

**Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:**

Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

**Cave with scratch sketches at Asfendhou / Sfakia:**  
Petroglyphs from Neolithic period of Crete (6500 – 5500 BC)

**Primary note:** Although the Petroglyphs (see [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petroglyph>]), according to A. Petrocheilou (1992), have been examined by C. Papoutsakis, whose meaning is still unclear. Sure seems that the rock engravings are attributes from the Neolithic period (New Stone Age [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neolithic>]) and are approximately 7,500 to 8,500 years old. Further information can be found within our Forum at: [<http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/wbb2/thread.php?threadid=745>] (German only) and at LITERATURE at the end of this Info-leaflet.

The cave is located in the area of Skordoulákia near the village **Asfendhou / Sfakia** (South Crete). **Asfendhou** (Asfendtou, see fig. left) can be reached coming from **Chania** (towards **Sfakia**) when turning left after the village **Askifou** towards **Komitadhes** (for more information about the area around **Askifou** see our leaflet No. 267-08/E: Askifou Plateau [[http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter\\_en/267-08E.pdf](http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter_en/267-08E.pdf)]).

The cave is "locked" and not to be found without the help of locals. The key and a "tour" to the cave entrance can be get locally: on the village exit of Asfendhou look on the right side for the "last electricity pylon" and (approx 100 m besides the road) a located House(roof) [see fig. right]. Immediately at the electricity pylon a path (through a wire gate) leads to this house. It is inhabited by an older, very hospitable couple. The Lady of the house is the "key keeper" and leads interested parties to the cave entrance (a corresponding "obolus" for this service should be of course!). She shared with us during our visit, that in the last 10 years, no scientists visited the cave; the last visitors were Greek archaeologists from Athens, Chania and Iraklion.



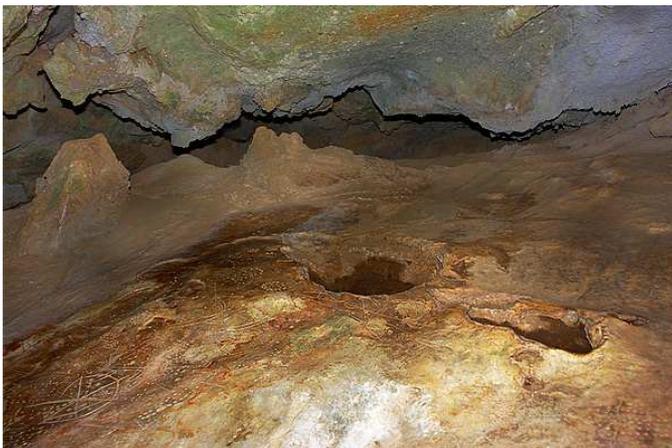
The way to the cave (500 m) leads east of the House through a small plane (thistle field, therefore wear sturdy shoes and long pants, etc.). Halfway, you pass a cistern which is about 15 m deep and whose "rope tracks in the rock" [see fig.] indicate the use of well over 100 years

**Pictures:** Maria Eleftheria (2009)

Access to the cave is located at the southern foot of the left (of the house) range (approx. 700 m above sea level). The cave was originally a “flat cave” under a overhanging rock (and served previously as shelter) of around 6 m wide and approximately 16 m almost horizontally depth with a height of about 2 m at the entrance to up to 1 m at the end of the cave. The entrance then was closed with boulders after the initial exploration of the cave and only an access of approx. 60 x 80 cm was left on the right side, which was closed with an iron bars (see fig. below). This "input" leads (crawling on the stomach) inside the cave (see figure below left). The ceiling height here is max 60 cm which seriously limits the "mobility".



The figural rock engravings are located on natural given surfaces, which in some places appear smoother, primarily located two adjacent, probably former “water holes”, which today are filled with soil (see fig. left); the larger [see right] has a diameter of approx. 23 cm while the minor measures approx. 16 cm in diameter. The individual engravings are a few just inches large and in different engraving techniques. The total area of engravings covers about 2 square meters of the cave floor. Due to the different engraving techniques and motives multiple development periods and scene groups can clearly be distinguished. The Petroglyphs are well preserved; this concerns both the deeper point engravings and the finer etching. See, for example, the following three figures on pages 3 and 4



In her book "Caves of Greece" mentioned *Anna Petrocheilou* (1992) the cave at Asfentou with only five sentences and underlines their prehistoric importance without any detail. She writes about "rock engravings of stone age people as representations of wild animals, arrow and bow, branches and much more". An interpretation of the probably older line engravings and the depressions arranged in circles is not to be found in this literature





**Petroglyphs** are known by countless people from all continents except Antarctica. Often the representations for the communities of which they are have high cultural and religious significance. **But no** general conclusions are **allowed**. Recognizing the importance of **Petroglyphs** is possible, if at all, only by excellent knowledge of culture which has established – **everything else are conjectures**. Let us take the **Petroglyphs** of Asfendhou currently in as what they are - a unique testament to a previously little explored **Neolithic** culture on Crete.

**Remark:** According to the uniqueness of the found **Petroglyphs** and its prehistoric importance in Crete, we **will** further research and **investigate** and **report** obtained results and / or lessons learned in our Forum “Caves”.

#### Literature:

**MAIS, K., SEEMANN, ROBERT & N. SYMENOIDIS (1978):** Preliminary report on findings of rock engravings in caves of Northern Greece. – Ann. Naturhistor. Mus. Wien, 81: 633-636, 1 Taf. (as pdf-file (5 Pages.) at: [\[http://www.biologiezentrum.at/pdf\\_frei\\_remote/ANNA\\_81\\_0633-0636.pdf\]](http://www.biologiezentrum.at/pdf_frei_remote/ANNA_81_0633-0636.pdf))

**PETROCHEILOU, A (1992):** Die Höhlen Griechenlands - ISBN 960-213-195-0, Pages 155-156.

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