolutions down to a few kilometres. Almost all of them are derived from numerical computer models and most use the data from the NOAA GFS model, this uses a ½-degree grid length (55½km) and is run every 6 hours. Meso-scale local forecasts are generated by more specialised computer models which typically use the GFS data for their initial conditions and which may also include real weather data or take account of local topography. These models can produce local forecasts with grid lengths of 9km or less.

The two main forecast delivery methods are to download grib files to a grib-aware application on your PC or tablet, or to display weather information directly in your web browser.

The two commonest grib-based services that cover Crete are [Ugrib](#) and [Zygrib](#). Both allow you to download the latest grib files and display the resulting forecast in the associated application on your PC or tablet. Zygrib displays a wider range of weather data than Ugrib and most people find Zygrib's displays easier to read and use.

There are a plethora of websites that provide web-based forecasts covering Crete and everyone has their personal favourite. Some popular weather sites are, [PassageWeather](#), [Poseidon](#), [PredictWind](#), [Athens Observatory](#), [WindGuru](#), [WindFinder](#), [WeatherOnline](#), [ECMWF](#), [University of Athens](#), and [Meteo.gr](#). We would advise you to carefully check the source data of each forecast you use to be sure you don't rely on two apparently different forecasts which in fact come from exactly the same computer model!

Internet-based forecasts are very useful for planning purposes but it would be unwise to rely on them alone, especially around a rugged island like Crete. We recommend that you always listen to the VHF weather forecasts, or monitor the NAVTEX weather broadcasts, and also use your own observations and experience.

*Computer models can only produce statistical predictions, they are not a statement of fact even though they are often presented as such. The weather does not know itself to within a Beaufort force, neither do human forecasters, nor computer models. It's always better to be in port wishing you were at sea than to be at sea wishing you were in port!*

## The North-East Coast Of Crete



### *Ports & anchorages on the north-east coast of Crete*

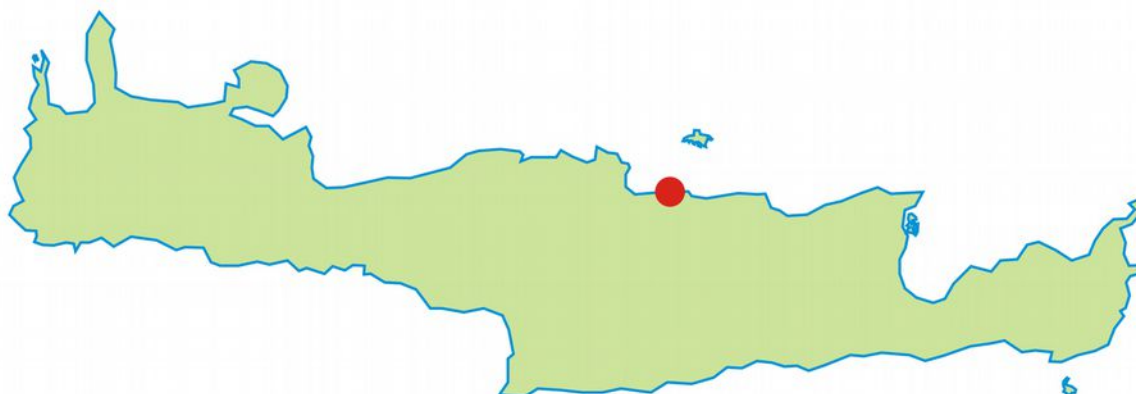
The north-east coast of Crete contains three of the safe north-coast ports; Heraklion, Agios Nikolaos Marina and Sitia. Also to be found here are the smaller ports of Gouves Marina, Hersonisos, Malia, Milatos and Kourmenos. Gouves Marina is a small private marina associated with a hotel complex, it is quite exposed and it's not safe in strong northerlies. Hersonisos, Milatos and Kourmenos are fishing ports full of local boats and their laid moorings, Hersonisos and Milatos are shallow (barely 2 metres). Malia is quite large and mostly empty but its entrance is silting up and depths on the quay are variable due to silting, it's not a particularly attractive place to be either. The anchorages at Nisis Dhia and Spinalonga are safe in most normal weather and the anchorages at Vai and Erimoupolis are safe only in relatively calm weather.

This corner of Crete is dominated by the large bay of Mirabello which is a popular sailing area and has been used in the past for the IMS600 World Championships. There are several attractive-looking anchorages on the east side of this bay, however the prevailing northwesterly winds (strong in the summer) blow straight into these anchorages making them unsuitable for a night stop. Some shelter from the northwesterly winds can be found in the small bays on the east side of Nisis Psira, the large island halfway up the east side of the Bay of Mirabello.

There are a couple of fair weather anchorages on the Dragonara Islands (just north of Sitia) but they are very exposed and fairly uncomfortable even in calm weather so we have not included them here.

## Heraklion

(35° 21.0' N 025° 9.4' E)



**Dangers:** Heraklion is the capital city and main port of Crete and large ferries, freighters and tripper boats come and go regularly, so a very good lookout must be kept when entering or leaving. In addition, large ferries often leave their berth with little or no warning so you must stay alert and be ready to take evasive action at all times when inside the port.

We first visited Heraklion in 2006 and had a very bad experience, the harbour master/marina manager was the most unfriendly and unhelpful we have ever met anywhere in Greece. Friends who visited here in subsequent years also reported a similarly bad experience. Consequently in earlier versions of this pilot we recommended that visitors avoid Heraklion altogether. However, friends who have visited recently (in 2011) report that the harbour master/marina manager has changed and that the mooring situation here is now greatly improved. The following information is based on these recent experiences.



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There are no dedicated visitors berths in the Venetian harbour/marina, all berths are occupied by local boats, so the only spaces you will find here are those belonging to boats that are temporarily elsewhere. You should either berth where directed or where convenient and you should be prepared to move at short notice if the boat whose berth you are in returns early or unexpectedly (so you cannot leave your boat unattended for long). Sadly there is no centralised record of which berths are available and for how long, so it's very much a hit-and-miss affair if you take a "free" berth in here. In the summer months there are often empty berths but your chances of finding a winter berth here lie somewhere between zero and none.

If the Venetian harbour/marina is full you will be berthed stern-to your own anchor on the wall just outside. Here you will be buffeted by the wash of the frequent and large ferries and freighters as they enter and leave their berths. In addition the bottom in this area is fouled by very large chains and concrete blocks which are (or were) used as moorings by the large freighters and ferries. A diver must be hired if you foul one of these (as has happened to a boat we know). You will not be allowed to dive in the harbour yourself, always assuming you wanted to get into the very dirty water here in the first place! In 2012 a diver here cost €100 to free an anchor.

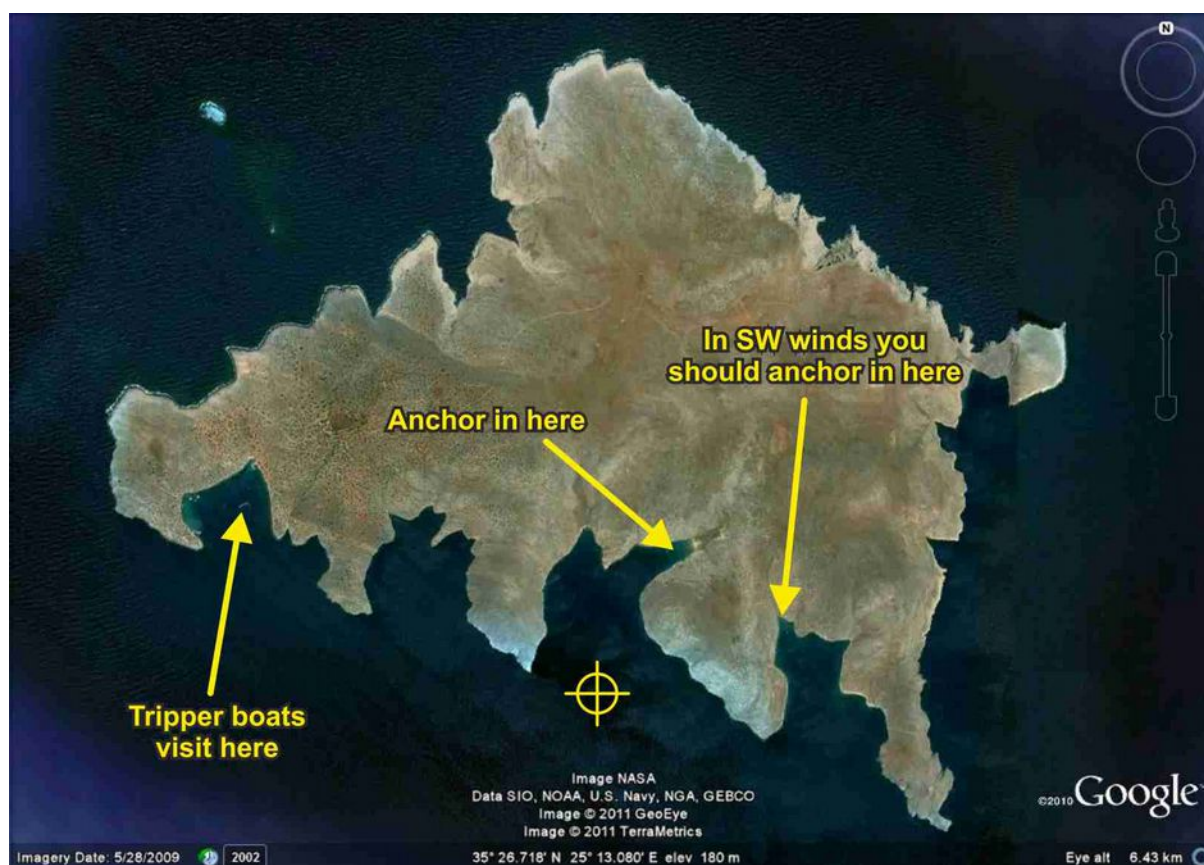
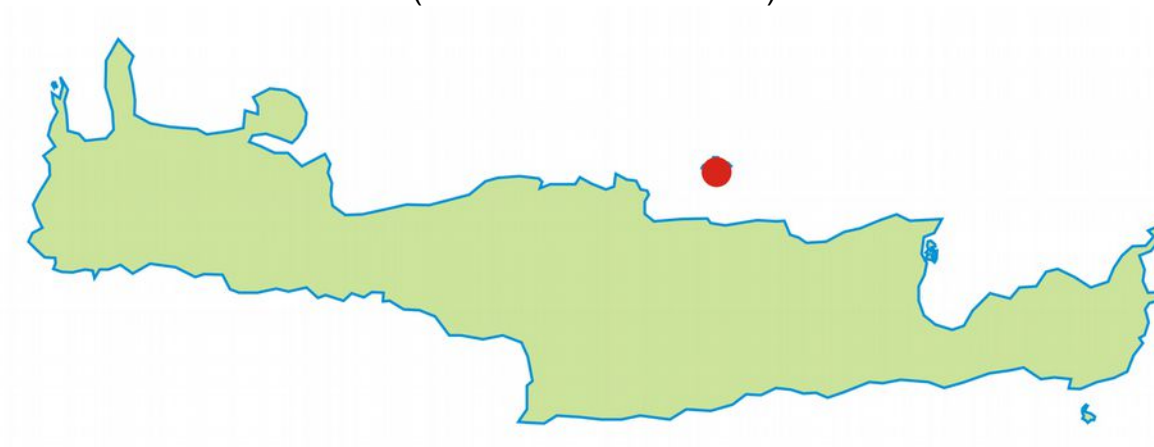
The shelter inside the Venetian harbour/marina is very good, except in storm force northerlies/north-westerlies (F9 or greater) when the sea can come over the outer wall causing a dangerous surge inside the marina. However these sorts of conditions are usually only experienced in the winter and then only rarely. The shelter on the wall just outside the Venetian harbour/marina is very good in most conditions (apart from the ferry wash).

There is a fuel berth in the entrance to the Venetian harbour/marina but the bottom nearby is littered with large concrete blocks and the depth alongside appears to be less than 2 metres. We stopped here for fuel on a friends yacht drawing 1.8m and we were occasionally bumping the blocks on the bottom in the gentle swell.

Heraklion is a busy and bustling major city, though there are many interesting archaeological remains and museums. All the major shops and stores can be found here as well as countless restaurants and bars and it provides easy access to the main airport. There is a good chandlers (Captain Jack's) close to the bus station outside the port. If you like cities you will probably enjoy Heraklion, if you don't then it is best avoided.

## Nisis Dhia

(35° 25.9' N 025° 13.0' E)



**Dangers:** *None.*

Nisis Dhia is the island 6 miles north of Heraklion and there is a beautiful and deserted anchorage at Ormos Mesaïos here. This is the third inlet from the west, the only one with a dog-leg. The bottom shelves slowly and is all sand until very close inshore when small stones cover the bottom. The depth is good everywhere and remains deep very close to the rocky cliff-like sides of the small bay, so anchor where convenient. There is a laid mooring for tripper boats (marked with plastic pots) that is anchored via a heavy ground-chain to a 45-gallon barrel of concrete on the seabed, adequate as a mooring for most small yachts after the tripper boat has left (or out of season).

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The shelter is good in Ormos Mesaaios with winds in the northern and eastern sectors, but less good when the wind is in the south or west. In these winds it is reported by friends that shelter can be found at the head of the next bay to the east, though we have not been in there ourselves. We have had reports that in westerlies it gets very rolly in this bay, although in south-westerlies it was quite smooth!

Nisis Dhia is uninhabited, though there is a small chapel in a cave at the end of Ormos Mesaaios. Tripper boats visit the island every day, though they drop off their tourists at the western bay. Some tripper boats visit Ormos Mesaaios where they use the laid mooring reported above, but they stay only an hour or so. We recommend Nisis Dhia, both as an isolated and secluded anchorage, and as an ideal alternative to Heraklion.

Notes: My CMAP charts show an isolated rock on the southern side of the entrance to Ormos Mesaaios, this rock does not exist, there is clear water right across the entrance. On several occasions we have seen fishermen lay nets almost right across the entrance to Ormos Mesaaios in the evening which they then recover at first light. We have no idea what depth of water there may be over these nets.





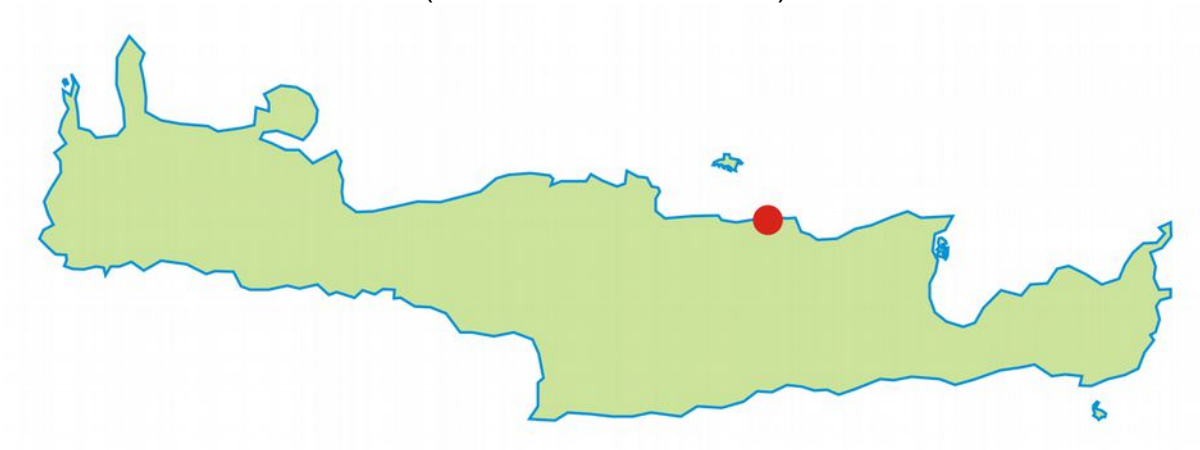
*Views of Nisis Dhia*





## Porto Gouves Marina

(35° 20.2' N 025° 18.2' E)



**Dangers:** There is a shallow area (charted 3m) just west of the entrance extending northwards for about 500m. We stood off about half a mile until due north of the entrance and then motored due south straight in. Less than a mile to the east is a small fishing harbour, do not mistake this for Gouves Marina, the depths in the fishing harbour are shallow and there is no proper quay to moor to either.

Porto Gouves Marina is a privately owned leisure marina, it's part of the Marina Hotel complex which lies immediately behind it. The marina is open only between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> October each year and entry is not allowed outside these dates. The northern quay has laid moorings for 6 yachts from 13m to 15m length and the middle quay (northern side) has laid moorings for 6 yachts of 13m length or less. The southern part of the marina is for small local boats only, but there is room for longer boats alongside the end of the northern quay. Depths everywhere appear to be at least 3m. Water and electricity boxes are available close to all berths. The

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angled quay immediately on the left on entering is where the mariner's office is located, this is used as an arrival quay prior to a berth being allocated.

The shelter in here is extremely poor. Even light northerly winds produce a swell inside the marina and in strong northerlies the sea comes over the outer wall and the surge inside sprays onto the quays making it untenable (we could clearly see where the sea had come over the outer wall and surged onto the quays inside during a very recent NW near gale 7). Since the summer Meltemi is a strong northerly wind producing a sizeable swell it is difficult to imagine why the marina was ever built! In bad weather don't even think about heading for Porto Gouves, despite its problems Heraklion is only 7 miles away and is much safer.

The marina can be difficult to see until close in, the hillside a mile or so behind the marina has two very large and very visible fixed radar dishes on top. Closer in the boxy concrete hotel complex can be seen and the marina is directly in front of it.

We visited here in late October 2010 and the marina was already closed down. We were charged nothing for our one-night stay but earlier in the season we would have been charged €20 per night (inc water and electricity) for our 45ft yacht. The marina has its own website at <http://www.portogouves.gr>.

The Marina Hotel complex is a 1960's style concrete box and much of the surrounding area has the same feel. We would not have been surprised to see Kiss-Me-Quick hats and candyfloss for sale. There are many tavernas and bars nearby (in season) but the area has a cheap feel about it. Our honest opinion is that Porto Gouves marina is something of a white elephant, we have no plans to stay here again and we wouldn't recommend it.

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## *Views of Porto Gouves marina*

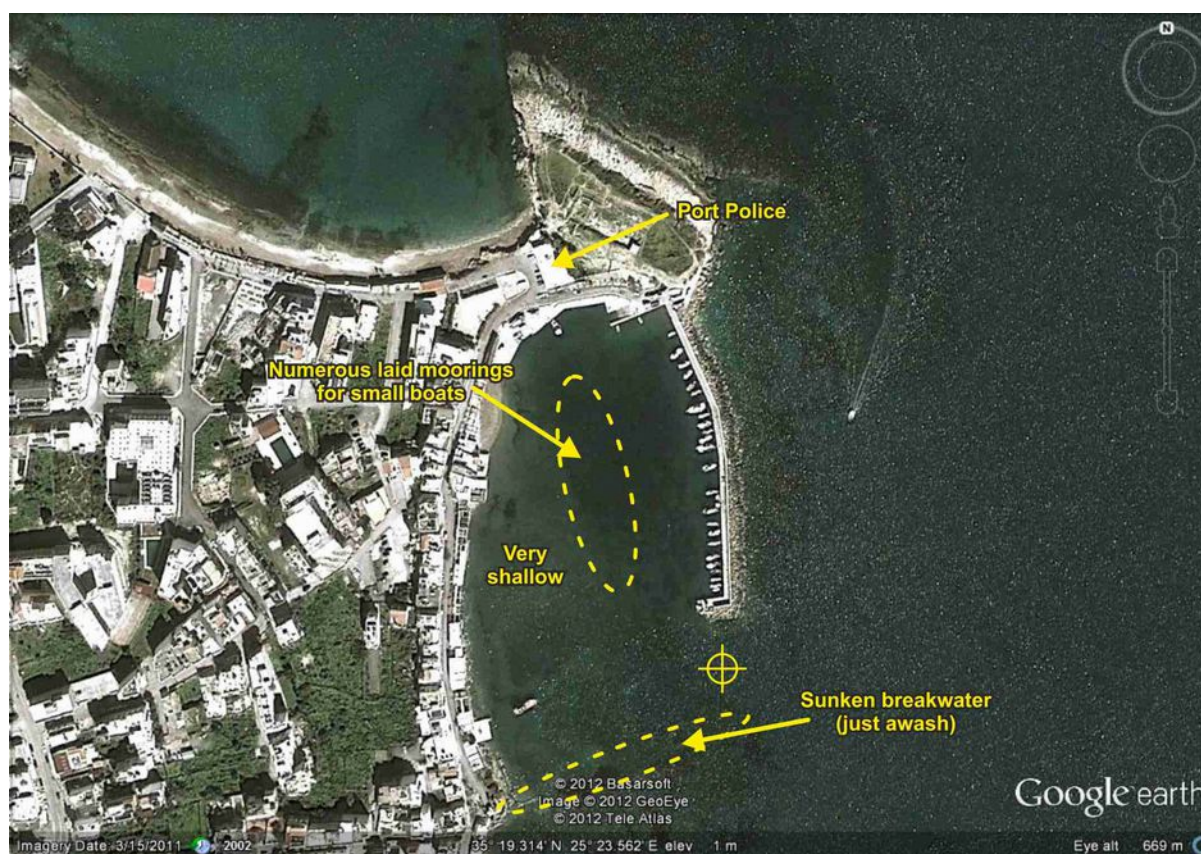
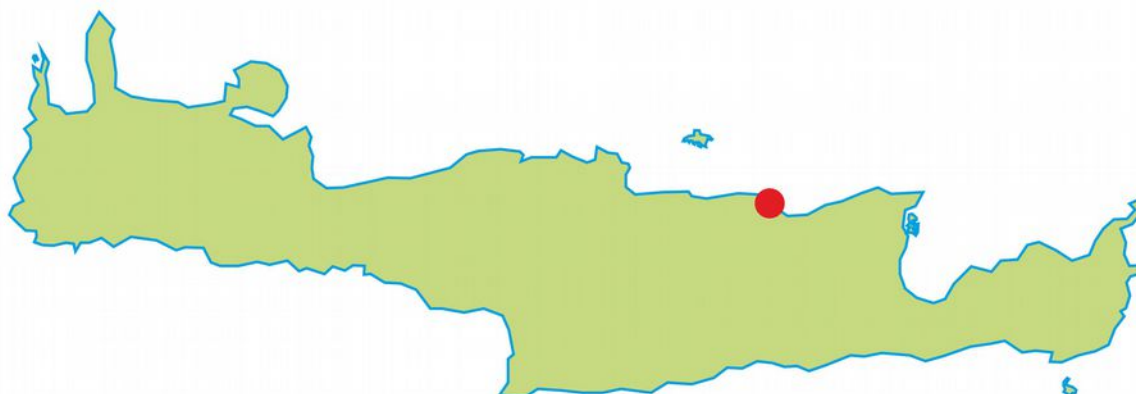


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## Hersonisos

(35° 19.2' N 025° 23.6' E)



**Dangers:** *There is a sunken breakwater that is just awash immediately south of the entrance. Inside there are numerous laid moorings for small boats, inshore of these it is very shallow.*

We have never been to Hersonisos in our boat but we have visited by car. The entrance looks to be straightforward, although there is an old sunken breakwater that is just awash immediately south of the entrance. Once inside there are numerous laid moorings for small boats right in the centre of the harbour extending almost the full length of it, inshore of these moorings (ie. west of them) it is very shallow (less than 1m). According to friends, between these laid moorings and the quay there is 3 metres of depth along most of the length of the quay (except close to the northern end) until about 20 metres off the quay when it begins to shallow.

## Crete Pilot

The quay is completely full of local boats, though you may possibly find a berth here when boats are absent. You should of course be prepared to be asked to move if the boat whose berth you are in returns. The depths close to the quay appear to be barely 2 metres for most of its length, the deepest area is in the centre of the quay. There is significant rubble at the base of the quay in several places so care is needed if mooring stern-to. We would recommend anchoring outside and reconnoitring in the dinghy before coming in.

There is a Port Police office in the port but friends have told us (in 2012) that they received no answer from them despite repeated calls on VHF channel 16, and they were of no help either in helping them to find a free berth.

The shelter here would appear to be good in most northerly and westerly winds, less good in southerly, and possibly easterly, blows.

Hersonisos is a lively tourist town, there are many bars and tavernas (and nightclubs it seems) alongside the harbour. It looks like it might be noisy at night! The main town is a short walk away, this is also lively, touristy, and quite large, it's a long walk both to and along the main street.

Because of the limited free space and the uncertain depths on the quay we have no plans to visit here in Little Roundtop.



## Crete Pilot



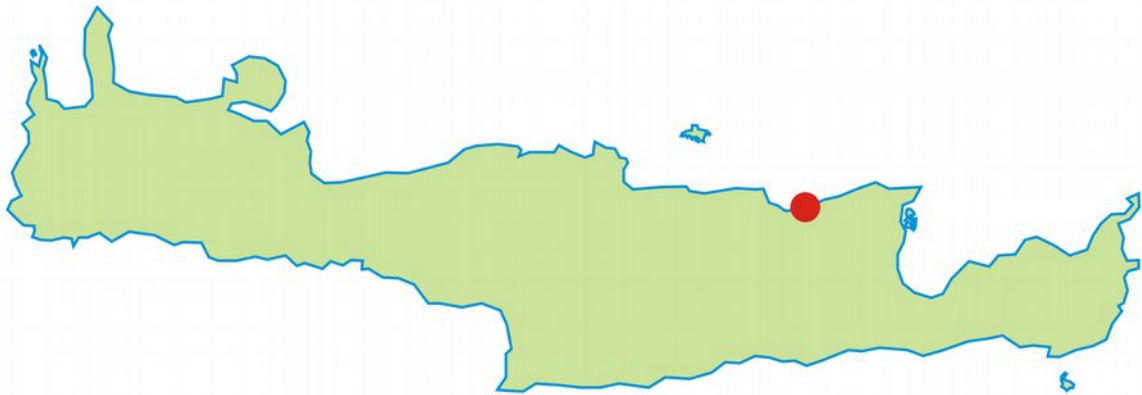
*Views of Hersonisos*





## Malia

(35° 17.8' N 025° 28.5' E)



**Dangers:** *The entrance to Malia is badly silted, depths of around 2.5m exist but only close to the outer wall. In addition, several sandbanks have formed along the inside of the outer quay reducing depths there well below 2m in places. It would be dangerous to attempt to enter here in bad weather.*

We have never been in to Malia by boat though we have a friend who has (in October 2009) in his 1.5m draught yacht. We have however visited here by car. Our friend reports that the entrance is badly silted on the landward side, he ran aground (on sand) when entering in the middle of the entrance the first time. He reports at least 2.5m depth close to the northern quay in the entrance, once inside there is 2.5m to 3m along most of this quay. We can confirm that there are sandbanks on the south side of the entrance and we have also seen several large sandbanks that have formed close along the inside of the quay reducing depths to well below 2m in places. Great care is needed if mooring stern-to here. The depth quickly shallows closer to the shore and the smaller



## Crete Pilot

fishing boat harbour in the south-west corner. Tripper boats visit here daily in the summer and they tend to want the deeper places on the quay. There is no charge to stay in Malia, though there is no water or electricity available either.

