

**Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:**  
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:**Monastery of Agkarathos**  
(probably founded 1000 years ago!)

The monastery is located about 15 miles south of Iraklion on a tor between the villages Sgourokefali and Sampas. You get there when taking the route Iraklion – Amnisos – Episkopi to Sgourokefali. About in the middle of the village (village square) follow the sign towards Kastelli. Approx one mile behind Sgourokefali than turn left towards the Monastery of Agkarathos (signposted with 1 km [~ 0.6 miles]; measured 1.5 km [~ 0.9 miles])



Agkarathos is a very old monastery, which existed already in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. It is not impossible that it was already founded during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Byzantine time, however it cannot be documented. Initial it was a small monastery, which belonged to the large Cretan family *Kallergis*. The first known abbot of the monastery was *Niphon Notaras*.

Starting from the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century fortification work began and it developed to a defence monastery. Until today many parts of the former fortification have survived, including the two gates, the dome-covered buildings of the old stables among other things more.



Main entrance of the monastery (**left**), the southern side entrance with remains of the old fortification (**right**)

The first Cretan abbot of the monastery was *Maximos Loukaris*, who took over the leadership in 1619. The leadership by *Loukaris* come to fruition and made the monastery one for the richest on Crete. In 1637 about 60 monks lived in the monastery.

The situation and the wealth of the monastery created the conditions for the fact that it could have an important role to the Cretan orthodoxy. Today it is considered that the monastery was also an important education places during the Venetian reign, were young pupils, clerics and laymen have been taught as well as handwriting was copied. The last abbot during the Venetian reign was *Meletios Kallonas* and come from Kythira.

The conquest of Crete by the Turks brought many problems to the monastery. It probably would have been destroyed if the first Metropolitan of Crete, *Neofytos Patelaros*, would not have intervened. The Turks did not destroy the monastery but forbid repair work.



During the liberation struggle of 1821 the monks were killed by the Turks and the buildings were set on fire. A large part of the monastery was destroyed and remained uninhabited for some years. After 1860, the rule of the Turks had loosened; the monastery accommodated a school for to surrounding villages

1866 the Cretans arose again and the monastery became the headquarters of the important Cretan liberty hero *Antonios Trifytsos*. He monastery church was rebuilt in 1894; the Turk reign ended in 1898. In the last years, in which the monasticism took a very intellectual form, the monastery again became a place of the care of education and culture.



Courtyard with monk booths with old well



The reconditioned church in the monastery inner court



View into the nave (to the altar)



New "wall paintings" in the church dome



Meeting room / dining-room of the monks



Relief within the courtyard