

**Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:**
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:**Embrosneros – a village with janissary past**
Belonging to Constantinople, first mentioned in 1355An article of our member *Maria Eleftheria*, Agios Nektarios / South Crete

Totally different attractions can be discovered in the idyllic village **Embrosneros**, located on the northern slopes of the White Mountains. The settlement, way back belonging to the Patriarchate of Constantinople, is then established since 1355 in records.

To get to **Embrosneros**, drive in **Vrisses** towards **Sfakia** and follow shortly before the village end in **Vrisses** the signs. If you pass, after about 2.5 miles, the Chapel *Agia Anna* on the right, you can already see above the simple building the first houses of **Embrosneros** (fig. right). A footpath leads from here to the unfortunately closed Church *Agia Panagia*, where the year is 1894 is carved above the entrance. If you continue for another 100 m, you get to the parking of a tavern surrounded by shadow giving trees.



The further down lying amphitheatre (picture below left), where once in a while concerts are held during the summertime, is very neat; it invites you to stroll. The old well (fig. below right) which donates all year long cool water, suggests that this place is used for sociability's since long ago.



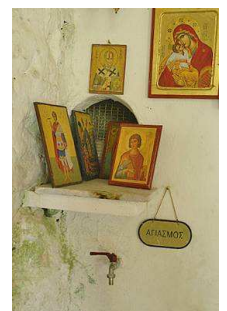
Afterwards follow the road left above the Taverna (on the right are the abandoned buildings of a former cheese factory) and go up the first junction right the hillside. For those who have difficulty with the slope by foot, this short piece up to the gate is driveable by car. At the already from far visible Church *Agios Antonios* (figure on top next page) leads right a way to the Cave-Chapel *Agios Ioannis Eremitos* (fig. down the next page).



Above this built in the rocks chapel, which shall be one of the oldest on Crete, was built the large church, dedicated to St. Antonio's (fig. above left).

Since only the priests are permitted to enter the rear altar area, there is a special "service" for believers here: the holy water that drips from the rock face is trapped in a stone (fig. above right) and directed over a line into the front room. Whoever has the need for this water just need to turn the tap (fig. right)

To get to the village of Embrosneros follow the street from the parking at the tavern uphill right. The road leads directly to the Platia, from there the route to the next highlight; the "Ali-dakis Castle" is well signposted.



The even in decline still imposing building is located approx 200m further on the left village edge, on a hill. Drive slowly because the place is easy to overlook and you then reach in the narrow streets of the town which are better to explore by foot.



The impressive entrance portal (fig. left and following images) with partially well-preserved stone carvings lets guess the former size of this castle that once the janissary ALIDAKIS let build. The janissaries were one in the 14th Century founded elite troop in the emerging Ottoman Empire; initially formed from young prisoners of war, later, during the "boys selection", out from boys of enslaved Christian peoples, snatched from their parents, military trained, and (re-)educated to fanatical Muslims. Alienated from the own family and the own people, the janissaries, who where not allowed to marry, lived only for war. They were directly responsible to the Sultan, who led them into the battles. Soon the reputations of unimaginable cruelty hurry ahead the Corps. Over time, the janissaries were aware of their power, they were allowed to marry and they started to demand more rights and influence. In 1826, they were violently terminated by Sultan Mahmud II.

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ALIDAKIS, who, as it's said, dominated the area north of Lefka Ori, was feared and known widely for his property. Sfakiotian rebels murdered Alidakis (around 1770) and the Tower of the castle was burned down. A folk song from ancient times describes his legendary wealth, and it is said from the Castle that the clay has been bound with milk instead of water.





Parts of the former estate were restored in recent years. Surrounding wall remains, however, show that the building was once much extensive. At the rear of the building there are large, high rooms and a narrow spiral staircase made of stone to the upper floor (see figure below + above left), their climbing requires courage, head for heights, and confidence in the stability of the construction. But the courage is rewarded with a fantastic view (see figure above right).



Finally I recommend a leisurely explore of the winding streets of the village by foot. Maybe you also pass the Cemetery Church with its red painted roof. There is an unusually large charnel house that is well visible in the lower area of the burial site. Bones and skulls of many generations are here together (fig. above right).

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