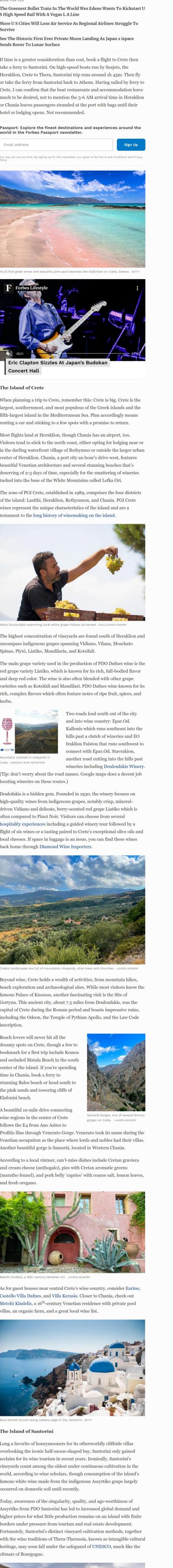
Classic Route While nearly every island in Greece produces wine grapes, two have become synonymous with world-class winemaking: Santorini and Crete. The classic wine tourism route explores both islands. The first thing to consider when planning your Classic Greek Wine trip is travel logistics. Athens International Airport (ATH) offers regular flights to Santorini (50 minutes) and Crete (1 hour). A fast ferry from Piraeus to Santorini takes around 5 hours; car ferries take several hours longer. The ferry from Athens to ports in Crete runs around 10 hours, and either consumes a full day or requires an overnight cabin stay. MORE FOR YOU The Greenest Bullet Train In The World Wes Edens Wants To Kickstart U S High Speed Rail With A Vegas L A Line More U S Cities Will Lose Air Service As Regional Airlines Struggle To Survive See The Historic First Ever Private Moon Landing As Japan s ispace Sends Rover To Lunar Surface If time is a greater consideration than cost, book a flight to Crete then $\,$ take a ferry to Santorini. On high-speed boats run by Seajets, the Heraklion, Crete to Thera, Santorini trip runs around 1h 45m. Then fly or take the ferry from Santorini back to Athens. Having sailed by ferry to Crete, I can confirm that the boat restaurants and accommodation leave much to be desired, not to mention the 5-6 AM arrival time in Heraklion or Chania leaves passengers stranded at the port with bags until their hotel or lodging opens. Not recommended. Passport: Explore the finest destinations and experiences around the world in the Forbes Passport newsletter. You'll find great wines and beautiful pink sand beaches like Elafonissi on Crete, Greece. GETTY Eric Clapton Sizzles At Japan's Budokan **Concert Hall** The Island of Crete When planning a trip to Crete, remember this: Crete is big. Crete is the largest, southernmost, and most populous of the Greek islands and the fifth-largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. Plan accordingly means renting a car and sticking to a few spots with a promise to return. Most flights land at Heraklion, though Chania has an airport, too. Visitors tend to stick to the north coast, either opting for lodging near or in the darling waterfront village of Rethymno or outside the larger urban center of Heraklion. Chania, a port city an hour's drive west, features beautiful Venetian architecture and several stunning beaches that's deserving of 2-3 days of time, especially for the smattering of wineries $\,$ tucked into the base of the White Mountains called Lefka Ori. The zone of PGI Crete, established in 1989, comprises the four districts of the island: Lasithi, Heraklion, Rethymnon, and Chania. PGI Crete wines represent the unique characteristics of the island and are a testament to the long history of winemaking on the island. The highest concentration of vineyards are found south of Heraklion and encompass indigenous grapes spanning Vidiano, Vilana, Moschato Spinas, Plytó, Liatiko, Mandilaria, and Kotsifali. The main grape variety used in the production of PDO Dafnes wine is the red grape variety Liatiko, which is known for its rich, full-bodied flavor and deep red color. The wine is also often blended with other grape varieties such as Kotsifali and Mandilari. PDO Dafnes wine known for its rich, complex flavors which often feature notes of ripe fruit, spices, and herbs. Two roads lead south out of the city and into wine country: Epar.Od. Kallonis which runs southeast into the hills past a clutch of wineries and EO Irakliou Faistou that runs southwest to connect with Epar.Od. Stavrakion, another road cutting into the hills past wineries including Douloufakis Winery. (Tip: don't worry about the road names. Google maps does a decent job locating wineries on these routes.) Doulofakis is a hidden gem. Founded in 1930, the winery focuses on high-quality wines from indigenous grapes, notably crisp, mineraldriven Vidiano and delicate, berry-scented red grape Liatiko which is often compared to Pinot Noir. Visitors can choose from several hospitality experiences including a guided winery tour followed by a flight of six wines or a tasting paired to Crete's exceptional olive oils and local cheeses. If space in luggage is an issue, you can find these wines back home through Diamond Wine Importers Beyond wine, Crete holds a wealth of activities, from mountain hikes, beach exploration and archaeological sites. While most visitors know the famous Palace of Knossos, another fascinating visit is the Site of $\,$ Gortyna. This ancient city, about 7.5 miles from Douloufakis, was the capital of Crete during the Roman period and boasts impressive ruins, including the Odeon, the Temple of Pythian Apollo, and the Law Code inscription. Beach lovers will never hit all the dreamy spots on Crete, though a few to bookmark for a first trip include Komos and secluded Matala Beach in the south center of the island. If you're spending time in Chania, book a ferry to stunning Balos beach or head south to the pink sands and towering cliffs of Elafonisi beach. A beautiful 10-mile drive connecting wine regions in the center of Crete gorges on Crete. LAUREN MOWERY follows the E4 from Ano Asites to Profitis Ilias through Venerato Gorge. Venerato took its name during the Venetian occupation as the place where lords and nobles had their villas. Another beautiful gorge is Samariá, located in Western Chania. According to a local vintner, can't-miss dishes include Cretan graviera and cream cheese (anthogalo), pies with Cretan aromatic greens (maratho fennel), and pork belly 'caprico' with coarse salt, lemon leaves, and fresh oregano. Metohi Kindelis, a 16th-century Venetian inn LAUREN MOWERY As for guest houses near central Crete's wine country, consider Earino, Castello Villa Dafnes, and Villa Kerasia. Closer to Chania, check out Metohi Kindelis, a 16th-century Venetian residence with private pool villas, an organic