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retreat

Expect soothing sea views, contemporary art sculptures and top-notch restaurants at the super-relaxed Minos Beach Art Hotel



Hannah Summers

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It's unusual to feel like you're holidaying on a remote Greek island and still be within walking distance of a bustling city — but that's what you get here. Minos Beach Art Hotel is strung along its very own private peninsula, with far-reaching views across the glittering water and the mountains of eastern Crete all just a short stroll from Agios Nikolaos. Waterfront bungalows are inches from the sea, a rarity in Greece, while others are found throughout the extensive gardens, which are dotted with sculptures. Excellent

restaurants, hip, contemporary design and a small spa only elevate this ultra-relaxed and cool, yet sophisticated retreat.

Overall score 9/10

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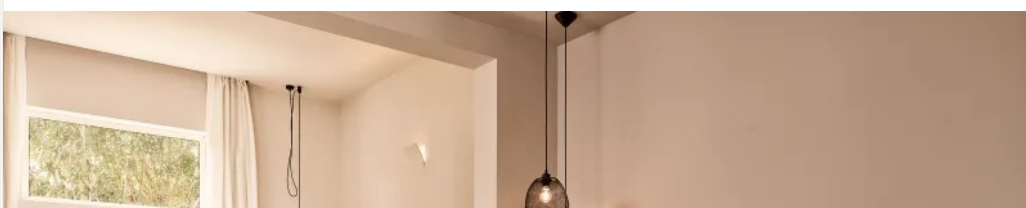
Rooms and suites



Score 10/10

The top pick at this low-rise pad are the dozens of whitewashed bungalows with small stone jetties for sunbathing and ladders into the water just beyond — throw open your doors and the water will lull you to sleep. Happily, they're not the most expensive either.

Dotted among the pampas grass and rosemary bushes in the gardens are a number of villas, some with large pools, some with two levels and smaller pools set a little further back from the sea. There are also smaller villas, nestled in the garden and further away from the water, that would suit couples or those willing to share with their children.





Whichever option you choose, the rooms are so beautifully designed, in such a peaceful and unusual setting, that you're unlikely to feel short changed here. Neutral palettes of taupes and soft greys combine with textured walls, bleached wood and jute rugs. Bedding is a soft-grey linen (a refreshing break from the usual white cotton) and furniture is minimalistic with black steel structures for hanging your clothes, as opposed to chunky wardrobes and chests. Shower rooms are moodily lit with matt black rainshower heads and black trough sinks, and one of the loveliest bits — delicately fragranced shower gel, shampoo and conditioner from the Greek brand, Bioaroma Crete. These feel wonderfully luxurious and are made in the neighbouring city of Agios Nikolaos (you will want to stock up).

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Food and drink



Score 9/10

Relaxed days start at spacious Bacchus, the hotel's main restaurant, which is open on several sides to make the most of those garden views. This is where you'll tuck into breakfast with tables of sweet treats, yoghurts, fruits, Bircher muesli, eggs and omelettes. Fresh orange juice and thick coffee is promptly delivered with you barely looking up to ask for it — you'll find this slick but warm service everywhere.

You can also dine here for an à la carte or buffet-style evening meal. Both are delicious, with a huge salad selection (chickpeas, quinoa, beetroot and more), pasta ragu and fragrant meat dishes, such as roast lemon chicken with moreish roasted sweet potato that's caramelised to perfection.





Then there's Adeste, a traditional-style Greek taverna next to a grassy lawn (handy for younger guests) with mezze dishes, including dolmades, dips and perfectly fried slabs of Greek cheese. La Bouillabaisse is a more formal choice for dinner with tables scattered across a glass-fenced terrace and the moonlight reflecting on the water. The fish of the day is perfectly grilled, served with vegetables and generous squeezes of salt.

As for easy lunches? They can be enjoyed at poolside at Ibiscus, which has a small menu with the likes of salads and hamburgers. Don't miss cocktails at Dionyssos, with a menu crafted by Baba au Rum in Athens, which recently ranked as one of the World's 50 Best Bars.

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What else is there?

Score 7/10

The main focus of a stay here is the beautifully clear water to swim in, whether you're lowering yourself down the ladder or walking in from one of the two sandy beaches. These beaches are small, but with shallow water they are great for toddlers — they are where most families at the hotel convene, and there's a water-sports outpost with jet skis and SUPs. There's no kids' club, so although there are younger guests, you won't see lots of them. The extensive gardens — meticulously maintained and filled with trees and flowers — mean there are various grassy areas for children too.

The hotel also doubles as an outdoor gallery; across the peninsula you'll see dozens of contemporary art sculptures from when the owner invited Greek artists to stay and create whatever inspired them, back in the Nineties. A large pool is dotted with shaded cabanas and loungers and there's a small spa with a couple of treatment rooms, plus sauna and steam rooms with glass windows looking out over the gardens (handily, guests can't really see in).

Where is it?

Score 10/10

Minos Beach Art Hotel has the best of all worlds, being just a 20-minute seafront stroll to the taverns and shops of bustling Agios Nikolaos (Crete's capital) and only a 50-minute transfer from the airport (which is a fairly usual transfer time to reach many of the island's most luxe hotels). Yet despite all that, you'll feel like you're swimming in a crystal-clear sea in the middle of nowhere. You won't need a hire car unless you're set on exploring the island's ancient sites, such as Knossos. Taxis are also an option if you want to travel further afield, and the hotel has bikes you can take out too.

Price B&B doubles from £250

Restaurant mains from £13

Family-friendly Y

Accessible Y

[Book now](#)

*Hannah Summers was a guest of Minos Beach Art Hotel
(minosbeach.com)*

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