

Emblematic **M**editerranean **M**ountains as **C**oastal destinations of excellence (**EMbleMatiC**)

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CASE STUDY, PP7 IDA MOUNTAIN



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WP3 – Studying

Activity A3.3 Conduction of the in-depth study of the criteria composing the emblematic dimension of the EMM

Final version – March 2018

SUMMARY

This case study is drafted in the framework of the WP3 “Studying” of EMbleMatiC project.

This document presents the recording of the elements of the emblematic dimension of mountain IDA based on the template produced by PP4’s subcontractor (ETAM), approved and adapted by the project’s Study Scientific Committee (LP1, PP4, PP6, PP8).

This case study document will consist a reference document for **the overall in-depth study of the emblematic dimension of the project’s touristic dimension** whilst it will constitute the emblematic dimension characterization document for mountain IDA.

The case study is operative in correlation with D.3.3.2-Report on participative workshop, results of which have been incorporated in it.

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Project Ref: 594 | 1MED15_3.1_M12_272

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
PART I	5
<i>I.1 INTRODUCTION.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>I.2 PHYSICAL AND HUMAN GEOGRAPHY OF THE MOUNTAIN</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>I.3 SPATIAL COHESION</i>	<i>9</i>
PART II	11
<i>C1 PROUD LOCAL PEOPLE</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>C2 INSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>C3 REPUTATION.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>C4 LEGENDS AND MYTHS</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>C5 POWER OF INSPIRATION</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>C6 PICTURESQUE LANDSCAPE.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>C7 PARTICULAR ECOSYSTEMS</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>C8 MEDITERRANEAN CULTURAL IDENTITY.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>C9 SUSTAINABILITY AND ANTHROPOGENIC ENVIRONMENT</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>C10 HISTORIC PLACES</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>SYNTHESIS OF THE EXTRAORDINARY-EMBLEMATIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MOUNTAIN.....</i>	<i>31</i>
PART III	34
<i>III.1 TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUPPLY.....</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>III.2 TOURISM OPERATORS</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>III.3 TOURISM DEMAND.....</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>III.4 TOURISM IMPACT.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>III.5 PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES.....</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>III.6 PARTNER'S PERCEPTION OF THE TOURISM VISION OF THEIR TERRITORY</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>IV.1 SWOT ANALYSIS REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN EMBLEMATIC SLOW TOURISM PRODUCT (ECO-ITINERARY)</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>IV.2 INDICATION OF IDEAL LOCATIONS FOR AN ECO-ITINERARY AND POSSIBILITIES TO ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS.....</i>	<i>42</i>
ANNEX	51
<i>TABLES AND DIAGRAMS.....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>PHOTOGRAPHS.....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>SELF-EVALUATION TABLE</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>BIBLIOGRAPHY</i>	<i>55</i>

Executive Summary

This case study is drawn up in the context of “EMbleMatiC” program implemented through the INTERREG -MED Program 2014-2020.

The central strategic objective of this program is the characterization of emblematic mountains of the Mediterranean as destinations of excellence. This goal is directly linked to the specific objective 3.1 "To enhance the development of sustainable and responsible coastal and maritime tourism in the Mediterranean area" INTERREG program-MED. The direct link of the objective of the program "EMbleMatiC" with the objective of INTERREG 3.1-MED derives from the effort to achieve sustainable development of regions through coordinated and targeted methods and practices, in terms of integrated management of coastal tourism.

The first part of the study is a general introduction and presentation of the area and its human geography.

The second part will include a detailed analysis of the emblematic criteria of the mountain as they are reflected in Phase A of the study “EMBLEMATIC DIMENSION – INITIAL DIAGNOSIS PERSPECTIVE - OPERATIVE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROCESS OF EMBLEMATIC SINGULARITIES QUALIFICATION (OPERATIVE VERSION)”. The criteria that will be analyzed are: C1 Spatial cohesion, C2 Institutional recognition, C3 Reputation, C4 Legends and myths, C4 Legends and myths, C6 Picturesque landscape, C7 Particular ecosystems, C8 Mediterranean cultural identity, C9 Sustainability and anthropogenic environment and C10 Historic places.

