



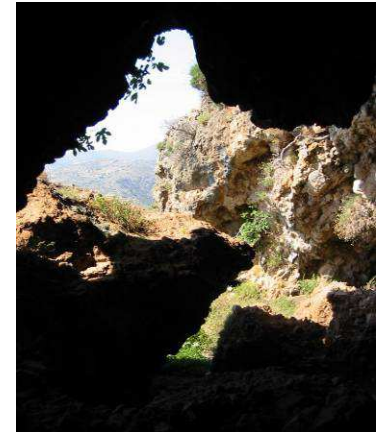
**Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:**

**Karst cave at Plaka and  
Monastery Aretiou / Mirabellou, North Crete**



Directions: from *Agio Nikolaos* drive northward (along the coast) to *Elounda*. From there go ahead towards *Plaka* (on this section is our first designation: the karst cave) to *Vrouhas*. In *Vrouhas* then drive westward (via *Selles* and *Skinias*) to *Valtos*. Short after *Valtos* you will reach a road crossing (which leads “straight out” to *Finokalia*), at which you turn left (again southward) towards *Karidi* (our second designation: *Monastery Aretiou*); from there you can select the way back via *Dories*, *Sirmeso* to *Kastelli* or *Fourni*, from where you meet, at the level of *Neapoli*, the National Road towards *Agio Nikolaos*.

The karst cave at *Plaka* is already on view from *Elounda*, in the mountain along the coastal road, which leads in serpentines uphill towards *Plaka*. Short before *Plaka* – at the level of the island *Spinalonga* - the karst cave is located on the left of the road in the mountain-slope. The slope is relatively steeply and hardly accessible due to its scrub-like vegetation with enclosed coarse gravel. Underneath the cave is a steep rock slope (approx. 3.5 m), which needs to be bypassed to reach the cave; the entrance into the cave is possible only from the side. The cave has an expansion of approximately 30 x 10 m and a ceiling height of 4 m. It exists only of one room, without alongside drifts. For speleologist the cave is less spectacular; nevertheless an access is worthwhile itself: from here you have a wonderful view on the sea and a really unsurpassable view on the “leprosy island” and the northern tip of *Spinalonga*.



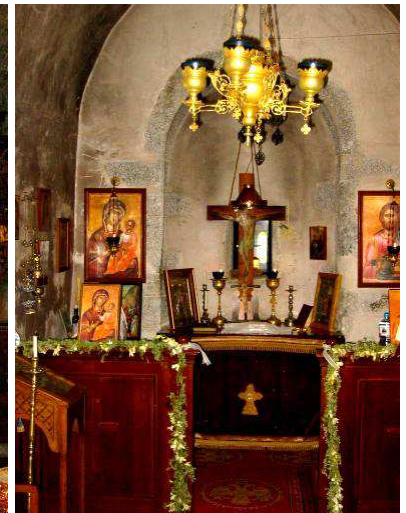
The images above show (from left to right) the ascent range from the road. Underneath the secondary cave (left picture, left upper picture margin) is about a 3.5 m, nearly perpendicular, smooth rock slope (see in addition also the centre picture), which must be bypassed in order to arrive from the side (best from right) to the cave. It is designed as horizontal cave and shows signs of a space purge (caution; falling rocks possible!). From the cave entrance you have a beautiful view over the coast and on *Spinalonga* (right) and from the cave courtyard on the sea and the “leprosy island” in front of *Spinalonga* (picture left). Due to the rough terrain you should arrange about 1 hour for the approx. 600 m distance. “Slip fields” in the slope, with loose, sharp-edged rubble should not be crossed but bypassed.



Monastery Aretiou at Karidi originates from the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and ranked at present of the Turkish occupation of Crete to

## I. Μονή Αρετίου Aretiou Monastery

the most important monasteries of the province. Wine cellars and oil mills belong to the monastery. It has been restored just in the past years and is today a worth seeing and well maintained facility, in which a signposted tour (past the monk cells) leads around the monastic church *Agia Triada* (holy trinity). The monastery is managed by three nuns and a monk; the nuns live outside of the monastery. In the inner court of the monastery, right of the church is a small worth seeing chapel; from the accessible roof of an outbuilding one has a good view of a opposite lying mountain-slope, where old, probably antique building ruins are located. If they are related with the monastery, is to clarify by planned, later excavations



Images show from top to bottom: The new established buildings at the monastery entrance, which reflect the old appearance in their architectural form and are adapted to the harmony of the environment. Around 1600 the “controller” MARCUS PAPADOPOULOS, an inhabitant from *Fourni*, donated 40 “Mouzorin” (a unit of this time), in order to support the 12 nuns at that time of the monastery. 1821 the monastery was lit by the Turks and the bishop “YOAKIM” was killed. A view at the monk cells in the monastic yard shows the successful re-establishment, like also the total view of the monastery (from the south). The pictures show the monastery chapel and the church of the holy trinity; besides the respective altar views, centre: the church *Agia Triada* and on the right the chapel. The picture on the left show

ruin remainders on the slope, east opposite the monastery; they probably belong to the old monastery plant.

**Pictures:** (5) U. Kluge / (6) H. Eikamp (05/2005)

