

In the steps of St Paul

A guide to Crete in the steps of St Paul

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Often whilst on holiday it is useful to have a plan to help you visit ancient sites. In 2013 I decided to look at the route followed by St Paul whilst on his visit to Crete in AD61. There is no evidence I can find that actually says Paul visited anywhere other than where he landed. However anecdotal evidence and local myths suggests that he did travel around the island, and the story of the anointment of Titus as bishop would confirm this. Enjoy the book!



In the steps of St Paul

St. Paul was continuing his journey by ship from Jerusalem to Rome when he encountered a hurricane and unexpectedly had to land on the Greek island of Crete (or Kriti). Crete is the largest of the Greek islands in the eastern Mediterranean Sea southeast of mainland Greece. Crete is famous for its ancient Minoan civilisation (300-2100 B.C.) and its ancient paintings and ruins are a must to see.

Meinardus says that St. Paul's ship anchored at 'Fair Havens' in Crete about the end of the first week of October, AD 61. Here the ship stayed waiting for the wind to change. Fair Havens (or Kaloi Limenes) is the name of a small village, a bay and a group of islets on the southern coast of Crete, not far from Agia Galini.

Whilst no one knows exactly if Paul stayed at this location, stories of his travels and preaching in Crete suggest he did travel across the island, and particularly to Gortys, the Roman Capital. Here he confirmed Titus (Timothy) as the first bishop of Crete.

To travel anywhere in Crete from Kaloi Limenes, it seems likely he would have made trips to many of the villages and sites en-route to Gortys, and also between Gortys and Ancient Heraklion (Candia). This book follows this mythical route, highlighting places the modern pilgrim can visit whilst in Crete.

Paul eventually left Crete to travel to Malta, and thence to Rome. He never returned, but Titus lived and preached on Crete and today his basilica can be seen and visited in Heraklion, where his "head" remains.

Acts 27:1-44





On a ridge over the bay of "Fair Havens" or modern Kaloi Limenes, archeologists found the ruins of an ancient greek chapel dedicated to St. Paul, perhaps marking the very spot where Paul himself used to preach to the natives of Crete. This site is now a modern church of St Paul, a site of pilgrimage.



