

## General information

Generally speaking, the territory of Psiloritis favours visits and exploration throughout the year, thanks to its mild climate and temperate weather conditions. Spring and autumn are ideal, since one avoids winter snowfalls (which might last up to April) as well as the excessive summer heat. Most Geo-itineraries, E4 Path and points of interest in the Mnt Psiloritis territory are within areas of conservation providing habitats for sensitive flora and fauna species. In order to conserve endemic species of local flora and fauna, as well as other groups of organisms, it is forbidden to collect, cut, uproot, have in one's possession or transport specimens of any kind, and it is not allowed to trade in, harm, destroy or directly or indirectly exterminate such species at any stage of their life cycle.

## PSILORITIS GEOPARK INFORMATION CENTRE

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Tel.: (+30) 28340 31402, FAX: (+30) 28340 31058
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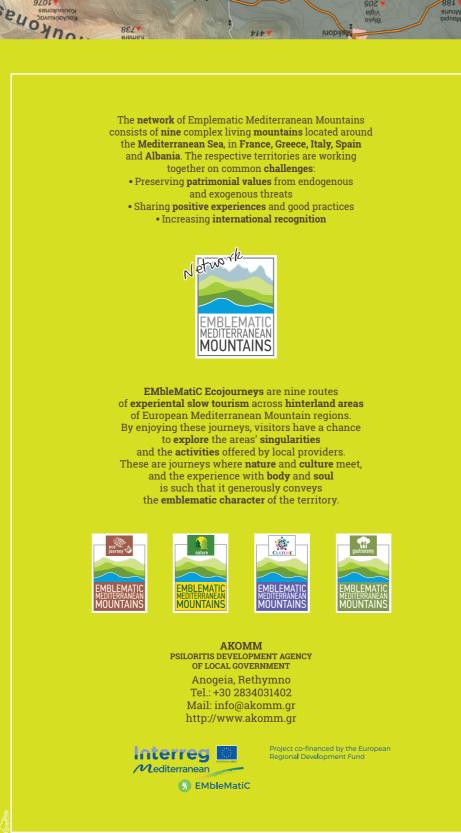
MUNICIPALITY OF MYLOPOTAMOS

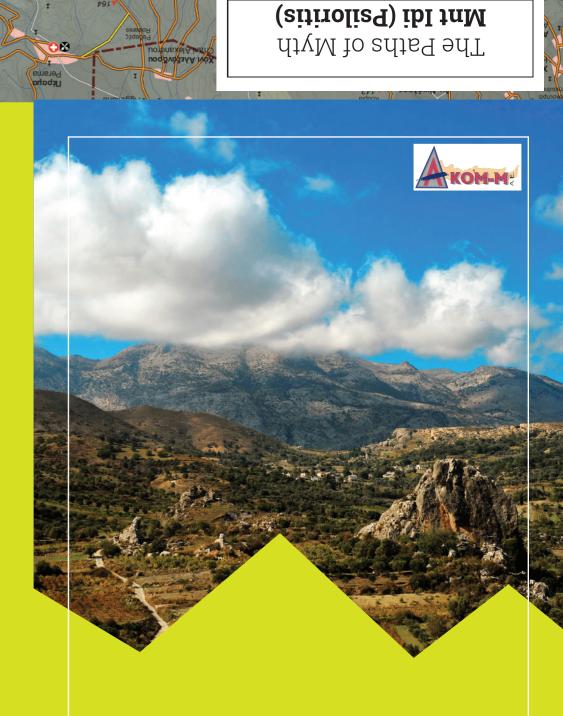
Tel: (+30) 28340 22462-22817, FAX: (+30) 28340 23138 www.geropotamos.gr | email: perama1@otenet.gr

## MUNICIPALITY OF PHAESTOS

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The Paths of Myth

Mnt Idi (Psiloritis)



#### Dear reader,

What you have in your hands is not only a tourist guide of Mnt Idi (Psiloritis), but also the result of an ambitious project carried out by the Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains network. Mnt Idi (Psiloritis) belongs to a group of Mediterranean mountain areas that work together in order to offer you a more intensive, authentic and sustainable travel experience. You can enjoy these experiences through 9 different Ecojourneys (see map above), which lead you to discover with all senses the hidden gems lying around some of the most amazing mountains across the Mediterranean basin.

