

BATTLE OF
CRETE

80th Commemoration Pilgrimage
18 - 24 May 2021



Painting by Peter McIntyre
Courtesy of National Army Museum NZ

BATTLE OF CRETE

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Souda Bay Commonwealth War Cemetery

On May the 20th 1941, ANZAC, Greek and British forces stood side by side with the heroic population of Crete in the defense of their Southern Mediterranean Island against the elite of Hitler's war machine. The ensuing battle is etched forever in ANZAC history.

Now, 80 years later, veterans and the descendants of these brave soldiers, will join with the local Cretan population to honour their courageous endeavours. Join us in 2021 and attend the commemorative services, explore the battlefields and share the stories.

To help us understand even more we have accompanying our group Dr Mark Wilson. Mark's knowledge of the battles and the surrounding events are unequalled.



Paratroopers over Hill 107
Courtesy of National Army Museum NZ

Tue 18 May: **Athens**

Our pilgrimage starts today in Athens, the capital city of Greece. Please join your fellow travellers this evening on the roof top of our hotel, under the gaze of the Acropolis, for an informal get together and share the opportunity to get to know each other.

Overnight accommodation:
Hotel Amalia, Athens

Wed 19 May: **Constitution Square, Faliron Commonwealth War Cemetery, Overnight Ferry**

After breakfast please join Mark in the conference room for an informative talk on the Battle of Crete and hear details of what to expect in the days ahead.

Leaving our hotel, we walk to Constitution Square which has been at the center of Greek political and military life for centuries. Stopping at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier we pause to see the changing of the guard. You are welcome to lay poppies at the memorial. Constitution Square is an area known as Plaka which is full of restaurants and shops, an ideal place to spend time and find lunch.

Meeting later in the afternoon we drive to **Faliron Commonwealth War Cemetery**, the final resting place for

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2,028 servicemen of WWII. Of these 596 of the burials are unidentified.

At the cemetery view the Athens Memorial where a further 3,000 names are commemorated. These fallen came from Greece and Crete in 1941 and 1944 - 1945, the Dodecanese Islands and Yugoslavia 1943 - 1945. It also hosts the names of those killed on Crete and whose bodies were never recovered.

Leaving the cemetery, we join together for a typical Greek dinner before boarding our overnight ferry to Crete. A far cry from the harsh conditions experienced by the evacuees, our ferry has comfortable cabins with private facilities and a host of bars, restaurants and entertainment areas.

Overnight accommodation:

Ferry cabins

Meals Included:

Breakfast and Dinner

Thu 20 May:

Souda Bay, Galatas & Prison Valley

Our early morning arrival into Souda Bay is not to be missed. Relive the feelings and emotions of our soldiers as they entered the harbour 80 years ago after their harrowing time in Greece. Imagine the quiet brooding harbour waters reflecting the burning merchant ships, and the damaged heavy cruiser HMS York beached near the entrance reminding all that death had already visited these historic isles. Was more fighting to come? After disembarking from the ferry, we drive a short distance from the port to the Souda Bay Commonwealth War Cemetery for a personal visit and a time of quiet reflection. This immaculately kept cemetery is bordered by hills and trees and is the resting place of 1,527 war dead including 447 Kiwis and 197 Australians.

Leaving Souda Bay we drive to the newly installed memorial at 42nd Street, the site of a spontaneous bayonet attack by ANZAC forces on the 27th of May 1941.

The German forces, estimated to number 400, suffered over 280 killed. 10 Australians were killed while the Maori Battalion suffered 14 casualties. We continue on to the Minoa Palace Resort located 12 kilometers west of Chania and our base for the coming days. On arrival we are welcomed and escorted to the breakfast room for a buffet brunch while we wait for our rooms to become available. Following check-in and a chance to freshen up we have another informative presentation in the resorts conference centre before leaving to the little village of Galatas which holds a very special place in the struggle for Crete.

For five days Kiwi soldiers, Greek soldiers and local civilians fought the elite German paratroopers to a standstill in Galatas and here was the scene of a famous charge by the exhausted New Zealanders on 25 May. The main square of the village is still dominated by the historic twin towered church and a memorial. There are signs of the Kiwi's presence everywhere. A visit to Prison Valley is our next stop before returning and an evening free of activities.

Overnight accommodation:

Minoa Palace Resort

Meals Included: *Buffet brunch*

Fri 21 May:

Rethymnon Australian Memorial Service, Galatas New Zealand Memorial Service

This morning we drive east to visit the battlefields at Rethymnon and the **Australian memorial service at Rethymnon**. We should never forget the actions fought here. Lt Col I R Campbell lead the Australian 2/1 and 2/11 Battalions and the Greeks in a series of continuous counter attacks that stopped the paratroopers cold. After the memorial service we lunch in Rethymnon (own expense). There are a number of cafes and tavernas serving great coffee and local cuisine. Also visit the many shops and the Venetian harbor dominated by the Fortezza Fort built 350 years ago.

