

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

Monastery Agia Marina / North Crete

European Mantis / Praying Mantis (*Mantis religiosa*)



The convent *Agia Marina* is a worth to see and very well cared monastery; it is located near the ceramist village *Thrapsano* [Θραψανόν], on top a hill between the villages *Voni* [Βόνη] and *Galatas* [Γαλατάς]. A visit is highly recommended, especially since you can connect the tour with a visit to the potters of *Thrapsano*. (therefore see our leaflet no. [020-04/E - Excursion to the pottery makers of Thrapsano](#)).

Being on the North coast road, at *Chersonissos* [Χερσόνησος] (~ 12.5 miles east of *Iraklion* [Ηράκλειο]) turn south towards *Kastelli* [Καστέλλι]. In *Kastelli* follow the main road westwards (right) until the village *Sklavellochori* [Σκλαβεροχώριον].

From here towards south until *Trapsano* (well signed). From *Trapsano* follow the main road again westwards (towards *Voni*). Leave the main road at *Voni* and follow the branch road towards *Galatas* (southwards, towards *Arkalochori* [Αρκαλοχώριον]). The monastery is located on top of a hill almost exactly in the middle between those two villages and well to see from far.



Pictures are showing a general view of the monastery, the stairs to the abbey church (right) and a view in to the cloistered courtyard (left) seen from the church. The silver icon shown within the headline can be found in the sanctuary of the church.

Pictures: U. Kluge / H. Eikamp (28.04.2003)



European Mantis (*Mantis religiosa*)

Already for centuries the Mantis plays a large religious role for the Mediterranean peoples. The name "Mantis" has its reference in the Greek and means as much as "Seer". Also the scientific name "religiosa" points in this direction; based on the prayer-like posture of her tentacles. The Mantis belongs to the order of Mantodea (Mantidea); among many other species, it is quite often represented within the Mediterranean. The extended upper body is particularly striking in the build. The small, triangular head is able to move freely. The first leg pair is converted to strong, mandrel covered catch legs, which are expanded at rest. The wing pairs vary in size. The smaller front wings hide the rear wings while resting.

Portrait of a Mantis

The females reach a length of approx. 8 cm; males are approx. 2 cm smaller and much slimmer. The Mantis is diurnal and almost solely orientated with their sense of sight. Predatory it feeds primarily on other insects (diptera).

A few days after mating the females lay several, approx. 4 cm long, yellow-brown egg-cocoons (*Ootheca* [pl. *oothecae*] is a type of egg mass made by any member of a variety of species (usually insects or mollusks) which contain around 150-200 eggs. They are flat on the upper side and curved upwards. The frost-resistant eggs overwinter; next spring the larvae (nymphs) then slip. The Mantis can change her color during each of the following 6 – 8 molting; it then adjusts itself with light brown or green tones to the respective environment. Ripe (adult) individuals can be seen on Crete from August until October.



Ootheca of a European Mantis



The pictures left of the shown "Crete" Mantis are made by *Brigita Kristel, Dramia* (2004)

The bizarre appearance of Mantis aroused the curiosity of people since the earliest times and has given rise to many folk tales and myths. Many cultures met her with fear and superstition. It was mentioned written by the Egyptians of the 6th Dynasty (ca. 2220 BC) and his figurative pictured on ancient Greek gemmed.

