



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

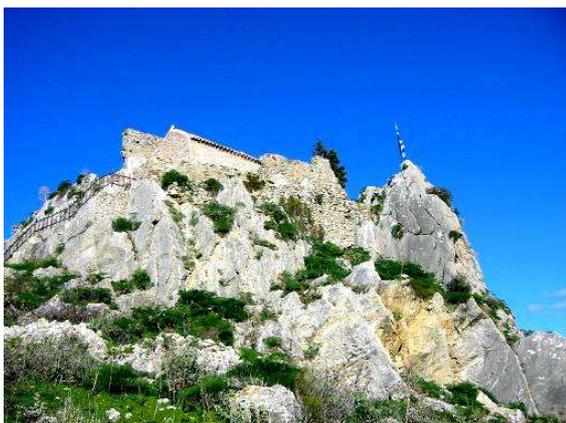
**Archaeological site  
of faistos**

## “Rock Church” (Ayios Ioannis) at Harakas The ancient Faistos (Phaistos) / South Crete

We start the tour in **Pirgos** (South Crete) and drive from there over **Doraki** in western direction to **Harakas** (at the edge of the Messara Plateau), our first Tour destination.

From **Harakas** we drive further on in western direction (between the Asteroussia-Mountain and the Messara Plateau) over **Sternes – Vagionia – Platanos – Petrokefali** to **Faistos**, the second Tour destination.

The church Ayios Ioannis Church sits on an isolated standing rock at the village edge of Harakas. The church itself has been rebuilt within old ruins. The older buildings- and wall remains on the mountain plateau suggests that they once belonged to a monastery (or similar). There are some further older ruins (an old windmill among others) in the area of the “Church rock” which probably are part of the former complex. Today, a newly-created path leads up the rock. The Church itself is almost always locked and not to visit. However, its still worth a climb (approx. 5 minutes), a "view from the top" in the country (and the Messara plain) surely compensated the small trouble.



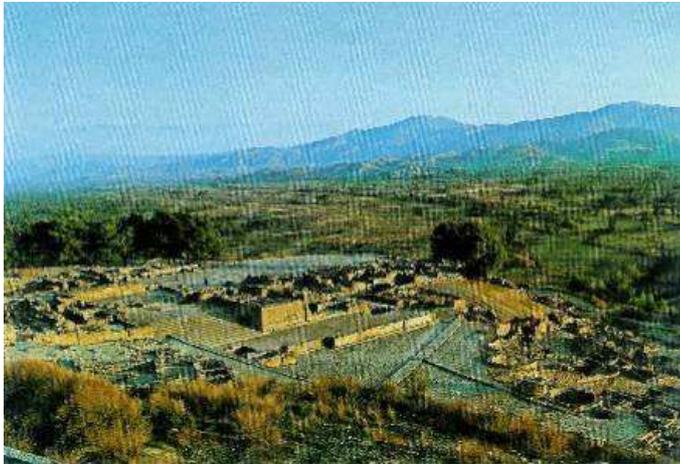
The figures of the upper series show (from left to right), the “plane tree alley” from Doraki to Harakas; the “Church rock” on the edge of the village (seen from the North) and a view from the south-western edge of the rock (where the old remains and the new church are located) into the Messara Plateau.

**Μονή Αγίου Ιωάννη  
Monastery of Ayios Ioannis**

The fig. left shows the rock (seen from the South); from this perspective the new Church and old building remains are visible.

**Pictures:** U. Kluge (25.12.2004)

The archaeological site of Faistos (Phaistos) is an about 100 m high hill area on the western edge of the Messara plateau. This hill was continuously inhabited since the Neolithic period (~ 2800 BC). The high point of his glory days began around 1900 BC, when the first Minoan Palace was built, which was destroyed around 1700 BC. The second Minoan Palace immediately rebuilt after the destruction of the first was destroyed around 1400 BC. The following ancient settlements that were built on the ruins of palaces include all subsequent periods (1400 - 700 BC) right up to the Roman period (67 BC - 330 AD). The archaeology story of Faistos is described in detail in almost any good travel guide so that we do relinquish here. However, the special discoveries like “the discus of Phaistos” and the tablets with **Linear A** scripture should be mentioned.



The upper series shows the archaeological site in Festos 25 years ago (left, 1980) and today (right, 2005); despite of still ongoing excavations, only a few changes (progress) are identified. Picture left: "reconstructed" complex remains, of which the former purpose is still unclear. Why a single stone block (in the yellow marker, right in the picture) isolated and heightened sitting on a smooth "polished mortar block", was unfortunately not to find out.

**Pictures:** U. Kluge / H. Eikamp (2005)

Many, in there floor plans preserved buildings and complexes are – similar as in Knossos and Malia - "reconstructed and rebuilt (in parts)". Apart from the "new" materials unfortunately too often used also the imagination of excavators (as it might have looked) is reflected in this "reconstruction". Some of reconstructions are to seen with some pessimism; especially since these assumptions are not with a probability bordering on certainty documented and professional discussible publications are missing. Based on scientific facts, "ideas or interpretations unfortunately often do not know any frontiers". The border between reality and mythology seems sometimes fluid.

Translated by Michael Bloechinger-Daeumling

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### Palaeoanthropology (VI): "Missing Link"? *Pierolapithecus catalanicus*



A fossil skeleton was recently recovered in Spain (near Barcelona), which could come from the last common ancestor of humans and apes – or at least of a close relative of this ancestor. The roughly 13 million year old skeleton, especially the skull, moves the fossil closer to humans and other primates and shows that the separation (monkey - human) could have occurred during this time. *Pierolapithecus catalanicus* presents ape-like as well as more primitive characteristics (such as strongly convex face). However it seems too early to talk about the much-quoted "missing link" of the long desired link between apes and humans. The fossil find is almost certainly a very close relative of the ancestor. - what but again does not mean that he has been the single common ancestor.

The fig. (right) show skulls (A/B) from *Pierolapithecus catalanicus* and (for comparison) two skull replica (recent) of *Gorilla gorilla* (left) and (right) *Pongo pygmaeus* (Orang-Utans) from the educational material collection of the publisher (Inv. No. 037 and 090).

