

**Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:**  
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:**Zoniana: an old and tradition-rich village on Crete  
with a long historical foretime.**

(Memorial-day of the burn-down of the village by the Turks in 1867)



**Preliminary remark:** if you look for further information (contributions) about Zoniana, we recommend the visit of our web site. Within the Forum “Country and People” (Land und Leute), when using the search function with the word “Zoniana” you will find 10 hits with 25 contributions (with something around 4.000 visits), e.g. “Cannabis farm in Zoniana”; “Legal proceedings to Zoniana”; YouTube movie about Zoniana – “Our village could never be occupied”; “Vendetta”; “Heavy penalties in the case Zoniana”; “Zoniana: a village at Crete”; “Wax museum in Zoniana”; “31<sup>st</sup> of July: Cheese day in Zoniana” and “Book about Zoniana” (therefore see also at [<http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/wbb2/search.php?searchid=7149>]).

Our past reporting to Zoniana on our homepage (based on sources of the European media and in particular by the Greek press, broadcast and television) drew no positive picture of the place and aroused the impression: “Zoniana is a robber nest and tourists should keep away from this village!” This naturally produced contradiction from the “Zoniana locals” and thus we decided to convince ourselves on site and to see what is really going on there. Due to our NLUK contacts and by Facebook friends we then received an invitation to Zoniana and the possibility of making our own „picture“ after the slogan: Form your own opinion before you judge!

After our attendance in Zoniana we had to revise our (surely by the media reports produced, prejudiced) opinion: Zoniana is a tradition-rich village at Crete with a long historical foretime and a worth to see place, which can be recommended without any reservation to all tourists! Beside many objects of interest (like e.g. the Wax Museum, on which we will report with a separate info-leaflet) you can find typically Cretan taverns in Zoniana, in which each guest is welcome and is taken up friendly and politely. In the contact with the local you feel: not a shred of danger or “robber nest”!!!

**A day in Zoniana:**

Accompanied by a further NLUK member (*Manos Karabinakis* as a interpreter), we drove to Zoniana on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2011. There we were preconcerted to an dialogue with the former village school teacher und book author *Dimitris Parasiris* (see image: right in the picture); to talk about his book about Zoniana, the probably oldest village at Crete, see also within our forum at: [<http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/wbb2/thread.php?threadid=3532>].



We held a very open and probably honest conversation with *Dimitris* and sum up the result, that Zoniana is not different to other villages on Crete (e.g. Anogia). Without denying the “Cannabis finds” he emphasizes that the medial reporting was unilateral and media-hyped (partly even consciously “faked”) to produce headlines and were able to provide verifiable examples. Obviously offence of individuals were assigned to the “whole village” and developed to a press campaign.

There was no solid evidence for “criminality in the village, even as tourist you can leave your car unlooked (with the key in the ignition) on the street without having fear of thefts (which we cannot do at home).

Among other things we experienced that the 9<sup>th</sup> of May is a memorial day of the burn-down of Zoniana from 1867 by the Turks and that this day (celebrated like every year) now, since 2011, is an “official memorial day” and to its ceremonies we also have been invited.

Background of the anniversary is „the theft “of a cannon by the people of Zoniana. In order to regain the cannon, the Turks tortured and killed many inhabitants – without result, whereupon the whole village was burned down. This happened about a half year after „the Arkadi incident “ (therefore see our leaflet 151-06/E at: [[http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter\\_en/151-06E.pdf](http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter_en/151-06E.pdf)]) were also 21 humans from Zoniana were burned. By the way, “Old-Greek” was spoken in Zoniana during “the Turkish time”; “New-Greek” since the German occupation; by the way, nothing is to be felt of an aversion to Germans – to the contrary (“war is war and schnapps is schnapps”).

The ceremonies to the anniversary began at 12:30 o'clock with a service in the central church, which also became transferred by loudspeakers to the church courtyard (where „the monument“ with „the cannon“ stands). After the intending words of the priest and the mayor also a historical pregnant speech took place from *Dimitris Parasiris*. Afterwards all present assembled on the church courtyard in front of the monument for the wreath-laying ceremony (see pictures below). High-ranking representatives of administration, police, fire-brigade, land and naval forces and not least the children of the place laid down wreaths/rings. A minute of silence took place after the wreath-laying ceremony; after their conclusion the Greek national anthem was sung.



Young people and kids met on the street for a parade through the village (see pictures below).

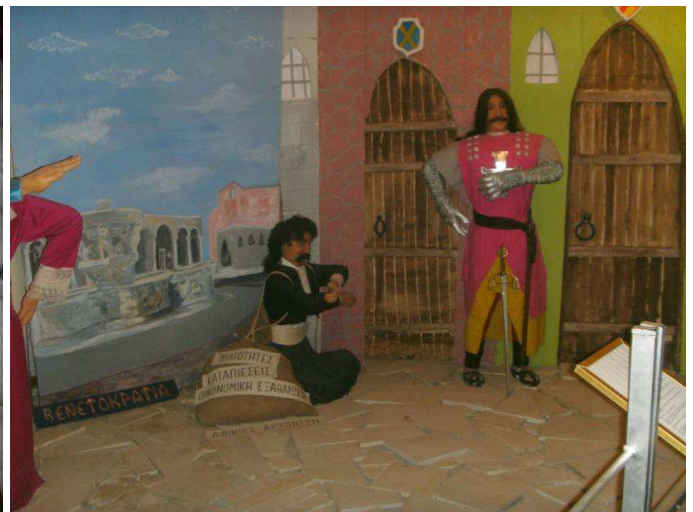


We followed the parade with our hosts over the village square [see pictures] (which thereby pointed to further characteristics of the village) to a tavern on the village edge.



Here a meal was prepared for the invited guests, which was “sponsored” of the village inhabitants. In the late afternoon then „the whole village meets “ likewise to eat and drink. Wine, cheese and other delicious, first of all much meat was dished up. We had to forfeit after the „starters“ - and also think slowly of the way back, a beautiful and experience-rich day draw to an end.

We also visited a cheese factory in the village together with Dimitris Parasiris (see picture below left), after we pay a visit to the Wax Museum (picture below right)



We took leave from our hosts, thanked for the friendly admission and much information's and left Zoniana - with the certainty and the promise, „we come back!“

The municipal territory of Zoniana is located in the northern foothills of the Psiloritis massif on approximately 630 m height. Zoniana lays approximately half-way between the island capital Iraklion and the prefecture seat in Rethymno. It's about 32 miles away from Rethymno and 28 miles from Iraklion.

Finally some (brief) commentated picture impressions of Zoniana on page 4



A house on the main road



Assembly in front of the memorial



The Turkish cannon; in Zoniana since 144 years



Pick-up of the priest in "NATO olive-green"



Pictures from the church courtyard during (left) and after the service (right)