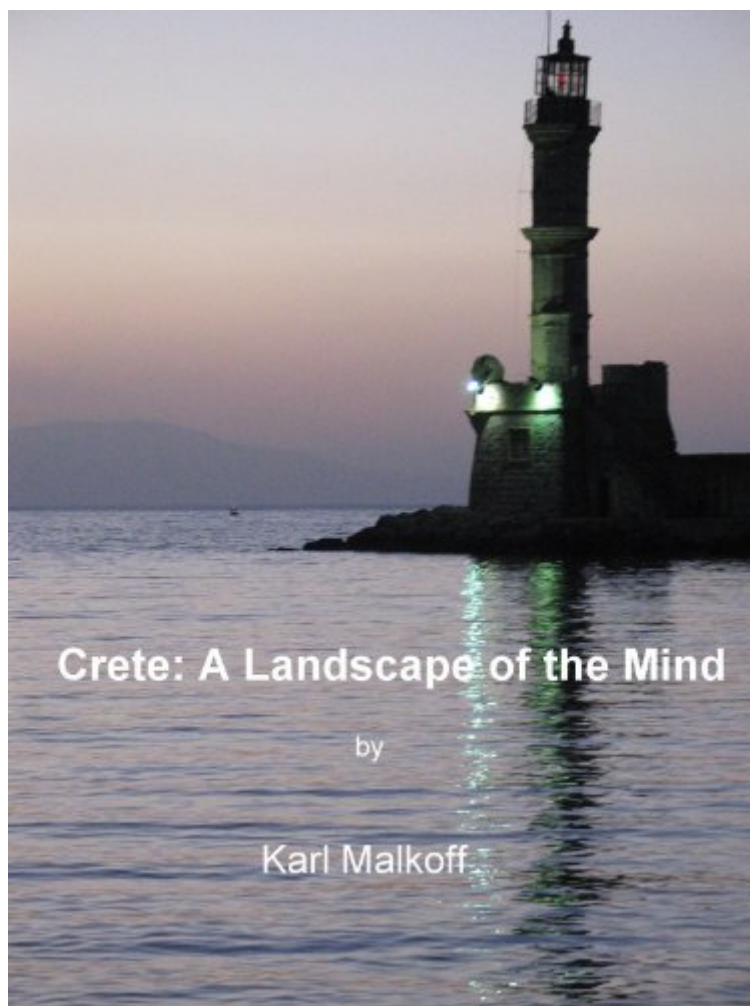


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Crete: A Landscape Of The Mind



Synopsis

"Crete: A Landscape of the Mind" is an historical, cultural, and personal account of the largest of the Greek islands. From the myth of the Minotaur and the archaeology of Knossos, through classical and Byzantine periods, the centuries of Venetian civilization and Turkish occupation, through World War II's extraordinary Battle of Crete, the island has had an absorbing, if violent history. This book covers the full range of that history, as well as the experience of visiting the island today. It is a study of the author's long-standing obsession with Crete, and an attempt to understand its archetypal power. The narrative interweaves the journal of a recent trip to Crete with essays on its mythology, archaeology, history, and contemporary reality, allowing inner and outer worlds to shed light on each other.

Book Information

File Size: 620 KB

Print Length: 216 pages

Publication Date: February 24, 2012

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B007DIWY5Q

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #1,233,349 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #60

inÂ Books > Travel > Europe > Greece > Crete #189 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Europe > Greece #232 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel > Europe > Greece

Customer Reviews

Lawrence Durrell famously said "other countries may give you an understanding of their landscape and their culture," (or words close to that) "but Greece gives you an understanding of yourself." Karl Malkoff's wonderful journey through the Crete that he obviously loves, is an interior journey of self-discovery. This book is rich in the history and culture of Crete and reads as though a friend is sharing his inter most obsessions and imploring you to understand. A must read before going to Crete.

An interesting book, somewhat hard to review. It is part memoir, part travel journal, part history book and part self-analysis. I can say that it intrigued me - mostly the parts where the author attempts to analyze his life-long fascination and obsession with the island of Crete, and where he uses Crete as some kind of a metaphor, as an outer reflection of his inner world. I was intrigued because Malkoff touches on many questions and points that sound familiar to me. I, too, have a deep fascination with this island, and the answer as to why has always been elusive, despite many trips to the island undertaken over the past decades. Therefore, the last chapter of the book in which he explores these questions in depth was the most interesting to me: Did it have to be Crete or could it have been another place in the world to trigger such obsession? What inside of him found its external equivalent in this island? And many more such questions. The attempts at answering these questions are equally fascinating and on occasion even provided some unexpected insight for me on a very personal level. Let's just say that I highlighted many a passage in this book. Of somewhat less interest to me was the abundance of historical background Malkoff gives - beginning with Greek mythology, the Minoan era and all the way to WW II. Not because I wouldn't want to know but because this is information I could find in almost any decent travel book about Crete. What makes Malkoff's book so unique, however, is the conversation he has with himself about Crete and the island's meaning for his life. Interspersed with the introspection and the historical information are journal-like entries about restaurants, hotels, day trips, vistas etc. but these, too, tie in with the "Landscape of the Mind" theme in that the author often uses them as jumping-off points for his more philosophical musings about Crete. This is not a conventional travel guide by any means. But people who feel drawn to Crete (or any other place, for that matter) and are unsure as to why, might find a few cleverly phrased questions here with equally interesting, albeit highly personal answers. Food for thought - this is as best as I can describe this book. It will not be for everyone but I for one found it to be an extremely interesting approach to the question as to why some places take root in our hearts beyond time and rationality.

Part of my heritage is Cretan. My grandmother, Eleni, was born in Crete in 1895. She was an amazing woman, I've been told. When she was a teenager she went to Athens for nurses training. At 18 she immigrated to America. Yes, I met her, but I had to be told. After those early adventures, she folded into the life of Greektown Detroit and never learned English. So she was and is still a mystery to me. In 1998 I visited Crete with my husband. I became as enthralled with the island as Karl is. We traveled the same crazy roads - my husband in drivers' heaven, me white-knuckled the

whole way. The scenery was dramatic or mystical or pastoral or just plain beautiful. The sights and spirit of these travels, which Karl wrote about, expressed all of that. Most special to me was my visit to Chania, where Eleni grew up. We wandered the old town streets, while I imagined where my great-grandfather's candy shop would have been. I am now on a mental odyssey to understand my grandmother. Since she only spoke Greek and I only spoke English, I never really knew her. I ate her delicious food; she nursed me with paregoric and holy water when I was sick; and I ate almost all of the chocolate candies that she kept on her coffee table. But the woman I was named after I couldn't understand, in so many ways. So I'm writing a book about her - fictionalized. Too much of the facts are missing to write a memoir. That led me to an online search for books about the island and the discovery of this treasure. It is a tale told by a man who is captivated by Crete. He writes about his affinity with eyes wide open to all the fascination and foibles of this place of great glories and terrible subjugations. I have laughed at his adventures, imagined his wife's reactions to his crazier forays, and saw through his eyes the wondrous sites of this magical island. It is more than description of the island's landscape, it is a landscape of the mind - once his, now anyone's who reads this fact full, sight full, thoughtful, and spirit-filled book.

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