



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



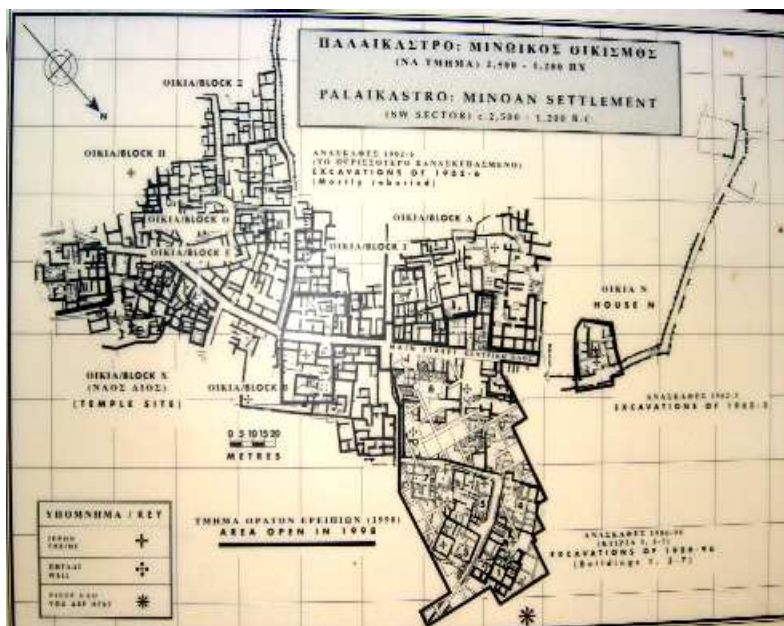
## Two ancient (Minoan) archaeological sites in the East of Crete

**Part II: the ancient “Roussolakos” / Palekastro – again threatened by the demise!**

**Directions:** Part I: “The ancient Ítanos / Vai – “lost” in the mist of history”, see leaflet No. 102-05/E, contains the directions to Ítanos. From Ítanos drive the there descript mile back and then turn East (on the branch towards the Palm beach of Vai) towards **Palekastro**, which is reached after about 5.6 miles. Right at the entrance you will find signs to the "archaeological site" and the excavation site. Turning left there are then around 1.2 miles to the final destination "Roussolakos".

A visit to the archaeological sites is recommended for travellers in Crete’s East; at much interest in archaeology it applies also for tourists in the area of Central Crete. A visit for the tourists from West of the island is only conditionally recommended (because of the relatively large distance). Both sites offer, compared to other Minoan settlement sites of the island, too little "archaeologically visible", what a journey (e.g. from the West with over 125 miles = approx. 3 hrs simple travel time) would justify

The village Palekastro is located on historical ground. This region of Eastern Crete was probably a major centre of trade already during Minoan time. The port of Ítanos (see leaflet No. 102-05/E), today located several meters below the water line and which only expanded during Doric time, attest evidence. The archaeological site "**Roussolakos**" (an artificial name, the actual name of the settlement is unknown), whose formation goes back to bronze age, is located 1.2 miles east of Palekastro in the immediate vicinity of Chiona Beach.



The first excavations began in 1902. The particular importance of this settlement is, that it was spared from any looting and countless, unique relics were found. A first settlement dates back to the early Palace period (see leaflets No. 032-04/E and 033-04/E). During this time a small settlement arose which went down during the "great disaster" (as also the other Minoan settlements on the island). Reconstruction probably happen at the same time as the palaces and other Minoan towns in Crete; it is estimated that the town, during its heyday, must have more than 50,000 square feet.

Along with many other towns and villages of the island, "Roussolakos" was again destroyed at the end of the Late-palace period; but afterwards rebuilt a second time; the settlement grew to the biggest Minoan settlement in Eastern Crete. The location of the settlement was conveniently and with the great plain behind it and a port, which was protected by the table mountain of KASTRIS, it probably became the main commercial centre in the East of Crete.

Many of the earlier excavations are today covered with Earth again. The areas that currently can be seen are limited to houses and parts of roads. In spring 2004 new excavations were started, in particular, because "**Roussolakos**" is considered a "vulnerable archaeological site". There are attempts of a Swedish consortium to build a hotel complex in the immediate vicinity which the site could fall to victim – it is threatened again the demise!



The figure on the left shows a partial view of the excavation area; right (roofed) the current excavation with building remains and "Roads"; see also the pictured "plan of the building complex", which gives information about the archaeological finding in this area.

(So far) the village of Palekastro has remained largely spared from mass tourism. The village has about 1100 inhabitants living mainly from agriculture, olive growing and wine making. There are also a few full-time fishermen but it's difficult for those to get comprehensive income due to massive over fishing of the Mediterranean. Tourism is still a sideline (individual tourism). The unspoiled landscape, the numerous, yet "lonely beaches" will probably be past in the near future, if the Swedish consortium can realize his plans of a hotel complex.

A Minoan Mountain Sanctuary was excavated on the mountain of PETSOFAS South of "Roussolakos", which is one of the most important Minoan mountain sanctuaries of the island. In addition to numerous stone tablets (linear "A" script), votive figures, seals, and a decorated ivory statuette were found. The objects are on display in the archaeological museum in Sitia.

**Pictures:** (3) U. Kluge / (2) H. Eikamp (02.05.2005)