In the third part, the tourism sector in the region will be analyzed and a Swot Analysis will be performed which includes the weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and threats of tourism sector in Mt. Psiloritis.

The case study concludes with the presentation of eco-paths which will meet a significant number of criteria analyzed in the previous parts of the study and the potential involvement of local bodies in the process of drafting a new tourism model.

PART I

1.1 Introduction

Mountain Idi or Psiloritis is a mythical place, a rare habitat and a very important geological formation, a set of exceptional aesthetic landscapes. It is a symbol for Crete and a sustained source of inspiration. A historic place with a rich cultural heritage. Symbol of freedom and resistance.

At the same time, it is a vibrant residential and productive area where thousands of people live and work, a place of culture and recreation which attracts thousands of visitors every year.

The mountain of Psiloritis is located in the Central Crete and is Crete's highest mountain, with a peak at 2.456,00 meters.

Psiloritis or Mt Idi (a word deriving from the ancient Greek word *Ida* meaning the wooded mountain) is identified with mythology, legends, history, culture, production and human activities as well as the social characteristics of the wider region.

The presence of the mountain has influenced the anthropogeography of the region. People living under the presence and the shadow of the mountain have developed a special social and cultural identity while at the same time the mountain itself decisively contributed to the development of economic activities over time.

1.2 Physical and human geography of the mountain

The region of Psiloritis is administratively attached to the Regional Units of Heraklion and Rethymno and to the Region of Crete. The area covers a total of about 1.497 km² and its population is 47.578 inhabitants. The area is the 17,95% of the total area of Crete and corresponds to the 7,64% of its population.

The area is divided in Municipalities which consist of 14 Municipal Units and 117 Municipal / Local Communities.

The municipalities of the region are: Amari, Anogia, Mylopotamos, and part of the Municipalities of Rethymno, Ag. Vasileios, Phaistos, Gortyna, Malevizi. The departments of these Municipalities are located in the physical and functional region of the mountainous complex of Psiloritis and they share cohesive characteristics in terms of economic and productive activity, demographics, social organization etc.

The average population density (inhabitants / area in km²) is low and is estimated to be approximately 32 persons per km², while the region is characterized in almost its total as mountainous and in one part as less-favoured. More specific, 25 Local Communities are characterized as less-favoured areas while 89 as Mountainous from a total of 117 areas. The population of the mountain areas (30.785 inhabitants) corresponds to 64,7% of the total population of the intervention zone.

According to the Greek Statistical Office, the areas that are characterized as Mountain Local and Municipal Communities are 57 in total, representing 61% of the area and 50 % of the population in

the region of Psiloritis. Still, submountainous Local and Municipal Units are 41 and represent 29% of the area and 22% of the population of the area. Overall therefore, the characterized as mountain and sub-mountain areas cover the 90% of the total area and are home to 72% of the inhabitants corresponding to the area.

Climate

The climate of the intervention area as well as that of Crete has the characteristics of continental-Mediterranean climate. Its main characteristics are mild winters, hot and dry summers and extended sunshine throughout the year. Common are also the warm and humid air masses from the Southwest while summer months prevailing winds are the north winds. In the region of Psiloritis due to its relief, climate phenomena are slightly different.

Summer is warm and warmest month is July with maximum temperature 30° C and minimum 22°C. The summer season is from June till September and July and August are almost dry. Sunshine duration is approximately 300 days per year.

Winter usually begins in mid-December. In lowland and sub-mountainous areas is mild while in mountainous areas is cold with heavy snowfalls. Psiloritis is snow-covered until spring while in ravines and sunless spots the snow doesn't melt until summer. Most rainfalls occur during December and January. In winter the maximum temperature is 16°C and the minimum 9°C.

Natural Environment

The natural environment of the region is of particular interest. The high relief of the area and mainly the geomorphology of Psiloritis favored vegetation and the presence of a large variety of fauna.

Flora



The island of Crete is one of the main centers of endemism in national, Mediterranean and European level. Specifically, from the 1.130 endemic plants of Greece, 268 of them are found in Crete, and 168 of these plants grow in Psiloritis.

