



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



Excursion to the Monastery Toplou / Northeast Crete
Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*)



Coming from *Sitia* follow the coast road towards *Palekastro*, *Vai* and *Kato Zakros*. Around 7.5 miles behind Sitia the road branch left to the **Monastery Toplou** and towards *Vai* (straight forward it leads to *Kato Zakros*). The road from here is very bendy, asphalted and good to drive. After approx 1.8 miles you reach the sequestered, located within a torr region monastery. The fortress dates from the 15th Century and its eventful history is characterized by destruction (by the Turks) and reconstruction. The Abbey owes its name to the Turks; in the 17th Century the militant installation had a cannon, Turkish "top". In World War 2, during the occupation of Crete by the Germans, the English operated here secret radio equipment.

The Interior of the monastery with its courtyard and the double-span church is worth a visit. Based on the double-span the church has also 2 Iconostases with numerous individual icons. The most famous of them is between the ships opposite the entrance. It was painted by *Joánnis Kornáros* (1745-1796). It consists of many small biblical scenes and belongs to the most valuable icons of Greece. Outside at the Church, left of the entrance is a stone slab where a contract between the cities *Ítanos* and *Ierapetra* is carved; it descends from the 1st Century BC.



The figure shows a view of the Monastery Toplou (build during the Venetian sovereignty in the 15th Century), here from the street. In the past it was named *Moni Akrotiriani*, i.e. as much as "Monastery of the Cape", and thus probably means the extreme northeast corner of Crete.



While today only 2 monks and the Abbot live in the monastery, Toplou was inhabited in the past by over 20 monks. The icon school of the monastery create significant artists and the Museum of icons (2.50 €entry), now attracts many art lovers, is one of the most famous in Greece. A large icon ("Great are you, Lord") is one of the most important sacred art of the Greek Orthodox Church. Every year at Easter the inhabitants of the surrounding villages pilgrimage to the convent to pay the than displayed icon a courtesy visit.

The figure shows the "altar table" of the large icon "Great are you, Lord", here in his flower arrangement to Easter Fig.: U. Kluge (4/2003)

The monastery is now by far the largest landowner of the region. Including the "Palm Beach of Vai" which is one of the properties of the monastery (and the monks). The very active Abbot, who knows well how to combine Church work and economic energy, also endeavours about the success of Sitia's agricultural cooperative, whose olive oils together with those of the monastery received the highest quality awards.





Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*)

The well-known plant also grows in Crete, at roadsides and in rocky scrub. Greek names for the Blackberry are *Vatoumuriá*, *Avatsiniá* and *Vatsaniá*. The leaves of the plant are divided into three leaflets and are based on long, spiky twigs which are curved at the lower end.

The flowers are pink. The "Berry grape" consists of many small, fleshy single berries which are first red and black after maturity. The plant contains tannins, flavin, vitamin C and bitter glucose; the fruit mainly contains organic acids, anthocyanins, pectin and sugar. In Cretan folk medicine, the Blackberry is used, among others, for sugar diabetes and diarrhoea, anaemia.

Pictures are showing Blackberry hedge at a hollow-way in the region of *Anogia* and fruits in detail
Pictures: H. Eikamp (9/2004)

Following again some science (geo scientific) keyword word information from the areas of NAOM and CRETE environmental forum

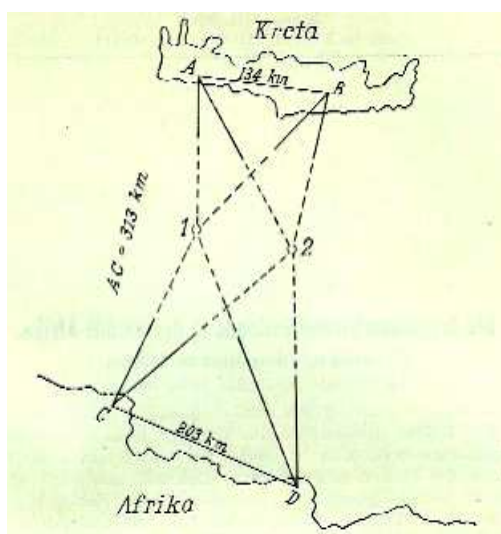


Palaeoanthropology (IV): "Art at skulls"

There are many tales and legends about "Art skull", "Tears of the gods", so including the mysterious **ancient crystal skull** of which were found 13 copies all over the world. They are one of the great mysteries of our time; for some they are a kind of "spiritual" message of oversized worlds and just simple "works of art" to others. However: the fascination of skulls bothers scientists and artists likewise!

Fig. left shows a manufactured skull made up from a single piece (cloudy) quartz crystal which still today poses scientists a riddle. It was found in Guatemala and brought to the United States in 1912 by a Maya priest.

Fig. next to it (right) shows a "skull" in artistic snapshot, because what is shaped by the 7 women with their bodies is a skull, erotic and bizarre at the same time. The "Sculpture" come from the surrealist SALVADOR DALI and was "composed" together with the photographer PHILIPPE HALSMAN for this image.



The trigonometric connection of Crete to Africa was already in 1941 a known scientific topic of research of the measuring engineering in the field of geo science. As a result, the maximum distance of Crete to Africa is less than 186 miles!

The figure comes from the literature collection of the editor.