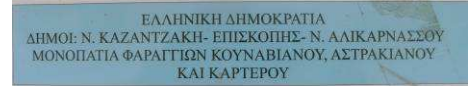




Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

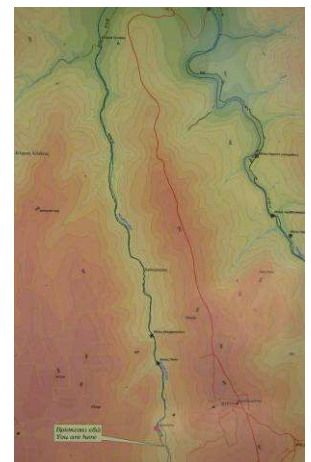


Canyon of Jersey Tiger and Giant Horsetail Hiking through the *Astrakiano*-Canyon (Prefecture Iraklion)

Primary note: the *Astrakiano*-Canyon is one part (middle part) of a three-part canyon combination with overall 13.5 miles length. The canyon-opening with its 1st section is around 8.7 miles long and starts at 513 m above sea level in the mountains between the villages *Alagni* and *Houdetsi*.

The 2nd part (*Astrakiano*) starts at 243 m above sea level and has a length of 2.8 miles; it extends between the villages *Komes / Kounavi* and *Skalani* (see map right).

The 3rd part (*Katero*) than leads from *Skalani* at 90 m above sea level and a length of 2 miles to the village *Karteros* and the sea. Starting point for the 2nd as well as the 3rd section (from *Kounavi / Komes* to *Kateros*), together shown with 4.8 miles (must be bee-line, because walked distance [in regards to the hiking club] is 6.8 miles), is *Skalani*. Furthermore 2 cars are needed if you do not want to walk it twice (back and forth).



Directions: From *Iraklion* take the road towards *Archanes* and than (according to the sign) the departure towards *Viannos / Skalani* (left at the traffic light); its about 300 meters to the village *Skalani*. Following the main road it is still approx. 1.2 miles to the target point (in a left turn); Coordinates **N 35.26°936°**, **E 25.19°886°**, 90 m above sea level. Here is the possibility to park a car. With the second car it than goes back to the taken exit, back to the road (left) towards south until the exit *Katalagari/Kounavi*, after the exit turn left again towards *Kounavi*. Within *Kounavi* follow the sign to wards *Komes*. At the village entrance of *Komes* turn right and drive up to the church. In front of the church turn left until a “V junction”. Here follow the left street for about 200 meters (therefore turn right 2 times) and find after additional 100 meters a first sign for the canyon. Following the sign, turning left drive for around 1 mile until the next

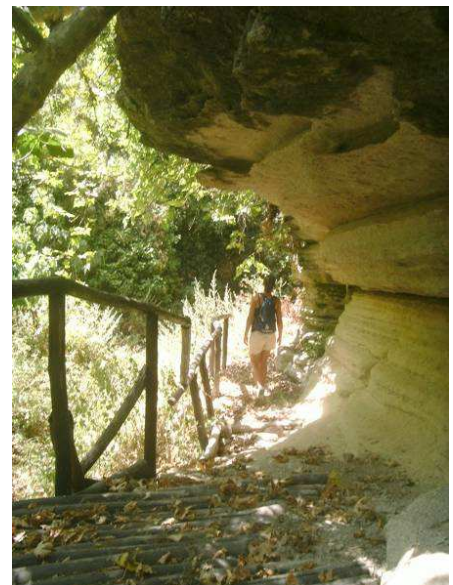
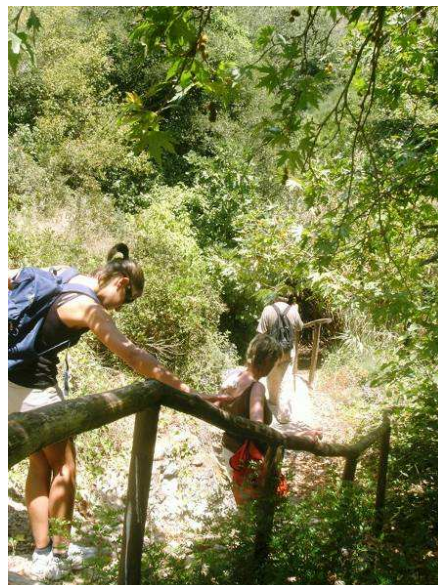


sign, here turn left again. After approx. a half mile the asphalt road will turn into a gravel road (good to go with a normal car) and after a few minutes you will reach your target for the start of the hike. Coordinates: **N 35. 23°087°**, **E 25. 20°395°**, 243 m above sea level. Here you can park the second car. Following the sign you then walk (left-hand) further uphill to a picnic area, see fig. (with sanitary installation but no water!); here starts the canyon hiking (right-hand, upwards). [We needed for our trek (start 11:15 a.m.) 3.5 hours (30 minute break) and reached the canyon end at *Skalani* at 3:15 p.m.]. With there previously parked car you can then easily get back to the beginning of the tour and the second car.



