



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

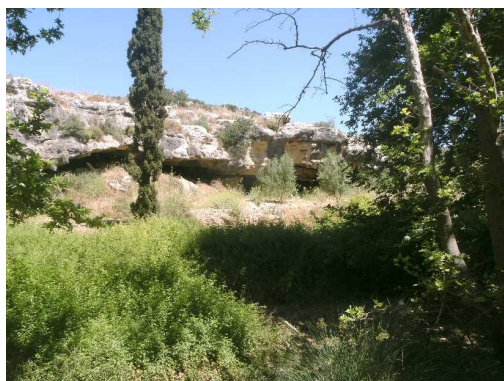
Habitation probably since prehistoric times Dugout at Roufas (Middle Crete, Prefecture Iraklion)



There are 2 routes to reach the dugout at **Roufas**. The "comfiest" leads from **Iraklion** to **Mires**. In **Mires** take the main road up to the middle of the village and turn right here towards the "Hospital" and **Breli Apolixnos**. It's about 500 m from here to the next sign (on the left side). Than further on for about 2 miles on the main road uphill until you reach a road fork (see fig. direction sign; Coordination point: N 35.071 78°, E 24.889 75°, Altitude 203 m). Here a gravel road branch right, towards **Roufas – Zaros**. It's then another 1 miles to the cave system which is located on the left side of the road.



If you want to take a gravel road instead of a mostly paved road, do not drive all the way to **Mires**, but turn right just before **Mires**, and follow the sign to **Roufas**. Short before the place-name sign of **Roufas** turn left into gravel path (without sign), it is wide enough to be used with a "normal" car. This leads through three (3) bends into a valley floor. There is also a small chapel, right of the path within the valley floor. After around 1.3 miles past the turn-off in **Roufas** you also reach the cave system, which than is located on the right (and after another mile the above named coordination point and the direction sign).



The dugouts (coordination: N 35.075 41°, E 24.895 47°, Altitude 242 m) are about 30 m away from the trail behind a creek in a rock edge that is good to see from the gravel path (see fig. left). The cave system, probably former "erosion caves", consists of 4 individual caves that are connected to each other by 3 artificially staved tunnels (corridors, between 1, 5 m height and up to 2 m long). The "front" of the cave system was previously probably closed by "Stone walls"; remains thereof can be found in front of each single cave. Every individual caves show inside "finishing marks",

whereas cave 1 (seen from left to right) had a fireplace, as seen on the, until today fuliginous ceiling (see **fig.** right). It also owns a artificially staved "chimney" (flue) of about 80 x 80 x 180 cm, which leads from the cave ceiling to the base of the rock edge. (see **fig.** left next page). Cave 1 measures around 8 x 6 m, cave 2 approx 6 x 4 m, cave 3 around 7 x 4 m and cave 4 9 x 6 m. Cave 4 marks "room units with windows" in sub terane or subtractive architecture (see **fig.** right next page).

The use of this cave system as "Home" probably already began in prehistoric times and lasted into "modern times". The reasons why people have visited caves, certainly counts that they have settled to live there.





Did that last more than a few days; it is called "living". Many traces of life and living in caves have disappeared long ago. Some "life places" are caused by the pure power of nature, but a many became reality by the work of the people.



The fig. left shows a view over the gravel path seen from the coordination point of the cave system; viewing direction west. The fig. in the middle shows the creek, running parallel of the path (right, while driving towards west); it leads still a lot of water even in May; so the former dwellers were probably sufficiently supplied. The fig. right shows a nest of Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*), today's resident of the outer cave niche; also the Mediterranean Barn Owl (*Tyto alba alba*) has their Habitat here and uses the caves as a place to sleep during the day.

Translated by Michael Bloechinger-Daeumling

NR: Höhlen: [Art.-Nr. 2.913; Zitat-Nr. 7.847] impr. eik.amp 11/2010

