

**Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:****Andartis – Memorial for peace at the Nida plateau  
Excursion with an off-road vehicle from Anogia to Gergeri**An article from our NLUK members *Diana P. Bailey* and *Maria Eleftheria*, Kreta

The Psiloritis-Massif (or Idha Mountains) South-west of *Iráklion* is one of three 2.000 m high mountainous massifs at the Greek Mediterranean island Crete. North like south of the cordillera the villages along the slopes are connected by paths and streets. A continuous with “normal” cars (without four wheel drive) passable traffic connection from the North to the South is only given east and west of the mountainous massif. A quite well constructed and signposted road leads from the village Anogia up to the Nida Plateau (see fig. at title bar).

A worthwhile excursion is to follow the right branch after already 5 miles of the journey towards the area of the *Yakinthia* festivals; therefore see:

[ <http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter/137-06E.pdf> ].

The broad gravel track wriggles gently through the landscape. After about 1 and a half mile I reach a big, old *Mitado*. Short after I reach a fenced, closed area.

During my visitation in autumn 2011 the branches of the tree on the chapel are full with photography's (see fig.). These are leftovers of the installation “the tree of memories” of the artist *Giannis Maniorou*. This is a very idyllic and peaceful place. Huge kermes oaks are at the terrain. Only the ring of the bells of the goats and sheep gets through to the ear. The amphitheatre with its roundly arranged arena, the seat rows made of rough worked block of stones, everything is harmonious. Existing trees were left and included into the architecture. Information's about current events are available in three languages (German, English and Greek) at the *Yakinthia* web page at: [ <http://yakinthia.com/bindexd.html> ].



Back on the road towards the *Nida* plateau, occurs after about 9 miles on the left the branch towards the *Capella* observatory on *Mt. Skinakas* (therefore see at: [ <http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter/367-12E.pdf> ]). Soon after you can catch first views of the plateau.

The *Nida* plateau is rather sparsely overgrown with grass, scrubby and some trees and is used, as a result of geological conditions (karstify, polje) as grazing ground; therefore see as an example for karstify and polje the leaflet about the *Omalos* plateau at [ <http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter/43-04E.pdf> ].

After approximately 4 miles I reach a tavern with large parking lot. The *Idean* cave (see at: [ <http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter/17-04E.pdf> ]), in where, based on legend, the young god *Zeus*, who grew up to a man with the shepherds of the Idha mountains, conceal himself of his father *Cronus*, is nearby. An old footpath leads up to the grotto. A driveway is getting built; who has a four wheel drive can take the gravel path. On half of the distance the rather inconspicuous, locked little chapel *Analipsi* is located. The *Idean* cave, located in approximately 1.500 m high was used as a cult place over many thousand years. Numerous finds, which are issued in the archaeological museum in Iraklion, confirm this.

The situation of the cave permits a far view into the landscape. The words of antique authors passed through my mind: “The island is ... forested”, reported the geographer *Strabon* of Crete; the philosopher *Platon* describes the way from *Knossos* to the cult place of *Zeus* on the *Idha* as „long, it gives however sufficient places on the way, where you can relax in the shade of the high trees.” The good old times, I think by myself. But from the climatic conditions Crete could be actually also today still another forest island!



Back in the tavern, where also rooms are rented, I enjoy an excellent lamb chop, and make a little conversation after the meal with *Stelios*, the owner. The man with the weather-beaten face skin laughs gladly. He looks amazingly similar to his father, whose larger than life-sized face on a photograph controls beautifully framed a wall of the guest room (see fig.). Obviously proudly the tavern landlord tells about the creation of *Andartis*, a project of the Berliner landscape artist *Karina Raeck*, which began to realize these with support and energetic assistance of the Cretan population at the end of the 1980er years. Two summers long *Stelios* as well as other men from *Anogia* carried the many large rocks, which had been spread all over the plateau during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, in order to prevent German airplanes from the landing. Since 1991 the stones form a memorial for the peace, a lithic, winged *Andartis* of over 30 m length. (The aerial photo of the *Andartis* (fig. below), was made by an unknown photographer during the work on the stone picture.)