Shelter from the normal NW winds were reported by our friend to be good, though a small swell crept in, especially near the outer end of the northern mole in the afternoon north-westerly breeze. The high sea wall suggests that Malia might offer reasonable shelter in strong northerly or north-westerly winds but you would need to be inside before the bad weather arrived, it would be dangerous to attempt to enter here in bad weather.

There are a couple of tavernas just outside the harbour but little else. There are no supermarkets or shops of any kind within reasonable walking distance.

Malia port is a disused and very run-down former commercial port that is no longer in working use. Dereliction and decay are the key words to describe it and there is nothing attractive about either the port or the area around it. When we visited by car there was the rusting hulk of a large car ferry moored alongside the quay (seemingly abandoned) and two other rusting hulks in the north-west corner, one of which has sunk and now lies partly above and partly below water.

The nearby town of Malia is the major 18-30's destination on Crete and in the summer the town is packed full of very young tourists (mostly British) looking to drink and party most of the time. The further along the beach you walk towards the town (west of the port) the more likely you are to encounter these tourists. Our friend reported that very few of them seem to walk as far as the harbour however and he didn't experience any noise or disturbance. East of the port the sandy Malia beach continues and is almost deserted and largely unspoiled in this area.

We have no plans to visit Malia in Little Roundtop and we can find very little to recommend about the place.

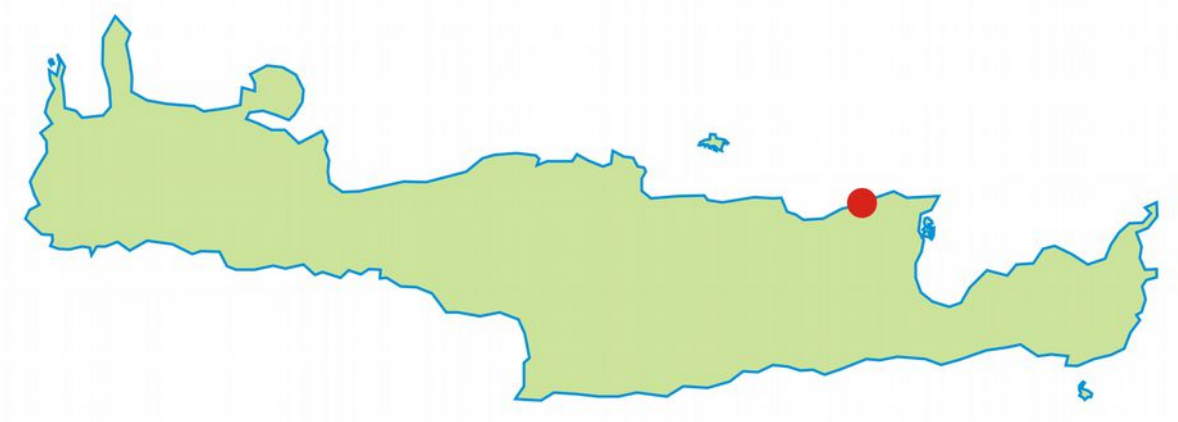


*Views of Malia*



## Milatos

(35° 19.2' N 025° 33.7' E)



**Dangers:** Milatos is not recommended for yachts drawing more than 2 metres. The entrance has a rocky bottom and there are many below water rocks inside the harbour that appear to have less than 2 metres of water over them, extreme care is needed. It would be dangerous to attempt to enter here in bad weather.

We have not visited Milatos by boat though friends have (in September 2011) in their 1.9m draught yacht. We have however been here by car. Our friends report that the depths in the immediate area of the entrance were around 2.5 metres and they found depths of just over 2 metres towards the outside end of the quay. From the land we could see that the bottom in the entrance is rocky, giving way to mostly sand once inside, so a grounding in the entrance would be serious. Our friends berthed alongside the very end of the outer quay in just over 2 metres of water, further along this quay they reported the depths appeared to be slightly less than this and



## Crete Pilot

we can confirm that it shallows the further in you go. The wind and seas were calm on the day they visited and they spent a safe night here. In anything other than calm weather however Milatos would probably be untenable, just getting inside would be very dangerous.

On the day we visited by car a tripper boat was occupying the space our friends had used at the far end of the quay. They told us that tripper boats visit Milatos every day in the summer but that this space should be available after 4pm. The small group of tavernas around the harbour seem to survive on this daily influx of tourists so you would make yourself extremely unpopular where you to still be here when a tripper boat arrived in the morning....

Inside the harbour our friends reported a number of below water rocks all with considerably less than 2 metres of water over them. In rough weather they believed that these rocks might be very difficult to spot making the harbour a very dangerous place to be. We were not able to see these rocks on the day we were there even though it was calm, but it would be wise to assume that they are there and take extreme care when manoeuvring inside the port.

Milatos port is a pretty place, there are several tavernas close to the harbour and several more a short walk away. There are no supermarkets or shops within reasonable walking distance however. The town of Milatos itself is several kilometres inland and there are very few shops even there.

We have no plans to visit here in Little Roundtop.



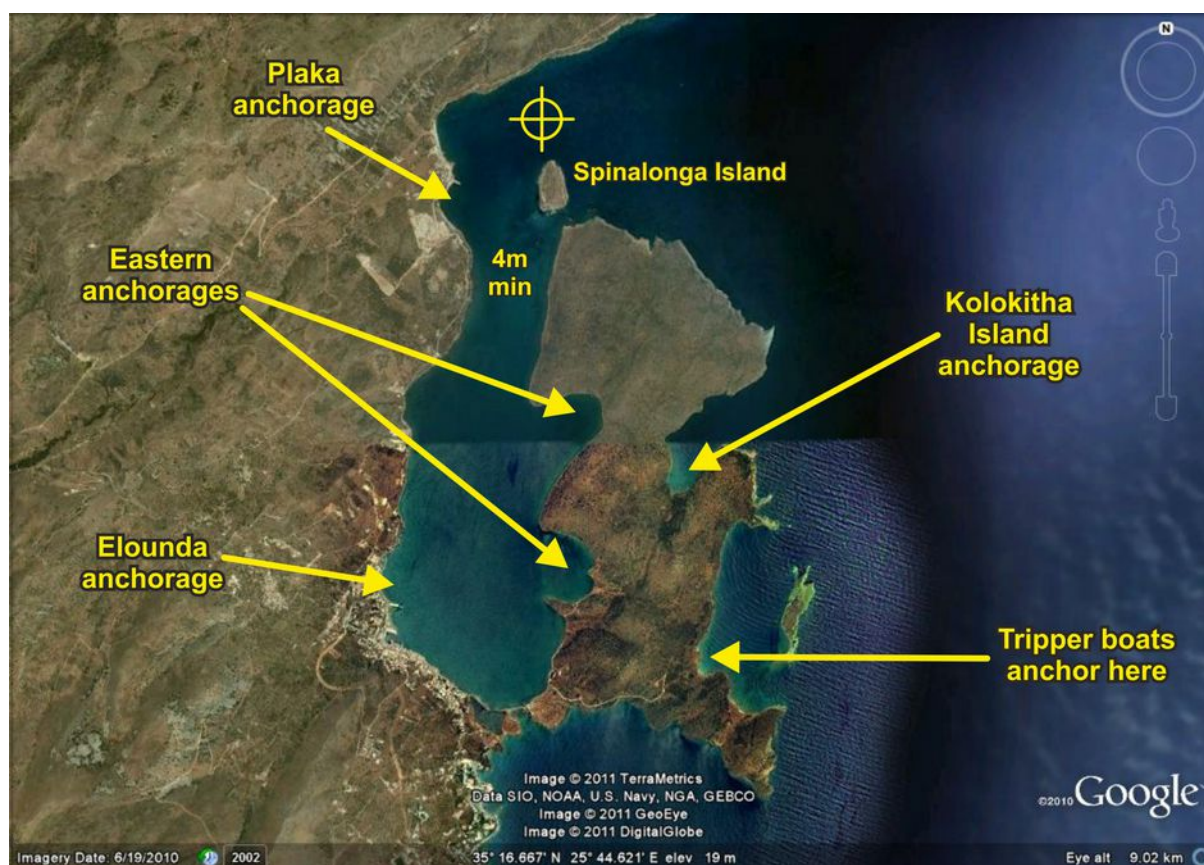
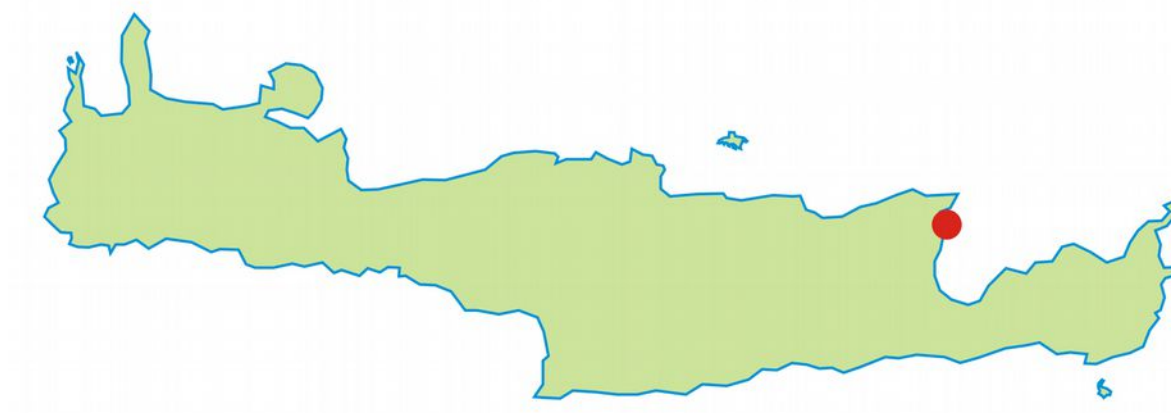


*Views of Milatos*



## Spinalonga Lagoon

(35° 18.0' N 025° 44.2' E)



**Dangers:** *In summer north-westerly winds the south-east side of Cape Ioannis (just before the entrance to Spinalonga Lagoon) often experiences very strong gusts (50 to 60 knots) coming down off the high ground where the wind-farm is located. In southerlies (rare in the summer) the wind and seas off the north-west side of the cape are often stronger than those in the Bay of Mirabello. If the wind is strong in any direction give the cape a good offing (the locals recommend 2 miles) and be ready to reef.*

Spinalonga Lagoon is a large shallow bay with Spinalonga Island at the entrance and the town of Elounda at the base. Depth everywhere is no more than 8 metres; though it shallows to at least 4 metres across the entrance just south of Spinalonga Island for a distance of about 100 metres. You should stay close to the centre of the bay whilst passing over this.



## Crete Pilot

There are a number of places you can anchor; off the town of Plaka opposite Spinalonga Island, the depth here shallows slowly to the shore from about 4 metres. You may be subject to severe gusts from the high ground to the north (where the wind farm is located).

There are two bays on the east side where you can anchor, both are around 6 metres deep with sandy bottoms shallowing quite quickly close to the shore. The shoreline here is deserted and both are subject to westerly gusts coming through the gaps in the high ground on the eastern side of the bay, these can be severe. Rubbish blown by the wind tends to accumulate on the beaches here making them unsightly, the southernmost bay suffers more from this problem, it's also the least attractive of the two bays. The north-eastern corner of the northern bay is used to moor tripper boats for the winter and there are laid moorings here for them (easily visible). During the summer tripper boats often use these moorings to bring tourists to the small beach for the day so you should keep well clear of this corner of the bay. The northern bay is a delightfully quiet anchorage once the tripper boats have left for the day and it's highly recommended, it's our favourite anchorage in the lagoon.

There is a small bay just north of the town of Elounda and just north of the quay used by large tripper boats. The depth here shallows slowly from about 5 metres and the bottom is muddy sand everywhere. This anchorage is also subject to westerly gusts coming through the gaps in the high ground on the eastern side of the bay and these can be severe. This bay is the most popular anchorage being close to the town of Elounda which has many tavernas and a good supermarket. Further south into the bay the depth shallows and the bottom becomes stony, there are no good anchorages in the southern end of the bay.

On the eastern side of Kolokitha Island (which forms the eastern side of the lagoon) there is an anchorage with much better shelter from the north-west and west winds, though it is totally isolated and completely open to the north-east. Anchor in the southern of the two small bays on sand, depths here are at least 5 metres even close in to the shoreline.

South of this bay is a larger bay formed by a smaller island (Kolokithia) and Kolokitha Island (it's called Kolokithia Bay). In the south is a tiny sandy beach which makes a pleasant anchorage. Unfortunately several largish tripper boats visit here daily in the summer bringing hordes of noisy tourists. It is possible to anchor in the northern part of the bay (close to the small church) though we have never done so ourselves.

There are two entrances to Kolokithia Bay, one in the north and one in the south. The northern entrance is deep but with a small rock awash (clearly visible) in the western side of the entrance. The southern entrance is shallower and there is a sand bar that extends south from Kolokithia Island for about half the width of the entrance. Take great care when using this entrance for the first time.



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*Views of Spinalonga Lagoon*

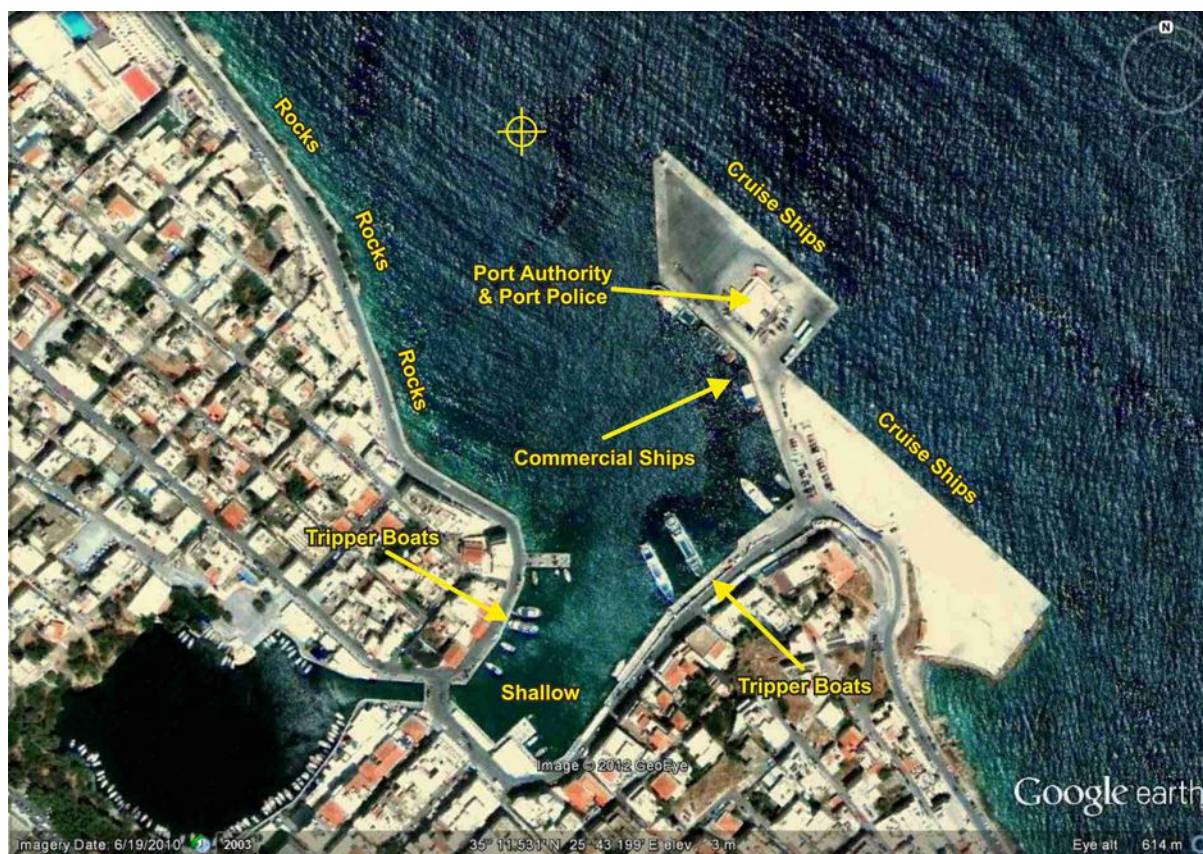
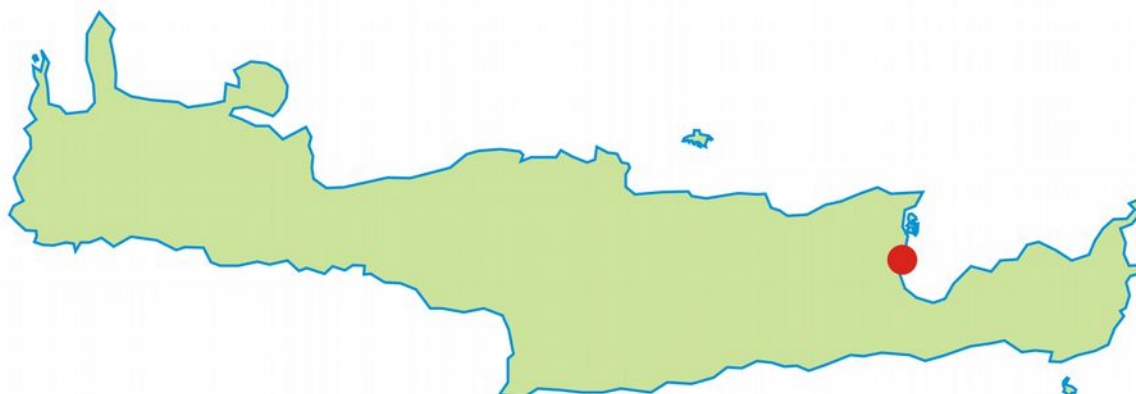


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# Agios Nikolaos Port

(35° 11.6' N 025° 43.1' E)



**Dangers:** *Private leisure vessels under 22 metres in length will be turned away from the port and directed to the marina. Do not attempt to moor here without prior permission from the port authority.*

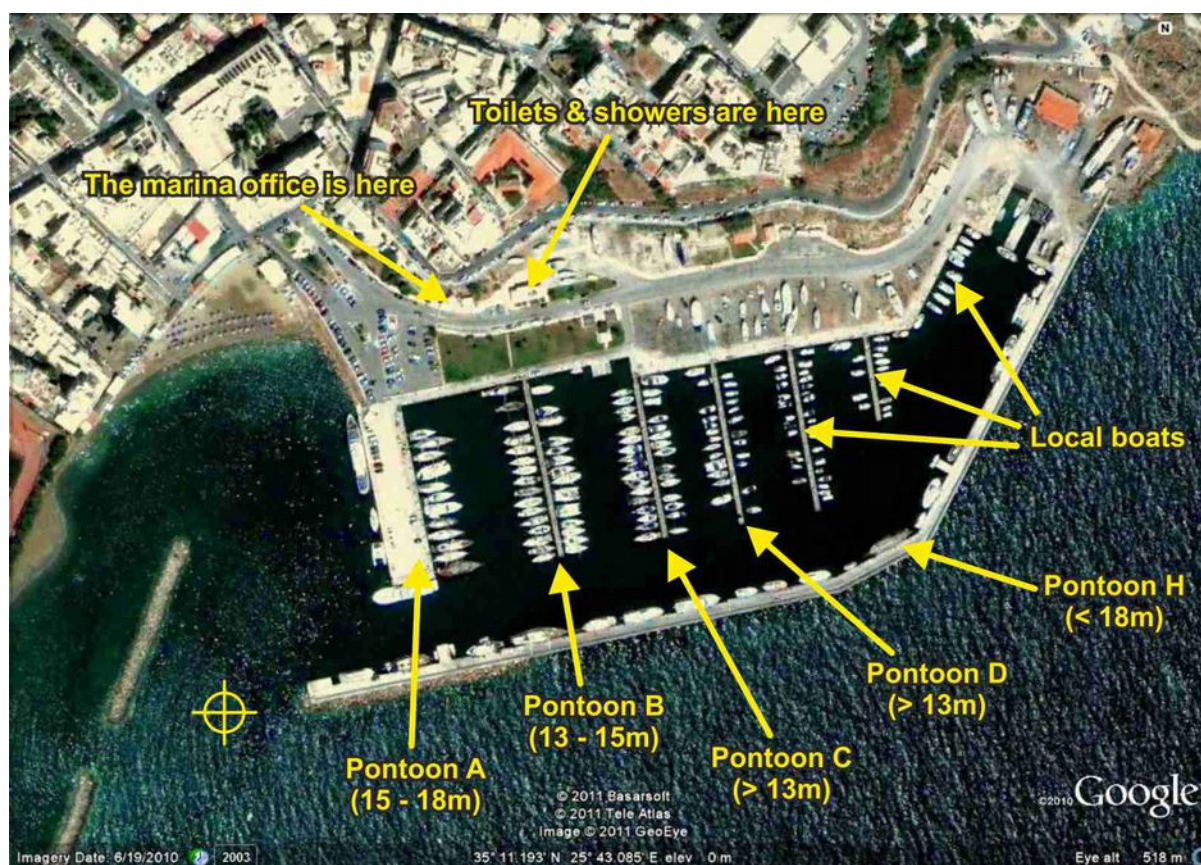
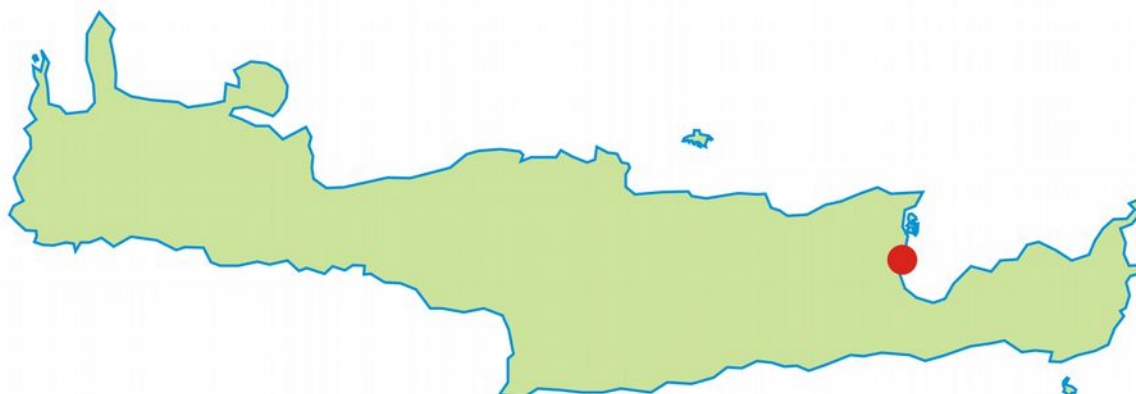
The port of Agios Nikolaos is a commercial port and there are no moorings available for private leisure vessels without prior permission. Private leisure vessels under 22 metres in length are routinely turned away and directed to the marina. You should not attempt to moor here without permission from the port authority (Tel: +30 8410 22312 & 90108 email: [agni@yen.gr](mailto:agni@yen.gr)). Their office is the large building on the main quay.

The shelter here is poor for smaller vessels in any case, the predominant north-westerly wind blows straight into the main harbour and a swell works its way in here too. In bad weather even the tripper boats move round to the marina or to a sheltered anchorage!



## Agios Nikolaos Marina

(35° 11.1' N 025° 42.9' E)



**Dangers:** *The wind in the vicinity of the marina is often strong and gusty, mostly either from the north-west or the south-east, manoeuvring inside the marina can be tricky in these winds. Also beware of the wave-breaker reefs just west of the entrance (seen in the Google Earth image above). These have a yellow flashing light at each end at night.*

Agios Nikolaos marina is an excellent marina with several pontoons for visiting yachts, bowlines tailed to the pontoons (2 per yacht on most pontoons) water and electricity at every berth, free wi-fi Internet, and a good, if small, shower and toilet block. The marina is safe in all conditions, though a surge can develop with strong north-easterlies and this can be severe. Metal springs are commonly used in shore lines for boats left over the winter, especially on heavier boats. A strong breeze blows through the marina on most days, this can be very strong (though not dangerous) in southerlies.

## Crete Pilot

The marina has a 65 ton travel-hoist and cradles for hard-standing. Electricity is available in most locations on the hard though water on the hard is not so easily found. There is no fuel berth in the marina but several local petrol stations operate a tanker service to the marina for refuelling (100 litres minimum). There is a small chandlers directly outside the marina and another a short walk away, there are local workers who can undertake most yacht repairs.

The entrance is straightforward but you must call Agios Nikolaos Marina on VHF channel 72 before entering and berth where directed. If there is no answer from the marina then go alongside the outer (western) side of pontoon A, the mariner's office is at the root of this pontoon.

The attractive town of Agios Nikolaos is directly outside the marina, so there is easy walking access to supermarkets, bars, tavernas and banks (most tavernas remain open throughout the winter). There is a local shop that will refill or exchange gas bottles. Discount car rental is available for marina customers from a local agent.

In the summer the restaurants and bars around the popular lake area (in particular) use touts to try and encourage patronage. This soon becomes annoying and since you mostly pay for the view in these places rather than the food or the service we recommend that you look, take your pictures, and then eat elsewhere!

The marina is a popular and lively place to over-winter and an increasing number of live-aboard yachts spend the winter here. In recent years the marina has been full over winter so advance booking is essential, a deposit will be required. Call Despina Karteri on +30 284 108 2384/5 or email [depaman@otenet.gr](mailto:depaman@otenet.gr) for information and bookings. The marina has its own website at: <http://www.marinaofaghiosnikolaos.gr/>. *During the current financial crisis in Greece the marina office is not usually open on Saturday and Sundays. The marinero (on duty 24-hours 7-days a week) can usually help when the office is closed.*

Note: You are expected to check in and out with the Port Police (office in the main commercial port) and they will want to see your marina receipt when you leave, provided you have one they make no extra charges. Occasionally they will visit the marina and check all the boats against the list of those which have checked in, they can, and often do, levy serious fines for not checking in! You are however permitted to leave the marina, sail anywhere within the large Bay of Mirabello (which includes the popular Spinalonga Lagoon) and return to the marina without checking out and back in again.