Each Ecojourney offers you a route or a group of routes across the hinterland area of these mountains. Whilst enjoying this journey on foot, biking or riding, or using public transports, you have a chance to explore the areas' singularities and to discover activities, creations and festivities offered by locals. All routes are perfectly integrated in landscapes that still preserve the footprints and the spirit of their ancient cultures and gorgeous nature.

But there's more: because we know how important aspects such as sustainability and responsible tourism are for you, we are committed to offer you an experience that...

• Is located in hinterland areas that are outside of the usual (and overcrowded) touristic routes; • Has been conceived and developed mainly using and placing value on already existing infrastructure;

• Is a result of a participatory processes with local stakeholders who are aware of environmental good practices related to water and energy consumption, waste management, fostering local and seasonal products, and obtaining ecolabels;

• Is conceived to favour interaction with local people and producers; • Will allow you to live for a while the essence of a Mediterranean mountain, its nature, its culture and its people and traditions. Go for it, it's waiting for you!

Your EMbleMatiC Hosts

#### The EmbleMatiC ecojourneys

Canigó, France

full of natural scents.

www.canigo-grandsite.fr

Once you will have enjoyed the ecojourney of this guide, you will be very welcome to carry on visiting the others 8 slow tourism routes located accross the hinterland areas of the territories of the EMbleMatiC Mediterranean Mountains network. More information available on the network website www.emblematic-med.eu and below:

The foothills of the Canigó Come to explore, to taste and be amazed whilst enjoying everchanging views over the Sacred mountain of Catalans! The foothills of Canigó, the promise of a slow and curious walk

Çika, Albania From Çika highlands to the

A scenic route running in parallel to Çika crest, enriched with a bouquet of 5 extending paths to balconies and paysages, natural & cultural heritage and welcoming people, is the heart of this journey. http://himara.gov.al/

Pedraforca, Spain The seven faces of Pedraforca

mountain The seven faces of Pedraforca is a new tourist experience that will take you to discover all the secrets hidden by this magical mountain. From one day up to seven days to impregnate yourself! www.elbergueda.cat / www.visitbergueda.cat

Gran Sasso, Italy The Gran Sasso, a mountain of Saints and Warriors Ascend from the Tirino Valley to the Gran Sasso, the highest peak of the Appennini Mountains. Enjoy an emotional journey through nature,

ancient traditions, landscapes and

tasty local products. www.galgransassovelino.it / www.yesgransasso.com

#### Olympus, Greece "Olympios Zeus", Cultural Route

ways of Etna "Ginesta" and

"Vineyard" flowered fields

Etna, Italy

part of the world.

www.galetnaalcantara.org

A mythical route that combines grandiose environment with remarkable historical monuments in a unique harmony. Organized infrastructure and services offer experience that really worth the visit! www.pieriki-anaptixiaki.gr

An ecojourney through path-Discover traditions that have not changed for hundred years. Live with the locals, experience their culture

and everyday lifestyle whilst falling in love with this very special

### Serra de Tramuntana, Spain The route of Comte Mal

Under the shelter of the majestic Mount Galatzó, that rises above the sea, you will wander on a land of legends, through an outstanding cultural landscape, shaped over centuries by proud local people. https://caminsdepedra.conselldemallorca.cat/en/-/la-ruta-del-



comte-mal

Mnt (Psiloritis) Idi, Greece On the Paths of Myth Through the ecojourney of Mnt Idi (Psiloritis) visitors could discover the Paths of Myths, History, Cultural Heritage and Natural Wealth in order to meet the original side and timeless value of Crete.

