

EXPERIENCE CULTURE, GASTRONOMY & MORE

GREECE IS

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CRETE

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WELCOME

Endowed by nature, rich in history, full of contradictions and yet welcoming to all... The word "island" can't even begin to describe the Cretan universe.

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DISCOVER

Home to gods and monsters, heroes and kings, the birthplace of European civilization is a shining beacon that casts its light on the history of humanity.

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EXPLORE

From its beaches to its mountain peaks, Crete is a myriad of destinations packed into one long stretch of land in the Eastern Mediterranean.

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GASTRONOMY

The culinary tradition of Crete makes the most of even the humblest of ingredients and elevates them to unimaginable levels of deliciousness.



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NOT JUST ANY ISLAND

How much of Crete can fit into the 200 pages of a magazine?

BY GIORGOS TSIROS / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, GREECE IS CRETE

Last May, I spent 36 hours in Crete at the invitation of the newly established non-profit organization Branding Heritage, which aims to highlight ways in which cultural heritage and modern entrepreneurship can go hand in hand. At the site of Knossos, we observed a demonstration of Minoan cooking by Jerolyn Morrison, in the presence of Charles, Prince of Wales. The curator at Knossos, Kostis Christakis, and the director of the British School at Athens, John Bennet, gave us a behind-the-scenes look at a collection of artifacts that reveal who the ordinary Minoans really were and how they lived: skulls and bones, seeds, everyday objects. The information contained in them will compose the next chapter in Minoan archaeology.

After an afternoon walk to the bustling center of Irakleio, where, coincidentally, a demonstration for world peace was taking place amid filled outdoor cafés (what a vibrant city!), we dined at Kafenes tou Kagjibi with Nikos Psilakis, a great connoisseur of Crete and its cuisine, an author and our collaborator on this issue of Greece Is. The hospitable owner served us his best dishes – among them wild greens, plain fluffy burgers (biftekia) and a stunning omelet with artichokes: the pinnacle of simplicity.

The next day, in the crowded auditorium of the Archaeological Museum, fashion designer Sophia Kokosalaki and other “Contemporary Minoans” explained that they consider their Cretan heritage as a permanent point of reference and source

of inspiration for their work. We saw a traditional wooden loom being operated by Klotho’s Alexandra Theohari and a jewelry workshop by designer Voula Karampatzaki, as well as the graphic design creations of young Cretan students inspired by Minoan symbols.

This brief exposure to the incredible wealth of Crete brought to mind a legendary cinematic quote from the film *Jaws*, used when a particular challenge seems insurmountable: “You’re gonna need a bigger boat.” And I realized we were gonna need a bigger magazine. Crete doesn’t actually fit in a magazine – or even in an encyclopedia, or an entire lifetime. The fact that it is surrounded by sea doesn’t make it an island. Crete is its own universe, filled with contrasts. Its wealth – both natural and cultural – is awesome. Its dialect, its unwritten laws and customs seem mysterious even to other Greeks. We might offend Crete if we began citing numbers, but there is one bit of statistical information I believe is quite illuminating: There exist in Crete 120 kinds of snails, which can be prepared in 40 different ways.

Crete can you blow your mind, cause you to change your life, your way of thinking, the way you see the world, and make you realize the true meaning behind the buzzwords of today’s tourist vocabulary, such as “uniqueness,” “authenticity,” “experience” and “hospitality.” With this issue, we have tried to do something more than scratch the surface.