



TRIP OVERVIEW

Discover the stunning coastlines and crystal clear waters of one of Europe's southernmost destinations with an unforgettable swimming holiday on the idyllic Greek island of Crete. From dramatic coastal cliffs to isolated coves, bays and beaches, the island is full of spectacular locations to explore and enjoy.

Our base for the week is the remote coastal village of Porto Loutro, which can only be reached by boat, hiking or, of course, swimming! Hotel Porto Loutro on the Hill, which offers modern and comfortable rooms with sea views, is located just metres from the water's edge and is the perfect place from which to enjoy the tranquillity of this island paradise.

With a range of shorter stunning coastal swims, beautiful natural scenery and a long and rich history which dates back to the Minoan civilisation that occupied the island as far back as 3,650 BC, this trip is a wonderful opportunity to discover this truly fascinating part of the world.

WHO IS THIS TRIP FOR?

This trip is ideal for the swimmer who wants to be based in one of Europe's most remote villages, situated right on the water's edge. The trip features idyllic coastal swimming, along with a chance to discover some of the amazing underwater vistas which make this coastline so special.

The trip is ideal for swimmers with a little less experience in the open water or who are looking to enjoy some additional time out of the water. Swimmers should have a basic understanding of open water swimming and be capable of completing the short swims distances of an average 3km daily.

LOCATION SUMMARIES

Porto Loutro

This small, isolated fishing village is situated in a bay which is overlooked by the peaks of the White Mountains rising to over 2,400m. There is a selection of tavernas and cafes in the village and our hotel has dramatic views looking both south and east. The island of Gavdos, Europe's southernmost piece of land, is clearly visible from within the village.

White Mountains

The White Mountains or Lefka Ori occupy the centre of West Crete and are the main feature of the region. They are made of limestone and called White Mountains because they are covered in snow until late in the spring, and in the summer the sun reflected on the limestone summits makes them appear white as well.

Sfakia

Famous over the years as one of the centres of resistance against Venetian, Turkish and German occupying forces, Sfakia is also known for the harshness of its natural environment and the ruggedness of its people.



Frangokastello

A magnificent Venetian castle built in the 14th Century dominates the town. During the Greek War of Independence, the castle witnessed a battle between the forces of the Greek independence leader Hatzimichalis Dalianis and the forces of the Ottoman Empire. According to tradition, each May on the anniversary of the battle, shadows of the armed Cretan soldiers who lost their lives there seem to march towards the fortress around dawn.

E4 European Long Distance Walking Path

Starting on the Spanish side of the Strait of Gibraltar, the E4 continues through France, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece. It visits Crete as well, and our swim journey is based under its gaze as it winds across the long dramatic coastal cliffs.

TRIP SCHEDULE

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Start Point | Hotel Porto Loutro On The Hill, Porto Loutro, Crete www.hotelportoloutro.com |
| Start Time | 17:00 on Day 1 |
| Finish Point | Porto Loutro, Crete |
| Finish Time | 11:00 on Day 7 |

Please note that the below daily itineraries are an example of the swims that may take place during the course of your trip, however, actual swim locations and distances will vary according to local weather and sea conditions. Your SwimTrek guides and local boat pilot will determine the most suitable swim locations each day and will communicate the plan with all guests as soon as possible.

Day 1

We meet on the lovely outside terrace of our hotel. We enjoy a welcome drink overlooking the village of Porto Loutro before our safety briefing and a description of our upcoming adventures. We then head down the hill for a short acclimatisation swim before heading out for dinner in one of the tavernas on the water's edge.

Day 2

After breakfast, our boat takes us to the start of our morning swim. Beginning at Sweetwater Beach, we swim west beneath the E4 coastal walk bringing us back towards Porto Loutro. Looking towards shore you are sure to spot hikers on the trail above watching as you swim. There's also some time to improve your technique as we will pause to offer you a chance to have your stroke recorded returning to Porto Loutro for lunch.

