



6 Best Things to Do in Chania, Crete

Explore the Venetian Harbor

The charming Venetian Harbor is the beating heart of Chania. The waterfront promenade is home to colorful buildings, a historic lighthouse, artisan shops, and bustling cafes.

The harbor was built between 1320 and 1643 by the Venetian Navy, making it one of the oldest ports in the Mediterranean.

During the Venetian and Ottoman eras, it served as a strategic hub for maritime trade and defense. The iconic lighthouse, fortifications, and waterfront buildings are remnants of its rich maritime history.

Many of the original buildings from the Venetian and Ottoman eras can still be found at the harbor and have been converted into cafes, restaurants, and shops.

I would highly recommend dining at one of the sidewalk restaurants and sampling authentic Cretan cuisine. Some traditional Cretan specialties include dakos (a Greek version of bruschetta), moussaka (eggplant casserole), fresh seafood, and local wines.

Best Places to Eat in the Venetian Harbor:

- **Taverna Apostolis:** This waterfront taverna is known for its fresh seafood dishes and traditional Cretan cuisine. Enjoy dining alfresco with views of the harbor and lighthouse.
- **Tamam Restaurant:** Located in a restored 17th-century building near the harbor. Tamam offers a mix of Greek and Mediterranean flavors in a charming setting. Try their meze platters for a taste of local specialties.
- **To Karnagio:** A hidden gem tucked away in the harbor's alleys. To Karnagio serves up delicious seafood and Greek dishes in a cozy atmosphere. It's a favorite among locals and visitors looking to experience authentic flavors.

- **Salis Restaurant:** For panoramic views of the harbor and a fine dining experience, head to Salis Restaurant. Their menu features creative Mediterranean dishes made with fresh, seasonal ingredients.
- **Lithos Restaurant:** If you're craving grilled meats and traditional Greek fare, Lithos Restaurant offers a relaxed dining experience overlooking the harbor. Don't miss their souvlaki and grilled octopus.

Walk to the Venetian Lighthouse

The Venetian Lighthouse, also known as the Egyptian Lighthouse, is one of the city's most iconic landmarks. It has become a symbol of Chania and is often featured in postcards, artwork, and tourist pamphlets.

The lighthouse stands proudly at the entrance of Chania's Old Venetian Harbor. The Venetians originally constructed the lighthouse in the 16th century, making it the oldest existing lighthouse in Greece.

You'll notice the distinct Venetian architectural style, characterized by its sturdy stone construction and octagonal shape. In the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire added a minaret-like structure to the top of the lighthouse.

To reach the lighthouse, visitors can walk along the break wall at the Chania Old Town Marina. The interior of the lighthouse is closed to the public, but you can climb up the steps for a better view.

Find the Secret Lookout

You've probably seen the iconic shot of the Venetian Harbor from above, but getting to the lookout point isn't very obvious.

After studying Google Maps, we found that if you head east on Kanevaro Street from the harbor and then take a left on Agiou Markou, it will dead end at a parking lot and terrace overlooking the harbor.

From this vantage point, you'll have unobstructed panoramic views of the Venetian Harbor and the Aegean Sea. It would be a fantastic spot to grab take-out dinner and enjoy the views at sunset!

You can also get a great view of the Kucuk Hasan Mosque (also known as Yiali Tzamisi Mosque) with its trademark domed roof. The mosque was built in the harbor in 1645 during the Ottoman reign.

It was the first mosque built in Crete during that era and is the oldest remaining Islamic structure in Crete. The mosque closed in 1923 and today it is used for special exhibitions.

To find out more about Chania's history, I would recommend a [small group bike tour](#). We did a bike tour in [Palma de Mallorca](#) while on our Mediterranean cruise and it was so fun and informational!

Wander the Streets of Old Town

Chania was one of my favorite stops on our [10-Day Mediterranean cruise](#), and my favorite thing to do in Chania is getting lost exploring the labyrinth of narrow alleys in Old Town. You'll find a patchwork of historic buildings and cultural landmarks that reflect centuries of history and influences.