## Crete Pilot

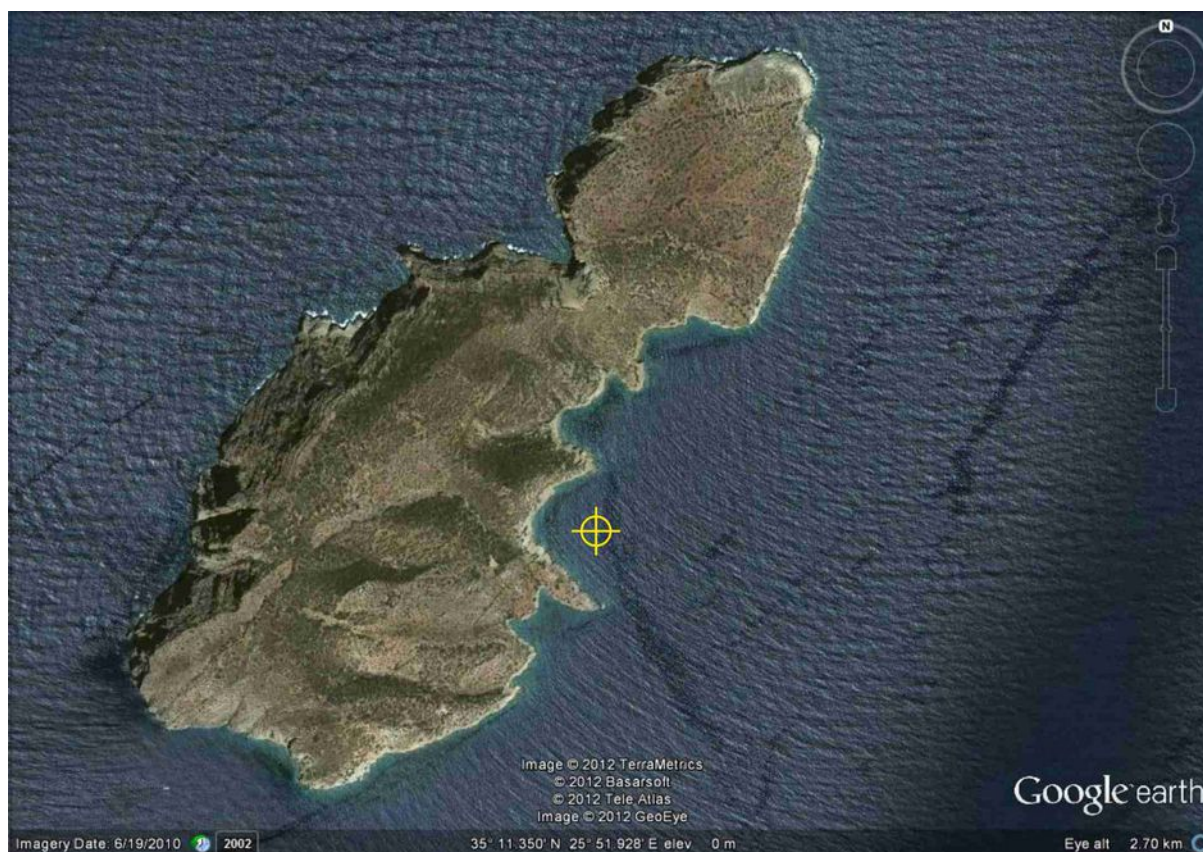
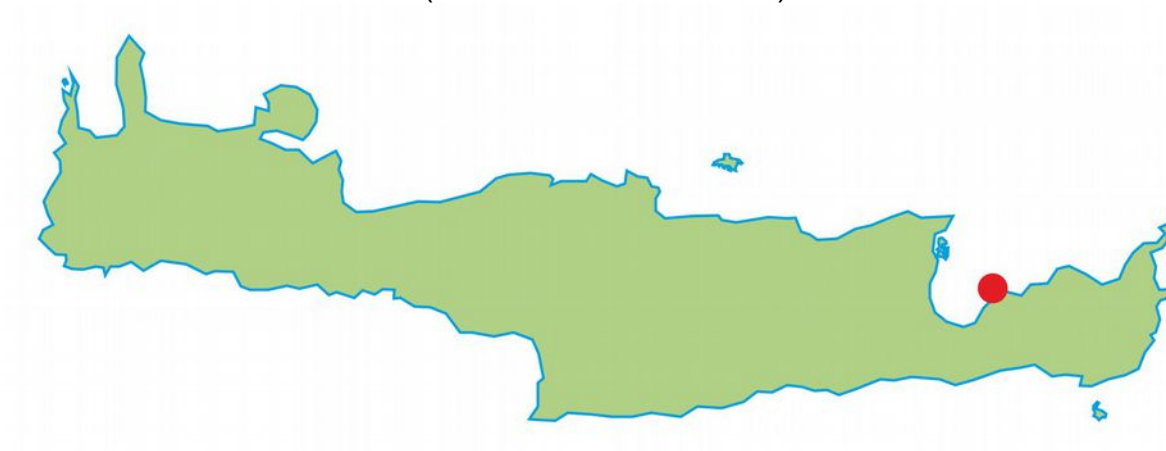


*Views of Agios Nikolaos Marina*



## Nisis Psira

(35° 11.2' N 025° 51.8' E)



**Dangers:** *If a Meltemi is blowing the ends of the island often suffer from strong gusts.*

We have not been here in Little Roundtop but we have anchored here for an afternoon in a friend's yacht. The large indented bay on the eastern side of the island offers fairly good shelter from the normal north-westerly winds, even during the summer Meltemi (when we were there). The bottom is mostly weed covered sand, though there are rocky parts. We anchored in 8 metres and took a line ashore to hold the boat stern-to the prevailing wind. Although it's off the natural track to anywhere this is a pleasant lunch stop, although we wouldn't recommend it as a night stop, except perhaps in very calm weather. Agios Nikolaos Marina is much safer and is less than 8 miles away.





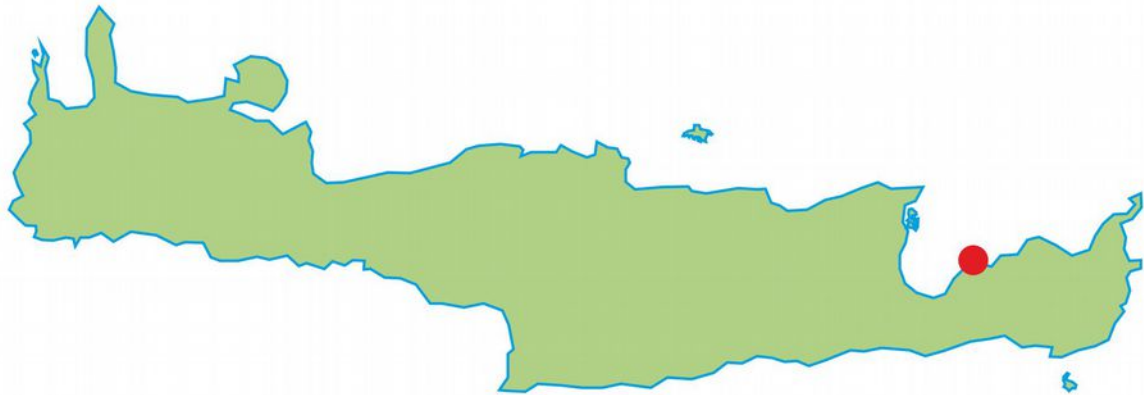
*Views of the Nisis Psira anchorage*





## Mochlos

(35° 11.1' N 025° 54.5' E)



**Dangers:** *The narrow strip of water between mainland Crete and the small island of Mochlos is a submerged causeway and it's very shallow. You may see local fishing boats passing through here but they know where the deeper water is, do not attempt to follow them. Make your approach around the northern and eastern sides of Mochlos island.*

We have not been here yet but several friends have (it's on our to do list). In the summer, from about mid-June until late September, the tavernas at Mochlos town employ divers to lay several mooring buoys off the south side of Mochlos island (between the island and the town). These are usually well anchored to the rocky seabed and you can pick up any convenient buoy. You will be expected to visit one of the town's tavernas of course, although you will not usually be hassled if you do not. Anchoring here is not advised, the bottom is all rock with extremely poor holding and a high likelihood of a lost anchor.

## Crete Pilot

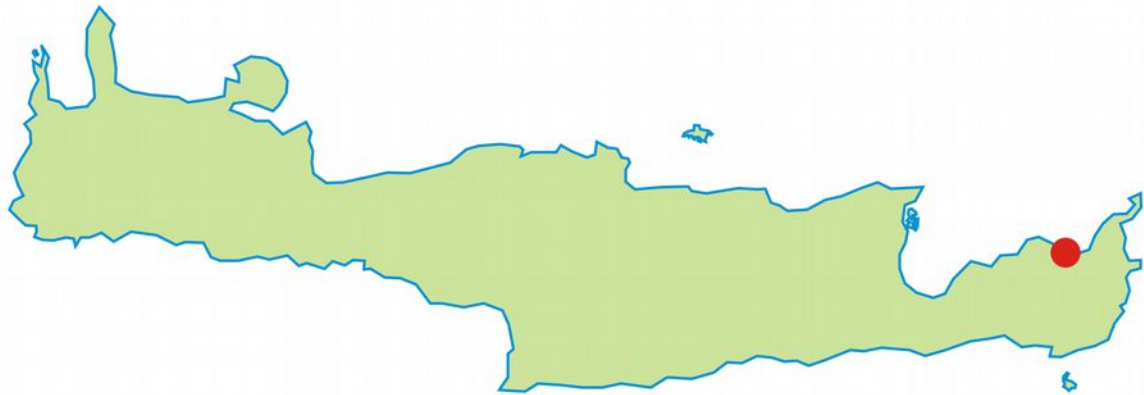
The shelter here is very poor, the predominant north-westerly winds blow straight into the anchorage and a sizeable swell creeps in with even moderate winds. If bad weather is expected you should leave here immediately and head for the safety of either Agios Nikolaos Marina (10 miles) or Spinalonga Lagoon (12 miles).

Mochlos is a pretty place with some excellent taverns and it's a popular lunch stop in the summer months. We would not recommend Mochlos as a night stop however, except in very settled and calm weather. In the winter the buoys are removed so it is impossible to stop here, and in bad weather in the summer it would be dangerous to attempt to moor here.



## Sitia

(35° 12.4' N 026° 6.6' E)



**Dangers:** *The harbour is large enough to anchor in, however we have been told by local fishermen that the bottom is littered with old chains, some of them large, so the possibility of a fouled anchor is quite high.*

As you approach Sitia the first quay you will see on your starboard side is reserved exclusively for large car ferries. The space to the south-west of this quay is used as a turning area by the ferries and you must not enter here. The harbour itself is a little further to the south-west (the Google Earth image above shows this clearly).

You should go alongside the long harbour wall (northern one) or stern-to on the shorter wall if you can find room. The shorter southern wall was developed as a small yacht marina but because it is safe in most weathers it was immediately fully occupied by local boats! The half of the northern wall closest to the town is in constant use by fishing boats but the seaward half is usually available for visiting yachts. (In early 2011 the whole of this



## Crete Pilot

wall was occupied by fishing boats, whether this will continue throughout 2011 remains to be seen). Rafting-up is a common practice here, though it's polite of course to ask permission first!

Water and electricity is occasionally available near most berths on the shorter wall, electricity is also available from one box halfway along the longer wall with a water tap nearby (sunk into the quay). There are several of these sunken water taps all along this quay. In 2007 there was no charge for electricity or water.

The port is safe in summer winds, but if the wind is strong and in the east-south quadrant a surge develops in the harbour making the longer wall very uncomfortable (the shorter wall is safe in these winds, which is why it's full of local boats!).

Anchoring inside the port is possible and is allowed, however we have been warned by local fishermen that the bottom is littered with old moorings and chains, some of them very large. We were advised not to put an anchor down at all, and certainly not without a trip-line. It is possible to anchor directly outside the port, just off the shorter southern quay. The bottom here is all sand and good holding but there is a swell here even in moderate winds.

The Port Police (office in the ferry port) rarely visit but if charter yachts or non-EU yachts arrive they usually come round and check everyone. Standard port fees apply. There are no port-based toilets or shower facilities, though there are many tavernas on the harbour front with toilets.

In 2010 plans were put in place to install two floating pontoons in the harbour to create a small boat marina. How long this will take to materialise is anybody's guess.....

## Crete Pilot



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## *Views of Sitia*

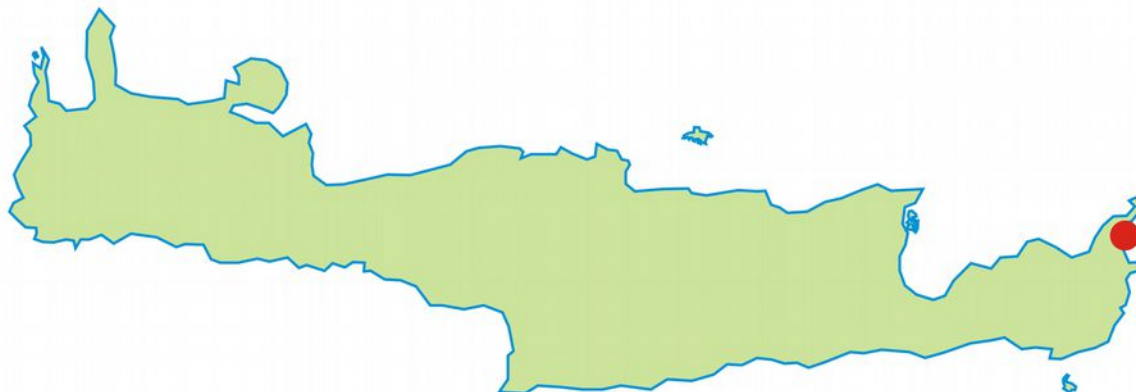


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## Vai

(35° 15.2' N 026° 16.1' E)



**Dangers:** *There are a number of above and below water rocks in the area of Vai so you should take great care piloting close to shore. The sea directly off the beach at Vai has flat rocks all over the bottom until around 100m offshore.*

We don't recommend Vai for yachties. The beach, once deserted and unspoiled is now full of regimented rows of parasol sunshades and loungers in the summer, there is also a water-sports centre (eek!). Large red buoys block off access to the beach to yachts in the summer, these are about 200 metres offshore where the depth is 6 metres or more. We anchored just outside these buoys for less than 30 minutes before we decided to move elsewhere. The anchorage just outside the buoys is very exposed with little in the way of shelter and the holding did not feel particularly good. The anchorage a mile north at Erimoupolis is safer and much more comfortable. The fishing harbour at Palaiokastros is close by also.



## Crete Pilot

In May 2011 Vai was visited by trusted sailing friends. They reported that the buoys were not (yet) in position and they anchored as close to the beach as they could get. They ended up in around 4 metres of water about 80 metres off the beach, closer in the bottom in the southern half of the bay appeared to be fouled almost everywhere by large flat rocks, the northern half looked to be less affected. The holding where they were they reported as being poor and they re-anchored twice before they were happy. Even so they did not feel safe spending the night at Vai and they moved to Erimoupolis in the late afternoon.

Vai is notable for its sandy beach and mostly for the palm forest that comes almost down to the sea. The Bounty chocolate bar commercial that was shown in the UK in the 1980's featuring young people on an apparently deserted Caribbean island was, in fact, filmed at Vai. In the 1970's it was a popular hippy haunt with a near permanent campsite established in the palm forest.

## Crete Pilot



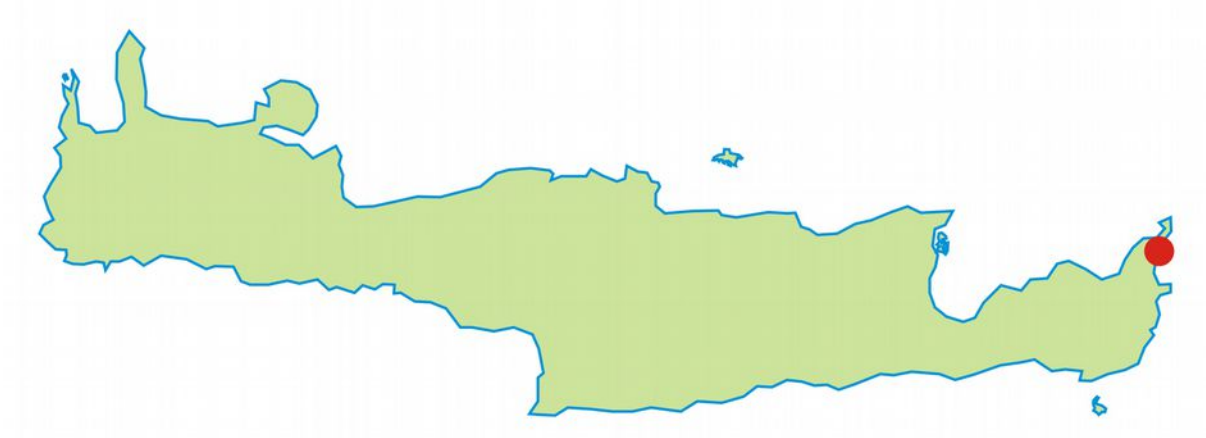
*Views of Vai*





## Erimoupolis

(35° 15.9' N 026° 16.0' E)



**Dangers:** *There are a number of above and below water rocks in this area, so you should take great care when piloting close to shore.*

About a mile north of Vai, Erimoupolis is a much better anchorage. Abundant space, a sandy bottom that slowly shallows to the beach and good shelter from the summer NW winds, though open to the south and east. We anchored in 4m. The beach is nothing special but it's largely deserted with none of the tourist clutter of Vai.





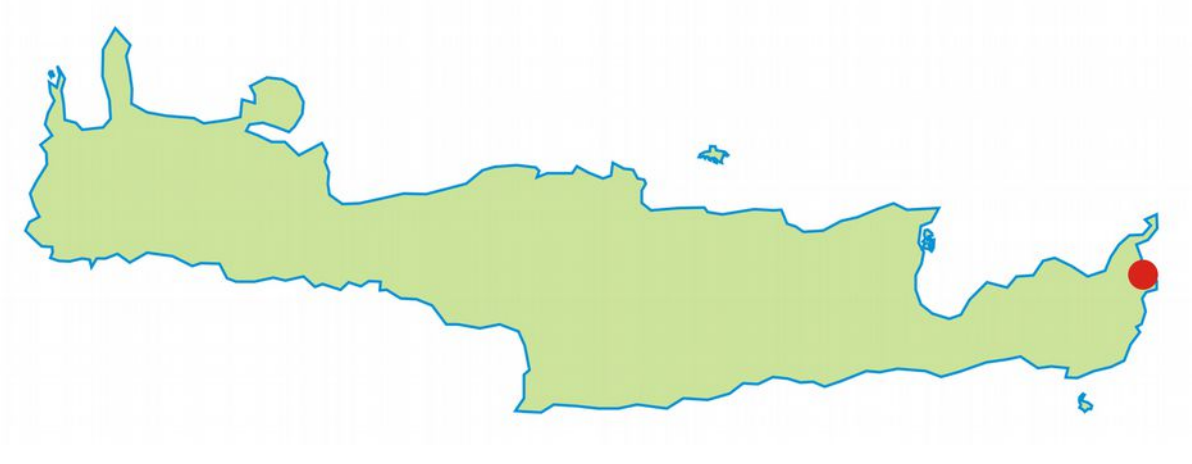
*Views of Erimopoulis*





## Kourmenos

(35° 12.8' N 026° 16.2' E)



**Dangers:** *The bottom inside the harbour is fouled by laid moorings and small rocks. It is also full of local fishing boats.*

We have never been in here but friends of our have (in 2012). They reported that the harbour, though quite large, is filled with small fishing boats and buoyed laid moorings. The local fishermen gave friendly waves but there were no spaces available for yachts. Our friends did feel however that in bad weather the fishermen would make space for one or two yachts to moor stern-to in here. In easterlies and even south-easterlies this would be much safer than Erimoupolis and certainly safer than Vai.



## Crete Pilot

Our friends reported depths of around 3m in the entrance and a minimum of 3m everywhere they were able to get inside the harbour. They suggested that anchoring inside the harbour may be unwise since the bottom looked to be fouled by numerous laid moorings and by many small rocks on the bottom.

Our friends anchored for the night a hundred metres or so off the mole and in front of the beach in 5m on sand. At the time a 15kt NW wind was blowing but the sea was flat and they spent a comfortable and uneventful night.



*Views of Kourmenos*





## The South-East Coast Of Crete



### *Ports and anchorages on the south-east coast of Crete*

The south-east coast of Crete is probably the most hazardous since there is only one port in this area (Ierapetra) and this is only suitable for yachts drawing less than 2m. For yachts that draw 2m or more there are no safe ports at all, with the possible exception of the power station at Aderenolakos.

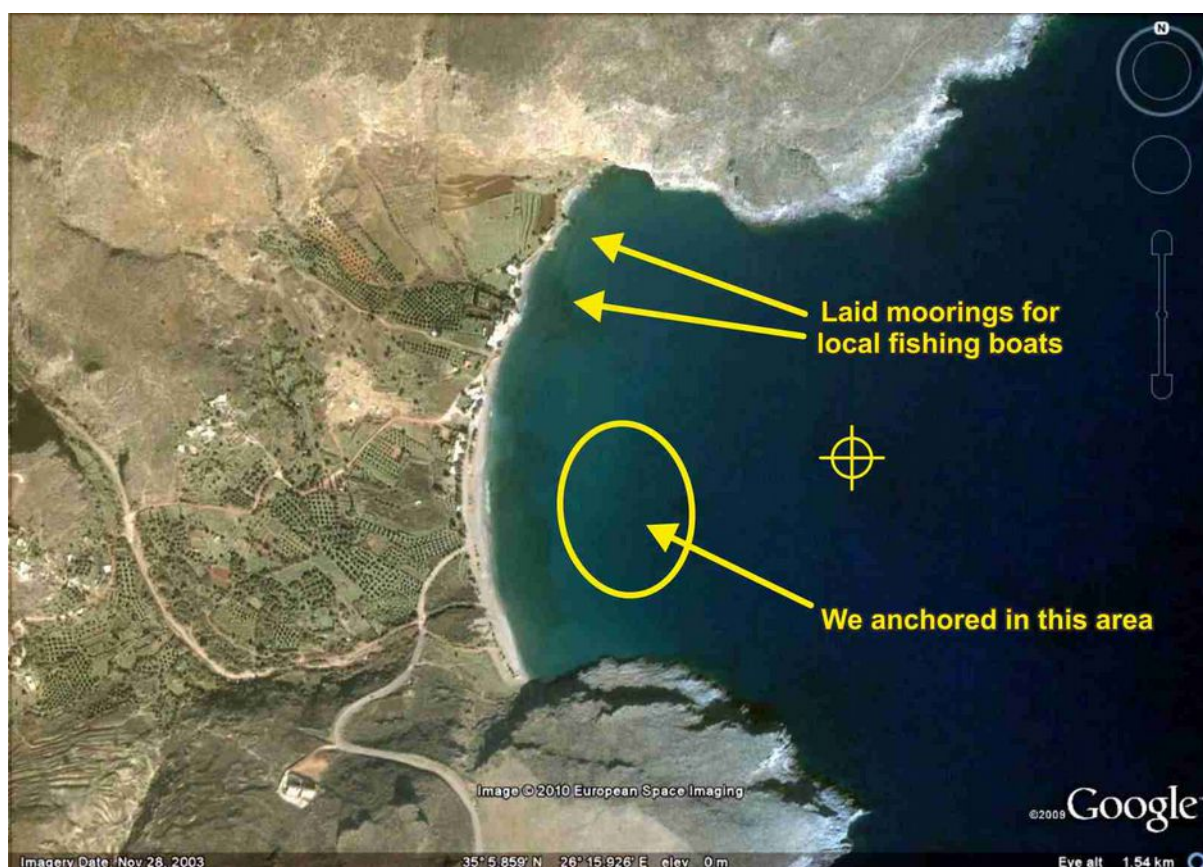
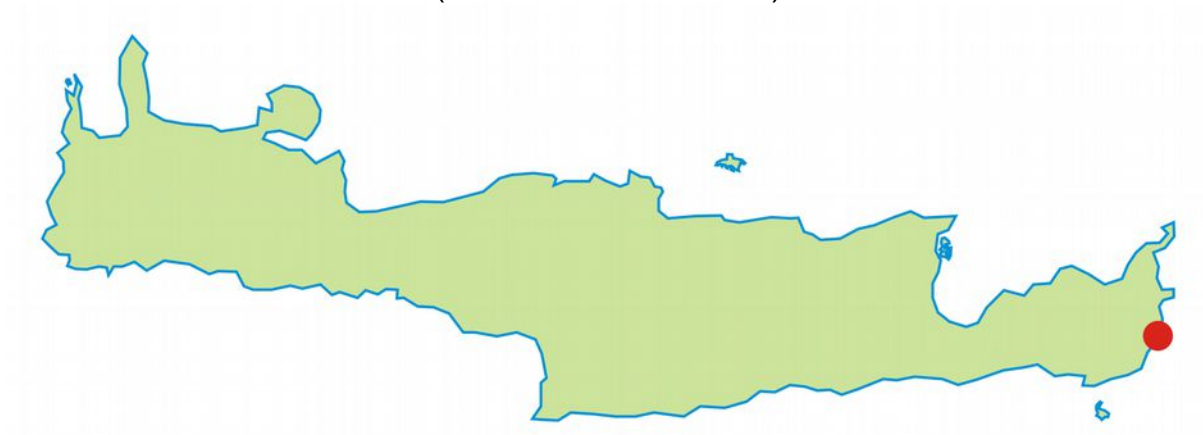
Aderenolakos power station is an oil-fired electricity power station supplying the eastern region of Crete. Large oil tankers regularly dock here supplying the power station with its fuel. There is a small port at the power station to accommodate the tenders that service the tankers and in severe weather it is reported that fishing vessels and yachts are permitted to find shelter here. At all other times the port is closed to all but power station vessels.

It is this stretch of coast that convinces us that the best route for a circumnavigation of Crete is clockwise. Travelling clockwise it is possible to wait in the anchorage at Kato Zakros for favourable weather to reach Aghia Galini, over 90 sailing miles away. This means that you are sailing towards a safe port, so if your forecast deteriorates you are heading for safety. Travelling anti-clockwise you would wait for a good forecast before leaving Aghia Galini, but if your forecast then deteriorates you are heading for potentially exposed anchorages until you reach Sitia, which is over 120 sailing miles away.

Note: There are a number of small fishing harbours along this coast; Makrys Gialos, Keratokambos and Tsoutsouros, for example, but they are all very heavily silted and the depth in all of these is less than 1.5m. My CMAP chart shows Makrygialos as a yacht harbour – this is completely false, the depth in the entrance here is less than 1m! We believe that the ports and anchorages shown in this pilot are the only ones suitable for a yacht on this stretch of coast.

## Kato Zakros

(35° 5.8' N 026° 16.1' E)



**Dangers:** *None.*

A pretty place with a few tavernas ashore (reasonable prices) and extensive Minoan ruins. Good sandy bottom gently shelving to the beach, we anchored in 5 metres. My chart shows a rock awash in the middle of the bay but we didn't see it at all, nor did we see the isolated rock in the north-west corner which the chart shows.