After lunch we return to our Hotel to freshen up before returning to Galatas to be present at the **New Zealand memorial service** in the early evening. Following the service our coach will return back to the hotel. The evening is free at leisure.

Overnight accommodation:

Minoa Palace Resort

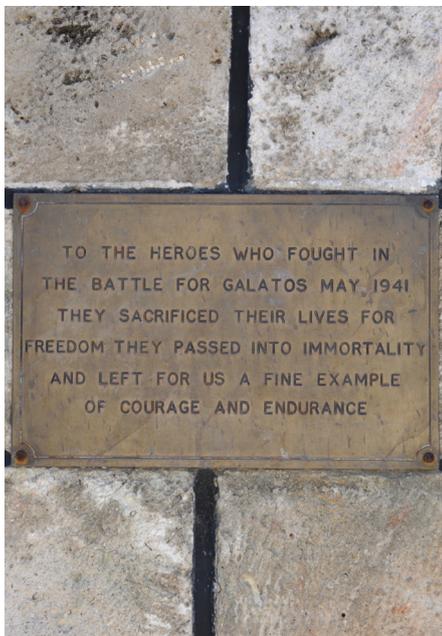
Meals Included: *Breakfast*



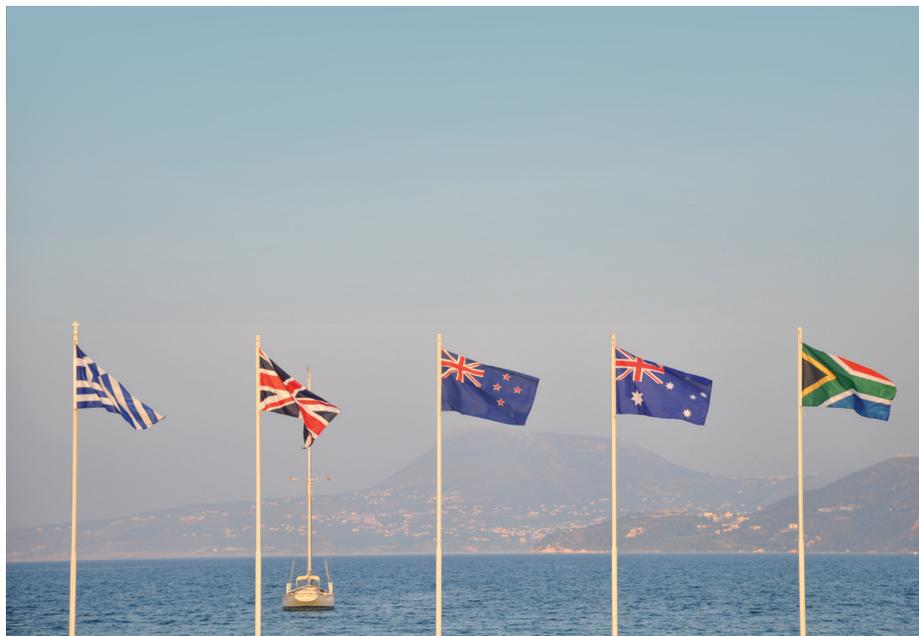
Platanias Beach and Theodori Island
Courtesy of National Army Museum NZ

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Battle for Galatas Memorial



National Flags – Souda Bay Commonwealth War Cemetery

Sat 22 May:

Battlefield Tour, Maleme, Hill 107, Tavronitis River and Souda Bay Commonwealth Memorial Service

After breakfast join together for a presentation on today's activities. Today we visit the most critical sector during the battle for Crete – the small airfield at Maleme and Hill 107 where you can appreciate the commanding views and where the German War cemetery is now located with over 4,000 war dead. We walk over the original Tavronitis River Bridge that was at the centre of much of the battle.

Breakfast on the 20th May 1941 was interrupted by a sight never before seen in warfare – an invasion conducted entirely from the air.

Sgt Frank Twigg of the 22nd NZ Battalion, described how the sky literally turned black with airplanes, and the ground heaved as the bombs fell. Next the sky was filled with different coloured parachutes, a stunning sight, but Frank knew that today was going to be a serious one.

The reasons why and how the Hill 107 was lost is still debated today – walk around the ground and decide for yourself.

Returning to the hotel there is time to find lunch then later this afternoon we travel back to Souda Bay and the Souda Bay War Cemetery for the main **Commonwealth Commemorative Service**.

This service, led by the British Legion, is a solemn and fitting occasion to commemorate all those involved in the defence of Crete.

