

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

## The Orthodox Easter in Crete

### More important than Christmas



The Cretans celebrate the Orthodox Easter in their "Parea", the village and family community. For the Orthodox Church is the "resurrection of Christ" more important than "the Nativity"! 40 days before the holy week begins with Lent the preparation for Easter whose high point is the Passion Week. During Lent, the "Greek Canon" is prayed in the churches which embraces 250 verses and which was submitted by the former Hymnologist and Metropolitan of Gortyna, Andrew of Crete (650 - 740 ad). Traditionally the "Easter eggs" are coloured red on Maundy Thursday (evenings), because on this day Christ was crucified; the red colour symbolizes the blood of Christ.

On Good Friday (Megali Paraskevi), the "grave of Christ" (Epitaphios) in the churches is decorated by girls and women with flowers, which then is symbolically carried through the streets during the "funeral procession" (candle procession) taking place in the evening.



Women decorate the "grave of Christ" in the church of Kato Gouves (left); centre picture: the "Epitaphios" after work is done. Right: the priest lead the candle procession through the streets of the village (in Kato Gouves around the Church).

**Pictures:** U. Kluge (29.04.2005)

In the night of Holy Saturday (Megalo Sabbato) to Easter Sunday (Pasha), the "resurrection" service is taking place throughout. At midnight, the lights in the churches will be killed shortly, and the priest passes the "Holy light", which comes from the tomb of Christ, to the faithful. Then the priest proclaims the resurrection of Christ with the words "Christos Anesti". The response of believers is "alithós Anesti", he is truly risen. The services take mostly up to 2.00 a.m. After the service the believers start their way back home, everyone with a burning candle, the "Holy light", where they draw with the candle soot a triple cross on the top bar of the doorframe before crossing the threshold of the House.

With the arrival in the house, also lent is over and the "Magiritza" is served, this special Easter soup is made from the innards of the Paschal lamb. On Sunday morning at an early stage then begins the grilling of the Paschal lamb in preparation for the festivities.



Already in the afternoon of Holy Saturday the stake to the "burning of Judas" are prepared (left), accompanied by continuous "firecrackers", that is until well after midnight. At midnight, the priest then announces the "resurrection of Christ" after the resurrection service (centre picture: here from the "balcony" of the Church in Kato Gouves). Hereafter the stake is inflamed and the Judas burned (again with crackers and more fireworks).  
**Pictures:** U. Kluge (30.04.2005)

In Crete, many places have their own celebration traditions that continue also on Easter Monday. It should be noted that the Easter festival, in a similar form as now, was committed even in pre-Christian times. At that time the "resurrection of nature" was celebrated.

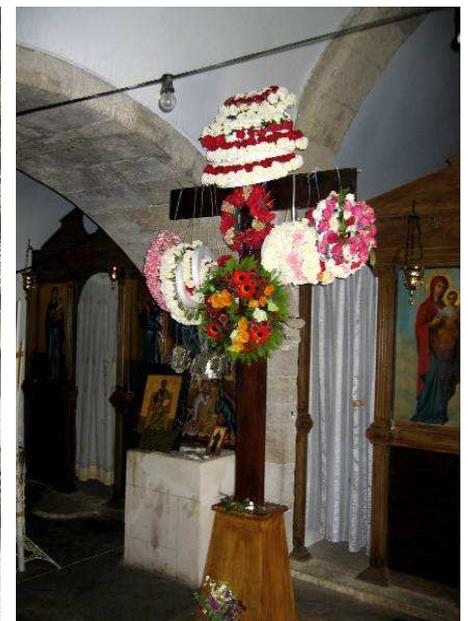
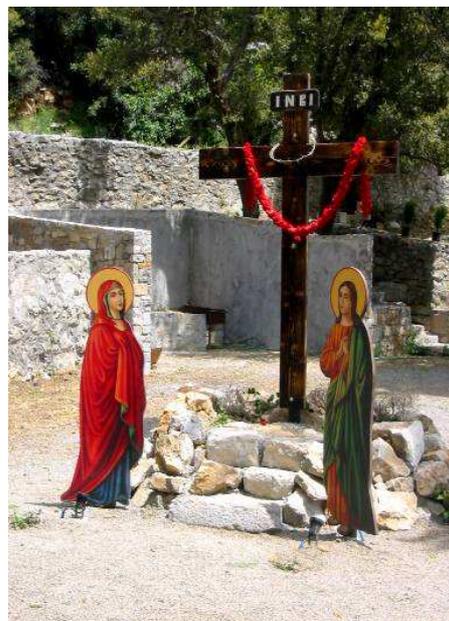
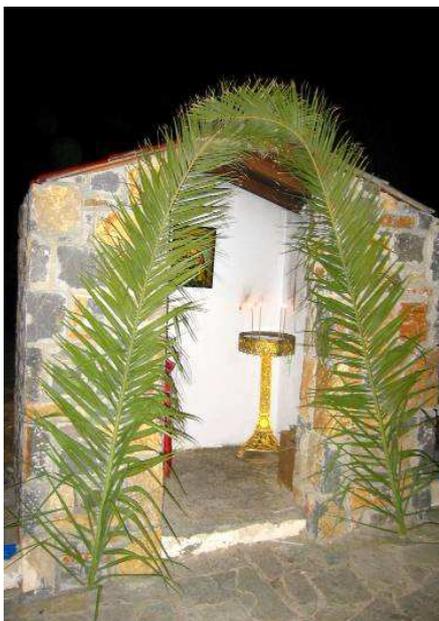


Fig. left shows a small, palm branch decorated candle chapel on the beach Chapel in Gouves. Centre image: Easter decorated cross on the forecourt of the Church of the Monastery Vidianis in the Lassithi plateau and right, in the chapel Afendi Christou Metamorfofi on the peak of Mount Jouchtas.

**Pictures:** U. Kluge (01./02.05.2005)