

**Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:**
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:**The (ancient) hilltop town *Polirinia*, Prefecture Chania
- with a fantastic view over Kissamos bay**An article from our NLUK members *Diana P. Bailey* & *Maria Eleftheria*, Agios Nektarios

From the tranquil port town *Kissamos*, on the North-West of Crete, a well signed winding asphalt road leads south into the mountains 3.7 miles to the village *Polirinia*. Up here at almost 400 metres above sea, the view is breathtaking. Maybe the wide view over the Kissamos bay was the reason that colonists in the 6th Century BC settled here at this elevation which is also strategically located between ports *Falassarna* (see also our leaflet [104-05/E – The ancient Falassarna](#)) and *Kastelli* (Kissamos).

It accrued a village with a fortress where their buildings were easily integrated into the natural rock formations.

The name *Polirinia* means “many sheep’s”, but the inhabitants of the village were quite willing to war, and not just simple, peace-loving shepherds. The village was in constant competition and hostility with the neighbouring *Kydonia* (*Chania*). Many coins shaped in *Polirinia* bear the image of the goddess Athena in war shape with spear and helmet. Together with the goddess Artemis, she should have been the protector of the village. When the Romans began to conquer Crete the village joined them and fought alongside them against *Kydonia* that was drubbed. So *Polirinia* prospered during the Roman occupation. From the 3rd Century information about *Polirinia* dried up, until the 10th Century where it is mentioned again as important Byzantine town. Meanwhile there are only few spoors of this bygone time. Only a few walls and Temple ruins are left of the ancient town.



Visible are usually remains of the second Byzantine period (**fig** left foreside). Only a few foundations from churches and houses and inscriptions have survived from earlier periods of history. The pits and caves on the way to the hill are graves from the Roman period. On top of the Hill you can see aqueducts hewn in the rocks.

Above the village, on the way to the fortress are the ruins of the Church of the ninety-nine fathers (therefore see also the leaflet at our homepage "Cave of the 99 holy fathers": Souré-Cave at [http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter_en/124-05E.pdf]). This was built on the foundations of a temple from the 4th Century BC. Its walls contain remains of ancient buildings and ancient tablets (**fig** right foreside).

The "new" village located slightly below the ruins is also worth seeing. Many houses have been carefully restored and many stone fragments from earlier times were also used when building a House. It is a pleasure to stroll through the winding streets, with a smile about this Cretan "recycling".

Below the Central village square is the ruins of a mill (**fig** left) and stairs lead to behind cave church (**fig** right).



The fact that most of the room was beaten out of the rock face, gives a very own atmosphere to the Church (**fig.** below)



The earlier washing area of the village is located a bit behind the Church, which unfortunately was modernized very rudely with concrete; nevertheless, the old stone troughs with their Roman inscriptions are still to admire at the roadside.