

**SAILING DIRECTIONS  
FOR THE ISLAND OF  
CANDIA OR CRETE**

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Sailing directions for the island of Candia or Crete by T. Spratt

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# SAILING DIRECTIONS

FOR THE ISLAND OF

# CANDIA OR CRETE.

BY

CAPTAIN T. SPRATT, R.N., C.B.

*SECOND EDITION.*

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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The Sailing Directions for the coasts of the Island of Candia or Crete were compiled by Captain T. Spratt, R.N., from the surveys and remarks made by him in the year 1852. The second edition has been revised and corrected to the present date by Staff Commander James Penn, R.N.

G. H. R.

Hydrographic Office, Admiralty, London,  
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# SAILING DIRECTIONS

FOR THE ISLAND OF

## CANDIA OR CRETE.

VARIATION IN 1866.

Grabusa islet, 8° 55' W. | Cape Sidero, 7° 50' W.

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**CANDIA, CRETE, or KIRIT,** as it is respectively called by the European, Greek, or Turk, from its position, fertility, and population, is the most important of all the islands of the Levant.\*

Although exceeding Cyprus in length it has only an equal area; and in comparison with the two larger islands of the Mediterranean, Sicily and Sardinia, although they are the same length as Candia, they are, however, nearly double its average breadth and area. Yet, excepting Mount Etna in Sicily, Candia has the more elevated mountains, its two principal heights exceeding 8,000 feet, and a third more than 7,000 feet.

Candia is 143 miles in length, with a maximum breadth of 33 miles, and a minimum of about 7 miles. The population may be a little over 200,000, of which about 70,000 or one-third are Turks; but the population has been estimated recently by Greek authors at Athens to exceed 300,000; thus making the Christian population to be four-fifths of the Mohammedan instead of only two-thirds. The latter estimate is, however, based on erroneous data; first, from a greatly exaggerated average of the number of families for each village, estimating them at 50 families for each, whereas 35 or 40 is much nearer, and in fact above the truth; and next, in the whole number of villages calculated for, there being only about 800, (the inhabitants of which are not less than five families each,) instead of the exact number of 1,047, as stated in a work published at Athens.

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\* The vowels are to be sounded throughout as in Italian or Spanish. The Greek *v* being represented by the Italian *i*. The letter *g* is pronounced as *y*, as *Agios*, holy, *pr. Ayos*.

The accent marks the emphatic syllable. Where there is a difference in the spelling of the names of places in the charts and in the Directions, the orthography of the latter is the more correct.

The rural population is mainly Christian ; but in some districts there is a large intermixture of Mohammedans, chiefly in the more fertile parts of the low districts and valleys near the principal cities. These Mohammedans are, for the most part, native Cretans, whose ancestors, under intimidation and oppression from the earlier Turkish rulers, forsook the Christian faith for Mohammedanism, but retained their language. Thus Greek is the common tongue of the island still, both with the natives, and in all official communications. This has led to a greater freedom of intercourse between Mohammedan and Christian than is usual ; and in consequence, frequent intermarriage, notwithstanding the diversity of creed and religious prejudices. They also dress so similarly as to render it difficult for a stranger, although he may be a Greek from the neighbouring islands, to distinguish Mohammedan from Christian, whether male or female. The Cretans are very hospitable to a stranger ; but their habitations are in general mean and untidy ; their living, too, is coarse and frugal, yet their endurance of fatigue is remarkable.

The staple produce of the island is olive oil, of very good quality in general, which is now chiefly used in the island for the manufacture of soap, instead of being all exported to France for this purpose as formerly ; Candia, therefore, chiefly supplies the Levant with soap. Silk and oranges are also exported.

