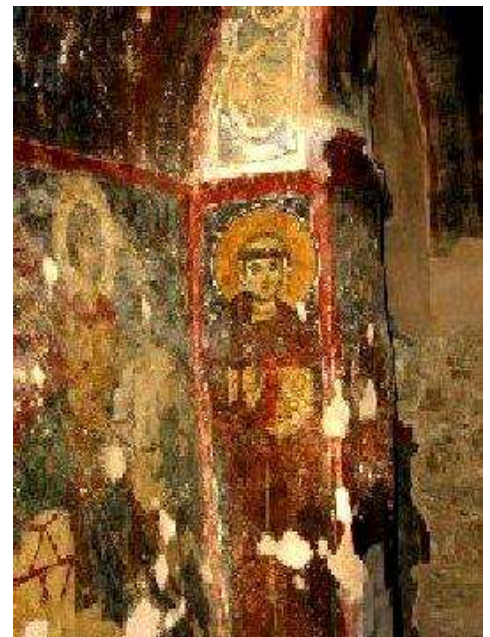


**Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:**  
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

## Kritsá: Church Pánagia i Kerá

### Hiking through the Kritsá-Gorge

**Kritsá** is located about 7.5 miles south-west of **Agios Nikólaos**. Short before the village, right of the street (and well signposted) is one of the big clerical places of interest of the island Crete: the Church **Pánagia I Kerá**. The over 600 years old Byzantine Church (Chapel) is full of architectural sophistication. The Church has three naves, gradually resulting in three centuries; the middle is the oldest. The Church seems broad and stocky by the oblique retaining walls on the sides. But the real attraction is the inner life: the many Byzantine frescos - a "brightly painted image Guide" of the 13<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> Century. A sightseeing costs 3 € (probably the only church in Crete) - and photographing is strictly prohibited! Opening hours: Monday – Saturday: 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., Sunday: until 2:00 p.m. So as not to stand at locked doors, you should again check the Opening hours with the tourist information in Agios of Nikolaos in advance; this applies in particular for the winter months.



Pictures are showing the three-aisled Church (left) with the "main entrance"; the fresco image (right) is located in the South nave. Almost all frescos are severely damaged by the "tooth of time". Their complete destruction is foreseeable, if a good restoration team do not performed their craft as soon as possible.

**Pictures:** H. Eikamp (5/2003)

You get to the **Kritsá-Gorge**, by entering after the village entrance of **Kritsá** the right signposted road to **Láto**<sup>1)</sup> (~ 2.5 miles)

<sup>1)</sup> **Láto**: remains of an ancient, Dorian settlement (City). In contrast to the unfortified palaces of the Minoans **Láto** was a proper mountain fortress with meters thick walls. Admission to visit this archaeological site is € 4; but it is closed during the winter months.

On the road towards **Láto** you cross after about 500 metres a bridge, which leads over a riverbed, which steps out of the left located Canyon walls. At this point is probably the best access (over the river bed) to the Gorge hike which requires approximately 2.5 hours to the end point in the village **Trápes**. Alternatively you can start the approximately 4.4 mile long walk (one way) also about a path right behind the bridge left. After about 400 meters on the path (in a right bend) you then have to go left into the riverbed. The height difference is about 280 m; you should schedule a bit more than 1.5 hours for back way, if you do not take the Bus **Trápes – Agios Nikólaos** (daily at 2:30 p.m.).

The Canyon ground in the riverbed is cluttered with rocks and boulders, sometimes even hands and feet must be used for smaller climbs. Also fences seem to block the way in multiple places; but there are always gates to open (sometimes with a small detour) so the hike can be continued. After about 1 hour of hiking the Canyon walls come closer together for almost 1.4 miles and the Gorge bifurcates. Here take the right path, following a fence. Hereafter the Gorge widens and the terrain is more open. After a 2 hours hike, you can already see the buildings of **Trápes** in the distance. The riverbed branches now. On the right (above of the gravel bed), a trail runs alongside the narrower river bed, which bandies at a ford to the other side and leads on the left up to the destination Trápes.

The walk should not be done "Alone". The "lonely" Gorge is (even during the summer months) less frequented and the it looks bad with quick help if necessary (even Mobil phones have no or less radio reception). Therefore at least "for two", sturdy shoes, and sufficient water! If the riverbed leads water (at the entrance) you should avoided the hike; smooth ground and by water transported and shaped rocks (which are in the Gorge) prove that then there is "No getting through".



The upper series shows the massif of Kritsa with the Gorge (right) and the „entrance to the gorge hike” seen from the bridge (left), here the still dry river bed (12/28/2004). The “field road” is to see in the bottom right of the picture, which leads almost 400 metres in parallel to the river bed. But latest from the yellow arrow marking in the picture the "walk in the riverbed" is essential.

Picture left: small climbs are not always avoided during Gorge walks and smaller "breaks" are recommended!

Yellow blooming clover is not uncommon in December in Crete; almost everywhere where "bare earth" is in summer, it forms "green carpets" in winter.



Pictures: (2) U. Kluge / (1) H. Eikamp (12/2004/04)