farm, and a great local wine list. The Island of Santorini Long a favorite of honeymooners for its otherworldly cliffside villas overlooking the iconic half-moon-shaped bay, Santorini only gained acclaim for its wine tourism in recent years. Ironically, Santorini's vineyards count among the oldest under continuous cultivation in the world, according to wine scholars, though consumption of the island's famous white wine made from the indigenous Assyrtiko grape largely occurred on domestic soil until recently. Today, awareness of the singularity, quality, and age-worthiness of Assyrtiko from PDO Santorini has led to increased global demand and higher prices for what little production remains on an island with finite borders under pressure from tourism and real estate development. Fortunately, Santorini's distinct vineyard cultivation methods, together with the wine traditions of Thera-Therassia, known as intangible cultural heritage, may soon fall under the safeguard of UNESCO, much like the climats of Bourgogne. As mentioned, PDO Santorini wines are highly regarded for their unique characteristics and high quality. The primary grape variety used in the production of PDO Santorini wines is Assyrtiko, which is well-suited to the island's volcanic soil and hot, dry climate. PDO Santorini wines are typically dry, with high acidity and a mineral character that is often described as "volcanic." They are known for their crisp, refreshing taste and their ability to pair well with a wide range of foods, from seafood to roasted meats. Some of the most popular Santorini PDO wines include the $\ensuremath{\operatorname{dry}}$ white wines made from 100% Assyrtiko grapes, as well as blends that may also include Athiri and Aidani grape varieties. The island also produces some dessert wines, such as the Vinsanto, which is made from sun-dried grapes and aged in oak barrels for several years before bottling. The winemaking team of Domaine Sigalas around a vine woven into a traditional basket called a Ungrafted Assyrtiko vines remain some of the last in the world untouched by phylloxera. Vine roots grow deep into the volcanic soil seeking minerals and nutrients as deep as 120 feet. Above ground, arid conditions and harsh wind have led growers to weave vines into baskets called koulouras that sit low on the ground. Consequently, grapes must be hand-harvested. These distinctions comprise the 3500-year-old traditions fit for UNESCO protection, along with the fact that Assyrtiko is one of the greatest white wines in the world. One of the greatest joys in life—and this is not hyperbole—is sitting on a balcony at sunset watching ships sail through the island's deep blue caldera with a glass of crisp mineral-driven Assyrtiko in hand. This act alone deserves a bucket-list nod and is one reason so many tourists flock to the island. Sipping Assyrtiko with a view of the caldera on Santorini GETTY Several wineries in Santorini offer tastings. Domaine Sigalas has a full hospitality experience that spans tastings, food and wine pairings, a-lacart dining, guided vineyard walks, and of course, a retail shop for purchasing bottles to take home. If space in luggage is limited, you can also buy these wines back home from Diamond Wine Importers. Beyond eating and drinking, other activities on Santorini include visiting Ammoudi Bay and Oia for incredible sunset views, walking the path from Fira to Oia for a 6-mile hike on the face of the cliffs, and visiting the $\,$ pre-historic ruins of Akrotiri. Santorini has several distinct foods. Fava spread (composed of mashed yellow split peas), dry-farmed cherry to matoes (the sweetest and $\,$ brightest in the world), "Chloro" Cheese, a soft tangy fresh goat cheese that's hard to find but worth seeking out, and white skin eggplant, all should be sampled. Unfortunately, Santorini's beauty and culture have sent tourism into overdrive—hotels and restaurants are packed at least for 6 months a year with the season typically starting around Catholic Easter and running until late October or early November. Try booking far in advance to nab the hotel of your choice. Hotels recommended by a local vintner include Vino Houses, Secret View Hotel, and Perivolas Lifestyle Houses. Of course, once you're on a private balcony sipping on Assyrtiko and watching the sun fade into the depths of the caldera, the effort, planning, and management of crowds will be worth it. $Follow\ me\ on\ Twitter\ or\ LinkedIn.\ Check\ out\ my\ website.$ Follow Lauren Mowery As contributing Travel Editor Wine Enthusiast, I view the world through the lens of drink. Editorial Standards Print Reprints & Permissions ADVERTISEMENT





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Planning A Classic Route

Through Santorini And Crete

Wine has been integral to Greek culture for over 4,000 years, with its origins dating back to the ancient civilizations of Crete and Mycenae. The Greeks believed that wine was a gift from the gods, and it played a significant role in their religious ceremonies and daily life. Greeks are also credited with spreading the cultivation of wine grapes throughout Europe, especially across Mediterranean Islands like Sicily and Corsica.

Today, wine remains intimately intertwined with food, culture, and lifestyle. Forgoing a taste of Greek wine or a visit to a winery would be as remiss as visiting Athens and skipping the city's ancient hilltop sentry, The Acropolis. With the expansion of wine tourism and hospitality facilities, visiting wineries in Greece has never been easier. The only question to answer is whether to pick the Classic Route through fabled Greek Islands or the $Adventurous\ Route$ leading deep into northern

In this article, I present the ideal Classic Route. In the next article, I will

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explain the details and logistics of the $Adventurous\ Route.$

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