



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

The mountain Vrisinas and its Minoan mountaintop temple, Prefecture Rethymno

[An article from our members *Diana P. Bailey* and *Maria Eleftheria*, Crete]



South of *Rethymno*, at the village *Kapedhiana* rises *Vrisinas* Mountain up with over 800 metres (858 above sea level) into the high. At its peak, the church *Agios Pnevmatos* (Church of the Holy Spirit) stands on the place of the ancient Minoan temple, which was dedicated to the goddess Artemis.

For this jeep tour which you can also walk, I wisely chose the necropolis of Armeni as a starting point. Here, on one of the biggest Minoan cemeteries, whose associated settlement has not been located until today (see also our leaflet "[049-04/E - Excursion to the necropolises of Armeni](#)"), are the most sepulchre inputs aligned to the East towards the mountain top temple on Mount *Vrisinas*.

On the road from *Rethymno* to *Armeni*, an asphalt road branches off to the East at the junction to the necropolis. After around 1 mile, a narrow road leads right slightly uphill and a small sign points the way to *Rousospiti*. As a strikingly landmark, straightforward is a transmitter to see. Further on branches a gravel road right off towards *Chromonastiri* and then it again goes right up where a blue sign points towards the Church of *Agios Pnevmatos*. The here running E4 hiking trail, which leads directly over the mountain top, is signposted as well (approx. 3 hours is specified to reach the top from *Chromonastiri*).



Already on the way you have a good view of the town Rethymno (fig. left above). Shortly before the Summit, you have to turn left again.

After 3.4 miles (fig. right below) the parking place below the target is reached. The rest of the route will be walked along the hiking trail.



In 1938, during construction work at the simple Church of Agios Pnevmatos the earliest references to a place of worship of the Minoans were discovered through clay figurines. Only 1973 more systematic investigations were carried out. Archaeologists dug out a collection of clay votive offerings and animal figures which are displayed in the Museum of Rethymno. Of the Minoan mountain top shrine is nothing to see anymore today. How it once may have been, is a matter of conjecture based on the representations on vessels and seals of the era.

Why precisely at this place was an important mountain top shrine becomes apparent when you look around at this location. Far from worldly things, you see the coast and the sea in the North, over the mountains also the sea in the South and the spur of Ida Mountains in the East. In November and in February the sun rise there, between the two highest hills, which form a double Horn. These were apparently important timestamps on the annual run for the people of the Minoan civilization and reason for celebrations.

With the advent of Christianity, the old celebrations were captured and changed by the new faith. The Whit-Monday is the feast day of the Church of *Agios Pnevmatos*. The faithful from Rethymno and neighbourhood pilgrimage to the mountain top to participate in the service; some of them already start on the eve before and stay overnight on the mountain.



Despite all that changes that have taken place this place gives room for leisure and reflection. It remained a place of power.