

Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

Excursion to the Trapéza-Cave / Lassithi Plateau Pine Processionary (*Thaumetopoea pityocampa*)



The *Trapéza* cave is located northeast of the village *Tzermiadon* [Τζερμιάδον] in the *Lassithi* plateau and is within reach via its main street in good 20 minutes (on foot): see also Leaflet No. [004-04/E – Hiking through the Lassithi Plateau](#).

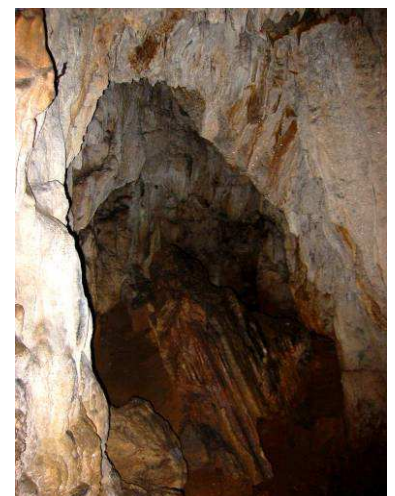
The cave was already used as a Temple in the late Neolithic (3800 - 2800 BC), the Minoan period (2700 - 1200 BC), the Hellenistic period (330 - 67 BC), the Byzantine period (330-1204) and also in the Venetian (1204-1669) and also used as burial. However, its importance decreased in the same way as the Dikteon cave increased (especially in previous Palace time).

The *Lassithi* plateau was, especially during the Venetian time between the 14th and 15th Century, a centre of resistance, when the island was shaken by violent riots. In response to the uprisings of *Lassithi* farmers who bloodily were suppressed, the Venetians "depopulated" the entire plateau and let lie idle for over a century. The situation only relaxed from the late 15th Century when it came to a rapprochement between the Cretan archons and the Venetian rulers. In the 16th Century peace came back and a new "heyday" began for the then 200,000 inhabitants of Crete.



Map Anno 1615

In the tourist season usually a leader is present in the *Trapéza* cave, who likes to guide through the cave for a small fee (0.50 € [in 2004]) - and also provides free flashlights. The not very large cave (less than 300 square meters) can be explored "on one's own" (with sufficient source of light and with caution).



Picture left is showing the entrance of the cave. The centre image shows a burial niche in the back of the Cave where three human skeletons (from Venetian time) have been found. The picture left shows the main caves path in the middle section of the cave.

Photos: H. Eikamp (2003)

Pine Processionary (*Thaumetopoea pityocampa*)

It's hard to find literature to the types of Processionary (*Thaumetopoea ssp.*) of Crete. The moths and the caterpillars of this genus are themselves not easy to distinguish; however, the **Pines Processionary** seems (*Thaumetopoea pityocampa*) to be the most common type. He belongs to the *Notodontidae* and is a small to medium-sized moth. The name **Processionary** arises from the fact that the caterpillars (especially at night) go in long processions on foraging. The caterpillars have clusters of hair on their head which are not safe for people and can trigger highly unpleasant skin. Fodder crops of the caterpillars are mainly pine (*Pinus*), sometimes spruces (*Picea*), larch (*Larix*) and cedar (*Cedrus*). There are 3 more types of **Processionary** in south Europe: the *Pistachios Processionary* (*Th. solitaria*), which mainly occurs in the Balkans; *Cyprus Processionary* (*Th. wilkinsoni*) and *Hercules Processionary* (*Th. herculeana*). The two latter named types are, according to the regional occurrences, also located on Crete.



Top row pictures show the moth askance (left image) and from top (right image). The lower image series shows a Web (left), a almost adult Caterpillar (centre) and a "Part of a single row procession".

Photo of the Web: Ute Kluge (29.04.2004)

Translated by Michael Bloechinger-Daeumling

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