


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

**Excursion to the Idaean Cave / Ida Mountain**  
**Geotope on Crete**


**Idaean cave** [Ιδαίου Άντρου] is located south of **Anogia** [Ανώγεια] approx. 12 miles in the Ida Mountains (*Psiloritis*). Based on Greek mythology **Rhea** hides her son **Zeus** here, after she secretly brought him into world within the **Dikteon cave** [Δικταίων Άντρου], to save him of his father **Cronus** who intended to kill him. Lots of temple-offerings have been found within the cave which served as a cult-place until the Christian time e.g. statues, bronze shields and much more. They are kept in the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion and can be seen there.

From **Anogia** follow the street towards south up to high-plateau. A tavern building is the starting point for the lasting 20 minutes walk there uphill to the cave. The entrance to the cave (on the West side of the plateau) was discovered by a shepherd in 1884. Last archaeological excavation took place in 1982. Inside the cave, a serpentine path leads to the main hall. The old sanctuary has been probably placed within this underground “Cathedral” while the secret temple was within another room. The cult of **Idaean Zeus** was practised here.

Over the last 15 years pieces from the end of Neolithic period and younger tracks were uncovered during further excavations, indicating that the cave was used as a temple between medium Minoan until the Roman period.



The figures show (from left to right) the cave entrance to **Idaean cave**, a look (from above) in the access and the cave entrance from point of view of access area inside the cave.

View to the Nida mesa taken from the “Cave courtyard”. The Nida plateau is a Karst appearance as a drain less valley within the Ida Mountain. Water is jamming during winter, which then rapidly desiccates during summer (seepage in the karst underground). It can be used as pasture only.





## Geotope

[Geotope is the geological component of the abiotic matrix present in an ecotope. Example geotopes might be: an exposed outcrop of rocks, an erratic boulder, a grotto or ravine, a cave, an old stone wall marking a property boundary, and so forth.

It is a loanword from German (*Geotop*) in the study of ecology and might be the model for many other similar words coined by analogy. As the prototype, it has enjoyed wider currency than many of the other words modeled on it, including *physiotope*, with which it is used synonymously. But the geotope is properly the rocks and not the whole lay of the land (which would be the *physiotope*).\*from Wikipedia\*]

“Mountain convolution” (or folded rocks) gives information about the history of the history of earth in particular to the formation of mountains by tectonic movements in the Earth's crust. They should be protected at particularly place for study. Outcrops of this style are called **Geotope**. In Germany, Geotope are preliminary of geological nature monuments. There are key points where knowledge about the development of our planet and life can be obtained.

The Geotope protection (starting point for future conservation movement during the 19<sup>th</sup> century) has been designed for carefully dealt with the inanimate natural heritage and receive certificates of geology for posterity. Important during Cenozoic were the world's notable “Alpidischen” mountain convolution. This pushed

the African plate below the Eurasian plate and the Tethys Sea belt (a parent of today's Mediterranean Sea) was narrowed. Also, deposits of the sea were towered to mountains (which is occupied by fossil findings). “Alpidische mountain convolution began about 65 million years ago and takes until today. Results of these plate movements are frequent earthquakes in the region.

Photo: H. Eikamp (2003)



There are many testimonials of mountain fold at Crete that would be worth to be protected as Geotope! An example is on the road to the **Idaean cave** (approximately 7 miles from **Anogia**, on the right side)(see Photo above); here tile lime has been “plissiert” (Talea-Ori-Series), i.e. shafts bent from their original horizontal situation and made upwards in a vertical position. The bright, white layer layers within this outcrop are imbedded marble formations as they often are on this road.

A very rewarding "side trip" on the way to the **Idaean cave** is a visit of the Observatory on the **Skinaskas** (1752). Shortly before the "Entrance" to the plateau of the Nida mesa is left (junction of **Ebriskos**) a wild romantic road, which leads approximately 1.5 miles through a Valley and then through serpentines (about 400m difference in altitude) ends after another mile on the mountain top (in the location of Observatory). In this section, you will experience the full "wild beauty" of the Ida Mountains.

Translated by Michael Bloechinger-Daeumling

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At this point literature tips on the subject palaeontology and nature conservancy (Author H. Eikamp, et. al.) from the NAOM Publishing House

