

East Crete magazine's super suggestions for seven original gifts you can take home with you from your holidays in East Crete



1. Extra virgin olive oil and other olive-derived products.

Olive oil producer par excellence east Crete is the ideal place to try and buy olive oil-derived products.

Where can I get some?

- *The Olive Farm near Aghios Nikolaos is a great place to buy dozens of olive oil products.*
- *Stick around and you can even get a guided tour of the old fashioned olive factory complete with donkey*

2. Sheep bells in all shapes and sizes.

Escape the beach and head for the mountains in east Crete and you'll soon hear the Swiss-Alps tinkle of sheep's bells. Made by hand in only a few workshops mostly in the east of the island these handcrafted bells, which came in all shapes and sizes, make ideal gifts.

Where can I get some?

- *In the mountain town of Ziros, if you're lucky, you can visit the workshops of local bell maker Giannis. Ask at the dimos (town hall) for more details.*
- *If you're visiting the Lassithi plateau stop off at Tzermiadon and buy bells from Giorgos who has a dusty little store packed with everything from sheep's bells to leather dog collars, on the left hand side of the road as you enter town on the road from Agios Georgios.*

3.Ornate knives and other metal-ware

Not one to give to your granny, perhaps, but the regions knife-making trade is still going strong and you can buy some wonderful knives with ornate carved handles to give as gifts.

Where can I get some?

- *There's a lovely shop in the backstreets of Sitia, which sells knives with intricately carved handles, as well as a wide range of other handmade gifts. Not sure of the name, but it's situated behind the harbour in Kornarou street somewhere around no 111 – worth finding!*

4.Raki

Spend some time in east Crete and you won't bother buying the local firewater made with grapeskins, because so many people are bound to give you bottles for free!

Where (else)can I get some?

- *You'll find plenty of bottles for sale in the region's smaller shops and stores (especially around raki season in Sept/Oct) Just look out for a line of (small) mineral water bottles somewhere near the till.*

5.Cretan wine

Not necessarily known for its fine wine, you'd be surprised to learn that east Crete has some award-winning vintage wines, including the dry 100% Liatiko Economou, Red 2003

Where can I get some?

- *Visit the Economou vineyards in the mountain village of Ziros*
 - *Or take a tasting tour of the Sitia winery*
- *If you're a real oenophile you might want to find out more about the wines of East Crete*
 - *Or follow the wine roads in east Crete*

6.Cretan Honey

The unspoilt, unpolluted slopes of East Crete studded with fragrant thyme and oregano shrubs are ideal for busy bees gathering nectar to make the region's delicious honey

Where can I get some?

- *You can buy honey from most of the main stores in the region, but if you want to find the real thing straight from the mountain, you'll need to get off the beaten track and hunt down some of the local producers.*
- *In the plateau village of Armeni, Giorgos Milonakis (ask at the kafeneion) sells a small amount of his own, home-produced honey.*

- *In the neighbouring village of Handras several producers sell their own honey (meli). Once again, ask at the local kafeneion.*

7. Thyme, sage and other herbs

Wander up into the mountains of east Crete and you'll find plenty of pungent-smelling herbs, including thyme, sage and oregano growing wild. If you'd like to take these mainstays of the Cretan diet back home as gifts, but can't tell an edible herb from a deadly weed, however, see the list below.

Where can I get some?

- *Head for Agios Nikolas Wednesday mornings (until midday) and you'll find a bustling street market where you can buy plenty of traditional foodstuffs, including those fragrant herbs.*
 - *Take a [wild herb tour near Sitia with Ithanos tours](#)*