The *Andartis* (a name for „resistance fighter, partisans“, those occur from the Greek fight for Macedonia during 19<sup>th</sup> Century) fought in the Second World War also on Crete against the German occupants. These proceeded with extreme brutality against partisans, and with punitive actions also against the civilian population. You can find a link reference with detailed information about the *Andartis* in a leaflet at:

[ <http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter/325-10.pdf> ].

After in April 1944 two British officers had kidnapped with the help of Cretan *Andartis* the German General Karl Heinrich Kreipe and (after an adventurous escape over Anogia and the Idha mountains) brought abroad, the German armed forces destroyed in a large-scaled, barbarian retributive action several villages. To the place Anogia applied the instruction of the commander of the fortress Crete, Friedrich William Mueller (who was executed as a war criminal after end of war), to make „the place level with the ground and to execute every single male inhabitant of Anogia, which is found within the village or in its periphery at a distance up to one kilometer“.



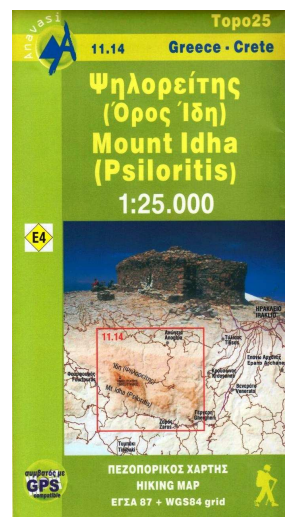
The *Andartis* is to be reached if you take, coming from the tavern towards South, the first branch left. The memorial composed of approx 5.000 large stones, which in the meantime became part of the landscape and is difficult to recognize from the distance. As point of reference: the stone-picture is east of the tavern, on the right below the hill where a house is in the view (see fig.)



Those on their way with a off-road vehicle and with enough experience in driving on gravel roads and would like to continue the tour towards the south coast have now a scenically very delightful distance in the view. It has already been descript in the reverse direction at: [<http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter/193-07E.pdf>]. Nothing has changed for the road condition since and it is still a distance which leads amidst in a relatively unaffected nature. Therefore it is worthwhile to take some time into account for the few extra miles. If you gladly observe, get involved in places, love the silence and like goats, then you are right here.

For this tour I recommend the shown map Mount Idha (Psiloritis, see fig. right), which, as it seems, is sold unfortunately only in better sorted book stores in the larger cities of the island.

Please remember before you start the journey to take along sufficient provisions for the tour from the *Nida* plateau to *Gergeri*. And please undertake the excursion only in continuously dry weather.



First take the winding road back towards *Anogia* and then turn off towards *Skinakas* Observatory. Pass the barrier (where it goes on the left further on to the Observatory) and remain on the broad asphalted road which changes into a gravel road after approximately 1 mile. A well-preserved *Mitado* is located on the right close to the path (see fig. below left).

Short after you reach a bifurcation. Here you must keep left. After another mile you will see the Chapel Timiou Stavrou (see fig below right) located on the right site on top of a hill. From here you have a wonderful prospect.





After another mile (there is a crater of say 10 meter on the left side of the street) keep again left. From here it goes slightly downhill. Again after about 2.7 miles you will pass a water reservoir. Just keep straight. Short after you will see another *Mitado* with a single tree. This is a nice place for a short rest. A place, which also the goats like.

The robust built mountain inhabitants with an acromion up to 1m are herbivores and usually quite peacefully. Keep right while continuing your journey until you see another water reservoir on the left and a small wind gauge station.

Now it is about 3 more miles until a new built Mitado (see fig. below left) with an Amphitheatre and a church. The asphalted road starts here.



On the right leads the branch towards the Chapel Agios Ioannis at the top end of the Rouwas Gorge; therefore see also the leaflet: [ <http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter/68-05E.pdf> ]

Here I found a hiking sign, where accompanying bones sparsely encourage to follow (see fig. above right).

The remainder of the way to *Gergeri* is full of bends, but the street, which is splendidly constructed, offers a wide view from the big *Faneromenis* water reservoir over the *Mesara* lowlands up to the south coast (see fig. below)



Google map coordinates for *Andartis*: +35° 12' 14.38", +24° 50' 42.62" [see also our forum contribution at (German only): <http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/wbb2/thread.php?threadid=5009> ].