



TRIP OVERVIEW

Discover the secret treasures, cliff-fringed coastlines and crystalline waters of one of Europe's southernmost destinations! A holiday on the idyllic Greek island of Crete is something all swimmers should try. From dramatic coastal cliffs to isolated coves, bays and beaches, this island offers a tapestry of spectacular swim spots and cultural delights.

Our base for the week is the remote coastal village of Porto Loutro, which can only be reached by boat, hiking, or, of course, swimming! Hotel Porto Loutro on the Hill offers modern and comfortable rooms with sea views, located just metres from the water's edge. It's the perfect place from which to launch our adventure and soak up the tranquillity of this island paradise.

With a range of stunning coastal swims and unique backdrops of canyons and mountains – plus, a rich history traceable all the way back to the Minoan islanders of 3,650 BC - you'll have plenty to discover in this fascinating part of the world.

If you would like to explore this Greek island, but are looking for slightly shorter swimming distances, please check out our Crete Discovery – Short Swims trip.

WHO IS THIS TRIP FOR?

This trip is ideal for the swimmer who wants to be based in one of Europe's most remote villages, situated right on the water's edge. The trip features idyllic coastal swimming, along with a chance to discover some of the amazing underwater vistas which make this coastline so special.

Swimmers should also have a basic understanding of open water swimming and be capable of completing the average swim distance of around 3 km prior to the start of the trip. The average daily swim distance is around 5km (split over a minimum of two swims).

We have given this trip a 'Moderate' grading. Most swimmers comfortable in the open water will be able to take part and enjoy one of these trips.

LOCATION SUMMARIES

Porto Loutro

This small, isolated fishing village is situated in a bay overlooked by the peaks of the White Mountains, rising to over 2,400m. There is a selection of tavernas and cafes in the village and our hotel has dramatic views both south and east. The island of Gavdos, Europe's southernmost shard of land, is clearly visible from within the village.

White Mountains

The White Mountains or Lefka Ori occupy the centre of western Crete and they are the main feature of this region - made of limestone and so-named because they are covered in snow until late spring. In



summer, sunlight reflects on the limestone summit and gives them a white lustre too.

Sfakia

Famous for being the bulwark of resistance against Venetian, Turkish and German occupying forces, Sfakia is also known for the harshness of its natural environment and the ruggedness of its people.

Frangokastello

A magnificent Venetian castle, built in the 14th Century, dominates this town. During the Greek War of Independence, the castle witnessed a battle between the forces of the Greek independence leader, Hatzimichalis Dalianis, and the forces of the Ottoman Empire. According to tradition, each May, on the anniversary of the battle, shadows of fallen Cretan soldiers appear to march to the fortress at dawn.

E4 European Long Distance Walking Path

Starting on the Spanish side of the Strait of Gibraltar, the E4 continues through France, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece. It visits Crete as well, and our swim journey is based under its gaze, where it winds across the dramatic coastal bluffs.

TRIP SCHEDULE

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Start Point | Hotel Porto Loutro On The Hill, Porto Loutro, Crete www.hotelportoloutro.com |
| Start Time | 17:00 on Day 1 |
| Finish Point | Porto Loutro, Crete |
| Finish Time | 11:00 on Day 7 |

Please note that the below daily itineraries are an example of the swims that may take place during your trip, however, actual swim locations and distances will vary according to local weather and sea conditions. Your SwimTrek guides and local boat pilot will determine the most suitable swim locations each day and will communicate the plan with all guests as soon as possible.

Day 1

We meet on the lovely terrace of our hotel. Before we enjoy a welcome drink overlooking the village of Porto Loutro, as well as our safety briefing and a description of our upcoming adventures. We then head down the hill for a short acclimatisation swim, followed by dinner in one of the tavernas at the water's edge.

Day 2

After breakfast, our boat takes us to the start of our morning swim. Beginning at Porto Loutro, we swim west beneath the E4 coastal walk, bringing us towards Sweetwater Beach. Sighting with the shoreline, you are sure to spot hikers on the trail above, watching you swim. If time allows, we will pause to offer you a chance to have your stroke recorded and then we're off to lunch at a restaurant in Sweetwater. In the afternoon, it's time for a circumnavigation swim. The harbour signal light is located on an islet at

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the mouth of the bay. Swimming around the rocky outcrop, this short swim features stunning underwater scenery and a unique view of Porto Loutro.

