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CRETE: A CLASSIC BEAUTY

Inland Crete, with White Mountains views, true local culture and low prices, is the place for UK homebuyers, says **Cathy Hawker**

UP IN the hills of Crete, away from the beaches and relentless waves of sun-burnt holidaymakers, modern tourism has little effect on village life. Take Vamos on the Apokoronas Peninsula in western Crete.

The sandy beaches of Almyrida and Kalyvas are within 15 minutes and the splendid harbour town of Chania and its international airport are 40 minutes away but few tourists head here.

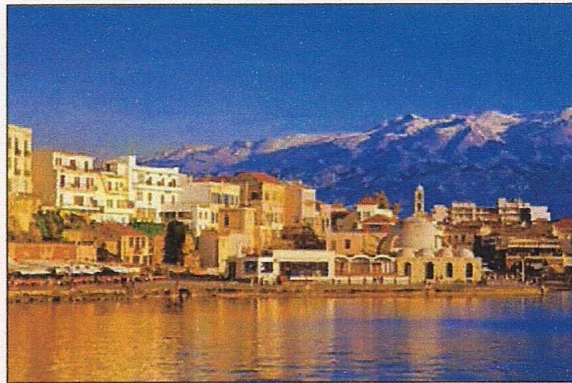
The Mayor of Vamos estimates that

200 British property owners live in the surrounding area and over a mid-morning coffee in the local taverna you'll certainly hear English voices. Yet this remains a working village where children go to school, tractors and donkeys vie with cars on the main street and elderly residents tend their olive trees with pride.

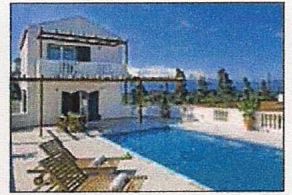
Property prices fall inland and on this long, thin island you are never too far from the water. Sea views appear unexpectedly as you manoeuvre the hairpin bends on many inland mountain roads. One mile from Vamos in Litsarda. On a tranquil four-acre site, English developers Caversham-Barnes has built nine handsome two- and three-bedroom villas. Litsarda Villas are built in pairs, each with their own entry gate, with views south to Crete's towering White Mountains and north to the sea.

The villas have large stone terraces, heated pools, garages and half-acre well-irrigated gardens filled with lemon, orange and olive trees. The whole site has attractive low stone walls while the only communal area is a new tennis court.

The villas are built and utilities connected but internal finishings – marble



Above: palazzos and hotels line Chania harbour



Thrilled: for £328,900, Bill Siddons and Delia Pluckrose bought the largest villa

tiles and kitchens – are left for owners to choose. Prices for fully finished and furnished property range from £217,000 to £328,900. Contact Caversham-Barnes (0118 948 3202; www.caversham-barnes.com).

The largest property on site has been bought by Bill Siddons and his partner Delia Pluckrose from Cambridge who paid £328,900 for their 1,615sq ft three-bedroom villa. For them, the low-density of the development and the affordable cost of living were important as eventually they plan to live there full-time. "We also love the location and being close to an unspoilt,

tourist-free village," says Delia, who works at Cambridge University.

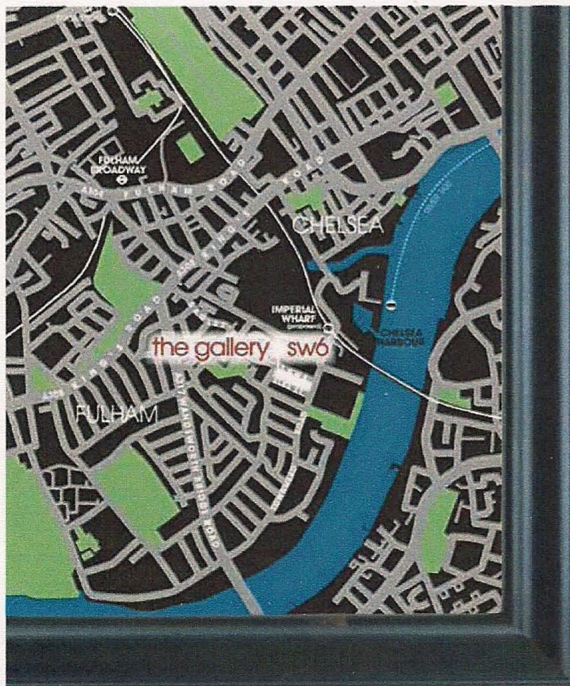
This is the second small project on Crete for British developer Said Marie. "Buyers here come to be part of the community," says Marie. "They want to live like the Cretans in a year-round community and not be in some sort of holiday ghetto."

Crete is certainly about much more than packed beaches. Flights from London to Crete have a good mix of walkers, cyclists and history buffs, heading inland to the mountains, gorges and mythical sites that criss-cross the island.

From £217,000: family villas (top) in Litsarda. Call Caversham-Barnes (0118 948 3202)

£105,500: two-bedroom house and shared pool (above) in Horafakia. Call Crete Property Consultants (0845 337 2717)

'It is close to an unspoilt, tourist-free village. We plan to live here full-time.'



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