

**Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:**  
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:**Hidden in olive groves – the ancient Górtis (Gortyn, Gortina)**

You reach the excavation at Górtis from the main road Iraklion about 30 miles south-westerly, towards Ágii Déka. One of the most important archaeological sites of Crete is located about 1 mile after the village. Although settled since Neolithic times, it only gained its height from 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC. Among the Romans (65 BC) it became the capital of the "Roman Crete". It preserved its position also during the Byzantine period and was partially destroyed later by earthquakes and the Arabs in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Century. From the 10<sup>th</sup> Century Górtis is deemed to be an "abandoned city".

The main excavation site is fenced and entrance fee is to be paid. Just to the left of the entrance are the remains of the Basilica of Saint Titus, the first bishop of the island. He was also the recipient of Paul's "Titus letter". His skull is now preserved as a relic in the him consecrated Ágios-Titos Church in Iraklion.



Fig. left shows the ruins of the three-aisled Ágios Tito's Basilica; the cross-dome is from 6<sup>th</sup> Century and was built in the place where once stood the Church of St. Titus (Ágios Titos). Tito, a disciple of Paul, began from here the conversion of the island Crete. Fig. right shows a new excavation point east of the Basilica. **Pictures:** U. Kluge (2004)

The Roman Odeon lies north of the Basilica, where the ancient Greek legal texts carved in stone blocks are kept. The inscriptions (now deciphered) are written in an ancient Doric dialect and run from left to right, in the following row than from right to left, whereas every 2<sup>nd</sup> row was engraved in mirror writing. A bit more northern, left behind the Odeon, is a large old plane tree under there Zeus allegedly fathered Minos with Europe.

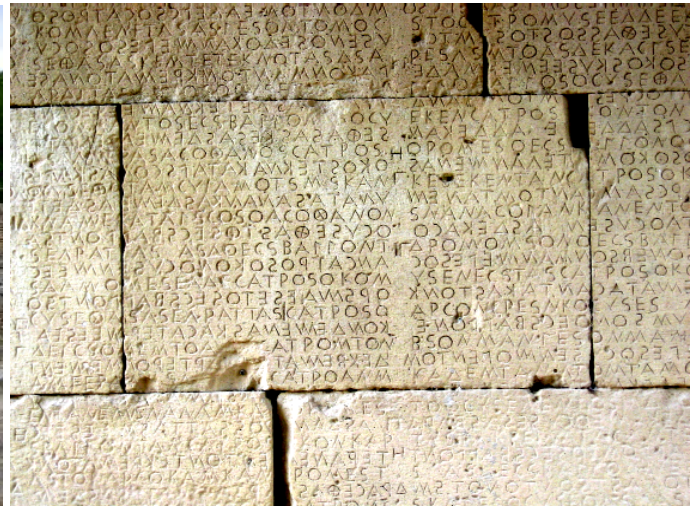


Fig. left shows the Odeon, the theatre of the later Roman Górtis from 1<sup>st</sup> Century; here impressed especially the well-preserved marble floor. Fig. right show part of stone blocks with the legal inscriptions, where the entire justice system, including rules of civil law, are laid down and allows you an insight into the social system of that time. **Pictures:** U. Kluge (2004)

You be informed best about the relatively extensive excavation site by a guide which can be purchased at a kiosk at the entrance; a plan therein lists a "tour", which controls all other attractions, e.g. the "Temple of Apollon Pythios", the "Roman praetorium", the "Shrine of the Egyptian Goddess Isis and Serapis", the "Thermae" and much more. Close to the kiosks is also a small museum, where in addition to an excavation documentation are also statues, (see figure right) issued which are found in Górtis.



Opposite from the fenced excavation area (across the street), Italian archaeologists currently dig up in the olive groves the ancient Metropolis. This area is home to many, not excavated remains of the ancient Górtis.

HOMER lists Górtis as one of the famous 100 Cities. PLATON vaunts within his "laws" the might, wealth and legislation of the city.

On the western edge of the ruined city is the dried up in summer river Mitropolianós, a tributary of the Geropotamos. In his Canyon is a spring horizon which once might has secured water for the settlement. The area is tectonically characterised by a great fault running East West. It contains the risk of earthquakes and runs right through the Odeon.

