

Crete



Balos Beach. Photography Craig Finetti

Going farther south to Crete by high-speed jet to visit Greece's largest island, it's evident that it has a long and complex history. Minoan palaces, Venetian towns, Medieval Castles and Byzantine monasteries constitute the most important sightseeing. And the most distinctive characteristic is its beaches. Many say the best on the island (if not all of Greece) is Balos Beach, and after a treacherous drive on unpaved roads that hug the cliff, followed by a mile hike down, it's arguably one of the most breathtaking spots in the world. Walk far into the turquoise sea for a refreshing dip and bask in the sun-kissed, pink-hued sandy beach. The hike back up is for the fit, however. You'll need a good pair of hiking sandals, water, more water and determination.

Crete also has a wine industry experiencing a revival, with producers focusing on elevating indigenous grapes. High up on a hill above the quaint town of Houdetsi in appellation of Peza is **Rhous Winery** (rhouswinery.gr). The husband-and-wife team, Maria and Dimitris, strive to modernize their winemaking practices to provide terroir-driven wines of indigenous grapes, such as Vidiano, Plyto, Muscat of Spina, Mandilaria and Kotsifali. These are beautiful wines and can be found on-premise at places like Milos inside The Cosmopolitan.