Sainte-Victoire, France *In the mood for Sainte-Victoire* We want you to enjoy the

unexpected Sainte-Victoire and share

it's authentic mood. Experience our

who embody the spirit of our living

local way of life and meet people

www.psiloritisgeopark.gr

territory. www.fuveau-tourisme.com



### Things to consider before you start

Don't damage signaling and other itinerary facilities

Respect private property, incl. buildings, crop fields

• Be polite and fair with locals and other users.

• Respect the peace and calmness of the place

• Respect other hikers, riders and cyclists

• Respect cultural heritage (churches, ruins, walls, and other

• If you walk alone, tell someone of your itinerary. • Don't overestimate yourself and choose it according to your physical abilities.

• Choose the appropriate clothes and equipment • Check the weather forecast before leaving and adapt your route

according to the weather conditions Remember to take enough water.

**Every visitor must:** 

Being a responsible traveler and minimizing the impact your visit

sustainable tourism is a way of traveling and exploring a destination

creates is important for the sustainability of the area. After all,

Respect **nature** (**flora**, **fauna** and land) and

Stay on the **paths** and trails waymarked

Light **fires** only in the authorized areas

Don't leave any kind of waste

authorised **road**/areas

into a protected area

constructions)

and **camp** only in those authorized places

don't introduce alien species of flora and fauna

Keep **pets** always **on a leash** and under the control

Circulate and park **motorised vehicles** only in

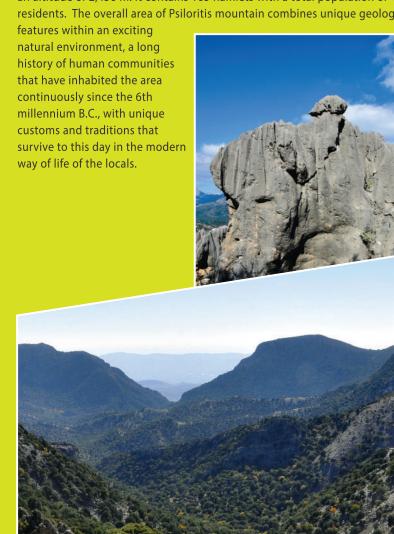
• Follow the rules and the instructions from the staff, if you enter

whilst respecting its culture, environment and people.

Report any breach to the corresponding authority

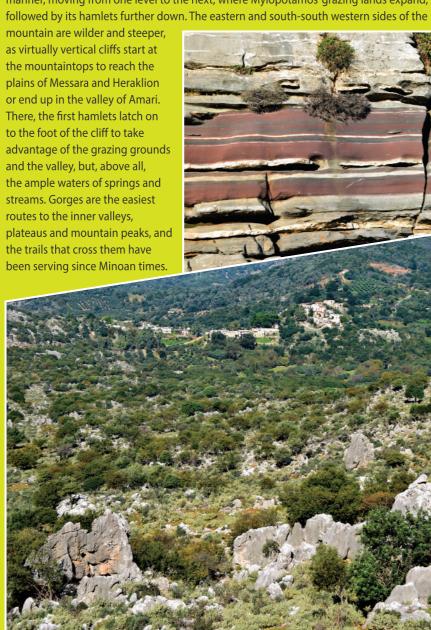
#### The identity of Psiloritis

The mountain Psiloritis covers the central part of Crete. It covers the altitudinal zone from sea level, in the north, to the highest peak of Crete, that of Timios Stavros, at an altitude of 2,456 m. It contains 165 hamlets with a total population of 40,000 residents. The overall area of Psiloritis mountain combines unique geological



#### The morphology

Mnt Psiloritis differs from all other mountains on Crete. It is relatively narrow and long with 5 of its peaks at an altitude exceeding 2,000 metres, and Timios Stavros Peak looming at 2,456 m. The mountain's north-western side subsides in an even and smooth manner, moving from one level to the next, where Mylopotamos' grazing lands expand,



#### Gorges

The geological structure of Mnt Psiloritis greatly favoured the creation of gorges which, in turn, contributed to the formation of this rich and versatile geomorphological landscape. To the east there are the gorges of Almiros, Gonies, Agia Irini in Mnt Krousonas and of Agios Antonios in Asites. To the south there are Rouvas,

Vorizia and Kamares; to the west, Platania and to the north Arkadi, Eleftherna, Margarites of Orthes in Mourtzana, Zoniana, and Mygia, in the area of Anogia On the cliffs and rocks of the canyons one comes across what may be the most significant wealth of the region, particular in spring and summer, enriching the atmosphere with wonderful scents.



