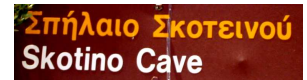




Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:
 Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:



Excursion to the Skotino Cave (Agia Paraskevi) / Prefecture Iraklion - starting point of the mythic "Labyrinth"¹ ???

The cave is located about 14 miles east of *Heraklion* [Ηράκλειο]. From the "Old National Road", at *Kato Gouves* [Κάτω Γούβαι] turn left towards south to *Gouves* [Γούβες]. There are still approx. 3.7 miles southwest (right) from the village exit of *Gouves* towards *Skoteino* [Σκοτεινόν]. The way to the cave is well signposted from here; the last 600 m are not paved (the slope to the cave leads to a landfill site) and can be used only with extreme caution (with normal cars).

The cave is approximately 135 m long, 36-40 m wide and up to 40 m high and covers an area of something more than 2,500 square meters. It was archaeologically examined by *Evans*, *Pendlebury*, *Faure* and *Alexiou*. The altitude difference within the cave system is approximately 45 m. In ancient times, *Britómartis* goddess was worshipped here, during Greek-Roman time goddess *Artemis*, which was replaced by the *Saint Paraskevi* in Christian time. The Grotto was, what is occupied by a variety of archaeological finds, used as cult cave from Antiquity up to the Christian time. Dense next to the entrance of the cave (right; at the height of the "cave roof") is a small chapel dedicated to Saint Paraskevi. The faithful meet here at the names day of the Saint and spend the day with dancing and singing "on-site".

Entrance to the cave leads directly into the "great temple"; it is approximately 100 m long, 36 m wide and nearly 40 m high. Walls and ceiling are covered with calcite formations; big stalactites form the Centre. This part of the cave (approximately 2/3) is safe to commit, while the following rooms, "Altar room", "Adyton" "Cult room" and "Chapel" should be committed only with appropriate experience and caves friendly equipment.



Cave layout



The figure **left** shows the chapel of Agia Paraskevi, **left** of it the cave area. The cave entrance (**right** image) is hidden under trees and bushes, which grow on a part of the former collapsed cave ceiling.



The figure **left** shows the cave entrance from inside from the "great temple"; the **centres** image a rock formation from the "Cult hall" ("lying Baer"); figure **right** a travertine pool from the "Altar room". The latter receives 3-4 water drops rpm from the top of the cave, they (uninterrupted) could turn the rock debris into "Cave pearls" in the course of millions of years. **Photos: H. Eikamp (17.07.2004)**

1 The "maze" plays a central role everywhere in the mythologies of *Daedalos* and *Icarus*, *Minotaur*, *Theseus* and *Ariadne*. *Daedalos* was the builder of the labyrinth, which should be the home of the *Minotaur*. *Theseus* who killed the *Minotaur* found the way out of the labyrinth due to the "thread of the *Ariadne*". These myths closely connect Crete to the labyrinth, which is closely linked to the cave. Is there the "Primal labyrinth cave" at Crete? Where is it? Already in the 17th century, the Frenchman *Tournefort* wrote in his itinerary that a visit of the Cretan labyrinth was the main attraction of each Crete Travel. "This famous site is an underground passage, like a alley, which goes in 100 curvature, which accrued peradventure, created without the slightest order, through the entire inner part of a hill at the foot of the Southside of Mount Ida, 3 miles from the ruins of Gortyna."

A. Petrocheilou dedicated in their standard work "The caves of Greece" (Athens 1984) the "Labyrinth of Gortys" a detailed description and interrelate all mythological figures and operations of Crete to the Labyrinth.

Other signs lead to the underground quarries in the area of Mesara Plain (see also Leaflet [013-04/E - Excursion to the "Labyrinth cave at Moronio](#) a underground stone pit from prehistoric time). There seems to be multiple in this area, which all probably have a similar structure, but are in different locations, given that there are plans of underground lines, which are absolutely not the same!

H. Kern, which meets every conceivable aspect of this issue in his book "Labyrinths" (Munich 1982), mentioned the idea that it has perhaps been one "cave" that gave the impulse to create Labyrinths. He refers to *Faure*, who represents the thesis that the "*Cave of Skotino*" was the release for the maze. A special feature here is that it has been known to the people of Crete since prehistory and serves as a "Dance floor" once for the populace - what enables the possibility that people dance the "crane dance", the *Geranos*; it is also assumed that this line dance could be the actual origin of the mythical labyrinth. (*U.Kluge* represents the thesis that all Crete, with all its more than 3000 caves – is meant as "Labyrinth"; mathematically there is every 1.71 square mile a cave or Grotto at Crete!)

In the labyrinth you don't met the Minotaur
In the labyrinth you met yourself
 In the labyrinth you don't loose yourself
In the labyrinth you find yourself



Cave plan of the Labyrinths of Gortyna (KERN, Page.58, fig. 24, past AMÉ, Page. 32) and Greek coin, ca. 350 BC.: Labyrinth with 7 aisles, flanked by the Thunderbolt of Zeus (right.) und arrow-head (left.); (Kern, Page. 66, fig.. 52)

Translated by Michael Bloechinger-Daeumling

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