The northern end of the bay is a mooring area for small fishing boats and is more "developed" than the quieter southern end; it also has a rocky shoreline.

There is good shelter from the summer NW winds, though another yacht (a large catamaran) reported gusts off the land up to 50 knots here during a strong Meltemi in August 2006. Another friend reported 40 knots of



## Crete Pilot

westerly winds coming out of here as he was sailing past in November 2009. The bay is of course completely open to the east.

The bay is large enough for several yachts to lie at anchor in here each with a very long anchor rode, even second anchors on long rodes as well, without any danger of the swinging circles coinciding. The bottom is fairly level with no hazards to worry about and it is all sand which appeared to us to give good holding. Though we have not experienced high winds in here I would have thought most yachts would be reasonably safe here.



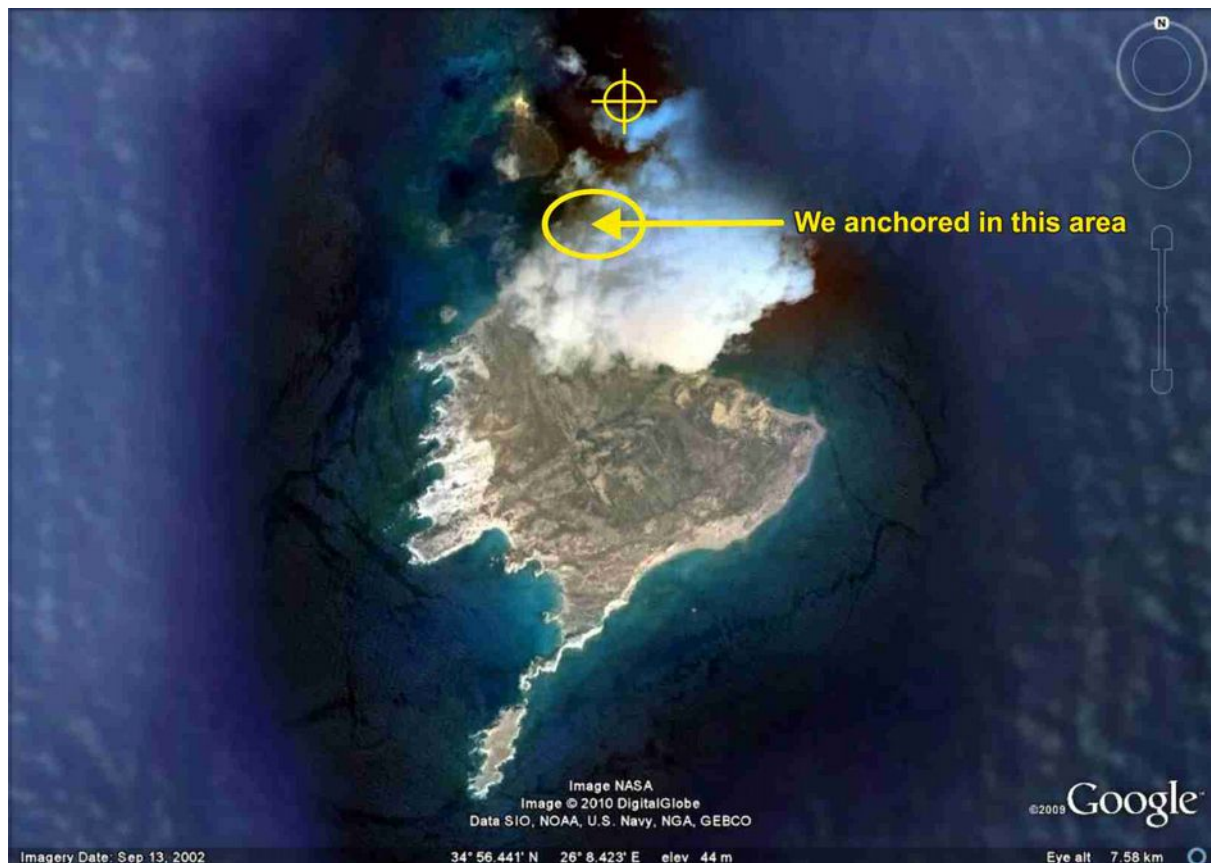
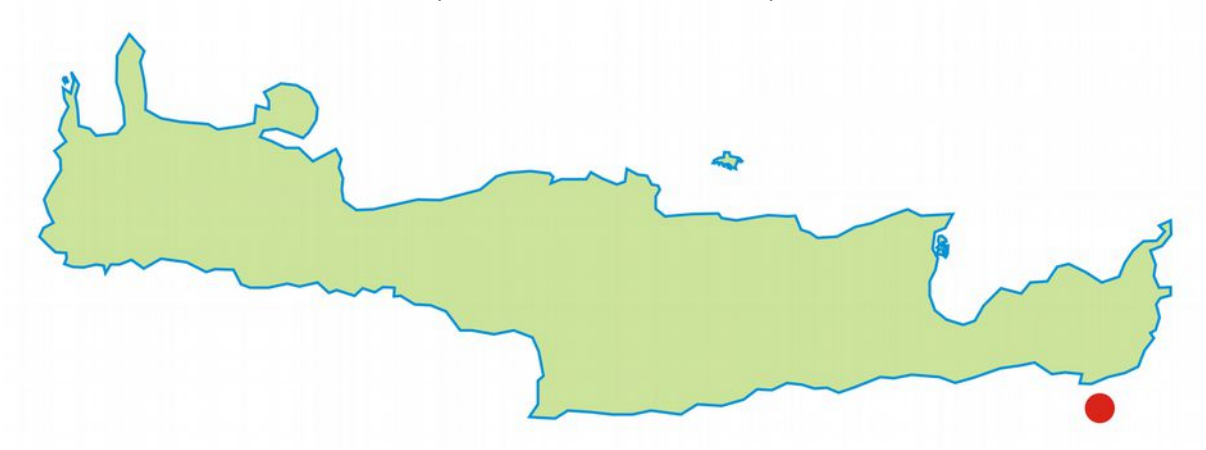
*Views of Kato Zakros*





# Koufonisi Island

(34° 57.7' N 026° 8.5' E)



**Dangers:** *The Koufonisi island group is surrounded by above and below water rocks and reefs. There is no shelter offered by the low-lying islands and it would be extremely dangerous here in anything but calm weather.*

The Koufonisi island group consists of the large island of Koufonisi, three smaller islands, one very small island and a mass of above and below water rocks that nearly encircle the anchorage in the middle. Entry is not possible at all from the west due to these reefs and we were advised by fishermen in Sitia that the eastern side is full of reefs too, except for a small channel.

The safe channel starts at 34° 57.7' N 026° 8.5' E and you should steer 210° true until well inside the reef. Have someone on the bow conning you in and keep an eye on your depth. We encountered depths of at least 6 metres when entering in a flat calm in a channel about 10m wide.

## Crete Pilot

Inside the lagoon the bottom is sand and rocks, so you have to hunt around for a large enough sandy spot to anchor. We found the depths inside the lagoon to be around 5 metres in most places at the northern end, though it shallows rapidly to 3 metres south of about 34° 57' N and becomes very rocky, so we ventured no further south than that. After a snorkelling exploration one yacht left the lagoon by heading due east rather than exiting via the “channel”. They found depths over 5 meters everywhere so it may be that the reef does not extend all around the anchorage (my CMAP chart shows no reef at all to the east here). We did not have the time to investigate this further. I know the specified “channel” is a safe entry and exit.

The anchorage is desolate and beautiful in a lonely sort of way, but it feels very exposed, especially in the westerly direction which is where the winds come from. The two small islands in this area (the two northernmost islands) are barely 2m above sea level and would offer no protection at all from wind or sea.

## Crete Pilot



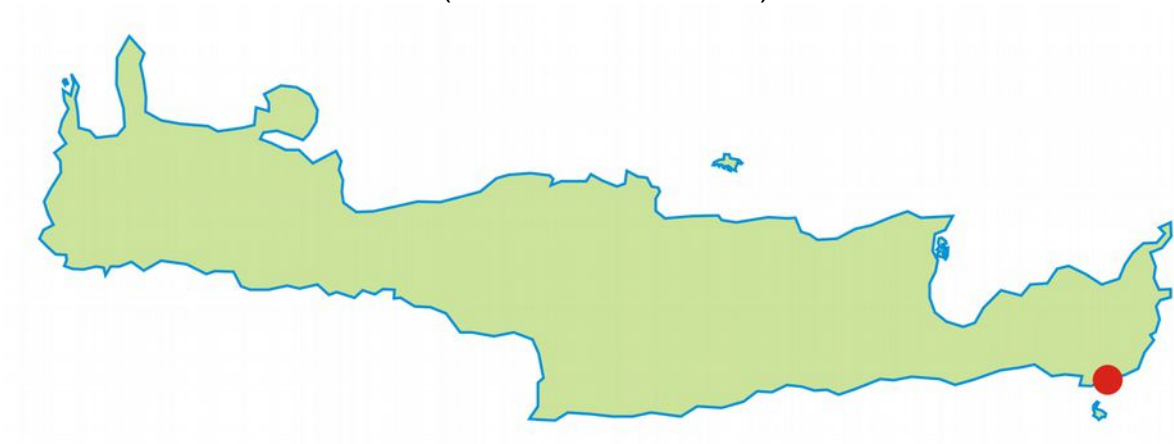
## *Views of Koufonisi*





## Aderenolakos Power Station

(35° 0.3' N 026° 8.7' E)



**Dangers:** *Unknown.*

In severe or stormy weather, instead of using the anchorage at Koufonisi Island make instead for the port at Aderenolakos power station. The power station is 3 miles north of Koufonisi and is easily seen having two chimneys with red and white stripes, several buildings and oil storage tanks. We did not visit the port but we did see it in passing. It's not a regular port but exists just to service the power station. Local fishermen have assured us that you will be allowed to find shelter there in bad weather but they warned us that you will be turned away at all other times.



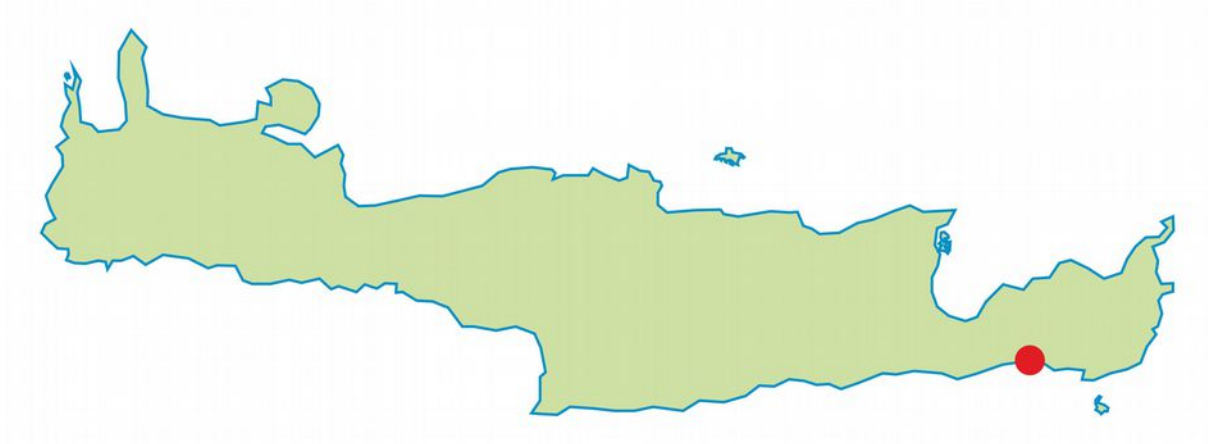
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*Aderenolakos power station*



## Makry Gialos

(35° 2.2' N 025° 58.6' E)



**Dangers:** *The port is very badly silted. Depths in the entrance and in most places inside appear to be less than 1m.*

We have not visited here in our yacht but we have been here by car. Makry Gialos is a wide open bay, completely open to the south but fairly well sheltered from the north, west and east. It appears to be mostly sand and so anchoring almost anywhere should be fairly simple. There was a buoyed-off swimming area close to the beach but it's probably too shallow for anchoring that close to shore in any case. The fishing harbour is very silted (around 1m) and is not usable by yachts.

On the day we visited there were stiff NW breezes (F5) blowing on the north coast of Crete but there was little wind in the bay here. There is a holiday resort based along the sandy beach here although the tourism is light and not overpowering.



## Crete Pilot



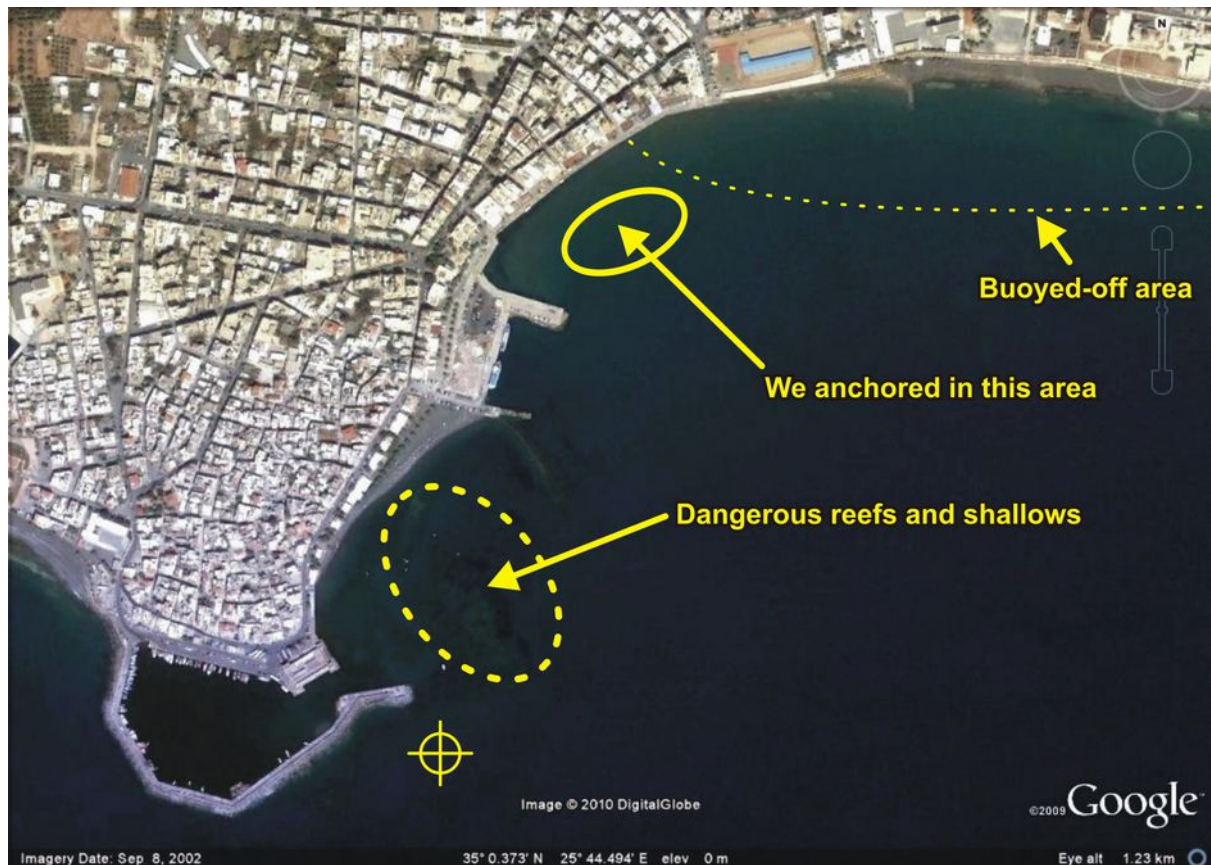
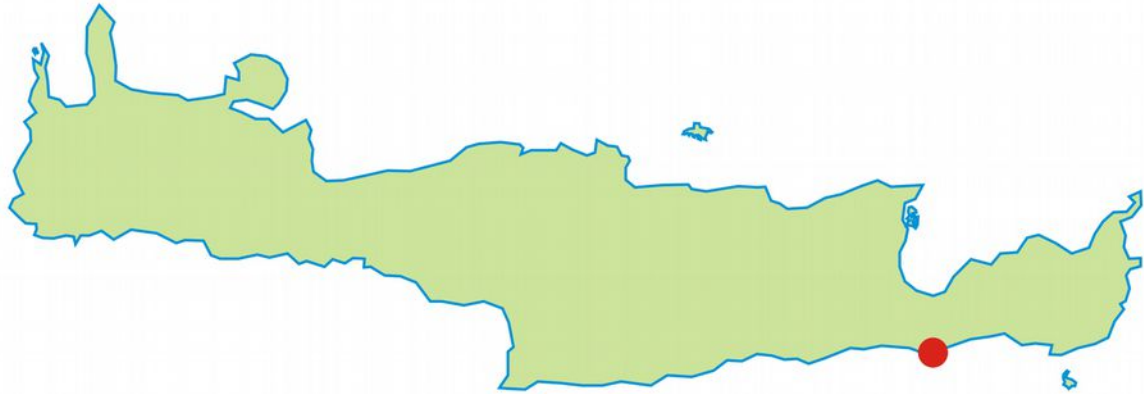
Views of Makry Gialos





# Ierapetra

(35° 0.1' N 025° 44.3' E)



**Dangers:** *There is an area of very shallow rocks and reefs immediately to the north-east of the entrance. You must approach from the south and stay close to the outer wall until into the harbour. The entrance to the harbour is very shallow (barely 2m) and narrow (around 30m wide). Ierapetra would be extremely difficult to enter in strong winds and big seas.*

The natural route into Ierapetra harbour is blocked by a large area of underwater rocks, reefs and shallows to the immediate north-east. The depths in this area are often less than 1m. The southerly cardinal shown on my CMAP charts was not there in 2007 (nor in 2009). The only safe route into Ierapetra is to stay offshore until level with the end of the outer mole and then head due north towards it, leaving it close on your port side as you creep round into the entrance.

## Crete Pilot

We were not able to enter the port at Ierapetra due to our 2m draught. A yacht travelling with us, which draws only 1.6 metres, was able to enter and reported that in the entrance they found just 2 metres of water. Once inside they found 2.5m but there were limited places to moor and they were turned away by fishermen from two places they attempted to moor. They ended up rafting up to a motor cruiser that had nobody on board. Other visitors to Ierapetra have reported similar bad experiences in finding anywhere to moor inside.

We anchored in 4 metres on sand off the beach east of the port, just outside the buoys marking the bathing area and in the lee of the ferry quay (at 35° 0.4' N 025° 44.4' E). We experienced a small swell in light winds overnight, though it would probably be uncomfortable here in even mild winds and certainly dangerous in a blow.



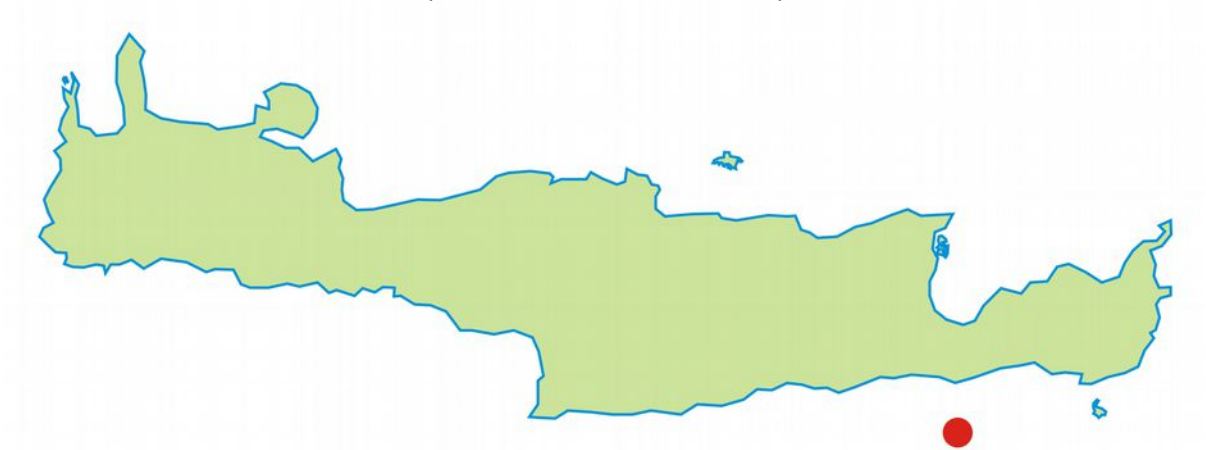


*Views of Ierapetra*



## Gaidouronisi (Chrissi Island)

(34° 53.1' N 025° 43.8' E)



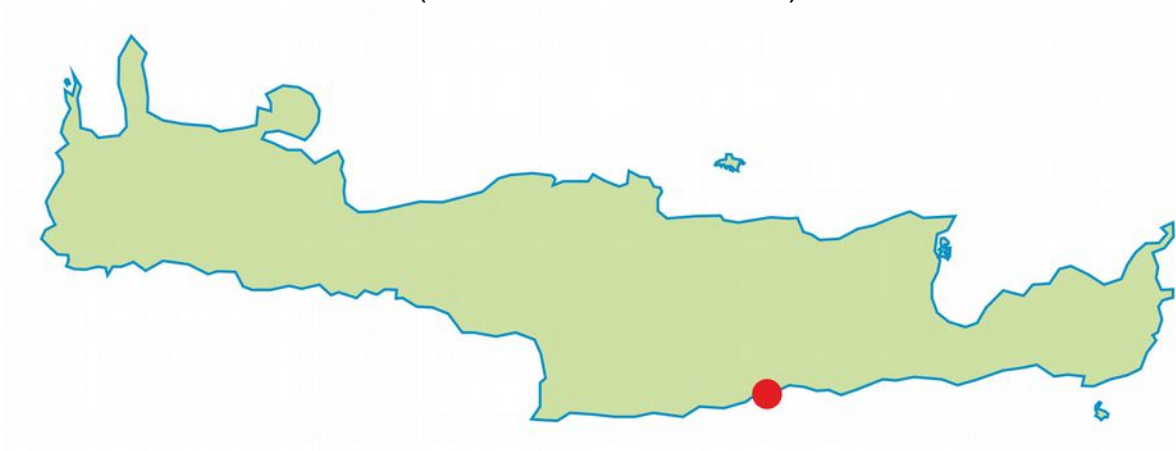
**Dangers:** *Gaidouronisi is low-lying and very exposed, it would be dangerous here in anything but calm weather.*

Gaidouronisi island is a low-lying and mostly sandy island 8 miles south of Ierapetra. We have never been here ourselves but we have several friends who have. Their reports are mixed however, one friend reports that anchoring is possible off the beach on the north side at the east end of the island but other friends tell us that the sand all along the bay on the north side is thin and over large plate-rocks so that you cannot get an anchor to set properly. Apparently the sand gives better holding close in to the shore, so a lifting keel (which our first friend has) can make a big difference here. Anchoring off the beach on the south side at the east end has not been tested by anyone we know, although commercial photographs do show a very rocky bottom all over this bay. Care must be taken of a stub pier on this southern beach which is in daily use by tripper boats.



## Tsoutsouros

(34° 59.08' N 025° 17.3' E)



**Dangers:** *The port is very badly silted with depths that appear to me much less than 2m almost everywhere inside. Strong gusts come down out of the gorge at the western end of the bay.*

We have never been here in our yacht but we have been here by car. The small port is badly silted and depths everywhere look to be much less than 2m. The area around the entrance also looks to be much less than 2m. The large bay to the west of the port looks to be a suitable anchorage although strong gusts come from the north-west down the gorge at the west end of the bay. These can be clearly seen in the Google Earth image above. On the day we visited these were strong (at least F5).

The small bay to the east of the port is shallow with mostly underwater stones and boulders directly behind the port. This bay suffers from the gusts from the gorge as much as anywhere else in the bay.

## Crete Pilot

We have no idea of the type of bottom nor the holding in the bay, but the anchorage would probably be fine in calm weather, and a welcome stop between Ierapetra and Aghia Galini, but it's probably best avoided if there are any serious winds blowing.

The village has some light tourism and there are several bars and tavernas but little in the way of shopping.



## Crete Pilot

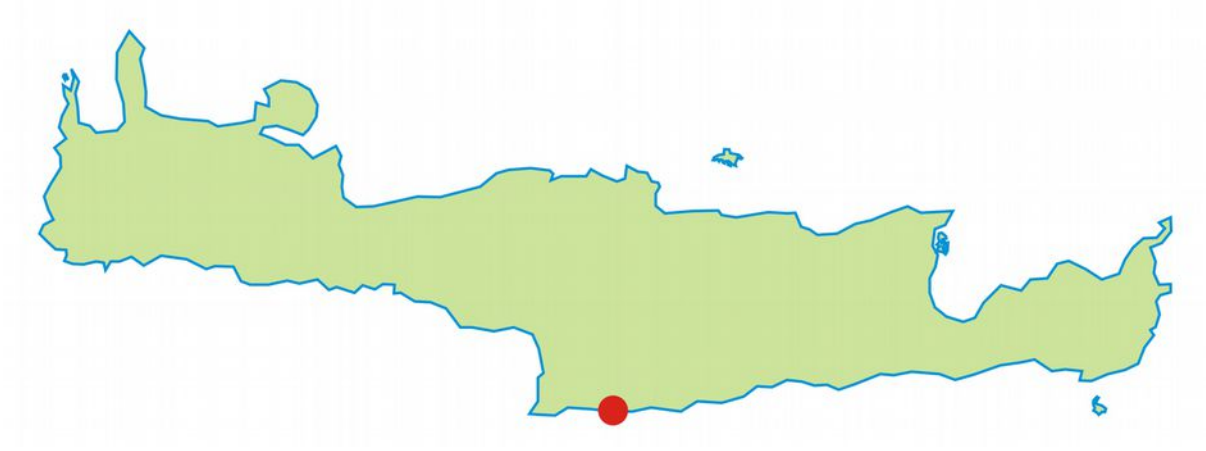


*Views of Tsoutsouros*



## Lentas

(34° 55.9' N 024° 57.1' E)



**Dangers:** *Unknown.*

Lentas fishing harbour is approx 40 miles west of Ierapetra. We have never been in here and neither has anyone else we know entered in a yacht. However, a friend has been here by car and estimates the depth along the longer mole at 3m. The small fishing harbour was largely empty when he visited (in February 2010) and mooring alongside the longer wall would have been quite easy. The shelter from southerlies and south-westerlies would be adequate he suggests, and certainly better than at either the Ierapetra or Kaloi Limenes anchorages.



## The South-West Coast of Crete



### *Ports and anchorages of the south-west coast of Crete*

The south-west coast of Crete contains the major port of Aghia Galini. Located more or less in the centre of the south coast it is probably the safest port in this area since it is perfectly possible to enter Aghia Galini under sail running before strong winds and in big seas. There is enough room inside to drop the sails, tidy the boat up and even anchor within the shelter of the L-shaped harbour. Even if you can enter Ierapetra and Palaiochora you would need to be inside those ports before bad weather arrives, entry in strong winds and big seas would be near impossible.

