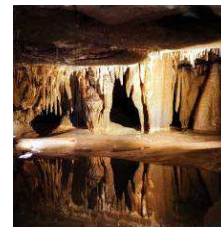




Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

Agia Foteini Cave

Cave church near Avdou, Prefecture Iraklion



Directions: The *Foteini cave* is located about 4.5 km south east of *Iraklion* and is to be reached from the village *Avdou* (within the “Lagada” well). Therefore you drive best from *Iraklion* on the National Road towards east until *Chersonissos* and then south towards the *Lassithi Plateau* (and *Avdou*). There are about 39 km between *Iraklion* and *Avdou*. In *Avdou* (about in the centre of the village) assigns a signpost on the right to the *Ag. Foteini cave*. The about 6.7 km long distance leads, starting from *Avdou* up to the destination across a gravel road, which goes in serpentine constantly uphill. A 4-wheel vehicle is here recommendable, in particular, the runway (the more highly you come into the mountains) becomes more badly, more steeply and above all closer; in the last third meeting vehicles can hardly pass. At this section of the “road” is only one widened place, which could be usable as “passage”.



Starting from the branch in *Avdou* (sign) drive the runway for about 600 m up to a fork, which you follow turning left (uphill). After about another 1.4 km you reach a “equestrian farm” (on the right of the runway); far straight ahead, you come after approximately 1.3 km to a another fork, which you follow right turning for further 300 m (up to gates crossing the runway). If the gate is “locked” - the drive is over; an indication that the last distance section is not passable at present and the last 3 km

must be mastered by “foot”. If the gate is “open” the travel by car can continue. After about 500 m you reach the “passage” and after further 2.6 km the destination, the ascent to the cave, which begins on the left of the runway at a “building” and is signposted. The ascent takes place over approx. 200 “stairway steps” with a difference in height of about 250 m and ends on a plateau, the forecourt of the cave.



The village *Avdou* has approximately 600 inhabitants and is mentioned already in a Venetian document from the year 1381. [Further information about Avdou can be found at www.avdou.com, here you will also find a link to “AVDOU VILLAS MARIS HOTELS” where you can find the above picture of the cave (which we didn’t see that way)]

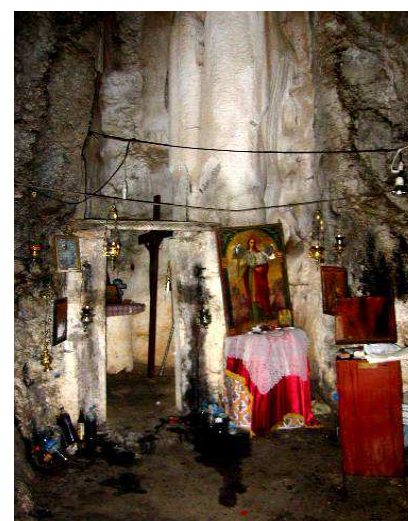
The cave church in the *Foteini cave* is sacred to the “holy Fotinis”; however, according to archaeological finds, the history of the cave goes back to up to the Neolithic age. Furthermore cult articles from the Minoan time point to the use as “adoration cave”. Starting from the Byzantine time (and also later, probably into the modern times) it is considered as a kind “place of pilgrimage”.

Today the cave entrance is secured with a metal lattice gate, but always open! The church-bell stands on the cave forecourt. The entrance is very narrow (only for a person) and leads between stalagmites and stalactites across “stairs” and in the course of the centuries brightly stepped rocks about 50 meters into the mountain. It ends in a relatively large hall, where a nearly snow-white sinter column dominates. Here also is the church part with the “sanctuary”. Branching cave courses and - lugs are accessible only over climbing portions with appropriate equipment. Shallow water-puddles in side rooms are pretty often and point to few existing water-roll. The narrow central aisle (to the church) is accompanied by electrical lamps (which however because of the humidity do not probably function) and candles. In the light of the burning candles cave and church appear (eerie) awe-inspiring and are probably the ideal setting for a worship.

Next page of this info leaflet shows some impressions of these excursion held in pictures; unfortunately they cannot show the atmosphere, as you find “locally”. Only you can collect lasting impressions. Therefore our recommendation for a visit of the **Agia Foteini Cave**.



Images showing (from left to right): view at Avdou seen from cave forecourt, the cave entrance and the entrance area.



Across brightly stepped rock the cave course leads across stairway into the “sanctuary” in front of a calc-sinter “curtain”.



Picture left: the upper half of the dominating, white sinter-column in the “sanctuary area”. Centre picture shows a holy water font, approximately in the center of the area of the cave church. It is fed (also) by dripping water from the cave ceiling. Already during the “old” Greek times, containers with consecrated water were situated at the entrance of holy areas; the right picture shows the “cave exit” from the inside

Pictures: (4) U. Kluge / (7) H. Eikamp (05/2005)