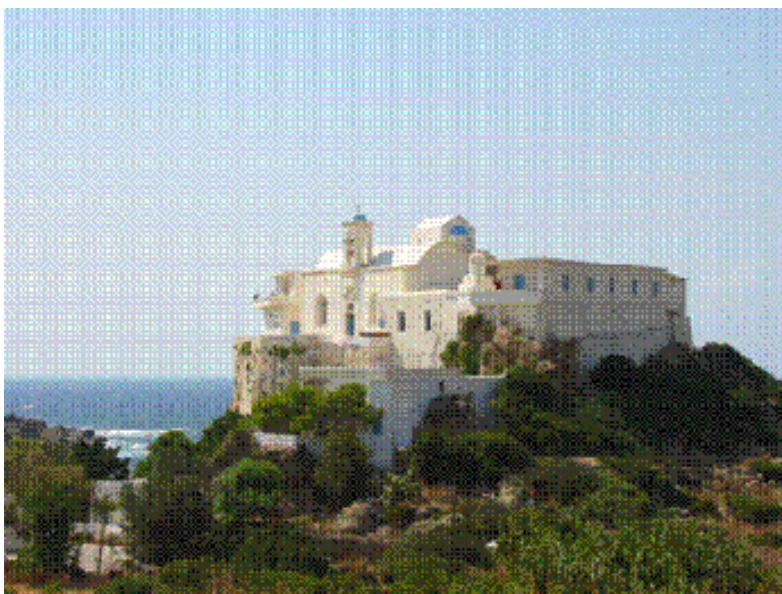


Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

Monastery Chrissoskalitissa / South-west Crete **Firethorn (*Pyracantha*) / Willow-leaved pear (*Pyrus*)**



The Monastery can be reached over the most western North-South-link, from Kastelli in the North-West towards **Elafonisi** in the South-West. To do this, you drive along the West-Coast to **Vathi**. From here follow the right branching side road towards Elafonisi with its on the Caribbean reminding "Dream beach" and the small, same-named, offshore island. Monastery Chrissoskalitissa is about 3.7 miles before Elafonisi on an about 30 m high steep rock, directly on the sea. The monastery was built in the 19th Century and is presumably (according to references) on the remains of an older monastic installation (17th Century) from the Venetian period. The legend says that one of the 99 stairs which lead to the monastery entrance is of pure gold, but only those can realize this stair who are "pure in heart and are without sin". Also the name of the monastery originates from this "golden stair". Today only one monk (NEKTARIOS) and one nun (THEÓDOTI) are living in the monastery.



Especially worth seeing (except the resort itself) is a dark painted Marian icon in the Abbey Church (Chapel). The main feast day is the 15th of August, the great Marian celebration day.

Soldiers of the Allies hide out in the monastery during World War II. After the occupation by the Germans they used the monastery as a prison.

The figure above shows a general view of the monastery. The figure below the sanctuary with Iconostases in the Chapel; in the right part of the image is the nun Theódoti.

Unfortunately, we haven't seen the "Gold stair" during our ascent - but who among us is without sin?!



Firethorn (*Pyracantha coccinea*)

The up to 4 m large shrubs of this genus from the Mediterranean have glossy, evergreen leaves; the up to 2 m wide, bent branches carry trusses of small, white flowers in spring. In cooler regions the narrow, up to 3.5 cm long, leaves take on a darker colour. In autumn the shrub bears fruits. The exceedingly numerous (edible but neutral in taste) berries are bright red, but also yellow or orange.



Pictures: U. Kluge (29.09.2004)

Willow-leaved pear (*Pyrus salicifolia*)

The up to 8 m high, frost-hardy tree with dainty, curving twigs and willow-like leaves is only rarely found on Crete. The long leaves are initially velvety hairy; the small, creamy white flowers in the leaves (almost) bent. The small (not necessarily typical pear-shaped) fruit ripens in autumn, which stain brown after ripeness. The summer- or half-evergreen trees of this genus originated from North Africa and are relatives of the Apple-tree (*Malus*). They are bred since centuries and were cultivated in many variations (var. *culta*).

Pictures: U. Kluge / H. Eikamp (2004)