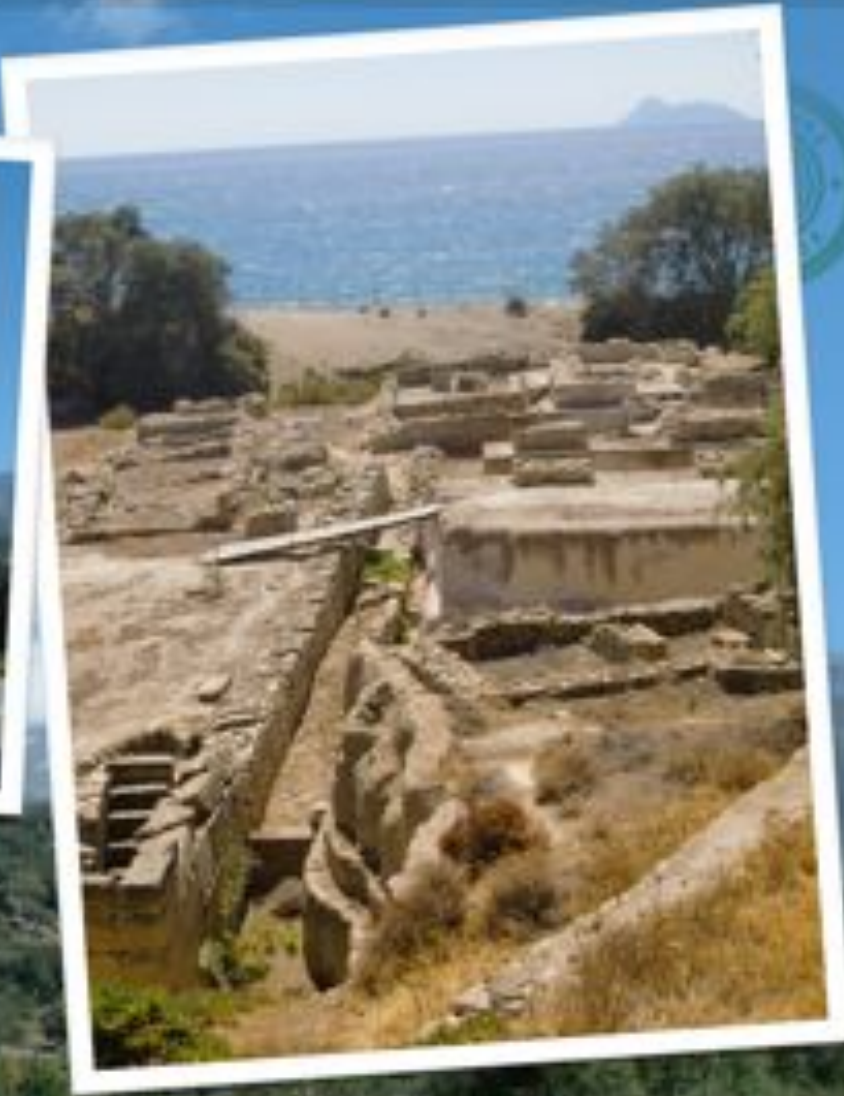


Today the existing white chapel, commemorating St. Paul's arrival on Crete, is situated on the brow of the hill overlooking the bay. It is built upon the site of the former church. A few yards to the west of the church is the traditional cave where St. Paul stayed. This cave is marked by a tall cross. Inside is the shrine to St Paul.

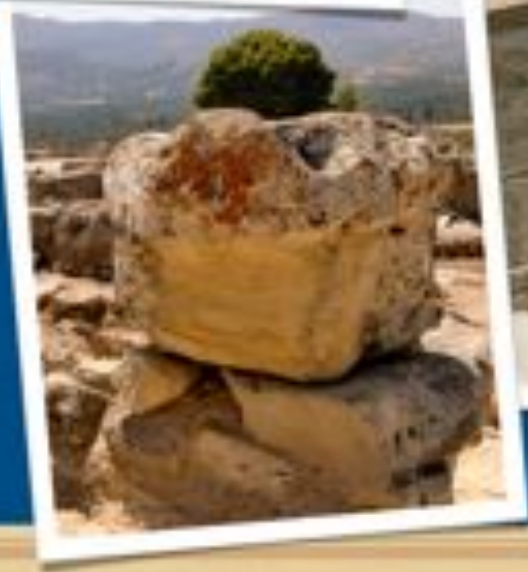


To the east of Kaloi Limenes is the town of Lebena. The god Asklepios (Healer) was based here and a temple honouring him was built by the Cretans. This was destroyed in 46BC, but was rebuilt. In Byzantium times a Christian church was built on the site, and the remains of the temple can be seen built into the surviving chapel.