Fig. left: Stephanie and Nina Krips at the 2nd “picnic-area”, it is where the shadowing of the canyon ends, the vegetation becomes light and the canyon extends; **fig. right**

The canyon trail is easy (no climbing) and runs along, with a few exceptions, the canyon creek, which leads water even in July (at least within the first third). Stagnant water zones (with fresh water tortoises and - crabs) change with small waterfalls and vortices zones, caused by boulders in the canyon creek. This is to cross several times in the course (via bridges); narrow spaces as well as ascents and descents are secured by wooden railings (the load-carrying ability of the handrail should be checked). The jungle-like vegetation is impressive and the large, old stock of trees shaded with the nearby high rock faces two-thirds of the path; see following pictures of the trail.



In this section are the ruins of two former mills; see fig continuation page. During the last third of the trail (where the canyon extends, see fig continuation page) the forest vegetation passes over in shrub vegetation with reed population; here also the direct sunlight is often intense. A "picnic-area" (such as at the start of the walk) is a welcome “rest area”. The last 300 metres to the canyon exit then go through olive groves and vineyards; shortly before reaching the road, the ruins of an old house are located on the right side (see fig continuation page) as well as the civilisation documentation, here in the form of wild trash debris, which effects the side of the canyon.



The vegetation of the canyon is a "paradise" for botanists. The ancient trees with its (often as thick as an arm) vines as well as the flowering plants call for botanical studies; especially the huge occurrence of the giant horsetail (*Equisetum telmateia*) impressed us; therefore see also:

[\[Wikipedia/Equisetum telmateia\]](#)

The green summer sprouts with ivory and 1-2 cm thick stems reach heights of 40-150 cm and in rare cases up to 2 m high.

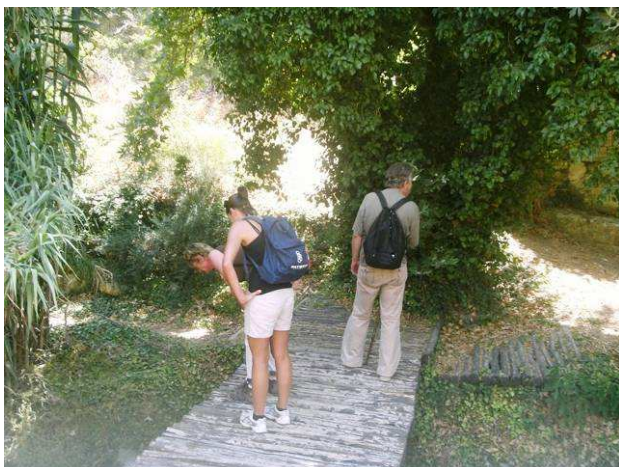


Fresh-water turtles, fresh-water crabs, lizards and others more enrich the fauna; also the badger is here at home. Also the insect world is very species (Spiders and Moths); the biodiversity of "soundless flyers" with a mass occurrence of the "Jersey Tiger" (*Euplagia quadripunctaria*) is to emphasise; hundreds fluttered silently through the vegetation of the Canyon; therefore see also our leaflet [62-04](#) (only German) at our homepage/Schmetterlinge or at [\[Wikipedia/Euplagia quadripunctaria\]](#).



The flora and fauna of this canyon is worth to be examined more closely and has probably even more "surprises"; a designation as a "nature reserve" would be desirable.

Finally some images of the canyon hike.



At this point, the [Crete Environmental Forum](#) would like to thank its members *Stephanie* and *Nina Krips* for the hint to this canyon, the escort / lead during the hike and the review of the manuscript.

Further information's (English / Greek) can be found at the following web links:

[\[http://candia.wordpress.com/photos/peza-to-karteros-2009/\]](http://candia.wordpress.com/photos/peza-to-karteros-2009/) and
[\[http://www.dimos-nikoskazantzakis.gr/visitor/canyons/gorges.html\]](http://www.dimos-nikoskazantzakis.gr/visitor/canyons/gorges.html)