From its position, being intermediate between the hot and arid sky of Africa, and the more humid and tempered atmosphere of south-eastern Europe, it is favoured with a more genial climate than either ; its summer temperature averaging about 80° Fahr. between the months of May and November, in the low districts near the shore ; and the winters are so tempered by the surrounding sea, and its proximity to Africa, that the thermometer seldom stands below 45° at the coast towns. Having several lofty mountains, with upland plains and secluded vales on their flanks, a milder temperature exists in them than in the open country and low lands bordering the coast, depending in intensity upon their zone of elevation and aspect to which they are exposed. Snow is permanent during winter at all summits above 6,500 feet, but it all disappears by the end of July.

The fruits of middle and southern Europe may, therefore, be grown in some of the upland regions, as may also some of the North African produce and fruits upon its lowlands, for the orange, grape, and olive flourish in the north and internal parts of the island better than in any other part of Greece or Asia Minor ; and apples, pears, and potatoes are the produce of some of the upland districts and plains ; whilst wheat of a remarkably white and good quality is grown in the low valleys on the south coast. Former revolutions, and disturbances, arising from various causes in connexion with political and religious animosities, have tended to create



a feeling of insecurity, so that, notwithstanding its genial clime and fruitful soil, its prosperity and population have but slowly advanced.

There has been displayed also an antagonistic feeling against the introduction of any civilizing improvements in the island; but mainly in respect to making roads for internal communication, and for other local and municipal improvements, inclusive of a college for the instruction of the Greek and Mohammedan children together on liberal principles, as projected and commenced by an enlightened Pasha and Governor. The opposition seems unhappily to have arisen entirely from a repugnance to co-operate in, or indeed to permit any civilizing efforts which emanated from a Turkish ruler. Thus local enterprise is checked or kept in suspense; and not only is the general improvement of the inhabitants retarded, but its natural resources and commerce rendered comparatively stagnant, by this mistaken and misapplied patriotism on the part of a high spirited people, whose mountain inhabitants no doubt can boast descent from the days of Minos, without admixture from Roman, Saracen, Italian, or Turk, who in succession have conquered and governed the island.

Not so, however, with the lowland Cretans, who are a mixed race, and who are the great sufferers during local tumult and disaffection. But the mountain Cretan being comparatively secure in his natural fastnesses, and dependant as much upon flocks as on produce, intimidates and leads the lowland Cretan by the prestige of his name, and the terror of his deeds; thus Cretan energy, by being so misdirected, is ever struggling to destroy its own prosperity, and progress in the road of social improvement and civilization.

The value of the exports varies from 200,000*l.* to 400,000*l.*, as it depends mainly upon the fluctuation of the olive crops for the produce of oil. The imports reach about two-thirds of the exports.

**COAST.**—The north-west extremity of Candia is formed by a high and precipitous promontory stretching out to the northward towards the island of Cerigotto and Greece. It is 7 miles in length by about one mile in average breadth; its highest point, the ancient Mons Coryncus, reaching 2,560 feet above the level of the sea; two other summits marked on the chain attain respectively 2,430 feet and 807 feet. Grabusa and Agria Grabusa are two bold and barren islets lying close off it, but with passages between them and the promontory.\*

**GRABUSA** islet, 450 feet high, is surrounded by precipices and surmounted by a fortress, built by the Venetians, to prevent its becoming

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\* See Charts:—Grecian Archipelago, No. 2,836, scale,  $m = 0.15$  of an inch; and Candia or Crete, western portion, No. 2,536a, scale,  $m = 0.5$  of an inch.

the stronghold of pirates at the threshold of the Cretan seas, when Crete was in possession of Venice; and although it was subsequently inhabited by several Turkish families, besides its garrison, it has now only a few soldiers and artillerymen, as a garrison or guard over state prisoners, and three or four useless guns.

Grabusa attained some celebrity in the late war of Greek independence, in which the Cretan Greeks took a long and energetic part against the Turks; and after being taken from them, by a treacherous surprise over its garrison of three Turks, who then held charge of the stronghold, it was for some time subsequently retained by the Greek and Cretan patriots and pirates, and eventually by the British. It was during its occupation by the pirates, on the 31st of January 1828, that H.M.S. *Cambrian*, by an accident in missing stays, was wrecked upon the reef off the south side of the islet.