Day 3

Today, we visit the coastal village of Agia Roumeli at the foot of the famous Samaria Gorge. The village can only be reached by boat, or hiking trail - unless, like us, you plan to swim into town! The morning swim starts at Agios Pavlos beach, where the apostle St Paul is said to have landed (during bad weather) on his voyage to Greece in 1st century AD. Swimming through the crystalline water, we follow the coastal fringes of the Samaria National Park.

We have a longer lunch today to give you time to explore the town. There is a selection of lively Greek tavernas to enjoy, or you can stretch your legs hiking to the Turkish fortress. You'll find spectacular views of the town and the sea from this ridge. Look inland to admire the Samaria Gorge and the exhausted hikers making a beeline for a cooling dip in the sea.

We follow the sheer cliffs on the west of the town to Damata beach and follow ranks of pine trees for our second swim of the day. During the swim, you pass by the stunning Fournoti cliffs - home to the only known *hypericum aciferum* plant in the world, which you can spot growing on the cliffside.

Day 4

This morning, we jump in the water in front of our hotel. Leaving the village behind, we slip through the narrow channel between Crete and the Porto Loutro signal light and continue around the peninsula to Marmara beach. Watch the water change colour as you get closer to the white marble pebbles that make up the beach. This interesting collection of crags and coves is a great place for our longest swim of the week.

After our post-swim snacks, you can travel back to Porto Loutro by one of our escort boats to relax on Marmara beach, or enjoy lunch in one of the cliff-top tavernas serving traditional Cretan cuisine overlooking the beach. You could also venture into a nearby gorge, relax, or follow the E4 track back to the hotel. The choice is yours!

Day 5

Today is a day of stunning coastal swimming in the remote area between Chora Sfakia and Frangokastello. This is a real opportunity to stretch out and put into practice what you picked up during the trip so far. We start at the sea caves by Agios Pavlos and swim down a remarkable stretch of coastline, finishing at Koutelo with its beach taverna where we stop for lunch. In the afternoon, we carry on westwards as we swim to Kritamos, which is situated in the shadow of the Frangokastello Castle.

Day 6

This morning starts with a hike along the E4 route, until we arrive at the sandy Sweetwater beach. The route grips the edge of the cliff, giving you a bird's eye view of yesterday's swim. On arrival, we meet up with our support boats and swim east towards the town of Sfakia. The coastline is dotted with a series of interconnected caves for you to explore. You have free time for lunch in Sfakia - a town famous for its cheese pie. Treats from the local bakery are also highly recommended.

It's more caves, inlets and exploring for the afternoon swim. Heading east from the port at Chora Sfakia,



we wend our way towards Charalambos. This dramatic stretch of coastline is scarred by cracks, caves and caverns.

Day 7

After the exertions of the week, it's time for a relaxing swim on the beach just outside our hotel before the trip finishes at 11:00.

TRIP INFORMATION

Group Size

This trip has a maximum group size of 15. The group will be split into a maximum of three groups, based on speed, with each group being accompanied by their own safety vessel/escort.

Boat Support

Boat support on this trip includes one main safety vessel and two support boats to be piloted by your SwimTrek guides and a local boat pilot. Please note that this boat support is subject to change without notice and cannot be guaranteed.

Equipment Checklist

For your basic, essential packing list, please visit our [Packing List](#) page on the website. There are no **additional, specific** items required for this location.

SwimTrek will also provide water and electrolytes at every location and refill your bottles.

TRIP GRADING

We have given this trip a 'Moderate' grading. Most swimmers comfortable in the open water will be able to take part and enjoy one of these trips.

Swimming Distances

| SWIM | DISTANCE | SWIM | DISTANCE |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------|----------|
| Porto Loutro - Sweetwater Beach | 3km | Porto Loutro Circumnavigation | 1½km |
| Agia Roumeli - Agios Pavlos | 2km | Damata - Agia Roumeli | 4km |
| Porto Loutro - Marmara | 4km | | |
| Agios Pavlos - Koutelo | 3km | Koutelo Coastal | 2km |
| Sweetwater Beach - Chora Sfakia | 3km | Chora Sfakia - Agios Charalambos | 2km |

Swimming Conditions

Swimming in the sea is a fantastic experience, however you should be aware that certain marine life such as sea lice, jellyfish, sea urchins and coral could be present during the swims. In all cases we will



work on reducing your contact with these creatures, however if you suffer from anaphylaxis, please consult the office prior to booking.