Explore the maze-like streets of the Venetian Quarter where you'll find family-owned shops, cafes tucked into alleyways, and historic buildings like the San Salvatore Monastery.

The Old Town's layout and many of its buildings date back to the Venetian era from the 13th to 17th centuries. It was during this time that the Venetians fortified the city with walls and built grand mansions. You can even walk along the remnants of the Byzantine defensive walls that once surrounded the city.

During the Ottoman rule in the 17th century, mosques, Turkish baths (hammams), and minarets were added to the cityscape.

Visit the historic Splantzia Square in the Turkish Quarter. This was once the heart of Ottoman Chania and features the Church of Agios Nikolaos. This church was turned into a mosque during the Ottoman occupation. It has since been turned back into a church, but the towering minaret is still in place.

The Jewish Quarter is also full of history and is where you'll find the Etz Hayyim Synagogue, one of the oldest synagogues in Greece.

The Church of the Trimartyri is another beautiful church that is worth visiting. This Greek Orthodox cathedral was built in the late 1800s in Plateia Mitropoleos, one of Chania's picturesque city squares.

I would also recommend stopping by the Municipal Market of Chania. This market is housed in an old historic building and is the best place to purchase fresh produce, local products, spices, and traditional Cretan delicacies.

To make the most of your time in Old Town, you may want to consider taking a guided tour. A few fun options include a [Trikke Tour](#), a [Segway Night Tour](#), or a [Guided Walking Tour with Street Food](#).

Take a Boat Excursion

If you continue walking east along the Old Venetian Harbor, it runs into the Chania Old Town Marina.

The marina dates back to 1461 and was originally used for ship building and repairs. Many of the original buildings have been converted into restaurants and it's another great spot to grab a bite to eat by the water.

If you have the time, I would recommend booking a [boating excursion](#) that leaves from this marina. This tour takes you to two other islands where you can snorkel and relax on a secluded beach.

If you're looking to relax on a beach without a boat tour, Nea Chora is a stretch of sandy beach that is only about a mile from the Venetian Harbor.

It's the best beach in Chania to enjoy sunbathing, swimming in the clear waters, or indulging in fresh seafood at one of several beachfront cafes.

Visit a Museum

Chania has a rich history dating back to the Minoan period around 3650 BC. The city has evolved over the centuries under the rule of different civilizations. The best way to learn more about its history is by visiting one of the several museums in Chania.

The Best Museums in Chania:

- **Maritime Museum of Crete:** This museum is housed in the historic Firkas Fortress and dives (no pun intended) into Chania's maritime heritage. You'll have the opportunity to learn about naval history, shipbuilding traditions, and the island's seafaring culture through interactive exhibits and displays.
- **Archaeological Museum of Chania:** Learn about Crete's rich history with exhibits showcasing artifacts from the Minoan, Roman, and Byzantine periods, including pottery, sculptures, and frescoes.
- **Folklore Museum of Chania:** The museum offers insight into Cretan folklore, traditions, and rural life. Visitors can view traditional costumes, household items, agricultural tools, and exhibits depicting local customs, music, and festivals.
- **Byzantine & Post-Byzantine Museum:** Housed in a former church, this museum features Byzantine and post-Byzantine religious art, icons, frescoes, and religious artifacts.
- **Museum of Typography:** This unique museum celebrates the art and history of printing, typography, and graphic design. Visitors can see vintage printing presses, typesetting equipment, and rare books while learning about the evolution of printing technology.
- **War Museum of Chania:** This museum is dedicated to Crete's military history. You'll find displays with weapons, uniforms, photographs, and memorabilia from World War II and other conflicts.

- **House-Museum of Eleftherios Venizelos:** This museum is located in the former residence of Eleftherios Venizelos, a prominent Greek politician. Visitors can explore Venizelos' personal belongings and documents while learning about his political legacy and contributions to Greece.

I hope this guide will help you discover the best things to do in the charming town of Chania, Crete!