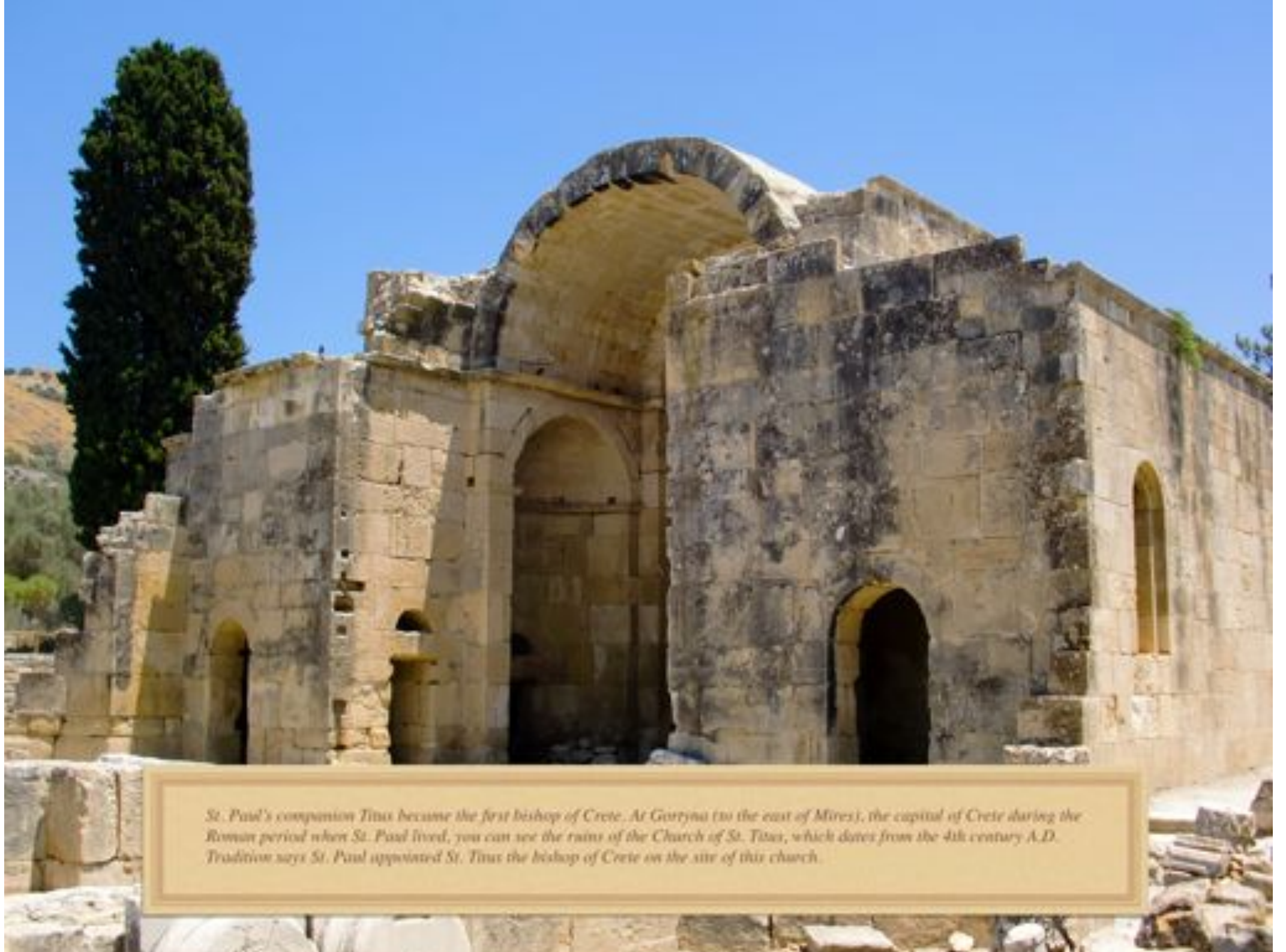




The road from Kaloi Limenes comes over the mountains to the north, passing by spectacular scenery. The only other way to travel is by boat around the coast to the west, where in ancient times you would make landfall at the port of Kommos. From here to Gortys is a short ride.



Passing by from Kommos to Gortys, you pass the ancient site of Faraos. Built around 2000BC, and destroyed in 1450BC this ancient site was reputed to be a palace of King Minos. Today the excavated remains have commanding views over the Messara plain, one of the most fertile regions in Crete. 3 km to the west is the ruins of Agia Triada.



St. Paul's companion Titus became the first bishop of Crete. At Gortyna (to the east of Mirès), the capital of Crete during the Roman period when St. Paul lived, you can see the ruins of the Church of St. Titus, which dates from the 4th century A.D. Tradition says St. Paul appointed St. Titus the bishop of Crete on the site of this church.



Doric laws

Gortys is a very large and partially excavated location on the Heraklion road from Mirax, near Agia Decca. The excavated site is open to visitors, but take a walk through the olive groves across the road for the 'real' history.





Spill



The mountain village of Spill is famous for its waters, and boasts fountains and springs that have flowed since roman times. Spill is on the main road to the north coast. To the east and above Gortys are the reservoirs of Zaros, built by the Romans.





To the north of Gortys, and just south of modern Heraklion is Knossos. Home of King Minos, this is the most famous, and well preserved, ancient Minoan site. A palace, trade centre and temple complex, the site covers many hectare, and much remains un-excavated. It was destroyed in 1450BC. To the south is the Doric Aqueduct that brought water.

