

A tour of the culture of Heraklion - Lasithi #EduTourism

Crete has an admittedly large number of destinations of cultural interest, on the basis of which a route has been designed within the framework of the Edutourism Act, which traverses the eastern part of the island. EduTourism is being implemented in the framework of the INTERREG V-A Cooperation Programme "Greece - Cyprus 2014-2020. A total of eight (8) routes



in Crete, six (6) routes in Cyprus and three (3) cross-border routes have been designed.

The route starts from the village of Avdou in the hinterland of the Municipality of Hersonissos, in a semi-mountainous location. It is a historical village with roots in the Minoan civilization and there are many archaeological findings of that era. The sub-Minoan settlement of Spiliaridia, the two sacred caves of Agia Fotini and Faneromeni as well as foundations of early Christian temples and buildings in various places, lead to the conclusion

that since antiquity there was continuous economic and cultural prosperity in the area. An example of the marriage of art and tradition.

We continue crossing ancient Lato, located about 3km north of Kritsa, which has a stunning view of Mirabello Bay. Lato is an archaeological site open to visitors and is considered the best-preserved city of the Classical - Hellenistic period in Crete and one of the best preserved in Greece.

The city took its name from Leto, the mother of Apollo and Artemis, although the main goddess of the city was Eilithia, who was depicted on the coins. The educational value of the site is based on its very good condition, as Lato is one of the best excavated Greek cities on the island. The site is of archaeological, urban and historical interest. The site is accessible by road.

Next stop in Kritsa is a small town of Eastern Crete, built at an altitude of 350m below Kastello hill, very close to Agios Nikolaos. What makes Kritsa special is the preservation of traditional life that attracts dozens of visitors. The picturesque narrow alleys, the musky courtyards, the shops of Cretan weavers, the traditional cafes, the folklore collections and the great temples can easily give the settlement the characterization of an open folklore and history museum.



Continuing towards the eastern end of the island, we find the village of Lithines in the municipality of Sitia. The main part of the educational value of Lithines is in the architectural and historical sector. Two indicatives of the most important buildings in the village are the Old Primary School of Lithines of Sitia and the Church of the Virgin Mary of Lithines.



The contribution of the local cultural association, whose members regularly organise events and attract a significant number of visitors, has proved invaluable. Accessibility is easy to the village of Lithines by car with a very well maintained asphalt road leading to the heart of the village. All places of interest are easily accessible and it is possible for the visitor to see everything thanks to the small size of the village. The route ends at Toplou Monastery is one of the most important and beautiful monasteries in Crete. The monastery stands imposing with its 33 meter bell tower and is one of the many small and large monasteries that once stood in the area of Sitia and were destroyed

by wars and pirate raids. It is impressive from a distance as it looks like a small fortress surrounded by a high wall about 10 meters high. After many efforts to restore and renovate the monastery, today Toplou Monastery has emerged as one of the Cretan monasteries of great interest, worth the long journey to visit.

The total journey time is 3 hours and 11 minutes and is ideal for travellers who prefer to experience new places through their natural and cultural beauty.

The EduTourism project is implemented within the framework of the INTERREG V-A Cooperation Programme "Greece - Cyprus 2014-2020" and is co-funded by the European Union (E.T.P.A.) and the National Funds of Greece and Cyprus.