

**Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:**  
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:**Excursion to the gulf cave of Mesa Potami / Prefecture Lassithi**  
**Oleander hawk moth (*Daphnis nerii*)**

You get inevitably to the gulf cave (at least drive past) if you from East to the Lassithi-Plateau. So from *Neapoli* (between *Agios Nikolaos* and *Malia*) towards South via *Vrisses* and *Drasi* and from *Ano Amigdali* (towards West) over *Argiro Nero*, *Exo Potami* and *Roussakiana* to *Mesa Potami*. The mountain pass road (Selena Mountains, 1599 m) has been widened and renewed in the last years behind *Mesa Potami* (direction Mesa Lassithi), where the cave outcrop became visible, approx 1.8 miles after *Mesa Potami* (right of the road).

The cave lies under a fault line at the escarpment of layer packets and probably arose as a result of tectonic movements in the bedrock. The current "cave access" was only uncovered through the road construction work and was previously not open (visible). It is about 160 cm wide and almost 60 cm high. The access leads for the first 10 m as a "creep tunnel" in 30 degrees angle downwards. Hereafter it extended to about 180 cm width and approximately 160 cm height and leads almost vertical into the mountain. The vertical "tunnel" leads at least 30 metres into the deep ("Stone drop sample"). Until now the expansion form and size of the cave was not studied. Therefore the cave **should not be examined alone** especially since their (in)stability due to the fault is not known and loose material in the ceiling rock represents an additional source of danger.



The figure on the left shows the caves entrance below of two ("displaced") layer packages; the fig. right the start of the vertical "tunnel" (10m after the entrance) inside.

**Pictures:** H. Eikamp (2003)

The described, Eastern access route in the Lassithi plateau goes through a wild romantic and impressive mountain scenery. There are countless "discovery opportunities": e.g. a spring source at a hillside (see 2<sup>nd</sup> Page), just a few meters after the village exit of *Mesa Potami* (right of the road), which will, after approx 7 miles as a small trickle, be included into a course of a stream at the Lassithi-Plateau.



On this route you can meet even the locals in their traditional dresses providing their agri-products (oranges, nuts, spices, olive oil, honey and not least self burned Raki) at street stalls for sale.

The figure on the left shows the source described on the first page; the fig. right a local in his traditional dress who offers his agri-products from own cultivation (during the tourist season) on the road. Also a photo is not a problem (if you ask before)

**Pictures:** U. Kluge (2003)

## Oleander hawk moth (*Daphnis nerii*)

Oleander hawk moth belongs to the *Sphingidae* (hawk moths) and is a subtropical and tropical moth species that is native in Crete. Characteristics: it is a large hawk moth, the wingspan is 9 to 13 cm; basic colour of wings and body is moss-green; along with it a bright violet and ping marking. The Oleander hawk moth is hard to confound with other species and is regarded by experts as the most beautiful hawk moth at all.

The caterpillars are green with 2 white longitudinal stripes, in whose vicinity are small white dots. There are two large bluish "Eye spots" on the front body. Adult they are 10 to 12 cm long. They cause a very characteristic eat image to Oleander: the leaves are eroded to 2/3, in addition some flowers and buds, then the larvae move to the next branch. The pupation occurs between leaves on the ground.

The Oleander hawk moth only becomes active after dusk and flies then to strongly fragrant flowers, mostly Oleander, to suck nectar with its long proboscis. The nesting occurs on Oleander bushes individually at the bottom of the foliage. Therefore see also (source): NAOM Leaflet No. [64•04](#) of the "UMWELTbürgerinfo" at <http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/schmetterlinge.htm> (German only) or [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daphnis\\_nerii](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daphnis_nerii)



Moth and caterpillar of Oleander hawk moth, which breeds 2 generations in South Europe: May – July and August to September.

Translated by Michael Bloechinger-Daeumling

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## Palaeoanthropology (I): new homianl species found! *Homo floresiensis* ("dwarf-human")

On the Indonesian island of Flores the remains of a previously unknown human species were found in a cave. *Homo floresiensis* was just 1 m tall and is extinct 13,000 years ago. The Fund dated to 18,000 years reveals only a brain volume of 380 cubic centimetres. No other prehistoric human had a comparable small brain. Currently it is the assumption that it is an "evolutionary contraction" of *Homo erectus*, as it is known from the Pale biology from isolated islands. How the lady from the "Liang Bua cave" came to the island is one of many outstanding questions.

Info source: [www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/erde/0,1518,druck-324944,00.html](http://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/erde/0,1518,druck-324944,00.html).



Skulls by comparison: left dwarf-human; right modern human