

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

## Excursion to Omalos-Plateau (Polje<sup>1</sup>) / Lefká Óri

<sup>1</sup> **Poljes** are almost “table plan” forms of karst landscapes, multiple square kilometre big plateaus, enclosed by mountains on all sides with more or less round to oval form. Conspicuous are the sharp discharged edges of the plan plateau where the fertile ground abruptly moves in rocky slopes of the surrounding mountains. The largest poljes of Crete are the *Lassithi* plateau (approximately 800 metres high), the *Omalos* plateau (approximately 1000 m high), the *Nida* high plateau (approx. 1400 m high) and the *Askifou* plateau (approx. 750 m high). Besides these there are a lot more, smaller plateaus in Crete.

The approximately 25 sq. km large *Omalos* plateau is over 1000 metres high in a caldera between the Western peaks of the White Mountains (*Lefká Óri*). To be reached from Chania via southbound (37 km) at well signposted roads. Apart from the north access, there is also a newly paved and broad street, which leads west from the Omalos plateau and connects to the North-South connection Chania - Sougia. The paved road through the plateau directs to the Canyon access of Samaria Gorge, approximately 1.5 miles in the south. From here you have a wonderful view into the Gorge and the 2080 m high, stark Gíngilos. From here hiking paths lead to the peaks of Gíngilos and Páchnes (3 to 4 hr. one way, the ascent of Páchnes is advisable only as "guided tour"). Omalos itself is not a real village, but a collection of building spread over the whole plateau. It is possible to drive around the entire plateau on a gravel runway which is already partly paved.

The accruing water after the thaw accrues to a lake which slowly drains off by so-called Ponore, “Sip holes” on the deepest point. During thousands of years the sediments carried along with the water formed the fertile soil of the plateau; best conditions for agriculture.



View into the Omalos-Plateau from the North entrance (left) and from the new, west entrance (right)

**Pictures:** U. Kluge (2004)





The figure left shows troughs of smaller sinkholes, often seen within the plain. The figure right shows a Ponor (SIP hole) in one of the deepest places in the Omalos plateau. If SIP holes are clogged, it temporarily forms a lake. Result is the characteristic flat erosion area of Poljes in the lime with a thin but fruitful loam cover (see bank).



The figure left shows a well (cistern); with a "residual mountain" in its background. These limestone rock formations protrude out as weathering remains at some points from the plateau. To what extent the strong solution detritus was a consequence of warmer climate before the Ice Age, is currently disputed between professionals. Much indicates that the Polje formation began considerably more than 2 million years ago, because tropical climate with high precipitation and temperatures greatly favours solving limestone and the formation of karst forms. The figure right shows an "ancient" building still used today as dwelling; only the "new" chimney (buried by a tree) indicates the "modernisation". **Pictures: H. Eikamp (2004)**

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*Translated by Michael Bloechinger-Daeumling*

At this point tips about properties, accommodation und food in *Chania* and *Gouves*.

**Ktimatoemporiki Kritis**

Property agency, in Chania, offers not only real estate of any kind but is endeavours to find the right solution and the right real estate for their customers.

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