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The Making Of The Cretan Landscape



Synopsis

This is the first book to help the visitor understand Crete's remarkable landscape, which is just as spectacular as the island's rich archaeological heritage. Crete is a wonderful and dramatic island, a miniature continent with precipitous mountains, a hundred gorges, unique plants, extinct animals and lost civilisations, as well as the characteristic agricultural landscape of olive groves, vines and goats. Jennifer Moody and Oliver Rackham explain how the island's peculiar and extraordinary features, moulded and modified by centuries of human activity, have come together to create the landscape we see today. They also explain the formation and ecology of Crete's beautiful mountains and coastline, and the contemporary threats to the island's fragile natural beauty.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

'...remarkably comprehensive in its scope, covering the history, geology, natural history, agriculture and many peripheral topics in detail. You should read it from start to finish (several times).' --BBC Wildlife Magazine
'This is an excellent and very readable book.' --The Anglo-Hellenic Review

I can't give a full review of this book, as it was a gift for someone, and I did not read it fully before giving it away. I will say that I was somewhat disappointed that there were not more photographs. The beautiful cover photo let me to believe that the book would be full of similarly beautiful images, but it is not. This seems like a great book for those interested in a somewhat academic analysis of the landscape. It is no coffee table book! I would have preferred if the rich text was accompanied by rich photographs as well.

The authors have traveled almost everywhere in Crete, observing at first hand vegetation, landform, and human effects on the landscape. They have also studied a vast body of literature, ranging from archaeological reports to Venetian archives to travelers' accounts. They have presented their knowledge in a very insightful, often original way, exploding older received wisdom such as the "ruined landscape theory" that regards long-inhabited places such as Crete to have begun as virgin forest and to have been gradually degraded to a semidesert. (In fact, many parts of Crete are sprouting new trees very nicely!) Learn about earthquakes altering the landscape, prehistoric and historic vegetation, the pygmy hippos and elephants that roamed in Paleolithic times, and the effects of the first human inhabitants from the Neolithic up to the 20th century. The book also gives a useful foundation for understanding more specialized aspects of Crete such as botany, forestry, agriculture, anthropology, etc. Moreover, the book is a good read. You can appreciate it equally by reading from cover to cover, or by choosing a chapter that particularly interests you. If you are curious to learn why Crete looks like it does, then this book is for you.

Very good book on all facets of the Cretan landscape including a small section on historical settlement and settlements by religion (very interesting). Rackham's and Moody's narrative is straight forward and clear with plenty of diagrams and black/white photos. There are enough details for the reader to receive a firm understanding of the landscape, without getting bogged down in any technical jargon related to demographics, architecture, topography, etc. Thoroughly enjoyable, especially if you are a lover of Crete and its peoples.

This amazing book puts together a stunning amount of knowledge collected both on the ground and in scientific and historical research into an elegant package. I have been visiting Crete for decades, yet I learn something new on every page about the land, the people, the animals, and the plants. The many photos and hand-drawn maps are valuable, though some of the lettering on the maps is hard to read in this edition. In any case, a large-scale map would make a good complement to the book. Highly recommended both for the armchair traveler and the visitor.

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