

**Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:**
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:**Jeep-Tour: Fodele - Ahlada - Rogdia / North Crete**
Sea squill, sea onion (*Urginea maritima*)

About 15.5 miles west of **Iraklion** (on the National Road ["New Road"] towards **Rethymno**, is right the junction to **Fodele**, the alleged birth-place of the painter *El Greco*. After the exit and drive through the underpass of the National Road we reach a crossroads with 2 signs: right (1.8 miles) to **Fodele** and left (4.3 miles) to **Ahlada** which we follow for the tour start.

A previous "visit" of the village of **Fodele** is recommended. Thereby you cross the fertile vale of *Pantomantris-River*, which flows through the village. The town offers in many shops ceramics and especially handmade woven goods (blankets and cloths). The small church (outside the village) can be reached while crossing the bridge (within the village, right) and than right again towards north until the today desert settlement "*Lumbiniés*". The Panagia built from quarrystone is a cross dome roof chapel from the 13th Century which is built on the foundations of an early Christian basilica from the 8th Century. The frescoes inside date back (based on a inscription in the Southern Cross arm) to the early 14th Century (1323).



The total distance of the tour (to **Rogdia**, without the side trip to **Fodele**, 3.7 miles) amounts to 7.5 miles (which offers to walk also), whereby the restricted area around VASSILIKO (734 m) will be bypassed by a third. The route to **Ahlada** is asphalted on the first 1.8 miles; pass over into a gravel road which is fixed with concrete on the gradients. After **Ahlada**, the route to **Rogdia** (5 km) goes over a (well constructed) road which leads through a worth seeing landscape into a watery realm lowland. Numerous sources invite here to refresh from the dusty Trail tour. Half of the track is completed, when the bridge over the (dry during summer) river is crossed, on whose shores many cisterns are arranged as reservoirs. The last 1.8 miles to **Rogdia** then lead uphill on a widening road. From the destination **Rogdia**, the way back to the national road is well signed.

Right before the entrance to **Rogdia** branches a bad gravel road, which leads to the convent *Moni Savanthainón* and the rock-church *Agios Savvas*. For those who like to do this tour (back and forth approx. 6 miles), please note that there is no alternative route and you must take the same way back.



The pictures above are showing (from left to right) the gravel road with bridge over the river, Cistern beaten in the rocks at the river bed and a bordered spring halfway left of the road. The yellow mark shows the spring section, here as detail image at the top of the right figure.

Sea squill, sea onion (*Urginea maritima*)

The sea onion grows in coastal areas of Crete (and the other Mediterranean), often under very harsh conditions. To the main blooming time in September they become millions on the slopes of coastal mountain zones, often with 3 to 5 plant per square meter. She is known since ages for the heal effect of their onions (cut into slices and dried), which is still used for some cough medicine. However it is very toxic in large quantities. The 3.5 – 4.8 inch wide onions are half in the Earth, train minor onions in old age and sprout several, wide, up to 23 inch long leaves with a wavy margin during spring. The strong, depending on location 12 to 47 inch high spike, shows a variety of star like, white flowers. These are only about 0.4 inch wide and have thin stems.



Pictures are showing a mountainside cluttered with sea onions (left) and in detail and extract (right) flower spike, single flower and onion with minor onions.

Pictures: U. Kluge (2004)