If unexpected bad weather catches you out on the south coast of Crete make immediately for Aghia Galini.

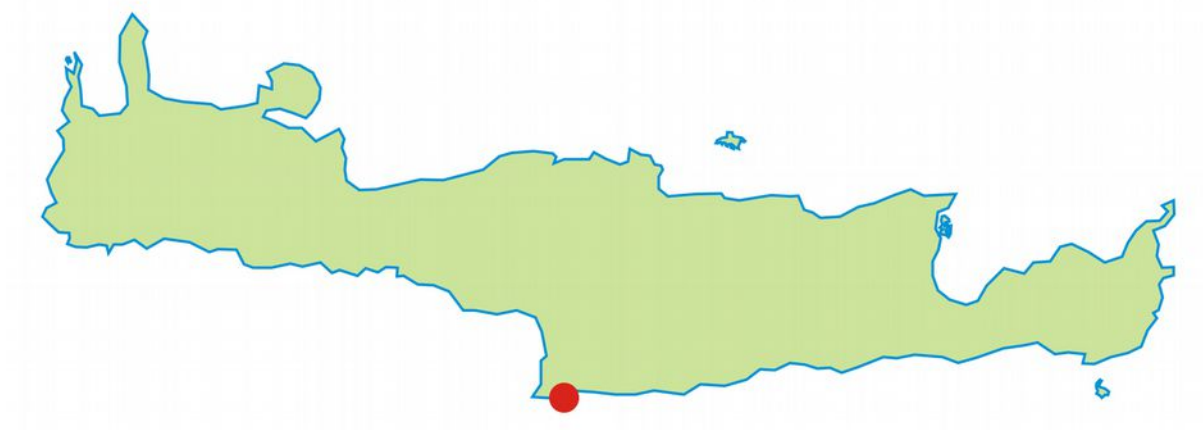
Palaiochora is a large and relatively safe port but the entrance is narrow (35m wide) and shallow (4m in the entrance). The small harbour at Hora Sfakion would be safe in normal weather but probably dangerous in a bad southerly storm. The anchorages at Loutro, Matala and Kaloi Limenes are fair-weather anchorages only.

This part of the south coast is particularly rugged and steep, the mountains come right up to the coast in this area and strong northerly winds produce unpredictable and unexpected gusts in this area which can be severe. We would recommend that you remain in Aghia Galini until you have a forecast that will take you safely to Palaiochora.

Nisis Gavdos, the large island 20 Nm south of Loutro, is the most southerly place in Europe. It has a small residential population and a tiny harbour on the north-east corner but it is very exposed and should be visited only in calm weather. We have not yet been there.

## Kaloi Limenes

(34° 55.8' N 024° 48.4' E)



**Dangers:** *There are buried undersea pipelines running from the bunkering island to the small bay in the north of Kaloi Limenes, the extent of these is shown on charts though the buoys marking it were not there in 2007. You should not anchor in this area.*

The anchorage at Kalio Limenes is off a sandy beach and close to a small, once thriving, tourist town. Sadly, for the town, an oil bunkering station has been established on the island of Agios Pavlos and though this is not particularly unsightly it appears to have destroyed the tourist industry in this area.

Easily visible once close in are the oil or gas storage tanks on the island of Agios Pavlos near the anchorage. Undersea pipelines run from this island to the shore very close to the anchorage. The buoys shown on my CMAP chart marking the extent of these pipelines were not in place in October 2007. A large rusting mooring



## Crete Pilot

buoy was present and you should anchor inshore of this buoy to be sure of staying clear of the pipelines. The bottom is sand in the bay, except for the southern end near the short pier where it is very stony, elsewhere the bottom is fouled by old anchors chain (large) and cables, but the water is very clear and you just need to look carefully at where you put your anchor down.

The bay provides very good shelter from the summer winds in the west and north, less so from the south and none at all from the east. There were no tavernas ashore in October 2007, though our pilot book said there were two.

When entering or leaving it is safe to pass between Nisis Agios Pavlos (the bunkering island) and the mainland but the water between Megalonisi and the mainland contains a great many rocks, some of which appeared to be fairly close to the surface. We chose to round Megalonisi to the south.

## Crete Pilot



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## *Views of Kaloï Limenes*

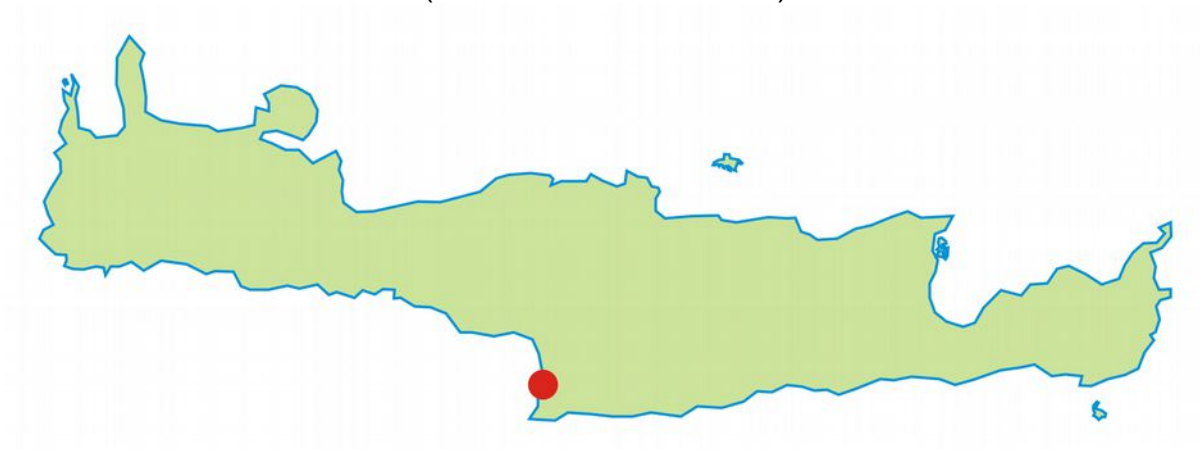


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## Matala

(34° 59.6' N 024° 44.7' E)



**Dangers:** *There is a shallow reef in the south-east corner of the bay at Matala. In 2007 this was (poorly) marked by three small yellow buoys.*

A stunningly beautiful bay and a “must see” when visiting this area. Matala has an unusual history that ranges from its use as a Roman port, numerous 1<sup>st</sup> century BC rock tombs in the cliffs, through to a large hippie colony that was here in the 1960's and 1970's. The hippies enlarged and lived in the rock tombs and the last of them was only removed as recently as the 1990's. The rustic tourist town still trades on its hippy past almost as a throwback to the 1960's – that none of us remember!

The entry is easy, the bottom is sand, with depths of at least 4 metres until you are about halfway into the bay. Further in there are underwater rocks in the centre of the bay with depths of at least 3 metres over them (though it's unsuitable for anchoring of course) until close inshore where it shallows. On the southern corner of the bay

## Crete Pilot

and close inshore there is a reef just underwater that is dangerous. In October 2007 there were three small yellow buoys marking the limits of this reef.

Matala is not advisable as a night stop because it's wide open to the west, which is where the prevailing winds come from. Even in calm weather we had a noticeable swell build up with the light afternoon breeze. There are many tavernas and bars ashore.



## Crete Pilot



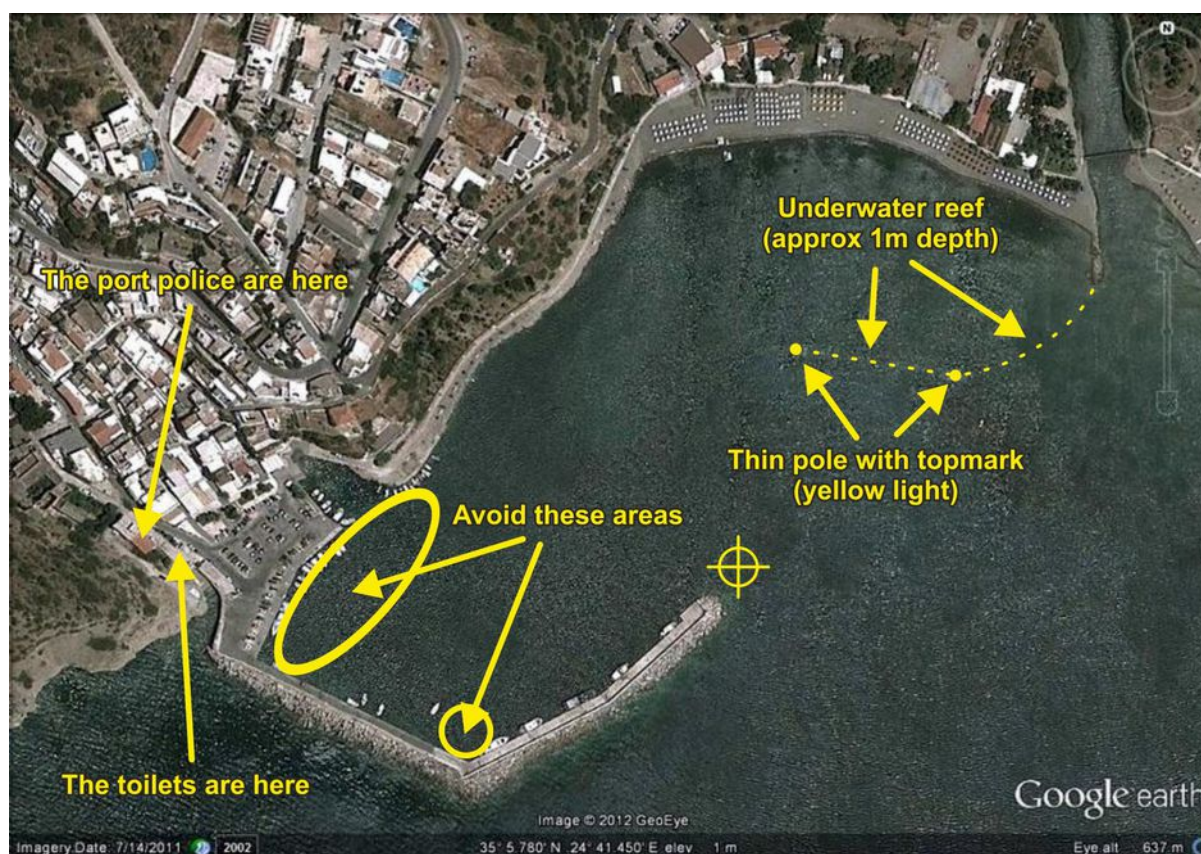
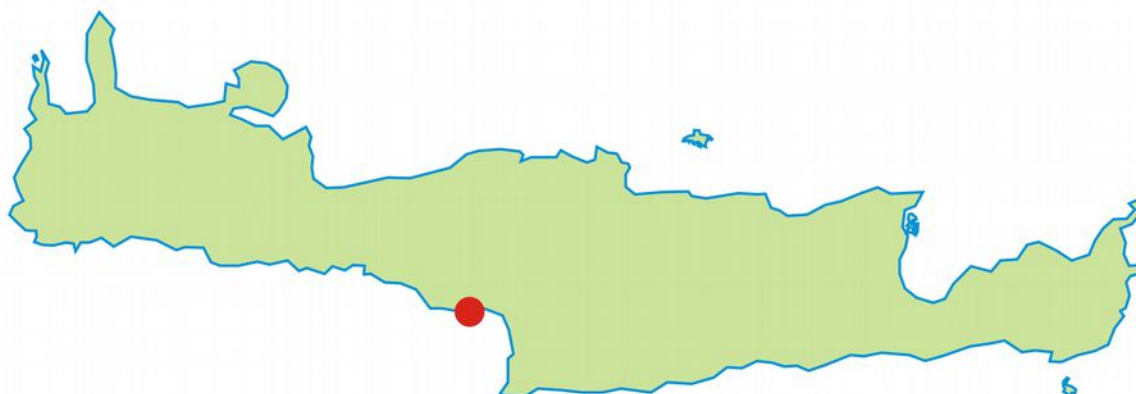
*Views of Matala*





# Aghia Galini

(35° 5.7' N 024° 41.4' E)



**Dangers:** The bottom is badly fouled with old moorings and chain in the area closest to the town. The area in the angle of the L-shaped wall is also subject to surging. You should avoid both these areas if you can. There is an artificial underwater reef to the north-east of the port, this is marked by two thin poles with topmarks.

Aghia Galini is the only safe deep-water harbour in the area. We moored stern-to near the angle of the L-shaped sea wall (*which was a mistake, see below*). We found depths of at least 5 metres everywhere, except close inshore. Yachts should avoid any mooring on the wall closest to the town due to shallow depths and the clutter of anchors and mooring chains on the bottom. There is good shelter everywhere and from all directions, except from the north-east when the wind blows straight in causing very disturbed water in the harbour (even then it is safer here than anywhere else nearby if you are well-fendered or pulled well off the wall). In north-easterlies in particular avoid the angle between the two walls where the disturbed water is at it's most severe, move



## Crete Pilot

elsewhere if you can. We were stern-to here and dragged our anchor in a NE gale 8, the anchor was still buried when we looked for it afterwards, so it was the bottom itself that let go. Fortunately we were able to drop alongside the quay without too much trouble. (*Local people have since told us that the holding everywhere in the harbour is fairly poor*). A week later in a SW gale 8/9 the sea crashed heavily over the top of the harbour wall in many places (including the angle). You should pull yourself at least 5 metres off the wall if possible wherever you are in here in strong southerlies or south-westerlies and do not leave the yacht unattended. We did not experience a significant swell in either the NE or SW gale anywhere in the harbour.

In 2011 an artificial underwater reef was constructed to the north-east of the port in order to prevent the winter storms removing the imported sand from the otherwise pebble beach. This reef is marked by two thin poles with topmarks, the westerly pole has partly collapsed and lies at an angle. They are both fitted with yellow flashing lights but these were not working when we were there in 2012. The reef extends underwater from the westerly pole to the end of the visible breakwater on shore close to the small river. The depths over these artificial reefs appears to be little more than 1m.

There are water taps at regular intervals along the wall and two electricity boxes that work (the other boxes were empty in October 2007 and September 2012). There is no fuel on the quay (though our Greek Waters Pilot book says there is) though a tanker could probably be arranged.

Aghia Galini lies on one side of a small gorge and it's now blatantly a tourist town. It has a great many hotels, guest houses, bars, tavernas and gift shops. Nevertheless it's fairly quiet with none of the rowdiness of some other places and although the town has surrendered most of its Greekness to tourism it's still a pretty place and quite a pleasant stop.

There is a direct bus connection to Heraklion and Rethymnon. Standard port fees apply, the Port Police office is at the base of the cliff to the left of the town. There are toilets and showers in a block close to the Port Police office and we found these to be quite basic but acceptable.

Aghia Galini is the only truly safe port on the south coast (despite the sea coming over the outer wall in south-westerly storms). Entry under sail in high winds and big seas is perfectly possible (the entrance is over 150m wide) depths are 5m to 6m everywhere (except close inshore) and there are no hazards within 100m of the entrance. The harbour is large enough to anchor in even in stormy weather (though with fairly poor holding).

*If you are caught out by bad weather anywhere on the south coast make immediately for Aghia Galini.*

## Crete Pilot



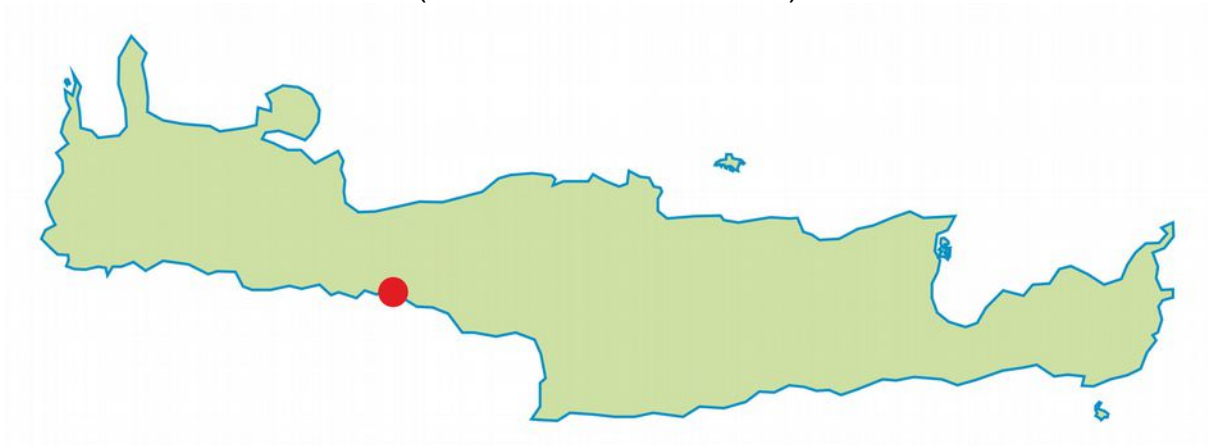
## *Views of Aghia Galini*





## Plakias

(35° 11.56' N 024° 22.9' E)



**Dangers:** *There are above and below water rocks between the old town quay and the beach close to the new port. Most of these are easily seen but you should stand well off shore until close to the port entrance.*

We have never been here in our yacht but we have been here by car. The new harbour to the west of the town has depths that appear to be well over 2.5m everywhere. When we were there in September 2012 there was ample space too. This would appear to be an excellent night stop between Aghia Galini and Palaiochora, certainly the shelter looks to be as good as that at both Aghia Galini and Palaiochora. There are water and electricity boxes at regular intervals everywhere and although we were not able to check that the electricity was working there was water in the taps. The only disadvantage that this port has is that it's a long way to walk to the town (it's about a mile away).

## Crete Pilot

The short quay in the town itself appears to have around 1.5m of depth all along it, and in any case it's in constant and almost complete use by local tripper boats. There are extensive laid moorings for these tripper boats making any attempt to moor here a hazard. We suspect that with the new port close by you will be asked to move if you do moor on this quay.

Should you wish to anchor instead of using the port, the large bay to the east of the town quay offers some shelter from the north and east, less so from the west and it's wide open to the south. On the day that we were here there was a stiff NW breeze (F5) blowing on the north coast of Crete but there was very little disturbance in the area of the port and the town. We have no idea of the type of bottom or of the quality of the holding, but the entire bay is backed by a sandy beach and it does look as though most of the bay is sand.



## Crete Pilot



*Views of Plakias Port*







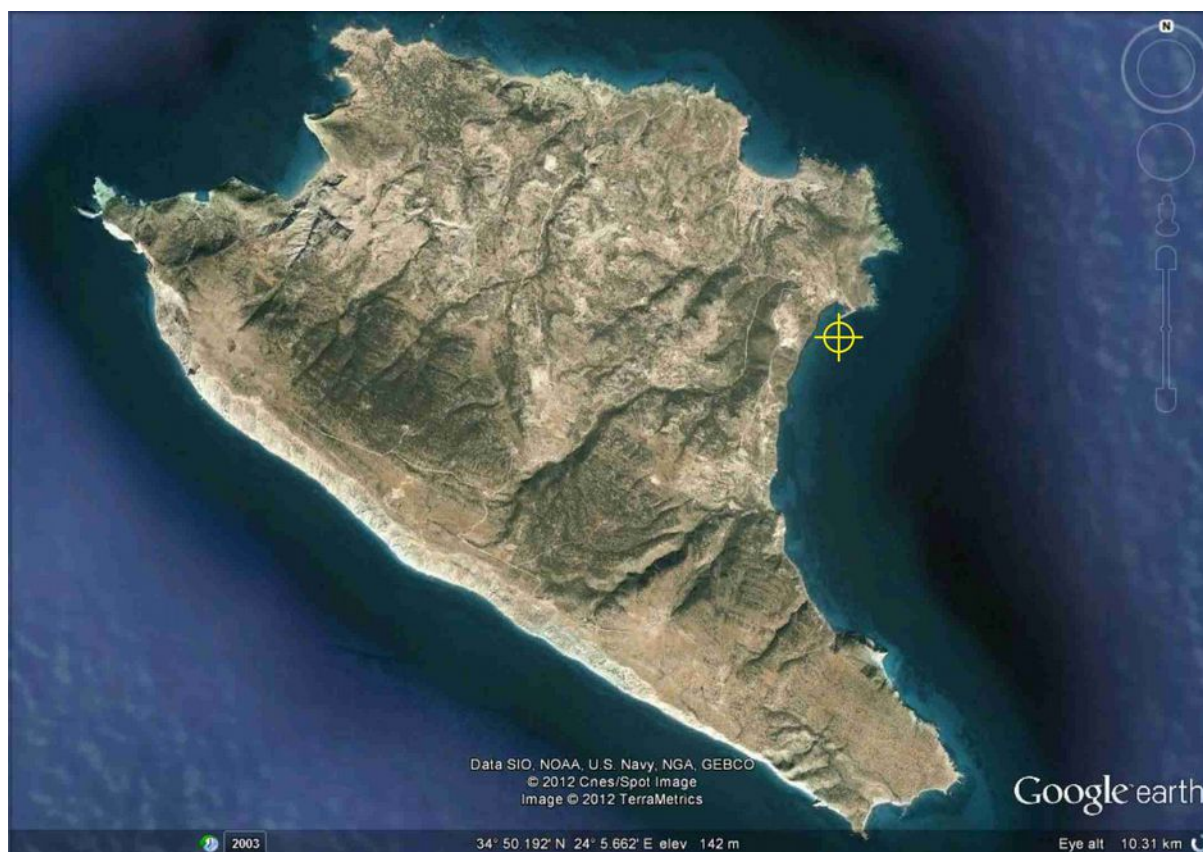
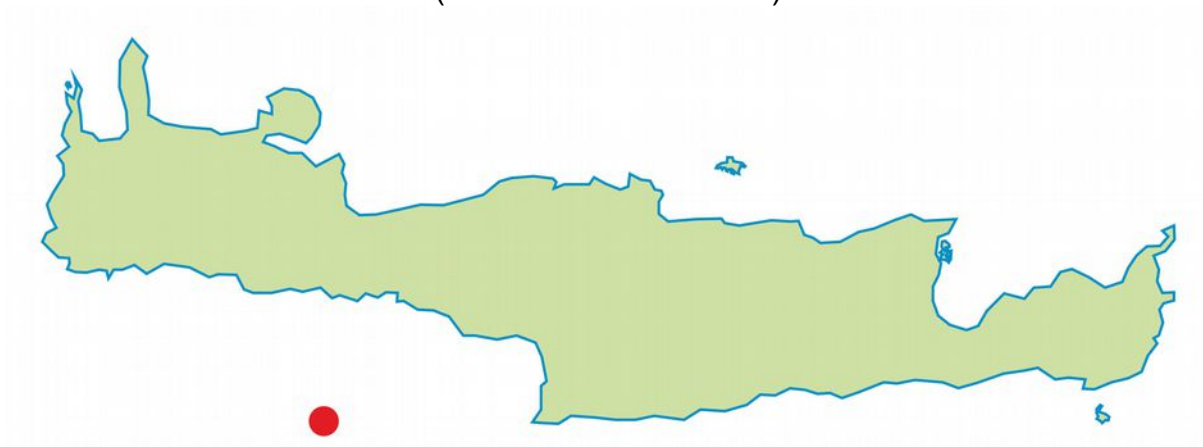
*Views of Plakias Town Quay and Anchorage*





## Nisis Gavdos

(34° 50.7' N 024° 7.1' E)



**Dangers:** *There is an extremely shallow area (<1m) in the north corner of the port. There are also numerous above and below water rocks close to the shore in the bay south of the port.*

We have never been here in our yacht but we have been here for a day visit by ferry. The port and main settlement is on the north-east corner of the island. The port facilities look to have been recently and extensively refurbished and this would make an excellent night stop as long as the winds and sea were not coming from the eastern sector (ie. south, through east, to north). In these conditions the port will probably be untenable. In the typical north-westerly winds the port is extremely well sheltered. On the day we were there there was a light north-westerly force 4 blowing but the harbour was completely calm and there was neither swell nor surge.

## Crete Pilot

The north corner of the port is extremely shallow (< 1m) with many just below water rocks. There is an obvious ferry dock in the north-west corner, near the haul-out crane, and this should of course be kept clear. The main quay (on the south-east side of the port) has what appears to be at least 4 metres of depth all the way along and there were no visible obstructions. There are newish-looking water and electricity boxes all along this quay and they do work. There was a yacht moored in there on the day we visited and they were using water and electricity, sadly the owners were not aboard so we couldn't pick their brains.

There is a small toilet block in the east corner of the port, close to the root of the main quay. These were locked but we assume the key can be obtained from the port police. The port police office is up the hill overlooking the port, it has several Greek flags flying outside it and is easily seen.

There is very little in the way of a town here. In the port area there were a couple of tavernas and a small supermarket and that's all. You would be well advised to be fully provisioned before visiting here as supplies are likely to be expensive since they all come on the ferry from Crete. There is plenty of accommodation available on the island for those who want to spend time ashore, we were hassled twice by people with rooms to rent before we'd walked more than ten paces from the ferry!

There is an anchorage outside and to the south of the port. The bottom here looked to be mostly sand but there are numerous above and below water rocks close to shore in this area so you need to pick your anchoring spot carefully. When the ferry leaves it uses the area immediately outside the port for turning so you should anchor well south of the port entrance. Further south in this large bay there is a small beach which from a distance looked like it might make a pleasant lunchtime anchorage.

On the north coast of the island, near the eastern end, is a largish indented bay which appeared as we passed it in the ferry to give reasonable shelter from the north-westerly winds, especially at the western end. This might make a pleasant lunchtime anchorage too and it would probably be a safer place to be in south or south-westerly winds than the port itself.

The cape at the south-eastern tip of Nisis Gavdos is the most southerly point in Europe. That's really the only reason we want to go there!





