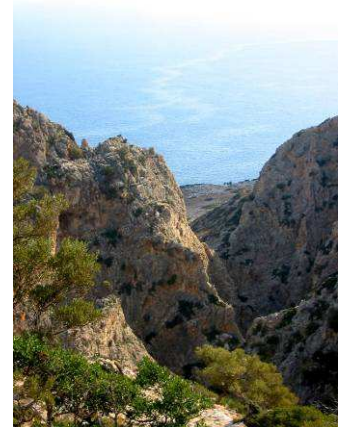




Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

Excursion to the cave at *Gouvernéto* (Cave of the Eremite John) and the monastery ruins of *Katholikó* / Akrotíri peninsula

With reference to our leaflet [No. 038-04/E](#) of CRETE environment info and the given directions there (to and from Monastery *Gouvernéto* to the “*Bear’s den*”) follow from here the natural stone paved way and climb down to the Canyon ground, which takes about 20 minutes. Short before you reach the ruins of Monastery *Katholikó* (via the steep built stairs), the cave of the eremite John, who should have lived here during the 11th Century, is located left sides of the stairs. Based on the legend he was, in regard to his numerous deprivations of asceticism, very kyphotic and due to his life in the cave he mostly crawl on all fours (wrapped in pelt against the cold), a hunter held him for a wild animal and shot at the eremite. In the cave he then allegedly succumbed his gunshot wounds.



View to the “Pirates bay” and the canyon from the mountain trail.

Picture: U. Kluge (2004)

The "Cave of Saint John the eremite" is probably the bed of a former cave-river of approx. 120 metres length and 1.500 sq. m area. The paths include approx 300 metres. Up to 20 metres high dripstone pillars with stalagmites and stalactites form walls, through which the cave system is divided into chambers.



Picture left shows the cave entrance from outside (top) and inside (bottom). Dripstone pillars and –basins of impressive size and beauty are situated in the particular cave chambers, which vary significant in size.

Pictures: H. Eikamp (2004)

Also the ruins of the abandoned Monastery *Katholikó* come from 11th Century and considered as the oldest of the island. The Church of the monastery is built into the rocks of the Canyon and a stone bridge connects both sides of the Gorge. On the 7th of October the "feast of St. John" is celebrated here; the bridge than provides barely enough room for all the faithful, who take the strenuous pilgrimage. Pirates plundered the monastery in the 17th Century, whereupon the monks fled uphill and built their "new" Monastery *Gouverneto* (a fortress on the mountain plateau); therefore see our leaflet [No. 038-04/E](#).

From the ground of the canyon (which is available next to the bridge along a steep path) you can walk down through the river bed to the sea to the "Pirate Bay" (with a small natural harbour – approx 15 minutes single way). The way back to Monastery *Gouverneto* (uphill, usually without cooling winds from the sea and barley little shade places) is troublesome and should not be underestimated; slip-proofed footwear, sufficient water and regular pause are essential. According to condition takes the return 1-1.5 hours.



The pictures of the upper row show (from left to right) the entrance to the Monastery, the fountain with bell in the upper yard and the stone bridge across the gorge with buildings (which are all empty and accessible). The lower series the facade of the chapel built in the rocks and a look at the Interior (the Chapel is usually locked, and visible only through a broken window). Picture right shows the access area in view of the court, in the background the steep stairway towards *Gouverneto*, which leads after the second bend on a natural stone path.

Pictures: U. Kluge (2004)