Walking Distances

| WALK | DISTANCE | WALK | DISTANCE |
|---------------------------------|----------|------------------|----------|
| Porto Loutro – Sweetwater Beach | 3km | Agia Romeli Fort | 2km |

Walking Conditions

Most walks take place on recognised paths and tracks of the E4, however there may be cases where we walk along trails or other unsealed surfaces, and care should be taken in these areas. Please note, if you prefer not to do the planned walks, you will have the opportunity to travel by boat instead.

Temperatures

| MONTH | WATER TEMPERATURE* | AIR TEMPERATURE* |
|-----------|--------------------|-------------------|
| May | 17-20°C / 63-68°F | 23-25°C / 73-77°F |
| June | 20-24°C / 68-75°F | 23-25°C / 73-77°F |
| July | 24-26°C / 75-79°F | 25-27°C / 77-81°F |
| August | 25-27°C / 77-81°F | 28-30°C / 82-86°F |
| September | 24-26°C / 75-79°F | 25-28°C / 77-82°F |
| October | 21-23°C / 70-73°F | 22-24°C / 72-75°F |

* Please note that these temperatures are indicative and should be used as a guide only. The water temperatures in early May can feel colder than indicated due to the mixing of thermoclines and water, which reduces the surface water temperature.

Weather Caveat

For safety reasons, we rely on decent weather conditions when carrying out our swims. Therefore, open water swimming holidays require a certain degree of on-trip flexibility which can result in changes to the planned itinerary. These changes often add a touch of uniqueness to your trip and will be communicated to you by your SwimTrek guides as quickly as possible.

GETTING THERE

As SwimTrekkers come from all over the world, and join our swimming holidays in numerous destinations, we don't currently offer flights as part of our SwimTrek packages. We do however want to do as much as we can to ensure that our guests get the best deals when travelling to one of our trips so check out our [SwimTrek flight tips](#) page on the website.

The trip is based in Porto Loutro which can only be reached by ferry, water taxi or hiking. The easiest

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way to reach the hotel is to fly into Chania Airport and then take a public bus or local taxi to the port at Chora Sfakia, followed by a ferry or water taxi to Porto Loutro. It is also possible to fly through Athens to Chania, however, please note that this option results in a significantly longer journey time compared to travelling direct to Chania.

From Athens Airport

From Athens airport, you will need to make your way to Piraeus port either by taxi or the subway. The easiest way to reach the port is by local taxi, with the journey taking approximately 45 minutes and costing between €50 and €75 depending on when you travel.

Alternatively, you can travel via the subway. The station is a 200m walk from the airport and you will need to take the M3 line from Proastiakos Stathmos Aerodromiou to Monastiraki Metro Station (this takes 45 minutes), then the M1 line from Monastiraki Metro Station to Pireaus. Once here, make your way to the 826 line to AG. Dionysios. From here, the port is approximately a 15-minute walk from the station.

Once at the port, Anek Lines run an overnight ferry to Chania that arrives at 06:00 in the morning. Tickets cost €40 for a return ticket. For guests who choose this option, we recommend that you arrive in Athens on the Saturday in time for the evening ferry departure. Details of ferry timetables are available on <https://anendyk.gr/routes/>.

You may be able to organise a private transfer with Eleni at info@taxisfakia.com from Chania Port to Sfakia Port, otherwise, you will then need to make your way from the port to Chania Town and continue your journey on public transport. Please see below instructions from Chania Town.

From Chania Airport

If you would like to arrange a private transfer from Chania airport directly to Sfakia port this can be arranged through Eleni at info@taxisfakia.com. The cost of this service depends on the number of passengers (please see the table below) and is payable locally on departure. The driver will be waiting in the arrivals hall where you collect your luggage, holding a sign with SwimTrek clearly displayed.

| NUMBER OF PASSENGERS | TOTAL PRICE |
|----------------------|-------------|
| 1 – 4 Passengers | €95 |
| 5 – 8 Passengers | €140 |

Public Transport from Chania Airport to Chania Town

It is possible to use public transport to take you from Chania Airport to Sfakia Port, but you will first have to take a bus from Chania Airport to Chania town which takes 30 minutes and costs approximately €3.

Public transport from Chania Town to Chora Sfakia Port

From Chania Town you will need to take a bus for your onward travel to Chora Sfakia (the duration and

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cost is approximately 2 hours and around €9). You can find more up to date information on www.e-ktel.com or calling the travel office on: +30 2821 091288.