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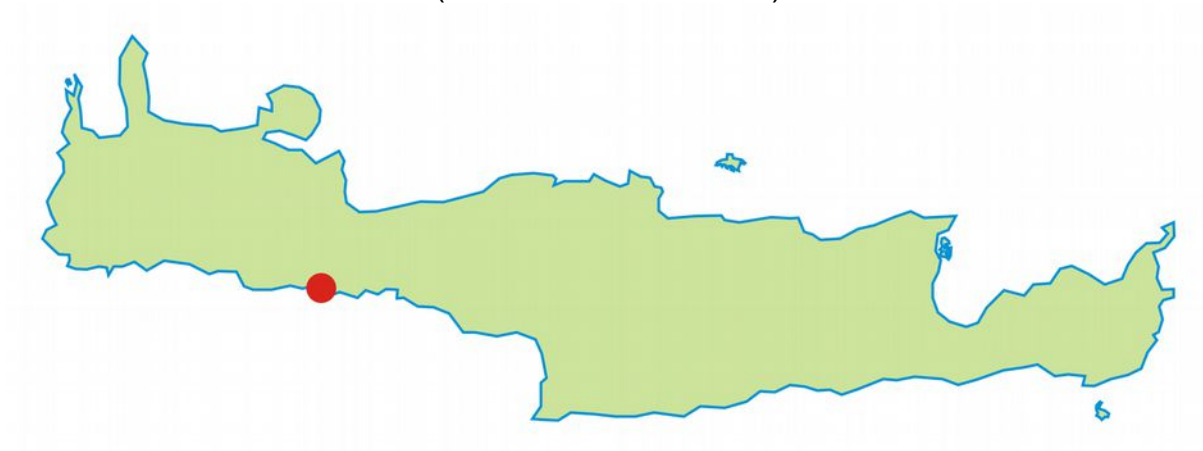
*Views of the port at Nisi Gavdos*



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## Hora Sfakion

(35° 11.9' N 024° 8.0' E)



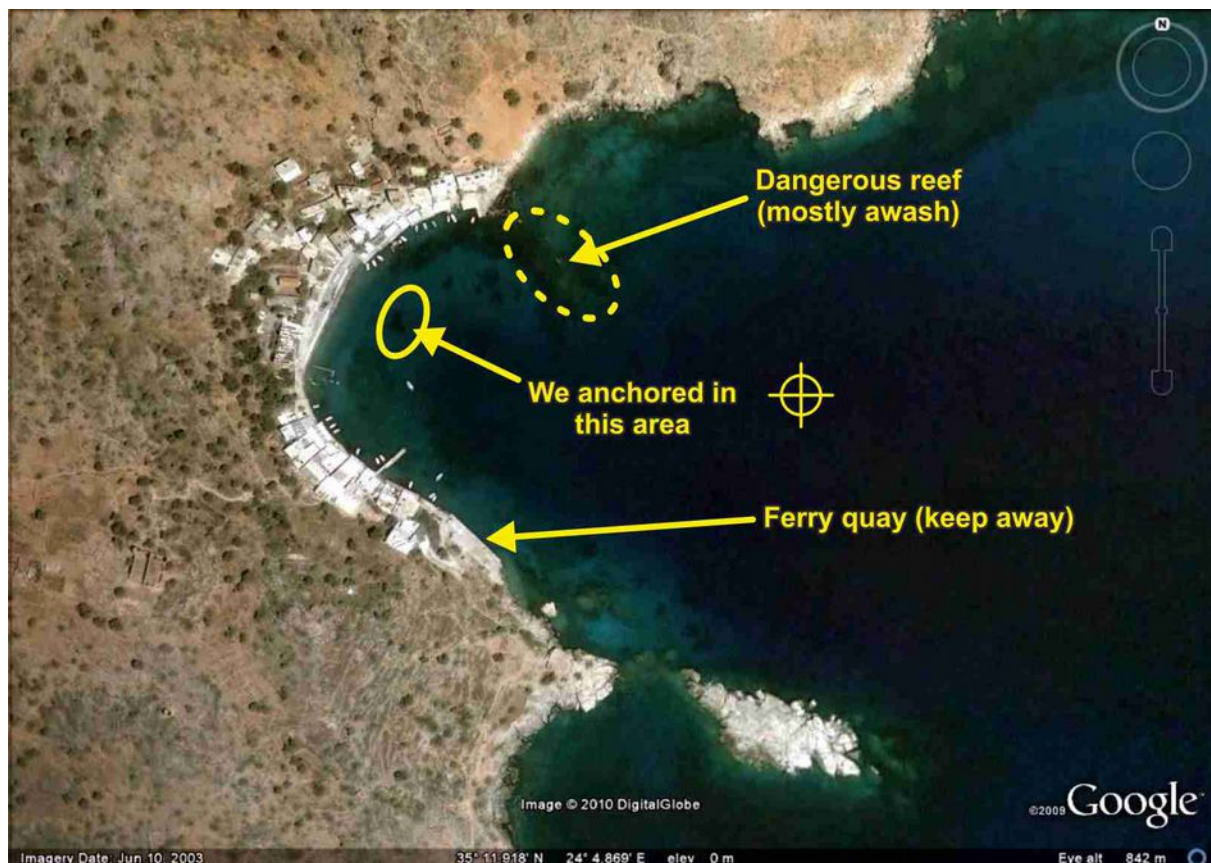
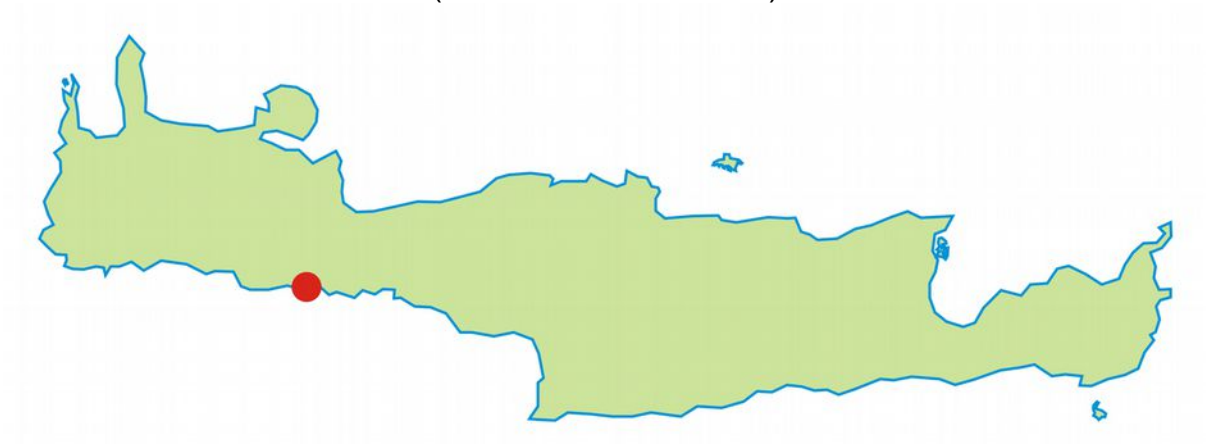
**Dangers:** *There are above-water rocks close to the northern fishing harbour (which is too shallow for yachts). A ferry uses the stub quay close to the entrance to the main (southern) harbour.*

The fishing harbour and ferry port of Hora Sfakion is approx 3 miles east of Loutro. We have never been in here but we have a friend who has (in November 2009). The northern fishing harbour is too shallow for yachts, but he reported that the outer mole of the larger southern harbour has been completely repaired and extended since the above Google Earth image and that there are depths of at least 4m along the outer end of this mole and in most of the harbour itself. Anchoring inside this harbour is apparently possible. This would offer much better shelter from the east and south than Loutro. There are above water rocks close to the entrance, they can be clearly seen in the Google Earth image above.



## Loutro

(35° 11.9' N 024° 4.9' E)



**Dangers:** *There is a reef just awash in the northern part of the anchorage. A ferry visits several times a day in the summer and docks at the quay on the south side, this area must be kept clear.*

Loutro is a small town at the head of a delightful little bay with many guest houses and tavernas perched on the narrow strip of level land between the cliff walls and the sea. In October 2007 every building was painted white with blue window shutters and they're all small enough so that they don't overpower the place.

The bottom is coarse sand everywhere and it's deep very close inshore. We anchored about 50 metres off the beach in 7 metres of water. There is a dangerous reef in the NE corner that is clearly visible just above water even on a calm day. Avoid the quay in the southern corner because it's in regular use by large ferries.

## Crete Pilot

There is excellent shelter from all directions except the SE and E quadrants, which are wide open. We arrived a few days after a F8 gusting F9 SW storm and experienced around a 1 metre swell from the SW in the open sea, in the anchorage the swell was hardly noticeable and not a problem. However, during the night the swell backed round to the SE and came straight into the anchorage making for a most uncomfortable night!

Loutro is not served by roads and the only way here is by sea (there is a regular ferry) or by footpath (the E4 long-distance footpath passes through here).



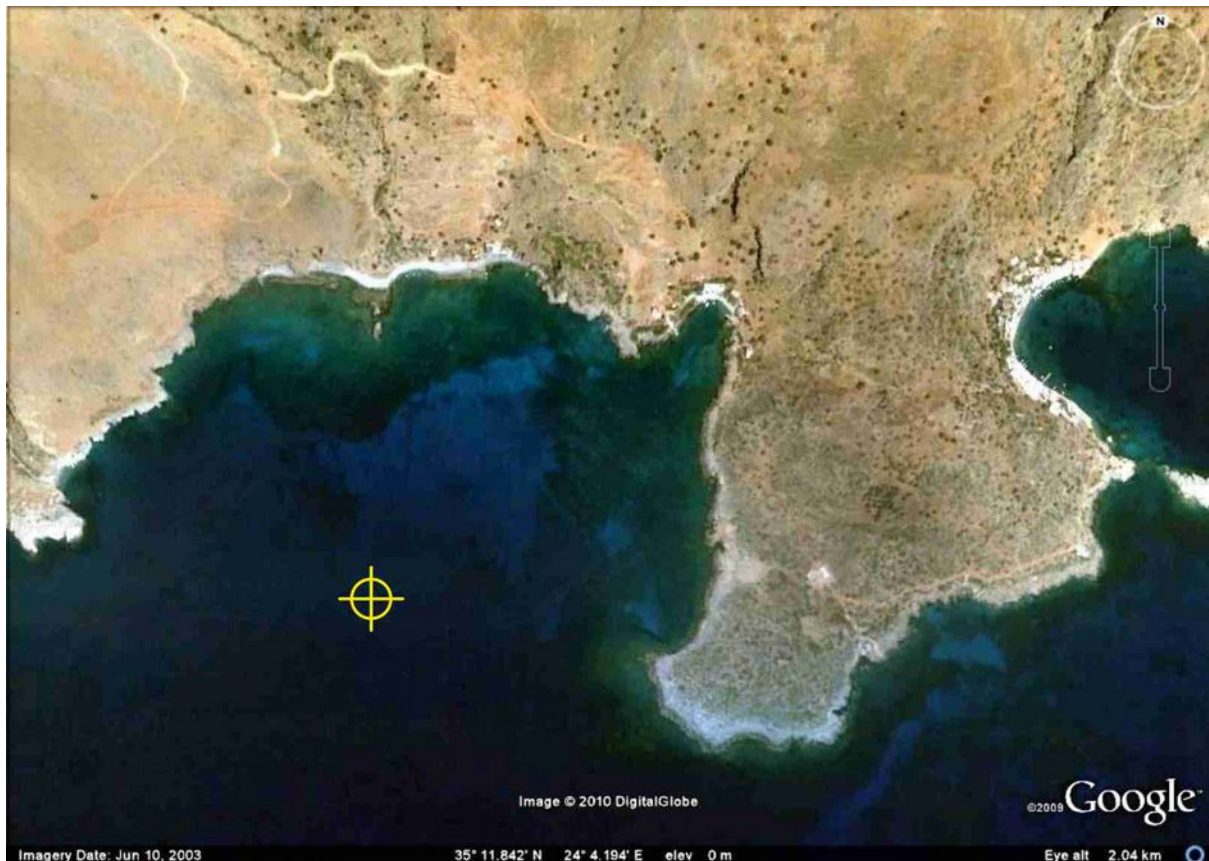
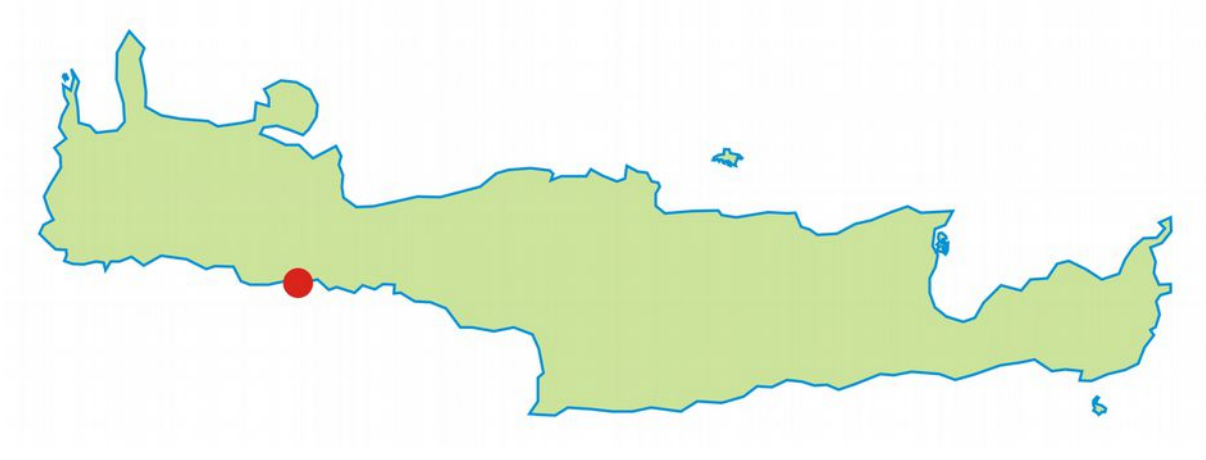


*Views of Loutro*



## Ormos Foinikias

(35° 11.6' N 024° 3.8' E)



**Dangers:** *Unknown.*

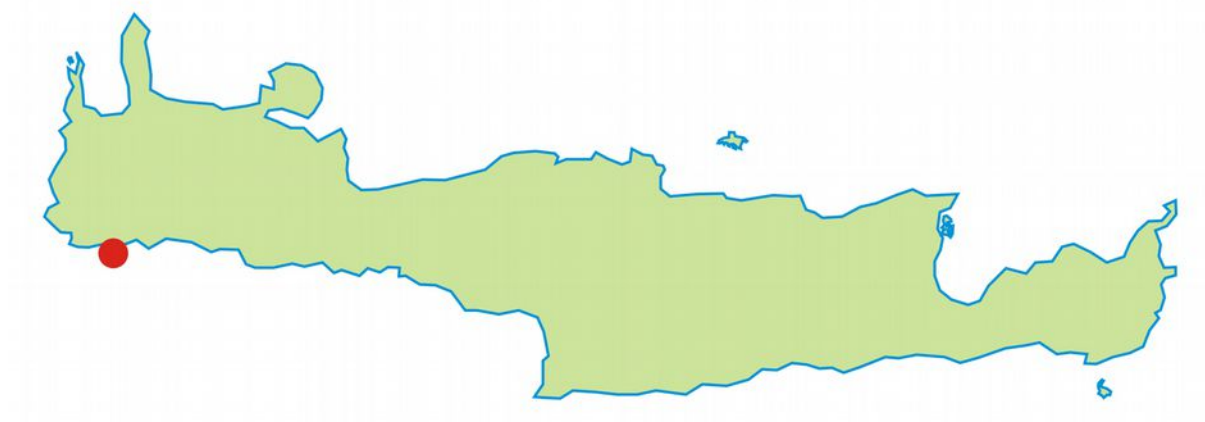
Just to the west of Loutro the bay of Ormos Foinikias offers an alternative anchorage to Loutro when the wind or swell is from the north-east or east. We didn't go in there though we took a close look on our way out of Loutro. It's doubtful whether we'd have had much better shelter from the SE swell in there, it would probably only be worth going in there if the wind or swell or swell is from the north-east or due east, since it's wide open to the south and offers no better shelter from the northern-western sector than Loutro.

There were buildings ashore which looked like hotels and possibly a taverna or two, though they were already shut up for the winter in October 2007.



## Palaiochora

(35° 13.3' N 023° 40.7' E)



**Dangers:** The entrance here is very narrow and difficult to see clearly until quite close in. Beware of heading for the more obvious light tower on Nisis Skhisto which has a reef just awash to its right, from a distance this looks remarkably like a port entrance. Palaiochora would be extremely difficult to enter in strong winds and big seas.

Palaiochora has a fairly narrow entrance (about 35m wide) and only 4.2m of water. My chart also shows a red can just inside the harbour entrance that wasn't there in October 2007.

Inside the depths fall to 2.5 metres in places, but mostly it's over 3 metres (but see below). There are three "pounds" inside the harbour; immediately on your starboard side on entering is a small pound for fishing boats, a little way in on your port side is a large pound (containing the Coast Guard cutter in October 2007) for larger

## Crete Pilot

fishing boats and ferries. Further in on your starboard side (after the fishing boat pound) is the pound where we moored. Depths in here are mostly 2.5 metres, dropping to 2.2 metres in a few places. *However, right in the middle of the entrance to this pound and about 10 metres in, is a shallow area with less than 2 metres of water over it.* It is shown on our chart and the locals assured us that it's just a sand bar and nothing "solid". Nevertheless, enter this pound either on the extreme left or extreme right of the entrance where depths are at least 2.5 metres. We moored alongside on the south-east wall of this pound under the lee of the hammerhead. *In October 2007 there was a large tractor tyre on the bottom about 20 metres away from the hammerhead and directly against the quay, reducing the depth above it to less than 2 metres.*

The locals warned us that this pound is dangerous in strong easterlies or south-easterlies due to the swell rebounding off the walls. In these conditions you should find a mooring in the large fishing boat/ferry pound (we found depths there to be over 3 metres almost everywhere). However, in strong southerlies and south-westerlies we were told that the sea comes over the outer wall causing a surge inside this pound as well. It is not safe to leave a boat unattended anywhere in Palaiochora, you need to be on board to move the boat within the marina depending on the wind and weather conditions.

When friends of ours visited here in June 2012 they were weather-bound for two weeks by very strong north-westerly winds, regularly over 40 knots and with frequent gusts over 60 knots. Not only was it uncomfortable and noisy but one of the two yachts had their bimini and solar panels torn down by the force of the winds. Their fenders were also badly scratched from being blown hard against the concrete quay.

There are water and electricity boxes on the quay and they work. You need to call the telephone number shown on the sticker on the electricity and water boxes, a man then comes and reads the meter and turns on the water and electricity. You need to call him again before you leave so that he can read the meters, but you then pay at the port police office when you check-out.

Standard port fees apply, the port police office is in the town a short walk away. There are no port-based toilets or shower facilities, though there is a small kafenion on site with a toilet (of sorts).

The town of Palaiochora is quite pretty in a rustic sort of way, it is a holiday destination for more adventurous tourists and it's a popular windsurfing location. The marina however has the feel of an abandoned building site, it is well outside the town and it feels rather detached from everything.



## Crete Pilot



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*Views of Palaiochora*



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## The North-West Coast Of Crete



### *Ports and anchorages on the north-west coast of Crete*

The north-western coast of Crete contains the major ports of Chania and Rethimnon as well as the smaller fishing ports of Kissamos, Kolimvari and Panormos.

Rethimnon, like Agios Nikolaos, is safe in all weathers and many yachts are over-wintered unattended here. Yachts also overwinter in Chania, however a powerful surge develops in the harbour here in very strong northerlies.

We have not yet visited Kissamos. Kolimvari is unsafe in NE and E winds (we were there in an ENE F5 and found a powerful surge inside the harbour). Panormos is a small fishing port and there is only room for one yacht alongside on the end of the mole here.

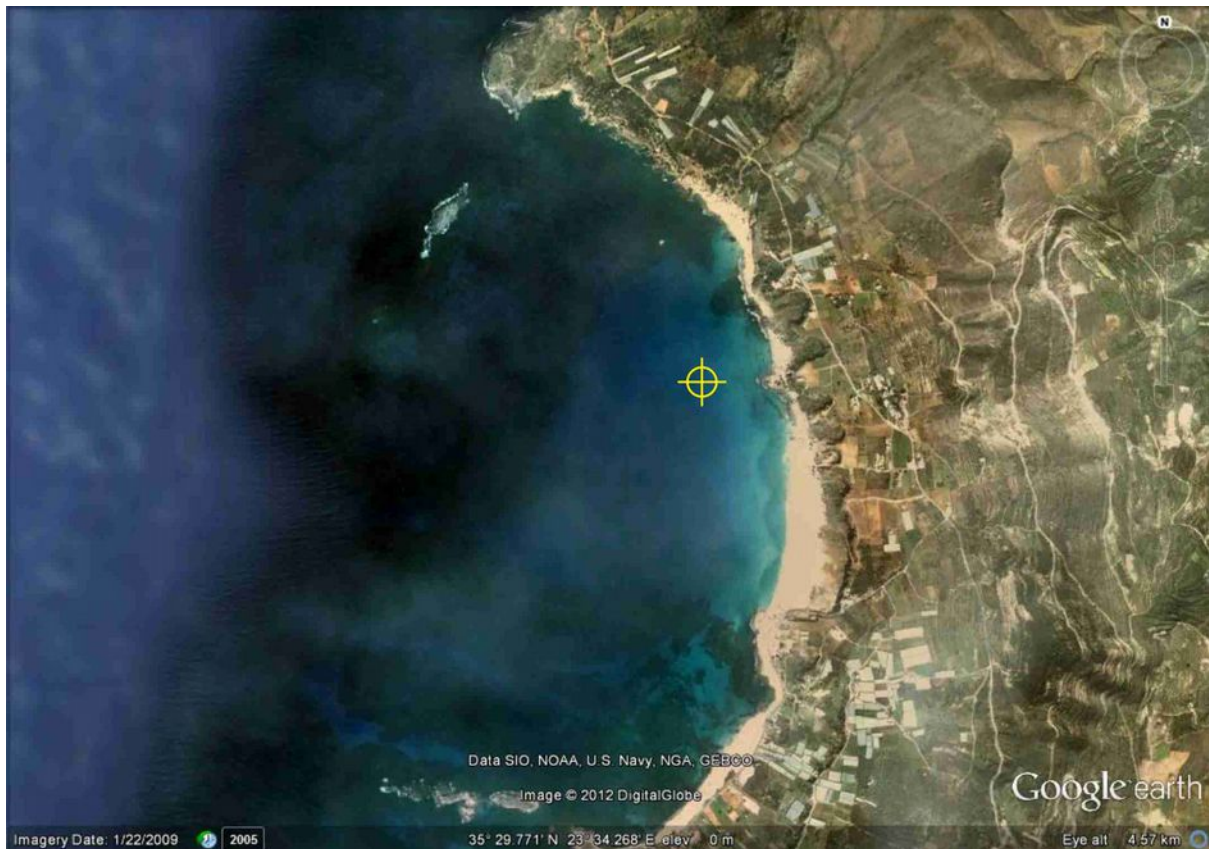
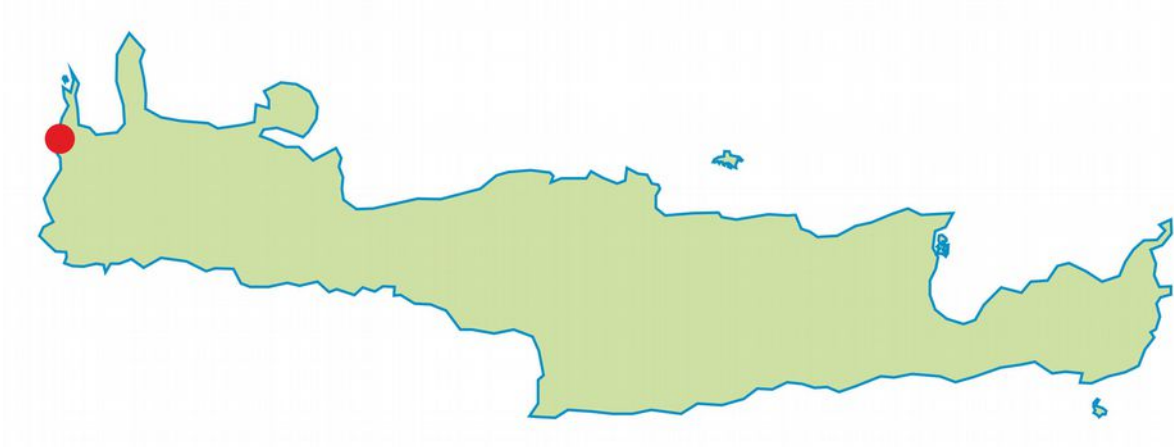
Gramvousa is safe in most winds, containing a northerly and southerly anchorage. We have weathered a two-day NW F8 in the northern anchorage here. Ormos Bali is a fair weather anchorage only and a swell enters the bay with almost any northerly component to the wind.

On the north-eastern coast of the Akrotiri peninsula, between Chania and Rethimnon, is the NATO Missile Firing Installation (NAMFI). This site is in fairly regular use as a live missile training and exercise area, using a large firing range to the east. Occasionally (and rarely) the firing range is closed to all vessels between sunrise and sunset every day, usually for a whole week. Travel between Chania and Rethimnon is impossible when the range is closed (without a large detour of course).