In the afternoon, it's time for a circumnavigation swim. The harbour signal light is located on an islet at the mouth of the bay. Swimming around the rocky outcrop, this short swim features stunning underwater scenery and a unique view of Porto Loutro. We finish the swim on the town beach with a technique session. You will get a chance to practice some of the drills that your guide may recommend when you view your swim video later in the evening.



Day 3

Today we visit the coastal village of Agia Roumeli at the foot of the famous Samaria Gorge. The village can only be reached by boat or hiking trail unless, like us, you plan to swim into the town! The morning swim starts at Agios Pavlos beach, where the apostle St Paul is said to have landed during bad weather on his voyage to Greece in 1st century AD. Swimming through the crystal clear water we follow the coastal edge of the Samaria National Park.

We have a longer lunch today to give you time to explore the town. There is a selection of lively Greek tavernas to enjoy or you can stretch your legs hiking to the Turkish fortress. There are spectacular views of the town and sea from this ridge. Look inland to admire the Samaria Gorge and the exhausted hikers making a beeline for a cooling dip in the sea.

We follow the sheer cliffs on the west of the town to Damata beach and its pine trees for our second swim of the day. During the swim you pass by the stunning Fournoti cliffs, home to the only known Hypericum aciferum plant in the world, that you can spot growing on the cliff side.

Day 4

This morning we jump in the water in front of the hotel. Leaving the village behind we slip through the narrow channel between Crete and the Porto Loutro signal light. We continue around the peninsula to Marmara beach. Watch the water change colour as you get closer to the white marble pebbles that make up the beach. This interesting craggy coastline is a great place for our longest swim of the week.

After our post-swim snacks you can travel back to Porto Loutro by one of our escort boats, relax on Marmara beach or enjoy lunch in one of the cliff-top tavernas serving traditional Cretan cuisine overlooking the beach. You could venture into a nearby gorge, relax, or follow the E4 track back to the hotel. The choice is yours.

Day 5

Today is a day of stunning coastal swimming in the remote area between Chora Sfakia and Frangokastello. This is a real opportunity to stretch out and put into practice what you have picked up during the trip so far. We start at the sea caves by Agios Pavlos and swim down a remarkable stretch of coastline, finishing at Koutelo with its beach taverna where we stop for lunch. In the afternoon, we carry on westwards as we swim to Kritamos, which is situated in the shadow of the Frangokastello Castle.

Day 6

This morning starts with a hike along the E4 route until we arrive at the sandy Sweetwater beach. The route grips the edge of the cliff, giving you a bird's eye view of yesterday's swim. On arrival we meet up with our support boats and swim east towards the town of Sfakia. The coastline is dotted with a series of interconnected caves for you to explore. During our lunch break, there is free time for lunch in Sfakia, a town that is famous for its cheese pie. Treats from the bakery in the town are also highly recommended.

It's more caves, inlets and exploring for the afternoon swim. Heading east from the port at Chora Sfakia, we head towards Filaki. This dramatic stretch of coastline is pocketed with cracks, caves and caverns.

Day 7

After the exertions of the week, it's time for a relaxing swim on the beach just outside our hotel before the trip finishes at 11am.



TRIP INFORMATION

Equipment Checklist

In addition to your daily non-swimming clothes, we also recommend that you bring the following items:

| ✓ | ITEM | ✓ | ITEM |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Swimming Costume (x 2) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Towel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Swimming Goggles (x 2)* | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sweater / Fleece |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Sun Hat and Sunglasses | <input type="checkbox"/> | Waterproof Jacket |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Waterproof Sun Cream | <input type="checkbox"/> | Walking Shoes / Sandals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Small Daypack | <input type="checkbox"/> | Aqua Shoes / Sandals |

*Try to bring one clear lens and one tinted lens for different light conditions.

Please note that SwimTrek will supply swim hats and provide water and electrolyte drinks in shared water bottles on your safety boat. If you prefer to use your own drink bottle, please feel free to bring one along. If you would like to use a wetsuit, rash vest or fins during your swims, please ensure that you bring these with you.

