

Chania, Akrotiri and Souda Bay Scenic Drive

The Venetian old town, the monasteries, the Souda Bay War Cemetery and the beach where Zorba danced. A full-day self-drive guide from getcarhire.com

The Route at a Glance

Start / end	Chania (the airport is on the peninsula)
Distance	About 60 km round trip, easily a full day
Time to allow	A full day with the old town and a swim
The hike	Gouverneto down to Katholiko, 2.5 to 3 hours
Best for	History, monasteries, wartime memory, a beach

The Drive, Stop by Stop

1. Chania Old Town

The most beautiful old town in Crete, centred on its Venetian harbour and 15th-century lighthouse. Park on the edge; the centre is pedestrian. Go early or late to beat the day-trippers.

2. Souda Bay War Cemetery

A quiet, beautifully tended Commonwealth cemetery on the bay, resting place of over 1,500 Allied soldiers of the 1941 Battle of Crete. Free to enter. A moving twenty-minute stop the cruise tours skip.

3. Agia Triada Monastery

The largest and one of the loveliest monasteries in Crete, 15 minutes from Chania. Golden stone, a three-domed church, and excellent monk-made wine, oil and honey at the gate. Modest dress; small fee.

4. Gouverneto & Katholiko

A fortress-like monastery further north, and the trailhead for the superb gorge walk down to the abandoned cliff monastery of Katholiko (2.5 to 3 hours there and back, steep, proper shoes needed).

5. Stavros Beach

The near-circular bay on the northern tip where Zorba the Greek was filmed. Shallow, sheltered and calm, perfect for a late-afternoon swim, with tavernas right behind the sand.

Driving Tips

- Chania Airport is on the Akrotiri peninsula, so you are on the route the moment you collect your car.
- The peninsula roads are excellent and well signposted. A small car is ideal.
- The descent to Seitan Limania (beyond Stavros) is steep, narrow and full of switchbacks; take it slowly if you add it.
- Use the edge-of-centre car parks for the old town, not the pedestrian lanes. Stavros fills up in peak season, so arrive early.
- Dress modestly for the monasteries (shoulders and knees covered). Carry cash for admissions and the monks' produce.

Where to Eat

Chania old town is the gastronomic heart, from smart seafood restaurants to tiny tavernas serving dakos, boureki and slow-cooked lamb. On the peninsula, the taverna at Agia Triada and the villages around Kounoupidiana do honest, good-value food, and Stavros has beachfront tavernas serving fresh fish by the sand. Look for the monasteries' own olive oil and wine.

Guide by the Digitalhound.co.uk editorial team for getcarhire.com. Compare cheap car hire at Chania Airport at getcarhire.com/chania.htm. Drive times verified; roads, monastery hours and openings can change, so check locally.