



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

## **The exit of the Imbros Canyon is still not the end!** **Komitadhes – numerous witnesses of a historic past**

An article from our member *Maria Eleftheria*, Agios Nektarios / South Crete.



The village **Komitadhes** is located on a hill at the exit of the Imbross Canyon in the South of Crete. Only 2.8 miles away from **Chora Sfakion**, with a wide view over the Libyan Sea to the island of **Gavdos** and **Gavdopola**, most tourists only know it as the start or end of the Gorge hike or from the transit on the way along the South Coast. This is a pity because there are some interesting sights in and around Komitadhes and the town itself has preserved a soothing idyll in its solitude.

Long ago, **Komitadhes** was a large and rich village. Merchants lived here in beautiful houses. Nowadays strolling through the narrow streets a bit uphill, you met witness of its glorious past in the various stages of decay.



Now most people are farmers who live in difficult conditions of their agriculture, because the additional income from the "transit tourism" is low.

And now a story from the village which leads to the first sight in the close vicinity:

Once the village **Komitadhes** was often attacked by pirates and plundered. During one of these attacks, the villagers in their need desperately turned to *Saint George* and actually managed to beat the pirates and put to flight. Thereupon a church was built in honour of helpful Saint. The artist *Ioannis Pagomenos*, who later became famous due to his extremely beautiful murals, painted the walls of the small, pretty Church in the year 1314.

The well-marked way towards the Church *Agios Georgios* begins at the central and closed village church (see fig. left), from where a path leads on the right downhill. As a small special feature, please take note of the remarkable "recycling awareness" of the villagers: for stabilising the fences – now completely rusted – barrels of weapons from World War II were used.

The Church of *Agios Georgios* (see fig. right), surrounded by olive trees is located just outside the village, is reached after a walk of 15 minutes. Some of the wall paintings (see 2<sup>nd</sup> picture row) are still very well preserved; on the west wall, an inscription calls the founder of the Chapel: Skordilis, Kera Kali, the monk Gerasimos Fourorgis and others.



Southwest of **Komitadhes** is the well signposted monastery *Thymiani*. According to the season the way is locked with a gate that is easy to open - and please close again.



Only little is known about the older history of the monastery, however the monastery *Thymiani* is of one of the most historically significant places in Crete. The leader of the Cretan rebels met here in May 1821 and decided the major revolt against the Turks. Until today, every year on the last Sunday in May this event is remembered with a great celebration. The buildings of the monastery, except the Church with its beautiful bell tower and a few remains are disappeared since in September of the year 1821 the Church was robbed in a retributive action and the monastery was burnt down. The Church (see fig.) is sanctified to the Panagia, the mother of God, and received her name, based on a legend, because someone found an icon of the mother of God at this point under a thyme bush.

If you follow from here to the path towards the sea (see fig. left, next page) and then in the arc back north, you will reach the cave church of *Agios Antonios*, one of the oldest sanctuaries in this area (see fig. right, next page).



Below the hermitage leads a path through a sheep shearing area in a small Gorge which was rinsed and formed by a stream over thousands of years. Large caves have developed by the localised flattening, which are used by the sheep in the summer as shady places. The creek bed is dry and is fully walkable during the summer.

Over the course of the route remains of walls can be found in some places (see fig. left), which indicate a settlement in former times. After about 10 minutes you reach to a building remain where right leads a path to an old source (see figure right) and other ruins. As further features at the roadside, the heaped common war properties in form of barrels as fence stabilizers should be mentioned; I even found two helmets (see fig. 2<sup>nd</sup> row).



Finally some uncommented images of our hike to **Komitadhes** in July 2009



For additional information of the area near Komitadhes see our info sheet No. 261-08/E: "Walking tour through the Imbros Gorge": [\[http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter\\_en/261-08E.pdf\]](http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter_en/261-08E.pdf)

Should you are hungry and have appetite for the Greek cuisine after this hike, I can recommend the tavern of Giorgos. *Giorgos Deligiannakis* cooks himself and very good, Annette, his German wife can give you more information about the surrounding, and if you decide to stay longer, George and Annette also offer overnight accommodation.

