Eleftherias Square, Heraklion, beginning of the 20th century with the first Archaeological Museum at the center and the monastery of St Francis on the right.

The Heraklion Archaeological Museum was founded at the turn of the 20th century to house the first Cretan Antiquities Collection. It was rebuilt in the 1930s to plans by architect P. Karantinos and met acclaim as a groundbreaking example of modernist architecture. Extensive restoration work began in 2001 and was completed in 2014.

The exhibition is laid out in 27 rooms on the ground and first floors, displaying archaeological finds from Neolithic to Roman times (6th millennium BC - 3rd cent. AD). The Heraklion Archaeological Museum, however, is world famous for the masterpieces of Minoan art comprising its Prehistoric Collection.

In the Museum garden are preserved the architectural remains of the Venetian monastery of St Francis.

Working hours
April 1st to October 31st      : 8.00 – 20.00
November 1st to March 31st    : 8.00 - 15.00

Archaeological Museum of Heraklion
Xanthoudidou 2, 71202 Heraklion
Tel. 2810 / 279086 - 279145 - 279000,
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The new exhibition

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In Room III are presented aspects of life, economy and administration at the foundation of the first palaces of Knossos, Phaistos and Malia (1600-1570 BC). In pride of place are clay vessels from the polychrome Kamares Ware, the most representative example being the "royal dinner service" of Phaistos. Rooms IV and V highlight the consolidation of the palatial system with the construction of the new palaces and refits (1570-1450 BC), together with the development of maritime trade. One of the most important exhibits, the Phaistos Disc, is the earliest known example of a Minoan text, probably of a religious nature.

Room VI is dedicated to daily life, sports and spectacles in general. Famous works, such as the ivory bull-leaper figurine and the Bull-leaping Fresco from the palace of Knossos, the Malia bowl and the stone rhyton from Hagia Triada, reflect the tastes of Minoan society.

In Room VII and VIII, Minoan religion comes to the fore. Figurines and ritual vessels from peak sanctuaries, the bull’s-head rhyton, the famous “Snake Goddess” from the Temple Repositories at the palace of Knossos, the stone ritual vessels from the palace of Zakros and the gold signet rings with epiphany scenes, all make up the cycle of worship.

Room IX presents the first phase of use of the palaces of Knossos (1450-1350 BC) together with finds from the local cemeteries and Kamiros Phaistos, dating from 1500 until 1300 BC. A special place is accorded to the city-tablules with Mycenaean Linear B script, which provide information on the palatial administration and economy. Finds from the tombs of the illustrious dead in the cemeteries of Knossos, Anchialos and Phaistos, mainly from the Final Palace phase, are also displayed in the adjoining Room X, while Room XI houses finds from settlements, sanctuaries and cemeteries of the period following the collapse of the palatial system. Of particular interest are the large clay figurines of goddesses with sprawled arms from Karona Gorti and Gazi.

Room XVII showcases the evolution of Cretan coinage. The tour of the first floor concludes with the cemeteries of the Helladic and Roman periods. In Room XVII, burial offerings from the cemeteries of Knossos and Heraklion, together with the unique bronzes funerary statuette from Leonpse, make up the landscape of death in those times.

Returning to the ground floor, visitors can tour Rooms XVII and XXVIII, housing the Sculpture Collection. A series of architectural reliefs from Gortyn, the temple of Prinias highlight the contribution of Crete to the development of Greek monumental sculpture, while Roman portraits and copies of known Greek statues are exhibited. Classical antiques reveal the flourishing of art during the Roman period.