Swimming Distances

| SWIM | DISTANCE | SWIM | DISTANCE |
|-----------------------------|----------|---------------------------------|----------|
| Sweetwater Beach | 1½km | Porto Loutro Circumnavigation | 1½km |
| Agios Pavlos - Agia Roumeli | 2½km | Agia Romeli - Damata | 1km |
| Porto Loutro - Marmara | 3km | Agios Pavlos - Koutelo | 2km |
| Koutelo - Kritamos | 1km | Sweetwater Beach - Chora Sfakia | 2km |
| Chora Sfakia - Filaki | 1km | | |

Swimming Conditions

Swimming in the sea is a fantastic experience, however you should be aware that certain marine life such as sea lice, jellyfish, sea urchins and coral could be present during the swims. In all cases we will work on reducing your contact with these creatures, however if you suffer from anaphylaxis, please consult the office prior to booking.

Walking Distances

| WALK | DISTANCE | WALK | DISTANCE |
|---------------------------------|----------|------------------|----------|
| Porto Loutro - Sweetwater Beach | 3km | Agia Romeli Fort | 2km |

Most walks take place on recognised paths and tracks of the E4, however there may be cases where we walk along trails or other unsealed surfaces and care should be taken in these areas. Please note, if you prefer not to do the planned walks, you will have the opportunity to travel by boat instead.



Temperatures

| MONTH | WATER TEMPERATURE* | AIR TEMPERATURE* |
|---------|--------------------|-------------------|
| July | 24-26°C / 75-79°F | 25-27°C / 77-81°F |
| October | 21-23°C / 70-73°F | 22-24°C / 72-75°F |

* Please note that these temperatures are indicative and should be used as a guide only. The water temperatures in early May can feel colder than indicated due to the mixing of thermoclines and water, which reduces the surface water temperature.

Weather Caveat

For safety reasons, we rely on decent weather conditions when carrying out our swims. As a consequence, open water swimming holidays require a certain degree of on-trip flexibility which can result in changes to the planned itinerary. These changes often add a touch of uniqueness to your trip and will be communicated to you by your SwimTrek guides as quickly as possible.

Group Size and Boat Support

This trip has a maximum group size of 15. The group will be split into a maximum of three groups, based on speed, with each group being accompanied by their own safety vessel/escort.

Boat support on this trip includes one main safety vessel and two support boats to be piloted by your SwimTrek guides and a local boat pilot. Please note that this boat support is subject to change without notice and cannot be guaranteed.

GETTING THERE

The trip is based in Porto Loutro which can only be reached by ferry, water taxi or hiking. The easiest way to reach the hotel is to fly into Chania Airport and then take a public bus or local taxi to the port at Chora Sfakia, followed by a ferry or water taxi to Porto Loutro. It is also possible to fly through Athens to Chania, however please note that this option results in a significantly longer journey time compared to travelling direct to Chania.

While we have outlined various travel options below, they are subject to change and should be used as a guide only. We suggest that you use www.skyscanner.net to search for alternative flight options for this trip. Whichever route you choose to take, we recommend confirming your flights and other travel arrangements as early as possible in order to avoid price rises and availability issues.

Option 1: Travelling via Chania

To search for available flights into Chania Airport, please visit www.skyscanner.net.

Transfer From Chania Airport to Chora Sfakia Port

If you would like to arrange a private transfer from Chania airport directly to Sfakia port this can be arranged through Eleni at info@taxisfakia.com. The cost of this service depends on the number of passengers (please see the table below), and is payable locally on departure. The driver will be waiting in the arrivals hall where you collect your luggage, holding a sign with SwimTrek clearly displayed.



| NUMBER OF PASSENGERS | TOTAL PRICE |
|----------------------|-------------|
| 1 – 4 Passengers | €85 |
| 5 – 8 Passengers | €140 |

Public Transport from Chania Airport to Chora Sfakia

You can also take a bus from Chania Airport to Chania town which takes 30 minutes and costs approximately €3. From here you will need to change buses for your onward travel to Chora Sfakion (the duration and cost is approximately 2 hours and around €9). You can find more up to date information on www.e-ktel.com or calling the travel office on: +30 2821 091288.