#### Plateaus

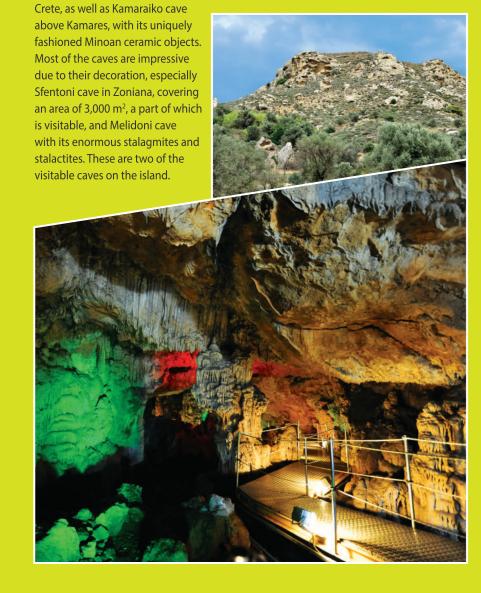
Many of the small and large plateaus of Mnt Psiloritis are oases of endemic plants and biodiversity, a haven preserving unique species of the flora and fauna of Crete. The most characteristic plateaus are those of Nida, Kambos Mygerou, Aravanes, Evdomo, Akolita, Stroumboulas and a large number of smaller plateaus scattered throughout

the mountain. The Petradolakia area is unique, with dozens of dolines creating a lunar landscape! Some plants cover an impressively large area, such as the endemic Nevrida (Polygonum *Idaeum*), a Cretan creeper that spreads out like a carpet over the entire plateau of Nida, alongside Crocuses. On the smaller plateaus of Petradolakia area grows the rarest plant on Crete and one of the four endemic genuses of Greece, Horstrissea, which is endangered due to overgrazing



### Caves

Undoubtedly, caves are the most impressive elements of the Psiloritis terrain, due to their number and form. From simple depressions in the surface (sinkholes and potholes), such as Voulismeno Aloni, to caves and rock shelters, such as Spiliara in Rouvas, underground rivers such as the Chonos in Sarcho, the Chainospilios in Kamaraki or the cave at Erfi, to bottomless chasms such as Tafkoura in Nida, with an estimated depth of 960 metres, the underground world of Mnt Psiloritis is a worthy competitor to the wealth of the surface. Some of the most important caves on Mnt Psiloritis are Idaeon Cave in Nida, where Creteborn Zeus was born and raised; this was the greatest sancturary of worship of Minoan



### **Hamlets - Architecture**

Mnt Psiloritis folk architecture is noteworthy and versatile, with a four thousand year tradition behind it; it has been shaped by both local geomorphology and climatic conditions and by various influences Crete received by, mainly, Mediterranean cultures, which the island encountered through the course of its history. A main feature of Mnt Psiloritis region is the variety of architectural styles and forms. Local folk architecture often co-exists with urban constructions and simplified neoclassic elements. Architecture is characterized by austerity, a sense of measure, a human scale and the use of local materials. Residences served the needs of a rural, animal-raising economy as well as those of humans' social life. Generally speaking, villages in the Psiloritis territory are mainly built on mountain and hill slopes. Local traditional architecture of remote Mnt Psiloritis hamlets up to the first half of the 20th century has its roots far back in the beginning of the island history, from both a stylistic and morphological aspect. In effect, the structure of hamlets in the beginning of the previous century hardly differed from the picture reflected in the ruins of Minoan hamlets that have been excavated.

