

Greece - Experience Living Ancient History in Crete

OK everybody hand up those of you who are familiar with the story of Theseus and the Minotaur? I ask this question not as an attempt to display to the world my knowledge of Greek legends and myths but rather to see if anybody has any idea as to the location of where the supposed legend took place?

Right, let's get down to basics. The legend of Theseus and the Minotaur went as follows.

The Minotaur was one of the most famous monsters of ancient times reputedly half bull half man (you really don't want to know how this arrived at – OK so its fairly obvious but you still don't want to know the details believe me) its horns apparently were as sharp as knives and its enormous hooves could kick the life out of the strongest of any heroes and if that wasn't bad enough, it ate human flesh.

Now is this the sort of neighbour that you would like living next door?

I think not and so imagine if you will the plight of the ancient Greeks. There they are just plodding along trying to get by and as a result of some extremely unpleasant mythical coupling they have this rather nasty neighbour who in an attempt to please, every year they have to send seven young men and seven young maidens as ritual sacrifices.

Thankfully, to cut a long story short (or you could be reading this article for days believe me) along comes this hero by the name of Theseus who convinces his dad to send him as a sacrifice and pledges to kill the monster and free Greece from this terrible tragedy. Again, long story short, Theseus meets aforementioned nasty neighbour in his labyrinth, kills the beast and in relief sails back to Greece, forgetting to change the colours of the sails on his ship, his dad seeing the fleet approaching and the wrong coloured sails throws himself off the cliffs in a fit of despair.

Life, it could be said, was never dull in ancient Greece!

Now imagine if in today's humdrum world you could experience some of the thrills and splendour of the ancient world? Well with Greece you can and in Crete (the largest of the Greek islands) you can experience the ancient history that inspired such tales of tragedy and heroism.

The historical site of Knossos is usually identified as being the site of the Minotaurs labyrinth but this is only the start of an experience that will live with you for ever.

Crete is an incredibly popular tourist destination with the ancient sites of Knossos (the site associated with the Minotaur) and Phaistos (home of the Minoan civilisation, the oldest civilisation in Europe) just being the start. Elsewhere in the island you will find the classical site of Gortys, the Venetian castle at Rethymno and the protected gorge of Samaria where if you are a lucky wildlife enthusiast will be able to spot two of Europe's most endangered and rare species, the Kri-Kri or Cretian Mountain goat or the Lammergeier a rare and endangered Vulture and the only large type of "raptor" still found anywhere in Western Europe.

But all of this as I have said, hardly scrapes the surface of what there is on offer. The trouble is once you have sampled Crete you may well find yourself spell bound and returning to sample the rest of Greece for a very long time.

Go on, why are you still reading this and not on the phone to your travel agent?

About the Author

Stephen Morgan writes about a great many Travel based issues and more on the above can be found here [Greek Islands](#) and <http://www.aroundgreece.com>

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