



Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:
 Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:



Excursion to the Arkoudiótissa-Cave (“Bear’s den”) and Monastery Gouvernéto at the peninsula Akrotiri



Coming from *Chania* [Χανιά] follow the signs towards the airport (*Chania Souda* [Χανιά Σούδα] which is located at the peninsula *Akrotiri* [Ακρωτήρι]. From the airport further on via *Marathi* [Μαράθι] towards *Koumares* [Κουμαρές]. At approx have the way is the Monastery *Agia Triada* [Μονή Αγίας Τριάδες των Τζαγκαρόλων], which is worth a halt in between. From here it is around 3 more miles to the Monastery *Gouvernéto* [Μονή Κυρίας των Αγγέλων Αγίου Ιωάννου Εριμήτου Γουβερ].

Pictures are showing the Monastery from the 17th century, built in Venetian Renaissance style and the oldest monk of *Agia Triada* during his “afternoon-nap”. **Photos: H. Eikamp (11.07.2003)**

Monastery *Gouvernéto* was built by monks of the Monastery *Katholikó*¹, whose ruins are located further north close to the coast at the ground of a canyon. They built their "new" monastery *Gouvernetó* (in *Katholikó* they were constantly suffering under pirate attacks) as a fortress on a level country with a free view in all directions. Within the thick walls of the monastery, in the middle of the court, the façade of the Church fascinated. A small monastery museum includes some centuries old icons. Patroness of the monastery is the mother of God *Glikofilóússa* ("sweet kissing"). There are also two chapels; within the convent walls; one is dedicated to the "Holy of Ioannis", the second is dedicated to “the holy ten”. Openings are daily, expect noon between 12:00 – 15:00.



Note: Please note that when you visit the monastery, (like everywhere in Crete) shoulders and legs are "covered". "Missing clothing" (cape) can be get as a loan at the entrance of the monastery.



Pictures are showing (from left to right): The fortification of the monastery of *Gouvernéto*, the church façade in the courtyard which acts curious and strange with its half-columns, monster heads and scene medallions and the left side of the inner courtyard; stairs direct upstairs to the monk cells from every side of the court.

Photos: U. Kluge (11.07.2003)

The “Bear’s den” (*Arkoudiótissa-Cave*) can be reached from Monastery *Gouvernéto* by following the canyon course towards the sea at a bumpy paved stairway. After approx 20 minutes walk you reach the ruins of an old building complex on the right side where the entrance of the cave is right behind. A small chapel from the 16th Century is hewn in the stone of the grotto entrance. In the middle of the cave is a bulky stalagmite where, with "lots of fantasy", you can see the shape of a bear. In ancient times the cave was dedicated to the goddess *Artemis*, who supposedly has formed the "striking" bear sculpture. During Christian times *Panagia* (Virgin Mary) has been adored here.

Note: Walking distance (outward and return about 1 hour) is “arduous” during the summer months, since only little shadow locations exist. Entrainment of sufficient water reserve is necessary.



The pictures are showing (above from left to right); Ruins of an old building "block" the direct view to the cave entrance where the little chapel seems "to buckle under the load of rock threatens"; right the cave entrance seen from inside.

The below picture row (from left to right): dripstone pillars inside the grotto, which ceiling is soot-blackened. The chapel bell hangs inside the cave at a sinter pillar where “altar steps” which have been beaten in to place icons. Right the “Bear sculpture” where steps to a “gallery” have been placed on its left side. **Photos: H. Eikamp (2003)**

¹The ruins of monastery *Katholikó* can be reached in another 20 minutes walk from the “Bear’s den” by following the with stones paved stairway down to the canyon ground. Short before you reach its end is left the “Cave of eremite John” who lived here as eremite within the 10th Century. The cave is about 150 metres long and up to 20 metres high. Another leaflet will inform more about this cave.