From Chora Sfakia Port to Porto Loutro Hotel

From Chora Sfakia, you will need to travel by ferry to the Porto Loutro. The ferry takes approximately 20 minutes to reach the village and, once you arrive, the hotel is directly in front of you. Tickets and the timetables for the ferries can be found at the following website: www.anendyk.gr

Notos Mare also offer a 24/7 taxi boat service, depending on availability, with prices starting from €35 (one way). To enquire about availability and rates, please contact them on info@notosmare.com or +30 693 809 4767.

Option 2: Travelling via Athens

To search for available flights into Athens Airport, please visit www.skyscanner.net.

Travel from Athens International to Chania

From Athens airport, you will need to make your way to Piraeus port either by taxi or the subway. The easiest way to reach the port is by local taxi, with the journey taking approximately 45 minutes and costing between €45 and €65 depending when you travel.

Alternatively, you can travel via the subway. The station is a 200m walk from the airport and you will need to take the M3 line from Proastiakos Stathmos Aerodromiou to Monastiraki Metro Station (this takes 45 minutes), then the M1 line from Monastiraki Metro Station to Pireaus. Once here, make your way to the 826 line to AG. Dionysios. From here, the port is approximately a 15-minute walk from the station.

Once at the port, Anek Lines run an overnight ferry to Chania that arrives at 06:00 in the morning. Tickets cost €40 for a return ticket. For guests who choose this option, we recommend that you arrive in Athens on the Saturday in time for the evening ferry departure. All ferry tickets should be pre-booked online. Tickets and ferry timetables are available at: www.booking.anek-superfast.com.

Transfer From Chania Airport to Chora Sfakia

If you would like to arrange a private transfer from Chania airport directly to Chora Sfakia this can be arranged through Eleni at info@taxisfakia.com. The cost of this service depends on the number of passengers (please see the table below), and is payable locally on departure. The driver will be waiting in the arrivals hall where you collect your luggage, holding a sign with SwimTrek clearly displayed.



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Notos Mare also offer a 24/7 taxi boat service, depending on availability, with prices starting from €35 (one way). To enquire about availability and rates, please contact them on info@notosmare.com or +30 693 809 4767.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Accommodation

Our accommodation for the week overlooks our small village home of Porto Loutro. Hotel Porto Loutro on the Hill offers modern and comfortable rooms with sea views. All rooms are well-decorated and equipped with air conditioning and en suite bathrooms and are offered on a twin share basis. There are a limited number of double bedrooms and rooms for single occupancy which can be reserved during the booking process, subject to availability. The hotel also features a bar-restaurant and sun terrace.

If you would like to book additional nights' accommodation at the start or end of your trip, please contact the hotel directly via email: onthehill@hotelportoloutro.com.

Meals

All breakfasts are included in your trip price as well as one lunch, however the other lunches and dinners are at your own expense. This gives you a fantastic opportunity to explore and experience the local cafes and restaurants of your choice over the course of your trip. The average cost of a two course dinner in a local restaurant is €20-€25.

Extra Expenses

You should bring extra money with you to cover such items as lunches, dinners, drinks, entertainment, souvenirs, etc. The local currency is the Euro (€). Please note that there are no ATMs in Porto Loutro. You will need to withdraw cash in Chania or Chora Sfakia before you arrive as many bars and restaurants in Porto Loutro only accept payments in cash.

Please note, the Greek Ministry of Tourism has introduced an Overnight Stay Tax. This is payable upon arrival at the accommodation at a rate of €0.50 per room, per night.

Passports and Visas

Greece is part of the European Union. Non-residents of Greece require a full passport to enter the country, which should be valid for six months beyond the expected length of stay. Citizens of all E.U. member states, U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand do not require a visa to enter Greece. Please note that visa regulations are subject to change and we advise that you check your own visa requirements prior to travel.



Health Information and Recommended Vaccinations

For comprehensive health information for people travelling to Greece, including all recommended and required vaccinations, please visit www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries. Please note that this information is subject to change and you should re-check this site regularly prior to your trip.

Travel Plugs & Electricity

For a useful source of information on the different electrical outlets, electrical plugs, and electric sockets, please visit www.worldstandards.eu/.