## Koutris Bay

(35° 29.9' N 023° 34.5' E)

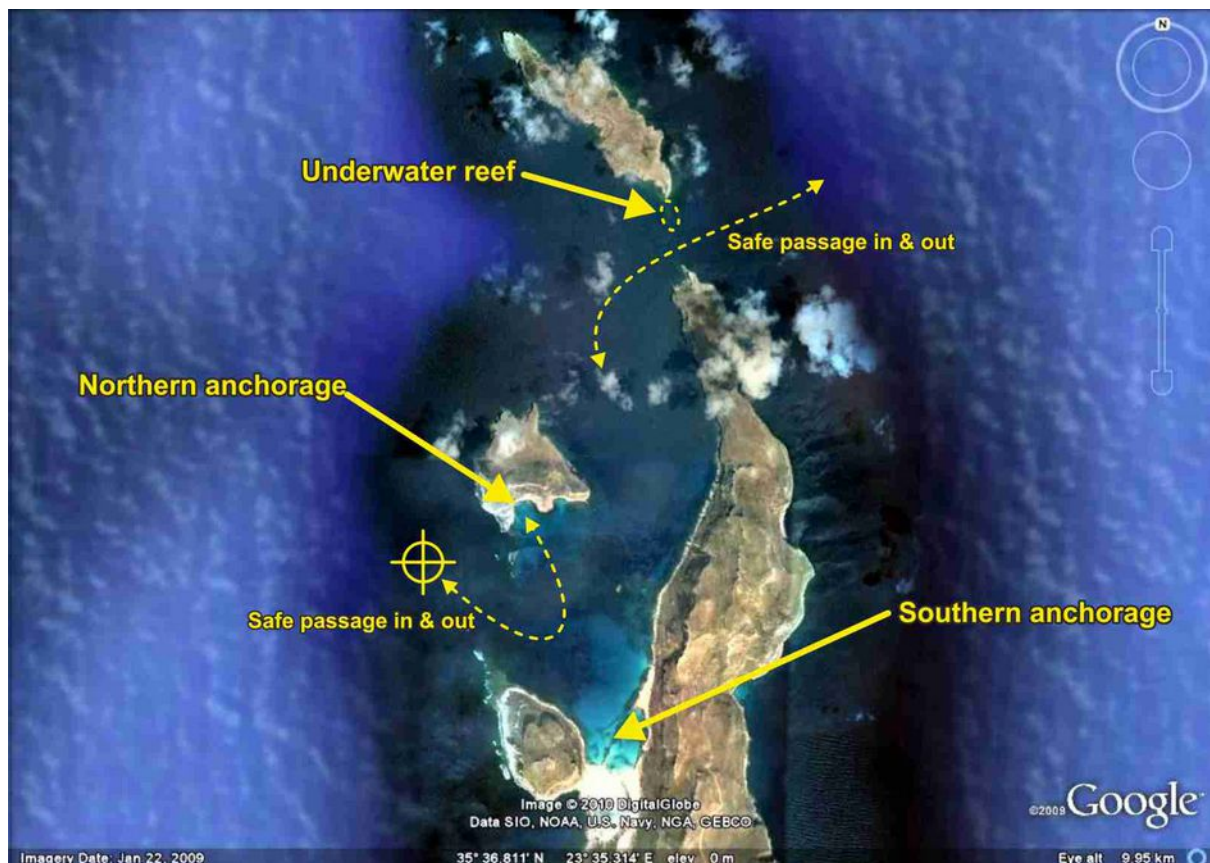
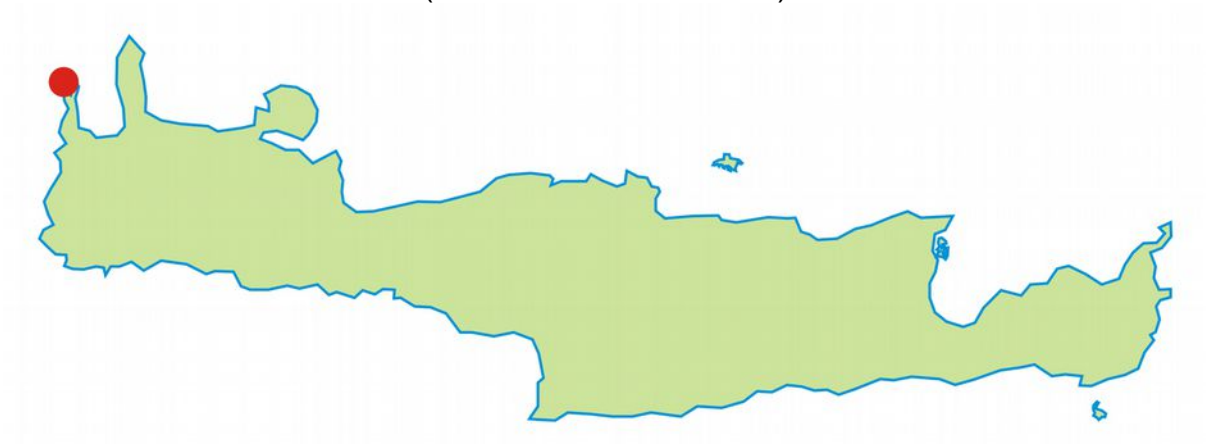


### **Dangers:** *Unknown*

We have never been here either by boat or by car but it does look like a possible lunchtime anchorage and possibly overnight in settled weather. There is a long sandy beach here and the bottom closer inshore is sand, though we have no idea of the holding. The wind and weather generally comes from the north and west on Crete so it may be a bit lumpy in here except in calm weather.

## Gramvousa Lagoon

(35° 36.1' N 023° 34.1' E)



**Dangers:** *There is a shallow reef extending south from the west side of Gramvousa Island and a similar, though shorter, reef extending northwards from Kers. Tigani. When approaching from the west you must head in a south-easterly direction until well inside. When approaching from the east there is a reef extending south from Nisis Agria Gramvousa to about halfway across the gap between the mainland and Nisis Agria Gramvousa.*

Gramvousa island and lagoon are one of the “must see” places in Crete. It’s desolate, almost unpopulated\* and largely unspoilt with an impressive Venetian fortress atop the rocky island. Several large tripper boats visit daily during the summer, these disgorge two to three hundred tourists at a time onto the island but they’re all gone by about 4:30pm leaving the island pretty much deserted (but see below).



## Crete Pilot

When entering or leaving the lagoon from the west side beware of the reef extending south from Gramvousa Island and north from Kers. Tigani. It is necessary to head some way into the lagoon in a south-easterly direction before turning back north-west to head for the anchorage in the bay under Gramvousa Island. The depth falls off gradually to around 4 metres in the centre of the small bay. The bottom is sand over rock with scattered rocks up to about 50 metres off the shore, it becomes completely rocky inshore of this point. You need to look carefully before dropping your anchor, the holding is variable depending on where you put your anchor.

There is a small quay with a stub pier on the west side of this bay that is used every day in the summer by large tripper boats (200 to 300 tourists at a time on the larger ones). Out of season, or after the tripper boats have left for the day, you can go stern-to or alongside the stub pier. There is 3 metres at the end of the stub pier, 2.5 metres on the south side and 2 metres on the north side. Along the quay itself there is barely 1.5 metres. Alternatively you can anchor where convenient in the bay, depths here are mostly 4 metres. The laid mooring for the tripper boats (marked by plastic pots) is anchored via a heavy ground-chain to a 2 metre square concrete block on the seabed and is a safe mooring (or kedge) for most small yachts.

The shelter is good for winds in the north-western sector. We safely weathered a NW gales 8 for two days here, though the shelter is less good in NE or E winds. Tuck yourself as close to the shore as you can with NE winds. For better shelter from southerly or easterly winds you can anchor in the southern bay. There are numerous rocks here that appear to be just under water so you must anchor a long way off the sandy and attractive looking beach. The bottom is all sand where you can anchor though. Friends who anchored here in a SW F5 reported that a large swell worked its way in here and they spent a very rolly and uncomfortable night.

When entering or leaving the lagoon from an easterly direction it is safe to pass through the gap between Kers. Gramvousa and Nisis Agria Gramvousa as long as there is no sea running. My chart shows a reef extending about halfway across the gap from the south end of Nisis Agria Gramvousa, so you should aim for a point midway between the centre of the gap and Kers. Gramvousa. In bad weather you should enter or leave by rounding Nisis Agria Gramvousa to the north.

*\*There is a small complex of buildings on Gramvousa island, these include a small chapel, and they were built for use as a religious retreat (though with anything up to 500 tourists on the island during the daytime in summer it's hardly secluded!). Friends who have been here recently (in June 2012) report that a small family appears to have taken up permanent residence in at least one of the cabins, they have a small kitchen garden and they like to hunt rabbits with guns in the early evening - after the tourists have left of course! They also apparently keep a small fishing boat alongside the long side of the small quay, but since this is the shallow side it's not occupying space that yachts can use.*



*Panoramic view of the south bay at Gramvousa Lagoon*

## Crete Pilot



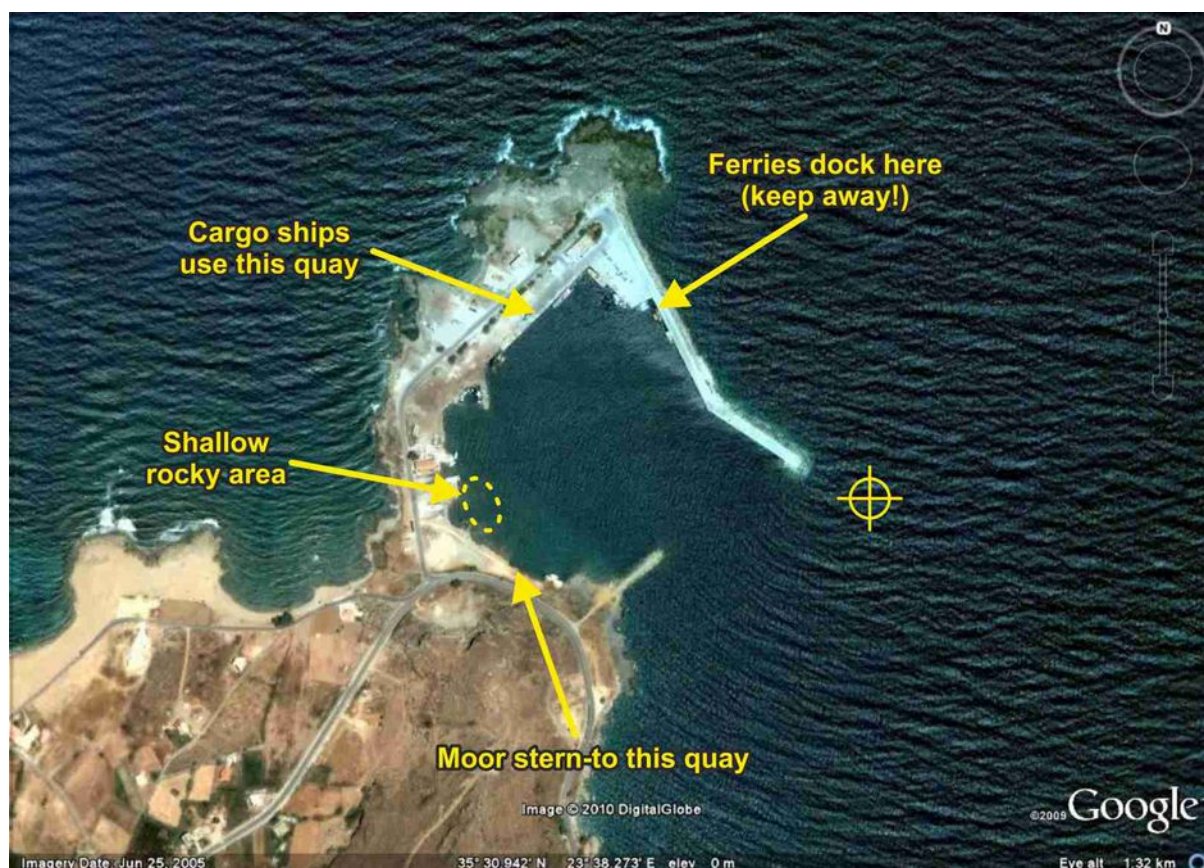
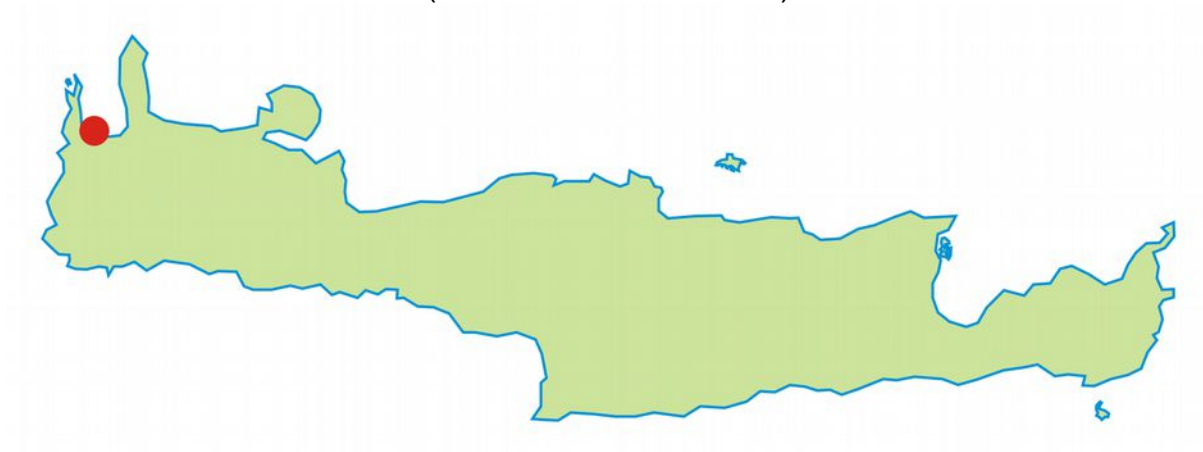
*Views of Gramvousa Lagoon*





## Kissamos

(35° 30.9' N 023° 38.5' E)



**Dangers:** *There are rocks on the east end of the main quay (stbd-hand) so give it a wide berth. There is a shallow and rocky area in the south-west corner. Ferries and cargo ships use the north-western corner of the port and you should keep clear. The port may not be safe in strong southerly winds.*

We have never been in here ourselves but we have friends who have, by car and in a yacht (2012). They reported depths of at least 3m along the southern quay, this is the only area of the port where small yachts can moor safely. A ferry docks at the quay in the north-west corner, so you should keep clear of this area. The north-western quay (with truck tyres along its length) is used by cargo ships and you may be asked to move if you moor here. There is a shallow and rocky patch in the south-west corner, but the rocks are easily seen.

There are no obvious water taps and no source of electricity for small yachts.

## Crete Pilot

There is nothing at all around the harbour itself, but the small village of Trachilos is a 500m walk away and there is one taverna there. The small town of Kissamos itself is over 1½ miles away along the coast road.

One set of friends were here on a fairly breezy day (by car) and they felt that the shelter would be very good with winds from the northern sector. They reported white-horses on the sea outside from the north-westerly F5 on the day they were there and not a ripple in the port. Other friends have been here in their yacht during a strong southerly (F6 gusting F7) and they reported a bad surge in the port. It might be wise to not leave a yacht unattended in here in strong southerlies.

Kissamos is at the base of the large gulf between the two westerly peninsulas on Crete and there is nowhere else to go should the port become untenable. It is at least 18 miles around the eastern peninsula and the very exposed Spathi Point to the closest safe shelter at Chania (and even there it's not completely safe in strong northerlies). In bad weather this would be an extremely unpleasant trip and with a difficult entry into Chania at the end.

We recommend Kissamos only as a fair-weather port.



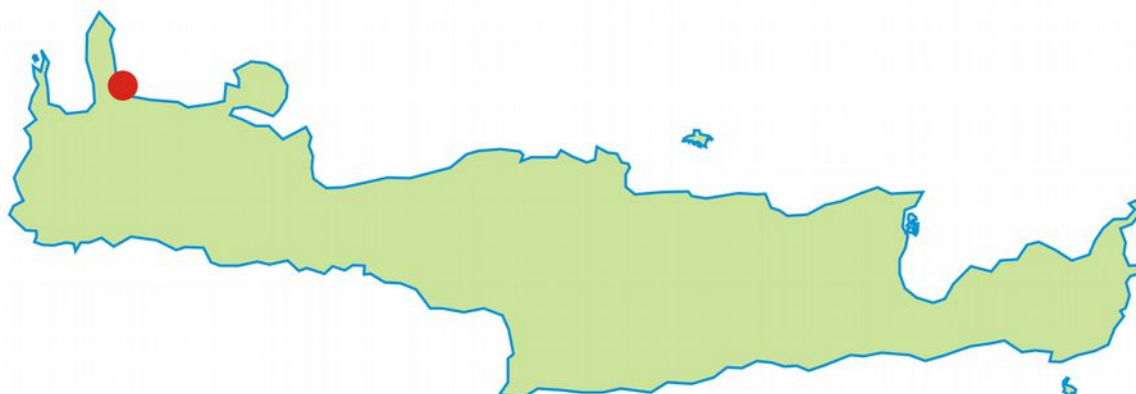


*Views of Kissamos.*



## Kolimvari

(35° 32.8' N 023° 46.9' E)



**Dangers:** *None.*

A new harbour/marina has been constructed here which is not (yet) shown on most charts or pilot books. There are two pounds, a large one immediately upon entering and a smaller one off to the left as you enter for small fishing boats.

Mooring stern-to or alongside is possible on the north, east and south sides of the large pound and electricity and water boxes are in place (we don't know if they're working). Depths almost everywhere are at least 4 metres with 3.5 metres in the entrance. The shelter would be good here from all but easterly winds.

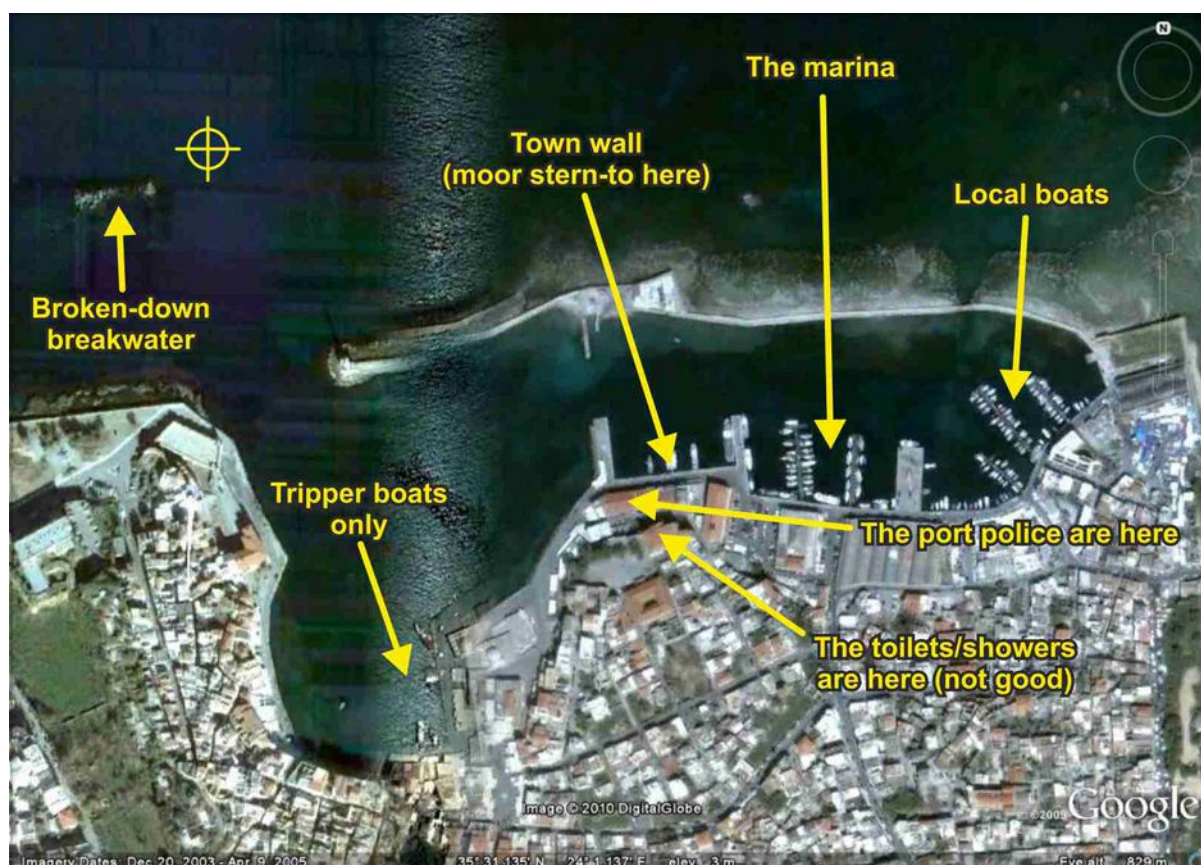
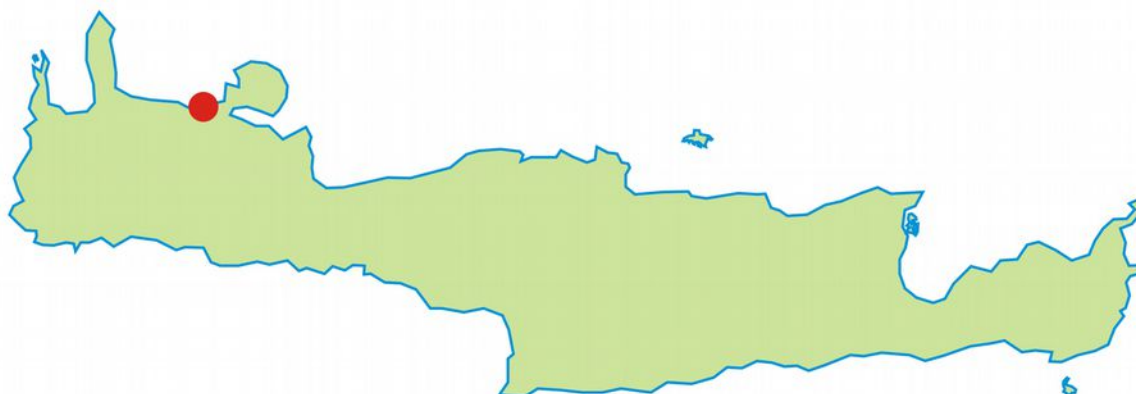


## Crete Pilot

On the day we arrived there was an ENE force 5 blowing a swell of about 1 metre straight into the harbour. Although we entered and looked around, the swell inside was too strong for a comfortable night and we didn't stay (we diverted to Chania). In other winds however, this would make a pleasant night stop. The town is a short walk away; there is nothing at all close by the harbour itself.

# Chania

(35° 31.2' N 024° 0.9' E)



**Dangers:** *There is an old and almost submerged wave-breaker reef about 50m north-west of the harbour entrance, the east end is marked by a green buoy. North of the outer wall, and all along it for about 50m out, it is rocky and shallow. (These can be seen on the Google Earth image above).*

Chania is a leisure and fishing port with a small marina. The marina is full of local yachts and tripper boats and it is most unlikely you will be able to find a berth in there. Visiting yachts moor stern-to the town wall, this has fixed mooring lines tailed to the quay and water and electricity is available close to all berths.

The port is in the middle of this tourist town and in the summer the place is very noisy and full of visitors - especially the town wall, which has a disco/night-club and cafés which are noisy and which stay open almost all



## Crete Pilot

night. In October 2010 we were woken by a drunken reveller who had jumped off the town quay onto our stern, his drunken friends on the quay thought it all very funny and were of little help in getting him off!

Most bars and tavernas in the harbour area employ touts in the summer and this soon becomes annoying. In addition, you will usually be paying for the view rather than the food or the service in these places. There are many excellent tavernas away from the harbour area.

Shelter on the town wall and in the marina is generally good, however even moderate northerly winds develop a surge on the town wall that strains lines and cleats. In very strong northerly winds this surge is dangerous and we have seen boats break lines and surge into the stone wall here in a northerly F8. The marina suffers less and if you can move in here in north winds you should. Do not leave a yacht unattended on the town wall if northerly winds are expected.

The entry to Chania can be a little tricky because the Venetian lighthouse is difficult to pick out from the background clutter until quite close in and there is a broken down breakwater partially blocking the entrance and about 50 metres out from it. This has collapsed and is almost completely awash now, though the green starboard hand buoy (lit) is clearly visible once close in. We recommend that you stand-off about ½ a mile until you have clearly identified the broken-down breakwater, the starboard-hand buoy that marks it and the lighthouse, only then should you attempt to enter. You must pass between the starboard-hand buoy and the lighthouse (red light), but stay reasonably close to the green starboard-hand buoy though, the water shoals close to the lighthouse and all along the outside of the outer wall.

Small tripper boats operate from Chania regularly during the summer, these often enter and leave at speed and with what seems like a casual disregard for other users of the port. Keep a good lookout when entering or leaving.

Depths inside are at least 4 metres around the town wall area; inside the marina the depths are at least 2.5m except close to the outer wall (north) and close to the east end. Standard port fees apply, the Port Police office is directly in front of the town wall. There are toilet and shower facilities in a block behind the Port Police office, these have been recently renovated though they are still barely acceptable, they are cleaned daily however.

Chania is a pretty place, especially around the harbour-front and in the old streets just behind. It is very touristy though and you will be hassled by almost every taverna you pass by. There is a good chandlers in town within walking distance of the port (on Skalidi Street).

In 2010 the water and electricity was controlled by a local man who charged €0.5 per KWh for electricity and €3 per 1000 litres of water. We suggest you don't plug in until he is around and reads the meters first, otherwise you run the risk of being asked to pay for the water and electricity used by the previous yacht if they left without paying (which does happen sadly).



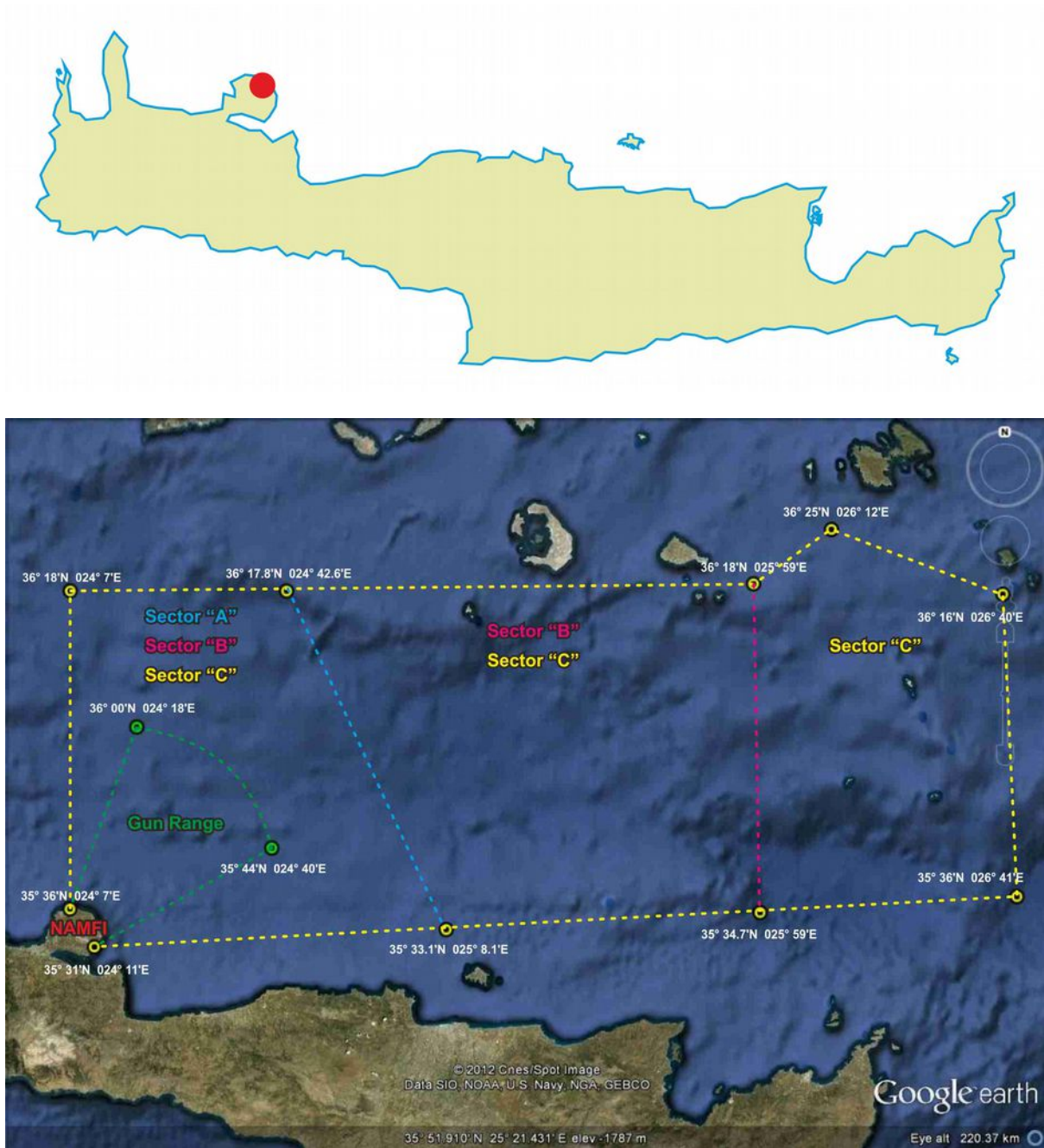
*Views of Chania*





# NATO Missile Firing Installation

(see Google Earth image below for coordinates of firing ranges)



**Dangers:** The firing range is used for live missile and gun firings out to sea. When any sector of the range is closed entry to that area is prohibited to all vessels.