Overnight accommodation:
Minoa Palace Resort

Meals Included: *Breakfast*

Sun 23 May:

Excursion to Sfakia, retracing the evacuation route and a combined service at Maleme Airport

By the 27th of May it was clear that the battle was lost and another evacuation by sea was required hence the exhausted Army headed south to the tiny fishing village of Hora Sfakia. Over the next four nights over 16,000 troops were evacuated, but many were left behind. For many who decided to evade capture or later escaped their journey had only just begun. For the next two years the courageous Cretan villagers

gave their lives to house and feed our escaped boys. We will never forget their sacrifice.

This is a full day tour that will retrace the route taken by our retreating soldiers over the formidable White Mountains. This epic trek was vivid in the memories of many veterans. Following a brief private service at the memorial at Sfakia, a swim and lunch (own expense) we make our way back to our hotel before driving to **Maleme Airfield for a re-enactment** of the airborne invasion. The reenactment is on the historic airfield itself and is a combined services portrayal of the events of 20th May 1941.

Tonight, is our last night together so please join us for a special last night dinner in a relaxed environment and a chance to reflect.

Overnight accommodation:
Minoa Palace Resort

Meals Included:
Breakfast and Dinner

Mon 24 May: Farewell

After breakfast our pilgrimage ends and we wish everyone a safe onward journey.

The Pilgrimage Price

7 days / 6 nights

From NZ\$2995 per person (twin share)

From NZ\$3795 per person (single)

Price includes:

- 6 nights' accommodation
- 1 nights first class Hotel accommodation – Athens
- 1-night ferry ticket and cabin accommodation between Athens and Chania
- 4 nights first class Hotel accommodation – Chania
- Welcome drinks, farewell dinner and meals as shown on the itinerary
- All transport as described
- Fully escorted throughout by our pilgrimage guides
- Battlefield tours as described
- Entrance to all commemorations
- Tips to drivers etc while on tour

Price does not include:

- Flights to Athens and from Chania
- Arrival and departure transfers
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Items of a personal nature
- Travel insurance

PILGRIMAGE GUIDES:

Dr Mark M.J. Wilson, CMCILT, MNZIM



Mark has been fascinated by the Battle of Crete for a long time and studies military history as a hobby. After reading Dan Davin's acclaimed history on Crete he was determined to go see the ground himself and in 2006, 2011 and 2016 Mark was the historian for the 65th, 70th and 75th Anniversary pilgrimages

to Crete which included a number of veterans. They shared their personal experiences which was a highlight and a privilege. Mark spent 21 years in the NZ Army as a full-time regular soldier and after retirement and a bit of gold mining, now works as an Associate Professor at Lincoln University. Military history still remains an avid hobby and he is looking forward to sharing his comprehensive knowledge on the coming 80th commemoration pilgrimage.

Greg Osborne



Greg's father was a veteran of the Battle of Crete and grew up understanding the importance that this and other battles had on the returning veterans. Dad joined the army in February 1940 and 5 years, 1 Month and 15 days later returned back to New Zealand and civilian life. This was after serving

in some of the bloodiest battles of WWII in Egypt, Palestine, Greece, Crete and Italy. Greg has been involved in the travel industry and arranging pilgrimage tours for over 45 years.

How to book

A deposit of \$800 per person is required at the time of booking to secure a place on the pilgrimage.

This deposit is nonrefundable and is part payment of the balance.

Full payment is due by 15 January 2021.

To reserve your place on the pilgrimage please contact Greg Osborne, see details below. Places on the pilgrimage are limited and booking early is recommended.

Important Notes:

This itinerary is based on information available as at 30 November 2019. The order of events is subject to change up to and including the departure date. Every effort will be made to inform group members of any changes as they occur. Prices are subject to change due to currency fluctuation or unforeseen circumstances.

Prices are based on exchange rates as at 30 November 2019.

FAQs

How do I travel to / from Greece?

Many airlines servicing both Australia and New Zealand fly to Athens. We recommend that you ask your travel agent for the best available airfares that suit your individual needs. A separate air ticket is required for a flight from Chania back to Athens or beyond.

What additional travel arrangements are available?

- Pre-pilgrimage accommodation at the **Hotel Amalia** in Athens
- Post-pilgrimage accommodation at **Minoa Palace Resort**, Chania
- Airport transfers
- A full day's walk down the Samaria Gorge on Tuesday 25 May

Where is our base on Crete?

The 5-star Minoa Palace Resort and Spa. All rooms are air-conditioned, have private facilities, telephone, TV and mini bar. Free WIFI is available in the public areas. There are excellent swimming pools, private beach, restaurants, bars and a conference room which we will use for our regular presentations and lectures on the Battle of Crete. Perfectly located at Platania, the resort provides time to relax and easy access to the Chania (12km away).

What will the weather be like?

Expect temperatures in the low to mid 20's during the day with cooler nights. This is spring time and days should be dry.

Do I need a visa?

Visas are not required for New Zealand or Australian nationals.

What's the shopping like?

Both Chania and Rethymon are great for shopping. Being old Venetian towns, their many narrow streets are closed off to traffic and are full of every kind of shop, bar and restaurant.

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