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Hiking in the “Canyon of mills” / Myli (Its settlement already started in the medieval times)

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Close of Rethymno is a unique, stunning landscape which has something to offer for everyone interested in history, nature, plants and wildlife. The gorge of **Myli** (φαράγγι των μύλων, "Canyon of mills"), whose settlement began in the medieval times and today their villages **Pano Myli** and **Kato Myli** are abandoned apart of a few buildings.

You can reach the starting point of this hike from **Iraklion** coming on the National Road to **Amari**, or from the Eastern part of **Rethymno**, **Perivolia**, by following the signs from the old National Road first towards **Amari** and further on those towards **Myli (Milli)** and **Chromonastiri (Hromonastiri)**. The entrance to the gorge with an information board is directly on the road below the new village Myli (fig. left)

A cobblestone way leads downwards, of which after just a few metres a small path branches to the right to the chapel of Agios Ioannis (fig. below left). The simple Chapel is built into the rock. The further way takes you down to the bottom of the Canyon, where a bridge is crossing the all year long water leading stream. Here I turned left towards North and strengthened and informed myself in

the tavern of **Evangelos Drygiannakis**. **Evangelos Drygiannakis** is the descendant of a Miller from Pano Myli (“Upper mill”). The inhabitants of the village founded the new settlement Myli in the 60's and moved there. Years later Evangelos has lovingly restored his parental home and converted it to a tavern. It is already clearly recognisable from the road (fig below right), and the cable car, which once transported material takes the necessary goods for the operation of the tavern over the Canyon today. However, much is cultivated by **Evangelos Drygiannakis** himself so that he can guarantee for the freshness of fruit and vegetables.





Refreshed and with an information sheet that is free to get at *Evangelos*, I start my expedition. On the opposite side of the canyon, raise in rich vegetation the ruins of a formerly splendid Venetian Villa from the 16th Century, in which the taxation authority resided and woke up on the charges of the Miller. Below the tavern was an oil mill (picture left), but most of the buildings in the Gorge were water mills that processed the grain into flour.

Earlier there were probably 30 mills "in operation", which provided the city of Rethymno and surroundings with flour, an early industrial centre, so to speak. Many of the buildings are however now such ruinous and surrounded by plants that a safely access is hardly possible (fig. below left). The narrow walkway leads to the Church of St. five virgins with a small cemetery and a spring (fig. below right).

row walkway leads to the Church of St. five virgins with a small cemetery and a spring (fig. below right).



Continue following the path, you reach a restored mill shortly after with a clearly visible feeder for the downspout of the water inflow. Inside are still the millstones in their original stone encircling to be seen as well as the collecting vessel for the flour, which was also worked from stone (see pictures below).

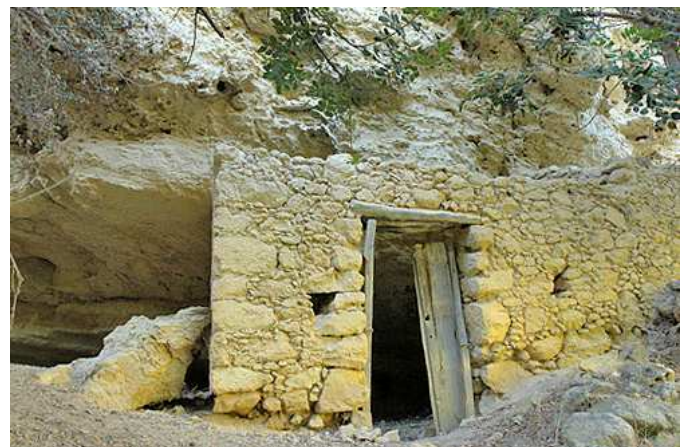


All mills in this Valley had horizontal mill wheels, typical for this time. And here is a special feature: Several mills that were arranged among themselves on the slope of the mountainside shared one inlet. In other words: the water from the top source was lead over the first downspout to the waterwheel and hereafter over a further intake to the next mill and so on until the lowest mill which than lead the water back to the creek.

Roots grow through the walls of the ruins (picture left) or make curtains on window- and door openings (picture right). Stalactites like within a dripstone cave have formed in the area of a former downspout. This is truly a magical place.



Many people lived here when all mills were still operated. Therefore you will find several caves within the gorge whose rock walls found usage by the building of simple accommodations. (Pictures below)



Before I reach the completely deserted village Kato Myli (see fig. page 4), the path crosses the creek. There is no bridge, but now during the summer flat stones allow the passage without getting your feet wet. That is certainly different in water-rich months.

To reach the Chapel of Agia Paraskevi (see fig. 4 page left), the creek must be crossed again (see fig. page 4 right). My description ends here because I decided to use the same way back, to see and to enjoy everything again in a different angle. The constant chuckle of the creek, the variety of plants, the chirping of birds, and high up in the rocks has birds of prey their home.



The Myli-Canyon has a length of around 2 miles; I need three and a half hours for the outbound and return on the well accessible wayside. Good shoes are recommendable.

Translated by Michael Bloechinger-Daeumling

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