## Mitata

Crossing the dirt mountainous roads or paths leading to Mnt Psiloritis grazing lands, there are the 'mitata' (singular: 'mitato'), seasonal shepherd residences-shelters. Their morphological and stylistic similarity to Minoan dome-like (bee-hive) tombs indicates their ancient origins.



## **Psiloritis Geopark**

The geographic location, natural beauty, exceptionally favourable climate conditions for settlement and, mainly, the abundance of natural resources of Mnt Psiloritis region, as well as the unique and complicated geological processes that have been recorded in its rocks, make it a virtual laboratory for the study of geological phenomena, that contribute to the better understanding of the evolution of Crete in general. Psiloritis Geopark was founded in 2001 by AKKOM – Psiloritis Development Agency of Local Government S.A., with the scientific support of the Natural History Museum of Crete. Due to its rich biodiversity, beautiful landscape and undisputed history and tradition, Psiloritis Geopark was incorporated, as soon as it was founded, into the Network of European Geoparks and, soon, into the Global Network of National Geoparks of UNESCO. At present Psiloritis Geopark is actively participating in global efforts for the preservation and promotion of the environment, natural and cultural heritage, as well as for viable, local growth through Geotourism and other forms of alternative tourism. The basic elements of the Geopark are the number of geological monuments in the region, its unique Natural environment with its biodiversity wealth and number of endemic species, and its Cultural environment, namely, culture, history, customs and traditions that reveal the long standing and harmonious coexistence of humanity and nature on Psiloritis Mountain.

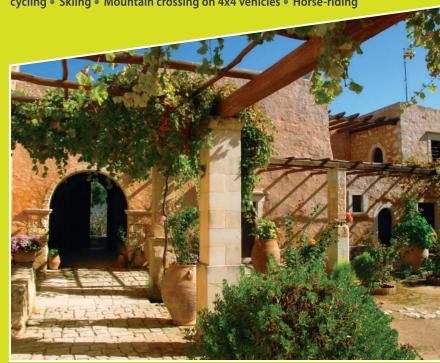


## **Tourism infrastructure**

The rich natural and cultural environment of the Psiloriti territory has been the basis for tourism development in the region in recent years. At numerous hamlets there are agrotourism accommodation facilities and traditional guest houses of very high quality standards. The Geo-itineraries of Mnt Psiloritis and Mnt Koukoulonas offer an unprecedented experience even to visitors who are not looking out for specific activities. The E4 European long distance path runs throughout Mnt Psiloritis with routes that are ideal for nature lovers and hiking aficionados. To meet the increasing demand for natural and forest recreation tourism in the region, infrastructure and amenities have been put to place and offer geo-itineraries, nature-appreciation and cultural routes, forest recreational sites, camping sites and various other facilities catering for educational activities, such as small thematic museums, Environmental and Educational Information Centres, Info kiosks, etc. Generally speaking, the broader Psiloritis territory is ideal for outdoor activities throughout the year, due to the mild climate and temperate weather conditions. Spring and autumn are the best times for hiking and mountain climbing as well as various other forms of alternative tourism provided in the Natural Park area. Visitors can seek these out at specialized agencies offering comprehensive tourism packets.

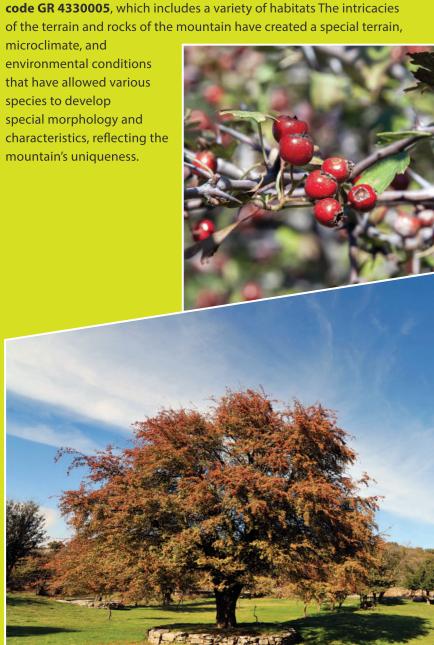
• Geotourism • Ecotourism • Agrotourism • Cultural tourism • Wine tourism

