

**Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:**
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:**Excursion to *Ágio Fárango Canyon* and
Monastery *Odigítrias* / South Crete**

By car you get to the Canyon (and the Monastery) from **Matala** towards South via **Sivas** to **Kalí Liménes**. The road is asphalted up to the **Monastery Odigítrias**, which was founded in the 15th Century. The Monastery, where in August the feast of the Blessed Virgin is celebrated, is worth to see but unspectacularly. North of the Monastery, an already heavily plundered Minoan tomb complex (*Chatzíanos Liófyto*) was found in 1979. It includes two round graves, pits for bones, burial- and mortuary-cult chambers and an enclosed courtyard with plate floor and altar. The complex dates from the so-called Early Palace period (Early Minoan Age: 2600 - 2000 BC); therefore see also our leaflet No. 032-04/E and 033-04/E.



Area of the round graves complex



Fig. left shows the Church in the courtyard; fig. right the "Xopatéras Tower" of the fortress of the monastery, which have proved 1828 during the revolt against the Turks. Pictures: U. Kluge (2004)

The road forks at the monastery (right it leads to **Vathý Iremía**), which we here follow straight ahead towards **Kali Liménes** and which just behind the monastery changes into a track. Follow this for about 1.6 miles (therefore you will pass a riverbed) and than turn right on a gravel road towards the Canyon. You can drive with a normal car up to the point where the gravel road first crosses the river bed; further on is a gravel road (which is passing the riverbed again and again) and which is recommended only for off-road vehicles (or by foot).

With an off-road car you can drive for another 2.5 miles, here is a “metal fence” which delimits the gravel road to a sheep fold. Here is still nothing to see from the actual canyon. You can continue downhill only “by foot” (for approx 1 hr.) along a narrow path directly on or in the river bed. Now the mountain slopes are closer together and you can see (after a left bend of the river) the Gorge in front. In early Christian times many hermits lived here in the karst caves of rock slopes (up to the end of the last century), which are already visible at the beginning of the Gorge and are very numerous here. Therefore the **Ágio Fárango-Canyon** is also called the **Canyon of the hermits**. At the end of the Gorge we reach the Church of Ágios Antonios, which was built in a rock niche, once the religious centre of the area. The last transept was built in the 15th Century and still consists in its former shape today. On a Hill are the remains of a Minoan Tholos tomb. From here the Libyan open sea at a beautiful Bay with a gritty sand beach is approximately 15 minutes away. Bay and Canyon can also be reached by the sea (by booked tours from Matala).



Fig. left shows the gravel track in the navigable part of the Canyon, which leads once left, once right of the River, which needs to be passed several times on the 2.5 miles long way. The middle picture show karst caves, and niches in the Rocky slopes, which mostly are located at one level and can have sizes up to 30 sqm. The figure on the right shows a rock formation with a view to the Bay just before the small South Harbour Kali Liménes, where PAULUS at his travel to Rom should have entered Cretan ground.

Pictures: U. Kluge (2004)

Three of the four European Gecko species are found in Crete, including the **Mediterranean House Gecko**, or more commonly **Turkish Gecko** (*Hemidactylus turcicus*), which can reach a size of up to 10 cm. Its top is yellowish to light brown and slightly translucent. In addition to the characteristics of the body is the lack of eyelids a typical flag. The animals are active mostly at night and primarily hunt insects.

The shown "teen" (approx. 7 cm long) visited us in the evening in our accommodation and "helped us hunting spiders", even though he had to cross the cobwebs on the ceiling while being without eyelids. For the jumping spider hunting this was unnecessary (it builds no grids). But she mostly escaped (on approaching of the gecko) by quickly abseiling from the ceiling with her "security line"

The pictures show a Mediterranean House Gecko (*Hemidactylus turcicus*) and (small image) a jumping spider (*Philaeus sp.*), which both are very common on Crete.



Pictures: U. Kluge (2004)