



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

For the sake of Nature, Environment and Crete
(Environmental awareness: We all are responsible)



Not without reason people of European industrialized countries are increasingly sensitive to the problems of nature and environment caused by them, and thus not only harms the environment but also themselves. The consequences are shown to us on a daily manner.

So it constantly surprises that in those countries where people usually life agrarian and would have a much closer rapport with nature, exactly not have this relationship. Perhaps they did not need this earlier. The waste were mostly organic nature and from low-emission as well as the packaging materials. Therefore a rubbish collection was not necessary. Waste was disposed somewhere where it moulders quickly and even caters for fertilisation.



However, in our present consumption and packaging society such old habits have fatal consequences. Even in the EU country Greece, in particular on the historic island Crete, people still simply throws their trash into the nature. However, in our time this waste consists to the largest part plastic material and other, very slowly rotting substances which are mostly highly loaded with pollutants. So wild dumping grounds can be found all other the place, shaping the landscape in a negative way and have a no visible destructive impact on the environment and nature (and ultimately to human). Each Crete traveller probably saw examples of it. However, here some typical examples (by *K.Eckhardt*: www.online-guide-kreta.de):

The figure in the title bar shows a sign of a natural preserve ("Red Butterfly"), which has been used by weapon enthusiast Cretans as target; also shoot traffic signs are no rare picture on Crete. The figure left shows a wild landfill site at the "Old route" Agios Nikolaos - Malia (Northern Crete); it is not the only one on this route! The figure to the right shows the "garbage bed" of a stream at Timbaki (South Crete); the eroded pollutants attain with the water directly into the karst underground or in the sea!

"During my last visit at Crete I drove behind a local, who suddenly veer to the left without an apparent reason. Short after three plastic bags with waste flew out of the window over the bridge parapet down to the others already there. Crete is certainly not my island, nevertheless I felt compelled to proclaim my "disapprobation" (in his vernacular) to the driver; "he did not understand well at all what I actually wanted from him".

A different experience was also typical: "In a particular village, during the summer, it is common to bring the garbage to a dry stream, while during the winter, when the river is active, the rubbish is disposed to the sea. I sat with friends in the Kafenio when a Pick-Up of a local, loaded with waste past the premise. One of my friends jumped up and gave a loud and long talk to the driver, about how it is possible to bring the garbage still to the stream bed; there is a rubbish collection in place now.



However, he showed unimpressed and went on. When my acquaintance returned to the table, I started to express my admiration for him and his awoke environmental awareness, as he quickly re-

claims me to Cretan facts. "Nico, you know, by the eternal wind the whole light waste from the River flies always to my property, which is just next door, this is really unnecessary".

If locals from tourist regions are interviewed on this issue – the tourist leave all this dirt. This is certainly a problem but not causative. Environmental awareness just begins to germinate on Crete and it is everyone’s duty to lead with best example to contribute for sensitisation of the environmental and nature conservation. Therefore a forum has been set up (www.kreta-umweltforum.de) which serves as a platform for discussion and also document where development leads to. A start is probably made with the provided implementation of the new EU directives, their compliance and effect is in our behaviour towards our natural heritage, our all livelihood. To preserve and protect is our obligation.



The figures show "car scrap"-yards in the (Nature) preserve area Analipsi (left) and Drassi / North Crete (right); Oil, petrol and coolant etc. can freely get into the ground and groundwater. **Pictures: H. Eikamp (2003/2004)**

"Everything irreparable remains in the "botany" and is left to the forces of nature to worry about the rest. The EU old car regulation is unfortunately still a "foreign word" in Crete". – says a posting within the CRETE Environment forum. Here you can also read a post from Greenpeace: "the Koupoupitos Gorge on Crete, just 200 m away from the sea, serves military bases, hospitals and industrial concerns as cheap address to dispose their toxic waste." These illegal practices equally endanger residents and environment of the coastal region. Despite a verdict of the European Court of Justice against Greece from 1992, to stop these activities, nothing happened expect the further dispatch of rubbish. After 8 years (in 2000), the European Court of Justice takes draconian steps now for the first time in its history. Because Greece disregarded the judgment, the country must pay a daily penalty of approx. 20,000 €."Virgin territory" has been entered with this decision because only since 1993 when the agreement from Maastricht entered into force it is possible to pronounce sanctions against an EU Member State. In any case, the court made an example with this decision and notorious polluters can not hide behind the bureaucracy in the future. Finally an excerpt from a contribution in the CRETE Environment forum stating: "that it is now more than ever necessary that all sectors of society must contribute to environmental protection" and all of us take up the cause; - because: "today our responsibility goes as far as our power to destroy - that our responsibility is now greater than ever before"!



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