



Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

Memorials on Crete: reminders upon occurrences

In Germany also known as “Marterl” (wayside cross) / Traffic tips

Marterl, wayside crosses, dead boards, wayside shrines and small chapels, since time immemorial positioned by humans in memory of occurrences (or as thanks), are not only found in Germany but also on Crete. In particular the wayside crosses have on Crete the same origin as probably in Germany and refers usually to an accident with fatal outcome. The word “Marterl” comes from the Greek “martyros”, which means as much as a “blood witness”.

On Crete, in former times, it was tradition (just like in Germany) to place a “little church” at well-known places. This tradition is maintained only rarely today (except in the rural mountain regions); today they in addition, still have another meaning: they are primarily memorials and stand usually at accident scenes with death sequence for the memory and warning at the same time. They are to be seen (unfortunately) too frequent on Crete’s roads and are located at roads predominantly at blind bends, in sharp curves, but also at straight lines. In the following some pictures (without comment) of “Marterl” and small chapels.



Pictures: (9) U. Kluge / (7) H. Eikamp / (1) "Lefteris" (2005)



Traffic tips: Based on the last accident statistics it gave on Crete in the last 4 years on the average about 100 accidents per year with death sequence. Therefore here some tips for the car driving holiday-maker on Crete: Drive on the right as far as possible (the right margin may be run over on Crete in principle). Cretans overtake gladly (without indicate) and usually inform by horns (if they are nearly on same height). In the darkness this procedure is announced by means of headlight flasher. In the mountains, in front of blind bends, you should operate the horn, to warn (possibly) drivers coming in the opposite direction; Cretans gladly “cut” the curves (and are better into straightforward drive). Adhere to speed limits; they mark primarily obstacles on the road, like e.g. Mountain chute, falling rocks, slipped or “bad” roads and bottlenecks. In the mountain villages drive step speed; in particular the older inhabitants do not pay attention while crossing the roads. “Right has right-of-way” does not always validity on Crete. Be not surprised, if in countryside regions persons under age (surely without driving license) drive with the car, this is nothing uncommon on Crete and likewise no rarity as herd on the road, which you should meet with peace and patience; same applies to goats “doing gymnastics” at the road slopes (those very often also kick off stones). Insist not on the rights after European road traffic regulations and drive prudently and far-sighted; always count on danger situations and enjoy landscape and views only with a stop - then a Marterl remains for you saved!