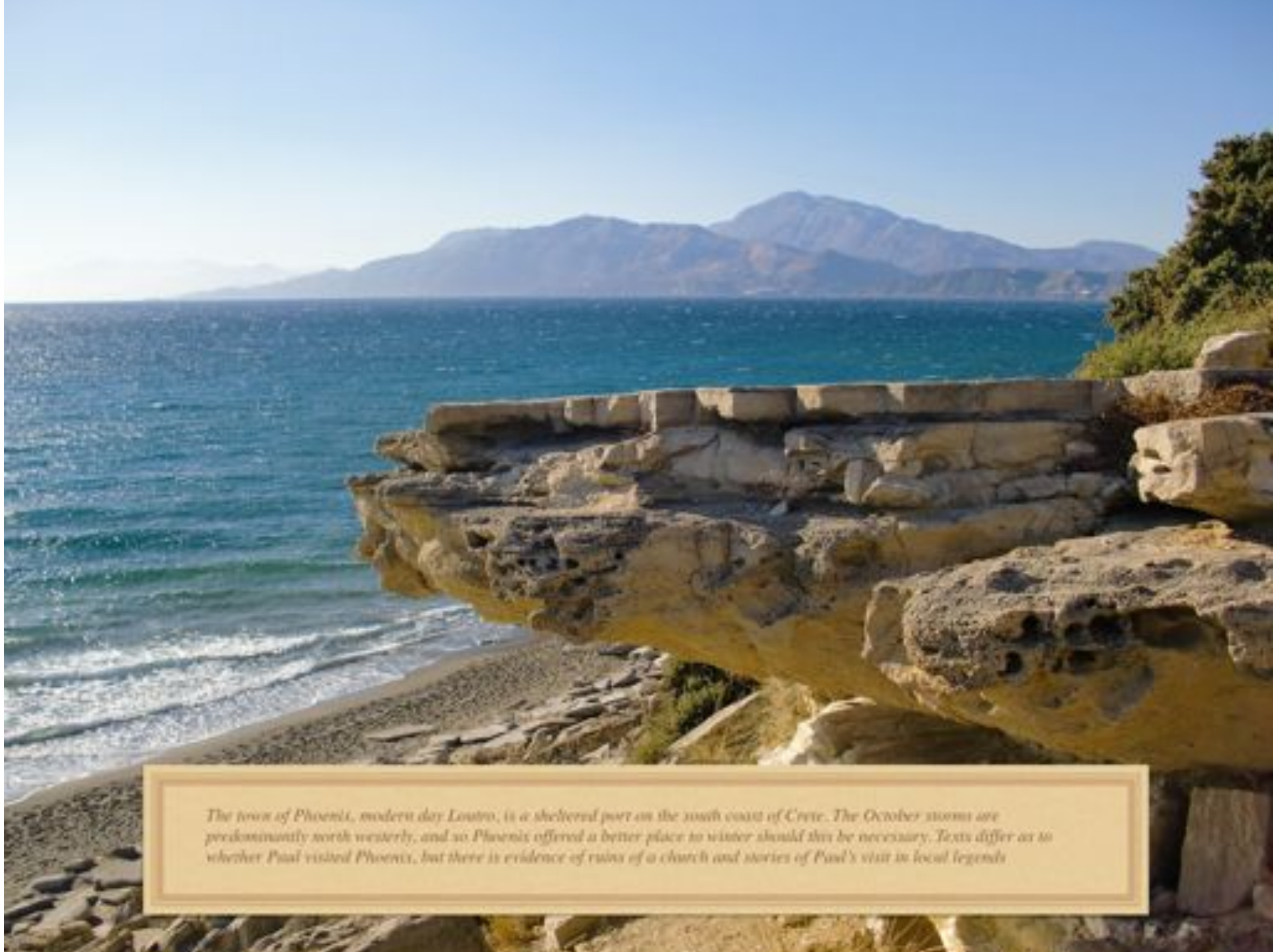




Candia (modern Heraklion) is the home of the cathedral church of St Titus. Titus was ordained by Paul as the Bishop of Crete. Whilst he traveled extensively, Titus (Timothy) was responsible for building the Church in Crete. He died in the year 107, aged about 95. Over the years his remains have been moved - and today his 'head' remains at this site.







The town of Phoenix, modern day Loutro, is a sheltered port on the south coast of Crete. The October storms are predominantly north westerly, and so Phoenix offered a better place to winter should this be necessary. Texts differ as to whether Paul visited Phoenix, but there is evidence of ruins of a church and stories of Paul's stay in local legends



BEER 5 m

PIRAEUS 341.38

BUNGA BUNGA 5 m



On leaving Crete, Paul's ship took shelter to the south of Gardus island, known in biblical times as Claudia. Here the ship shed cargo, before leaving to cross the sea to Malta, where it was eventually shipwrecked. The place of the shipwreck is now known as St Paul's Bay, Malta.







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