From Chora Sfakia Port to Hotel Porto Loutro On The Hill

From Chora Sfakia, you will need to travel by ferry to the Porto Loutro. The ferry takes approximately 20 minutes to reach the village. Tickets and the timetables for the ferries can be found at the following website: <https://anendyk.gr/routes/>

Notos Mare also offer a 24/7 taxi boat service, depending on availability, with prices starting from €35 (one way). To enquire about availability and rates, please contact them on info@notosmare.com or +30 693 809 4767.

Hotel Location

As you disembark from the ferry, you will see the hotel up on the hill with the road directly in front of you. You want to take this road up to reach the hotel.

If you travel via water taxi, you will need to make a left when you disembark. You will see the hotel on the hill and will need to take a short walk to reach the road leading up to your accommodation.

ACCOMMODATION

Our accommodation for the week overlooks our small village home of Porto Loutro. Hotel Porto Loutro On The Hill offers modern and comfortable rooms with sea views. All rooms are well-decorated and equipped with air conditioning and en suite bathrooms and are offered on a twin share basis. There are a limited number of double bedrooms and rooms for single occupancy which can be reserved during the booking process, subject to availability. The hotel also features a bar-restaurant and sun terrace. NB: Hotel Porto Loutro on the Hill has a minimum age restriction of 7 years old.

Pre/Post Trip Accommodation and Trip Extension Options

If you would like to book additional nights' accommodation at the start or end of your trip, please contact the hotel directly via email: onthehill@hotelportoloutro.com.

Food and Drink

All breakfasts are included in your trip price as well as one lunch, however the other lunches and dinners are at your own expense. This gives you a fantastic opportunity to explore and experience the local cafes and restaurants of your choice over the course of your trip. The average cost of a two-course dinner in a local restaurant is €20-€25.

For more information, please visit our [food and drink](#) page on the website.



TRAVEL ADVICE

For more information on any of the following sections please visit the [Travel Advice](#) page of our website.

Money, Extra Expenses and Tipping

You should bring extra money with you to cover such items as lunches, dinners, drinks, entertainment, souvenirs, etc. The local currency is the Euro (€). Many bars and restaurants in Porto Loutro do accept payments by card and there is one ATM in Porto Loutro but it can run out of money so you may wish to withdraw cash in Chania or Chora Sfakia before you arrive. Please note, the Greek Ministry of Tourism has introduced an overnight stay tax. This is now included in your holiday package price.

We believe that tipping is done entirely at your own discretion. If you have been provided with excellent it may be something you wish to do. Your SwimTrek Guides can advise on local norms for service providers like boat crew, waiters or taxis. Nothing is expected for your SwimTrek Guides, but many groups like to present something to the Guides at the end of the trip.

Responsible Travel

SwimTrek is conscious of the importance of protecting the world's natural wonders. We are acutely aware of our responsibility to not only take care of the natural environments which we are lucky enough to explore, but also to educate our guests about the importance of conservation efforts and responsible tourism. It's for this reason that we have worked so closely with our partners to ensure that our trips are conducted in the most responsible and sustainable way possible, working tirelessly to minimise the impact of our presence on local marine life and the natural habitat.

For more information, please visit our [Responsible Travel](#) page on the website.

Passports and Visas

Greece is part of the European Union. Non-residents of Greece require a full passport to enter the country, which should be valid for six months beyond the expected length of stay. Citizens of all E.U. member states, U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand do not require a visa to enter Greece. Please note that visa regulations are subject to change, and we advise that you check your own visa requirements prior to travel.

Travel Insurance

We consider comprehensive travel insurance to be essential, and we strongly recommend that you purchase insurance which includes, but is not limited to, cover for illness, accident, emergency repatriation, ambulance, air ambulance, helicopter rescue services, cancellation, lost luggage and delays. Your travel insurance should also cover you for open water swimming and any other activity listed in your trip itinerary (including races and competitions, where applicable). Please read your policy details carefully and remember to take them with you on your trip for your own reference. For further information, please visit our [Travel Insurance](#) page on the website.



Health Information and Recommended Vaccinations

Here at SwimTrek we pride ourselves on our focus on safety and the well-being of all our guests. As we operate in some beautiful and remote locations medical facilities are not always easily accessible. SwimTrek Guides, and many staff working for our local partners, are first aid trained. However, we ask that you read our [Travel Health](#) page to ensure that you are informed about general Travel and Swim Health precautions.

Travel Plugs & Electricity

For a useful source of information on the different electrical outlets, electrical plugs, and electric sockets, please visit www.worldstandards.eu/.