The NATO Missile Firing Installation (NAMFI) is based on the Akrotiri peninsula between Chania and Rethimnon, just north of the airport. The full firing range extends approximately 48nM north and 124nM east of the peninsula, and is subdivided into three ranges (called sectors A, B and C) and a smaller gunnery range. Live firings from land based missile launchers and guns to sea based targets are carried out here quite often.

## Crete Pilot

When the firing range is active it is used in two main ways; in the first case the range is kept open to shipping and only specific target areas are designated as exclusion zones, caution is advised elsewhere. In the second case, and rarely, sections of the range are completely closed to all vessels.

The range is only operational during the hours of daylight (typically sunrise to sunset) and when it is closed it is usually every day for a whole week. Every sector of the range includes the north-east corner of the Akrotiri peninsula, so any range closure makes travel between Chania and Rethimnon impossible, unless you are prepared to travel at night or make a large detour.

When the ranges are not operational there are no restrictions on shipping anywhere in this area.

It is clearly important that you check the status of the firing range before entering any part of it, you can do this in a number of ways. The port police in Chania and Rethimnon can tell you the current and future status of the range. Alternatively the dates, times and coordinates of the firing range in use (whether closed or not) are broadcast as navigation warnings on the NAVTEX system from the Heraklion transmitter. They are also broadcast on VHF during the regular navigational warnings broadcast (0500, 1100, 1730, 2330 UTC daily).

NAMFI can be contacted by email at [info@namfi.gr](mailto:info@namfi.gr), by phone at +30 28210 26800, or via their website at <http://www.namfi.gr>.

**Special Note:** During 2012 two very small sections of the range are in constant use three (and sometimes four) days a week throughout the year, although no parts of the range are closed to shipping at these times. Reproduced below is the NAVTEX navigation warning, broadcast daily from Heraklion Radio during 2012.

```
ZCZC HA82
301325 UTC DEC 11
IRAKLEIO RADIO
NAVWARN 671/1
NORTH KRITIKO SEA
MISSILE AND GUN FIRING
'KRITI, FIRING AREA SECTOR 'C,
A) 01 JAN TO 31 DEC 12
EVERY WED, THU, FRI AND SAT DAILY
FROM 0530 TO SUNSET
B) 01 APR TO 31 OCT THIS SECTOR
'C, WILL NOT BE ACTIVE ON SAT
UNLESS NOTIFIED AS APPROPRIATE
IN AREA BOUNDED BY:
35-36N, 024-07E
36-18N, 024-07E
36-18N, 025-59E
36-25N, 026-12E
36-16N, 026-40E
35-36N, 026-41E
35-31N, 024-11E
TARGET DROPPING ZONES
1000 METRES RADIUS CENTRED AT
R1. 35-32,00N 024-13,00E AND
R2. 35-28,00N 024-11,75E
PASSING VESSELS KEEP WATCH
'NAMFICONTROL, ON VHF-CH.12/16
CAUTION ADVISED
CANCEL THIS MSG 311615 UTC DEC 12
NNNN
```

These “target dropping zones” are small (only 2km across) and are located either side of the entrance to Souda Bay, although the R2 zone is actually outside the defined firing range! Zone R1 however, is across the natural track from Chania to Nisis Palaiosouda and Souda Bay.



## Nisis Palaiosouda

(35° 30.1' N 024° 11.0' E)



**Dangers:** *None.*

Just north-west of the island of Nisis Palaiosouda between the island and the Akrotiri peninsula is a delightful little anchorage. There is a small breakwater with small fishing boats moored behind it, but we didn't venture that far round to test the depths, our chart shows barely 2 metres. We anchored just west of the breakwater close to two sandy beaches in 4.5 metres on sand. Closer in towards the beaches you begin to see large rocks on the bottom, these are flat and close to the seabed so they're not a hazard, but they're obviously not good for anchoring on!

The shelter here is good for the normal summer NW, N or even NE winds, it would be less well protected from the SW and S and it's completely open to the E and SE.

## Crete Pilot

We spent a night here in May 2010 and were woken twice during the night by a series of very large (1m approx) waves coming from the direction of Souda Bay. We were beam-on to these at the time and the boat was rocking alarmingly, it was bad enough that we lost a small petrol can overboard! There was no obvious cause but we suspect it was the wash from warships entering or leaving Souda Bay, though none was in sight when we looked on deck. We have no idea whether this is a regular occurrence but we suspect it is since Souda Bay is an active NATO naval base.

Note: The prohibited area around the Souda Bay deep-water harbour and naval bases has been reduced in recent years so that this anchorage now lies outside the prohibited area. If your charts are old they may (incorrectly) show the anchorage being inside it.



## Crete Pilot



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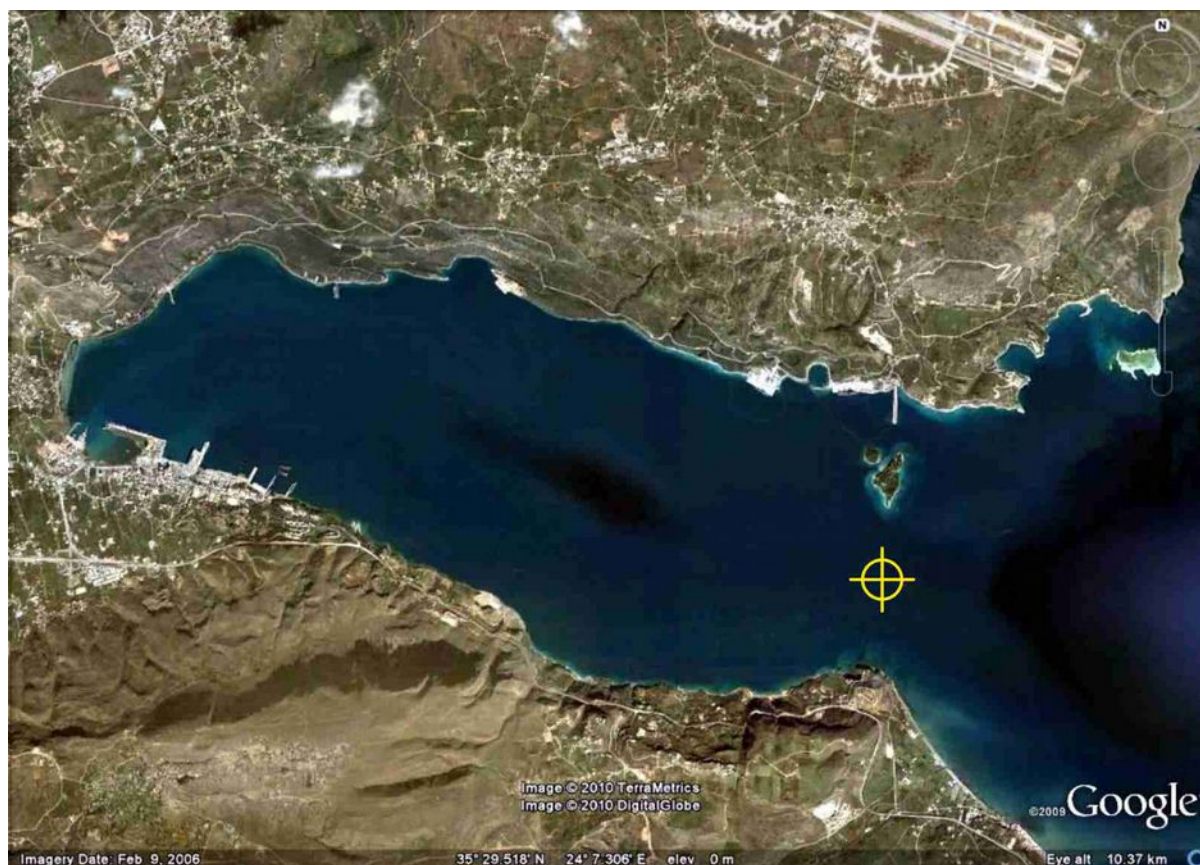
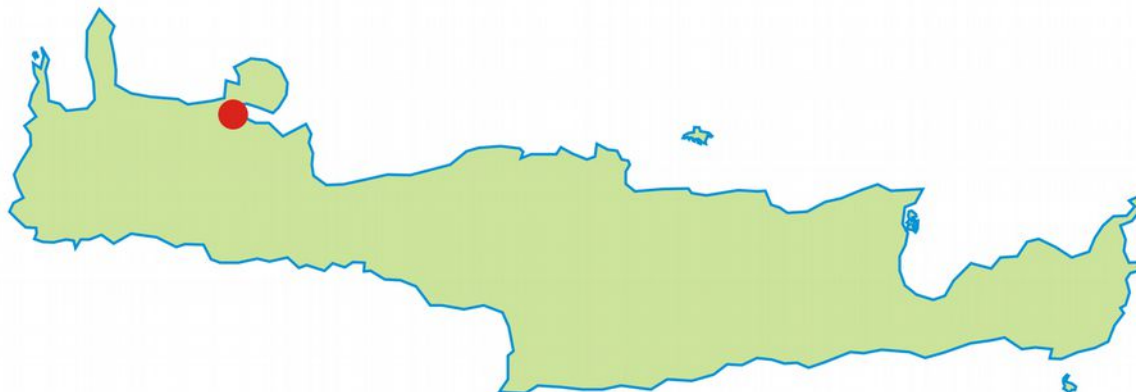
*Views of Nisis Palaiosouda*



Copyright © 2007 Tony Cross

## Souda Bay

(35° 28.8' N 024° 9.1' E)



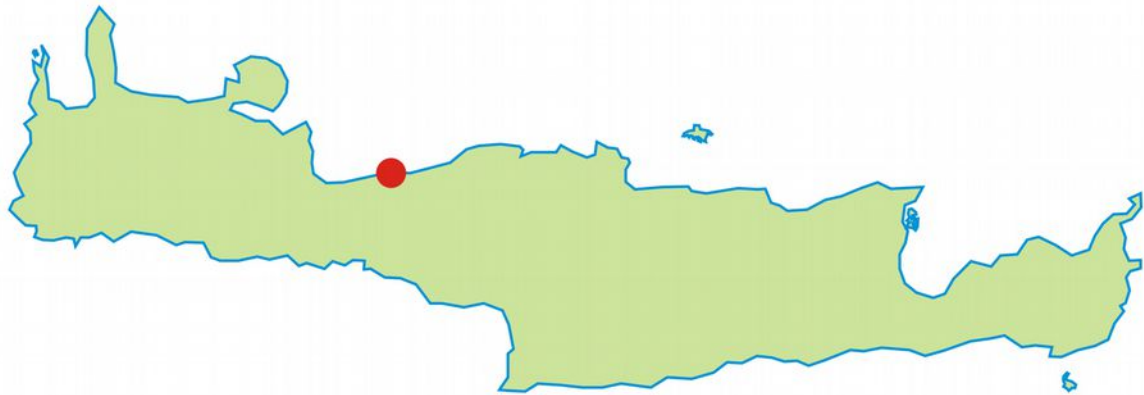
**Dangers:** *Souda Bay is an active NATO naval base and you are supposed to request permission on VHF channel 12 before entering. You must stay in mid-channel and you can only anchor at the town of Souda on the western end of the bay.*

We have never been in here so we cannot comment on it at all except to say that the entire bay is an active NATO naval base and you are not permitted to enter any areas of the bay except for the town of Souda at the far western end. The Port Police in Chania told me that you must call Souda Port Control on VHF channel 12 and ask permission to enter the bay. Recent visitors (in 2012) told me that they got no answer at all on channel 12 but the NATO harbour master on VHF channel 11 was extremely helpful. Our friends we told to keep as close as possible to the middle of the bay, it would also be wise I think not to take any photographs and keep a good listening watch on VHF channels 11, 12 and 16 (if you can manage all three).



## Rethimnon

(35° 22.4' N 024° 29.1' E)



**Dangers:** Rethimnon is a major port, and freighters and ferries (some of them fast) enter and leave frequently, so you should keep a good lookout when entering or leaving.

Inside the main harbour at Rethimnon there is a separate small boat marina in the SE corner with pontoons and laid bowlines tailed to the quay at all berths. The bowlines are very short however (especially on pontoon C) and are probably too short for yachts over about 40ft (12.2m) except on the outside of pontoon A where they are quite long. Pontoon A (outside only) and pontoon C are available for visiting yachts, you can also use any available area of the wall (pontoon B) between these two. Pontoon G is also available for long-term berthing by arrangement. All the other pontoons are full of local fishing and pleasure boats, however the marina office may allocate you a berth here (or alongside the wall in the gaps) when/if necessary.

## Crete Pilot

It is possible to berth in the old Venetian harbour by arrangement with the marina office. However, in the summer it is full of local boats, the bottom is almost certainly fouled by old moorings in places and it's extremely noisy since it is surrounded by tavernas.

The shelter in the marina is good under most conditions, though strong southerlies produce a sizeable slop on pontoon B (the wall). Yachts stern-to on pontoon A are also quite exposed in strong winds from either the north or south. It has been reported to us that in December 2011 in storm force northerlies the sea came over the outer harbour wall and produced a very large slop and surge in the marina. These extreme conditions are usually only found in the winter months, and then only rarely. Many yachts are left unattended here over winter and there is a small, but growing, winter live-aboard community here too. Winter mooring is very cheap, you should call Nikos Pangalos in the marina office on +30 283 102 2408 (office) or +30 697 480 8785 (mobile) for information and/or bookings. Space is very limited though, especially on pontoon C where the best shelter is found. The marina has its own website at: [www.rethymno.gr/en/city/marine/marina.html](http://www.rethymno.gr/en/city/marine/marina.html). *During the current financial crisis in Greece the marina office is usually closed on Saturdays and Sundays.*

There is a toilet and shower block underground on the main quay opposite the end of pontoon C. This is rather small but it's quite acceptable (there is even hot water in the showers). Water and electricity is available close to most berths and is controlled by the marina office (€7/day for water and €4/day for electricity for our 45ft yacht in October 2010, discounts are available for long-term use).

Management of the marina is the responsibility of the local authority and you must check-in with the marina office at the local authority office block on the left as you exit the marina car-park (office on the first floor). In October 2010 we were charged just €1.50 per night for our 45ft yacht. There are regular security patrols and the nuisance that used to be caused by youngsters riding motorbikes up and down seems to have disappeared.

Rethimnon is a busy provincial town with very little in the way of charm outside of the old town, though this is quite pretty in places. There are many bars and tavernas along the front and fairly close to the marina, though these often employ touts in the summer which can be annoying. There are many more tavernas tucked away in the back-streets of the old part of town. The Venetian fortress here is the most impressive on the island and it's worth a visit even though there is little left to see except the walls. A large minaret from the Turkish period can be seen in the old town (though its been surrounded by scaffolding for the last few years) and the remains of several former mosques can be found in the old town too.

**Note:** Although there are regular security patrols there are at present no mariners in Rethimnon marina and thus nobody to contact prior to your arrival and nobody to help take your lines when you arrive. So you simply turn up and berth where convenient (or where directed by those already moored) and either moor on your own or look for help from yachts already there.



## Crete Pilot



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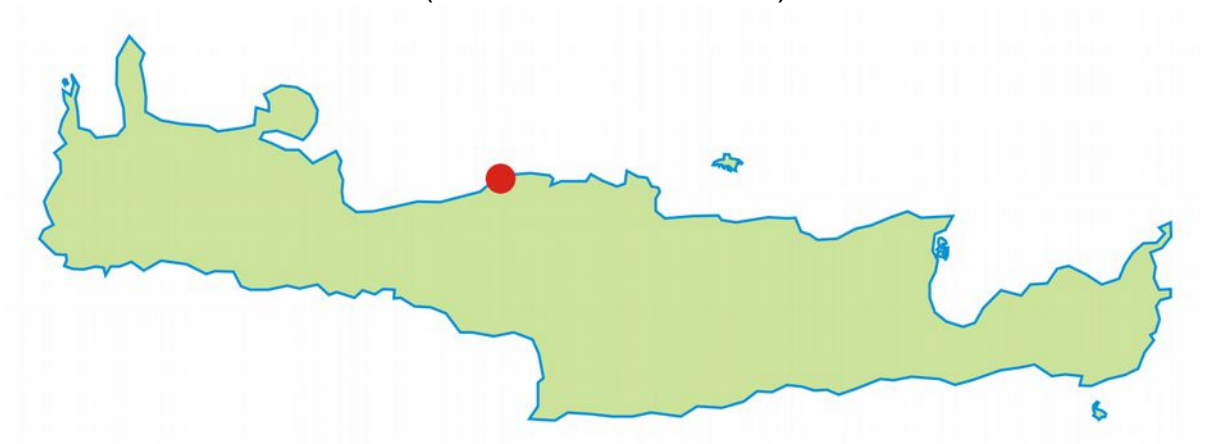
## *Views of Rethimnon*



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## Panormos

(35° 25.2' N 024° 41.5' E)



**Dangers:** *The depth shallows very quickly once inside.*

A small local fishing harbour, Panormos is not really suitable for visiting yachts. In May 2007 we found depths of 3 metres just inside the entrance, which shallowed very quickly as we went further in.

In 2007 a large “galleon” tripper boat moored at the extreme end of the large quay (where the depths are 3 metres) on most days in the summer. It was possible to moor alongside here (there is not enough room to lay an anchor for going stern-to) only after he has left in the late afternoon. However, in 2012 friends visited here and discovered that the tripper boat no longer calls (although it could always start again!). A fishing boat occasionally uses the space on the end of the quay but provided you are prepared to make room for him there should be no problem mooring here.



## Crete Pilot

We found the shelter here to be fair in a strong north-westerly, although a significant swell worked it's way in. The shelter would probably be as good (and without the swell) from most other directions. Rethimnon is only 11 miles away however and is much, much safer.

## Crete Pilot



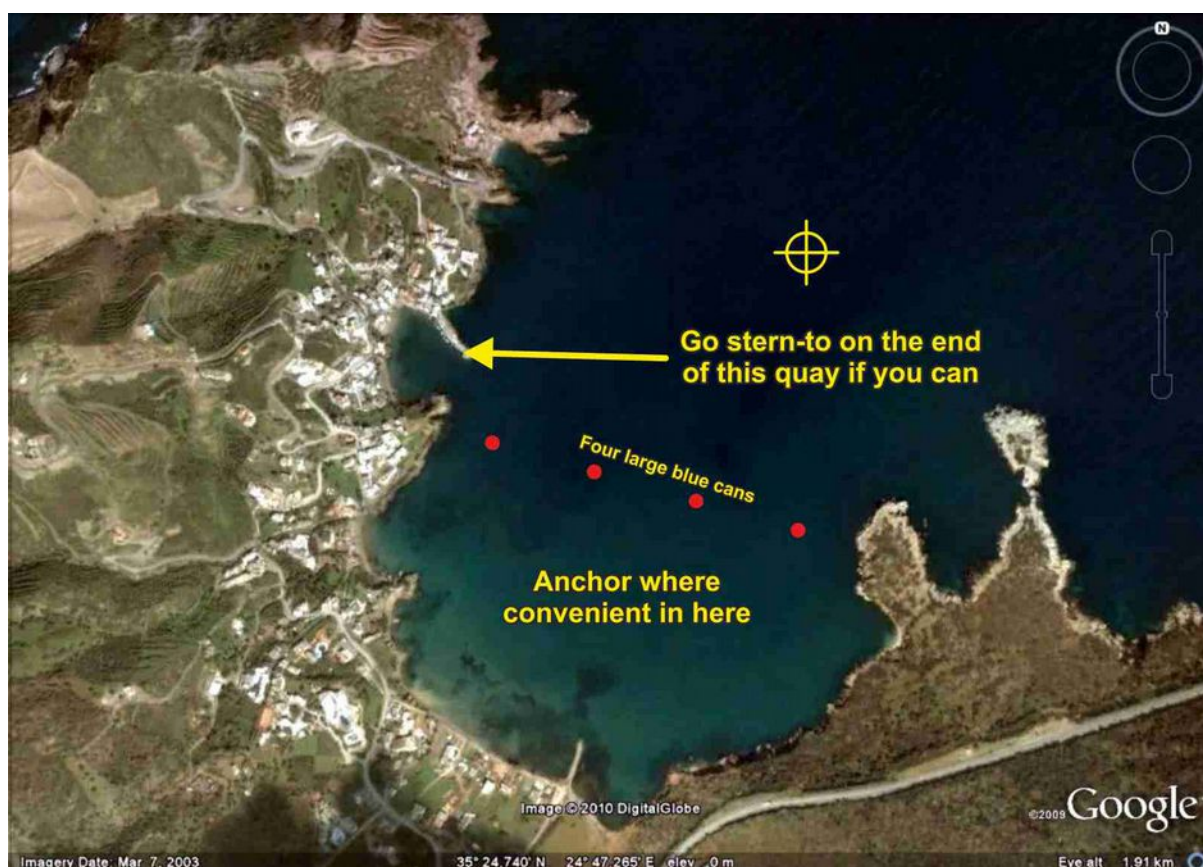
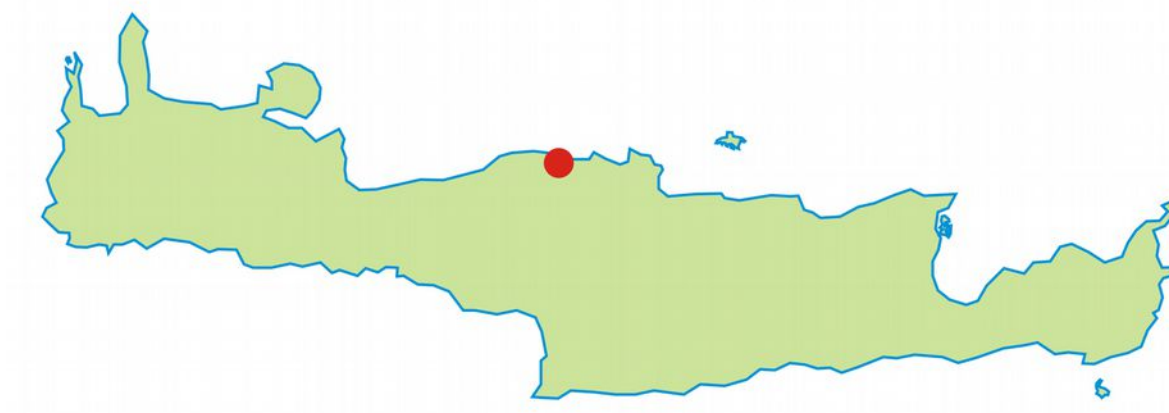
## *Views of Panormos*





## Ormos Bali

(35° 24.9' N 024° 47.5' E)



**Dangers:** *In strong north or north-easterly winds a sizeable swell enters the bay.*

A wide and open bay with several coves and beaches off it and many hotels and tavernas ashore. There is a small harbour protected by a breakwater in the NW corner which is usually full of local fishing and tripper boats. There is a space right on the end which is used by a large “galleon” tripper boat during the day, either after he has left for the day or out of season, small yachts (less than 40ft) should be able to go stern-to here. There is not enough room for longer yachts to lay sufficient anchor chain. If you can get into the harbour do so, with any northerly component to the wind a swell enters the bay making for an uncomfortable night. We generally take a line ashore to hold the bows into the swell if we're staying the night here.

## Crete Pilot

In the summer months there are usually four largish blue cans in the positions shown on the Google Earth image above, friends have been told by the man who lays them that these are not to keep yachts out of the bay, they are there to keep jetskis (rented in the small port) out of the bay. There are many people swimming, canoeing, and lazing on airbeds in the bay here (which is why jetskis are banned) but visiting yachts are welcome to anchor in the bay as long as you proceed slowly and keep a good lookout for swimmers and other water users.

Friends visiting in late 2012 confirmed that the buoys are not there to keep yachts away and that yachts are welcome to anchor in the bay. They also told me that one of the buoys has dragged a long way into the bay.



*View of Ormos Bali*



# Useful Addresses

## **Agios Nikolaos Port Authority**

Website: <http://info.yen.gr/page.php?id=1036>

Email: [agni@yen.gr](mailto:agni@yen.gr)

Address: Agios Nikolaos Port Authority, Harbour Office, 21 Akti Koundourou, 72100 Agios Nikolaos, Crete, Greece.

Telephone: +30 28410 22312 & 90108

## **Agios Nikolaos Marina**

Website: <http://www.marinaofaghiosnikolaos.gr/>

Email: [depaman@otenet.gr](mailto:depaman@otenet.gr)

Telephone: +30 28410 82384 & 82385

Fax: +30 28410 82386

## **Gouves Marina**

Website: <http://www.portogouves.gr/>

Email: [info@portogouves.gr](mailto:info@portogouves.gr)

Telephone: +30 28970 41112

## **Rethimnon Marina**

Website: <http://www.rethymno.gr/en/city/marine/marina.html>

Telephone: +30 28310 22408

## **Cretan Weather Online**

Windfinder: <http://www.windfinder.com>

Windguru: <http://www.windguru.com>

PassageWeather: <http://www.passageweather.com/>

Athens Observatory: <http://cirrus.meteo.noa.gr/forecast/bolam/index.htm>

Eurometeo: <http://www.eurometeo.com/english/home>

Meteo Greece: <http://www.meteo.gr/>

Poseidon: <http://poseidon.hcmr.gr/>

PredictWind: <http://www.predictwind.com/>

HNMS: [http://www.hnms.gr/hnms/english/navigation/navigation\\_html](http://www.hnms.gr/hnms/english/navigation/navigation_html)

Athens University: <http://forecast.uoa.gr/>

Weatheronline: <http://www.weatheronline.co.uk/>

ECMWF: <http://www.ecmwf.int/>

## **Grib Weather Services**

MailaSail: <http://weather.mailasail.com/Express-Weather/Express-Weather-Usage>

GlobalMarineNet: <http://www.globalmarinenet.net/grib.htm>

Grib.us: <http://www.grib.us/>

SailDocs: <http://www.saildocs.com/gribinfo>

## Crete Pilot

ZyGrib: <http://www.zygrib.org>

### **General Weather Services & Information**

Frank Singleton: <http://weather.mailasail.com/Franks-Weather/Home>



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