The harbour is formed between a small peninsula called Tigani (Fryingpan), lying to the south of Grabusa, and a long ledge of rocks, partly awash, extending towards it from the south-west end of Grabusa like an artificial mole, but with a passage between its extremity and the Tigani peninsula. The bottom is composed of a thin layer of sand over rock, and therefore affords no secure hold nor safe shelter during violent gales from the west, unless a chain is made fast to the western reef. It is therefore not recommended as an anchorage in south-westerly gales. The best shelter is with the south-east point of Grabusa on with the centre of Agria Grabusa, and between the former and a black rock lying on the east side of the harbour.\*

**DIRECTIONS.**—The safest channel to enter Grabusa harbour is the north-eastern, taking care, however, to give the south-east point of the island, a berth of more than a cable to clear a shoal lying off it. In a northerly gale during winter it might be more convenient for a vessel caught near this entrance of the archipelago to run for this harbour, so as to be ready to take advantage of any change of wind or weather, in preference to lying to, and being drifted to leeward of Candia. The passage between Agria Grabusa and Cape Busa, the north-west extreme of Candia, is 4 cables wide, but the navigable channel is reduced to about half this breadth by a reef extending from the south end of Agria Grabusa.

**KISAMO.**—The entrance to the deep bay of Kisamo is formed between Agria Grabusa and Cape Spada, which bears from it E. by N., distant 8 miles. The bay is more than 8 miles deep, and at its head is a

\* See Plan 1.—Grabusa Harbour, No. 217, scale,  $m = 2.5$  inches.

narrow marshy plain with a sandy shore, that in ancient times was part of the head of the bay, behind which rise gentle ridges well cultivated with vineyards and olives, and containing several villages.

A dilapidated Venetian fortress stands at the head of this bay, upon the site of the ancient town of Kísamo, and just over an old sea cliff, with a poor village and bazaar adjacent to it. The ancient mole that formed the old port of Kísamo is now visible to a height of nearly 20 feet above the sea, owing to a subsequent elevation of the coast, and the harbour is consequently almost dry and choked with sand. A ledge of low sea-washed rocks to the west of it juts out to a point and divides the head of the bay of Kísamo from the valley and bay of Mesogia.

**CAUTION.**—Being quite open to the north, the bays of Kísamo and Mesogia are not to be recommended as anchorages for sailing vessels, the bottom being generally sandy and having no good hold. Should a vessel, however, be unfortunately embayed and hampered between the promontories of Grabusa and Spada during a gale from the northward, she should run towards the south-east angle of the bay and anchor, in not less than 17 fathoms water, off Tranisa point, where the bottom is muddy and more tenacious than elsewhere.

A well found vessel, with the usual precautions of sufficient cable out and masts made snug, would here ride out an ordinary gale with safety. An English brig did so a few years since, and was saved from shipwreck in consequence.

Native coasting craft find shelter in a small indentation of the shore on the west side of the bay, about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles southward of Cape Busa, called Agios or Ayos Sostís, from a chapel existing there to this Greek saint; the water is, however, too deep for anchoring off it, and to obtain shelter, it is necessary to have the stern secured to the north shore.\*

Water may be obtained at the mouth of all the valleys, and a small supply of provisions from the adjacent villages.

**CAPE SPADA**, the most northern cape of Candia, is easily recognized by a small conical hillock like a tumulus, which stands over its high and bluff extremity, the summit of which is 1,200 feet above the sea.

This remarkable promontory, projecting northward 11 miles beyond the usual line of the coast, has an average breadth of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles. The land is generally about 1,800 feet high, but the ancient Mons Tityrus rises near the centre of the promontory to a height of 2,500 feet above the sea. The shape of this tongue of land is not unlike the blade of a sword,

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\* See Agios Sostís bay, on plan of Grabusa, No. 217.