

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



Excursion to the cave of Melidóni / Prefecture Rethymnon
Mediterranean Cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*)

One of the many tourist developed cult caves of the Minoan era is the "Gerontospiliá" near *Melidóni* [Μελιδόνιον]; see also leaflet [No. 012-04/E](#).

The cave is located between the hills of *Asphalates* and *Prases*, in an altitude of 220 metres; the entrance is located on the southern slope of the *Kouloukona* Mountains (1.075 m) North of *Melidóni*. The view from this position at the green valley, the char burner region and the *Psiloritis* is impressive. The cave entrance is made like a 2.5 m high and 4 m broad arc. The 25th Inspectorate for prehistoric and classical relics in Crete in connection with the organization of "Melidóni-Cave" and the community of *Geropotamos* published a leaflet about the cave itself as well as the cave as archaeological site, which contains detailed Information; E-mail: permal@otenet.gr



Picture left is showing the cave entrance. Picture right is the cave layout; the numbers mark the following points: **1** Ticket sales (3€/ Person); **2** Doline; **3** oven of "old woman"; **4** ancient inscription; **5** cave entrance; **6** chamber of hero's; **7** RAULIN's chamber; **8** PASHLEY's chamber



Apart from its Minoan history the cave has also a great historical importance. In the year 1824, 370 civilians and 30 armed soldiers who had barricade in the cave were killed. The investing turks inflamed a fire in front of the cave, the smoke irrputed the inner cave and the

trapped asphyxiate. The shock caused by the "murder" and the geological interest in the cave were attraction for many well-known visitors who visited Crete during the 19th Century and wrote about the cave: e.g. PASHLEY (1837) PERROT (1867) und RAULIN (1869)

Source of above pictures: from the leaflet of the organization of "Melidóni-Cave" from the community of *Geropotamos* and the 25th Inspectorate for prehistoric and classical relics in Crete.



More karst caves (grottos) are located on the left side of the mountain on the 1.2 mile long way towards the entrance of the cave, so also about 200 m before the official parking lot of the Melidóni-Cave: die picture left shows the entrance of a grotto (head-high) straight at the street; middle picture is showing sinter formations within the grotto; picture right a view "towards outside". These caves are worth seeing, since they are included as part of the Melidóni cave karst system in their geologic hydrological total circuit. **Photos: H. Eikamp (24.07.2004)**



Mediterranean Cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*)

"Since centuries the Cypress is revered as sacred tree. Its resilient wood was used to construct ships and entrances of religious sites. In many cultures, it applies as a tree of death and the grief. The sad history of the myth goes back to OVID:

... and there was a boy named KYPARISSOS which could ride the mighty deer which was sacred to the nymphs. But while hunting he met the sacred deer with his Spear and killed him. He decided to die. Apollo, who loved him, implored to the gods to allow him to mourn forever and the boy turned into a Cypress.

Many mountain regions of Crete, which are stark today were formerly densely wooded and the today occasionally cypress trees were the "forest tree of Crete"; Source: www.satureja.de.

THEOPHRASTOS (372-287 v. Chr.) mentioned that the locals used the resin of Cypress to embalm the dead and their high and slender form often served on memorial slabs and statues as decoration. CHEVAKIS (a greek Doctor) describes a elixir, obtained from



young instincts, used against suffering of oral and throat area and wound healing. Cypress sprig in the house should allegedly help against mosquitoes, flies and other insects.

Photos: U. Kluge (24.07.2004)