• Hiking-Trekking • Gorge crossing • Canyoning – Rappel • Speleology • Climbing • River Trek – River crossing • Hang gliding – Paragliding (parapente) • Mountain cycling • Skiing • Mountain crossing on 4x4 vehicles • Horse-riding



# Nature

Most of the Psiloritis region is included in the NATURA 2000 list, under **code GR 4330005**, which includes a variety of habitats The intricacies



## Flora

The geological and climatic versatility of the Psiloriti is clearly reflected on the various types of vegetation: Trees, at times forming small clusters and at others extensive forests on mountainsides, in ravines and on small plateaus. In the closed valley Rouvas, apart from the holly oak forest, there is also one of the few habitats of the only endemic tree of Crete, Ambelitsa (Cretan Zelkova). Sparser forests with impressive Cypress trees and rugged pines are mainly encountered on the southern edges of the mountain, while deciduous acorn trees are present throughout the mountain mass standing alone or in small or larger clusters, such as those near the village of Margarites and in Vroulidia (Anogia region). Northern European Hawthornes and pear trees are very impressive, especially when they bear fruit. During spring and summer the lower slopes of Mnt Psiloritis is filled with scents: Thorny brooms, Genista acanthoclada, Winter Savory, various thymes, sage, thorny burnet, and many other species create a colourful paradise. At higher altitudes bushes, mainly due to wind and snow, are stubbier and very spiny. This is the domain of Greek spiny spurges, astragalus, Astracantha cretica, Berberis cretica and the renowned crocus seen on Minoan pottery. Maquis vegetation includes carob trees, wild olive trees, Phoenicean juniper, oleander, arbutus, species that can withstand the drought of the Cretan summer. As a rule, they have tough leathery leaves and deep roots. They are everywhere, either standing alone or in large impenetrable clusters of bushes, such as those created by heathers and arbutus shrubs on the northern slopes of the mountaim.

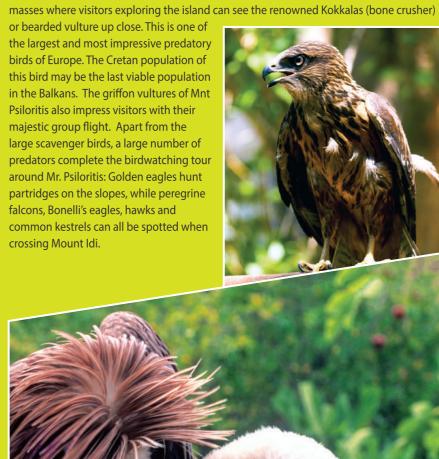
# Crete's long isolation from mainland areas has led to fauna that includes many

species caught in the process of speciation or, at least, significant differentiation from corresponding mainland populations. This is the hunting ground of one of the last remaining populations of the Cretan wildcat, the phantom creature for wildlife explorers of Crete. All of Crete's reptiles (geckos, lizards, and the island's four snake species), as well as most of Crete's mammal species, such as the Hare, the Spiny Mouse, the Cretan Badger, the weasel and the ferret can be encountered here.



## Birds

The bird fauna of the Psiloritis is considered very significant, as Mnt Psiloritis is a truly Important Area for Birds. Hundreds of large and small birds nest, hunt and rest here after migration or find hiding places to mate. Mnt Psiloritis is the first of the Cretan mountain



Infrastructural Table																								
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First aid - Infirmary Pharmacy € Bank - ATM Post Office

1 Information Point

Information Point

Handicrafts Store

W Grocery Store

Traditional Cafe

Restaurant - Tavern Hotel - Rent room Traditional Lodgings Minoan Monuments Prehistoric & Classical

 Gorge Cave Landscapes of Outstanding Natural

Church / Monastery

Museum - Collections

Antiquities Roman Monuments **Byzantine Monuments** Architecture

**Miking Trails K** Climbing