Characteristic are the Dittany of Crete (*Origanum dictamnus*), the endemic red tulip (*Tulipa doefleri*), crocus (*Crocus oreocreticus*), Psiloritis Knotgrass (*Polygonum idaeum*), Cretan Zelkova (*Zelkova abelicea*) and Horstrissea (*Horstrissea dolinicola*) that has a narrow endemic range, as it can be found only in Psiloritis in specific plateaus around Skinakas. The orchid *Cephalanthera cucullata* is an endemic species of Cretan orchid that grows in a very small area of 2 decares and is protected as a "Nature Monument" since 1985.

Noteworthy are also the flora species of Cedar, like the *Dianthus pulviniformis* and the *Cerastium brachypetalum* ssp *doefleri*, which are found among the protected by the Presidential Decree 67/81 ("On the protection of native flora and wild fauna and the determination of the coordination and control procedure of related research", Government Gazette 23, 43/A), rare species and the Cretan Maple (*Acer creticus*) which is found along with kermes oaks, mainly in the forests of Rouvas and Zaros.

Avifauna

In the study area and mainly in the wider area of the Natural Park of Psiloritis, 155 bird species have been recorded until now, 36% of which reproduce regularly, 46% can mainly be found during migration period (spring, autumn) 12,3% are summer visitor and they reproduce in the region while the rest 6% are random and summer visitors that nest outside the region, unspecified species and 1 species that has distinkted from the island of Crete.

Compared to the overall area of the region, there is a large number of species, which is in a large extend due to the heterogeneity of the ecosystems of the region, as well as its geographic location. Especially if the altitude of the region is taken into consideration, as well as the fact that important wetlands or coastal areas (that usually retain the largest diversity of migration birds) are not included, the variety of the species compels special admiration.



Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*

In the huge Psiloritis massifs different kinds of eagles are hosted among which the lammergeier (*Gypaetus barbatus*) and the Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos* ssp *homeyeri*). The griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*) is one more protected species in the area as well as the chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*), the Rüppell's Warbler (*Sylvia rueppelli*), the Rock Sparrow (*Petronia petronia*) and many more. All the above are mentioned in the relevant legislation in Annex II of the Bonn Convention

and Law 1335/1983 with which the Bern Convention was ratified (Government Gazette 32/A/1983).

Mammals

Mammals have a profound impact on the fauna of the region without been protected by the current legislation. The Cretan shrew (*Crocirura zimmermannii*), a unique endemic mammalian species of Crete, lives in the region as well as the Cretan wildcat (*Felis sylvestris cretensis*). Also important is the presence of different species of rodents such as: the Crete Spiny mouse (*Acomys minous*), the Wood mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), the House mouse (*Mus domesticus*) etc. but also chiropterans like the bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* ssp. *Creticum*) which is an endemic subspecies of Crete.

Invertebrates

In addition, there are several invertebrates, many of them endemic, such as snails (*Albinaria terebra*), *Helicopsis bathyptera* and *Mastus turcidus*. Other important species of the region are *Campanula creutzbergi* and *Campanula saxatilis* ssp. *saxatilis* as well as the *Crepis tybakiensis*.

Reptiles

The reptiles, which live in the area and are protected both by the PD 67/81 and the Bern Convention (Law 1335/1983) applies to two types of Kotschy's Gecko (*Mediodactylus kotschy*, *Hemidactylus turcicus*), the Balkan Green Lizard (*Lacerta trilineata*), the Ocellated

Skink (*Chalcides ocellatus*), the Balkan Whip Snake (*Coluber gemonensis*) and three species of snake: European Cat Snake, , Grass Snake, European ratsnake. (none of which is dangerous to humans)

Amphibians

Regarding amphibians in the region have identified the Green Toad (*Bufo viridis*), the Tree Frog (*Hyla arborea*) and Cretan frog (*Rana cretensis*) with the first two identified in appendices IV of Directive 92/43/EEC PD67/81 and in the Bern Convention and the latter in annex V of the Directive and the Bern Convention.

Cultural Environment

The rich natural surroundings complement the social and cultural environment of the region that is equally important and interesting.

Cultural events

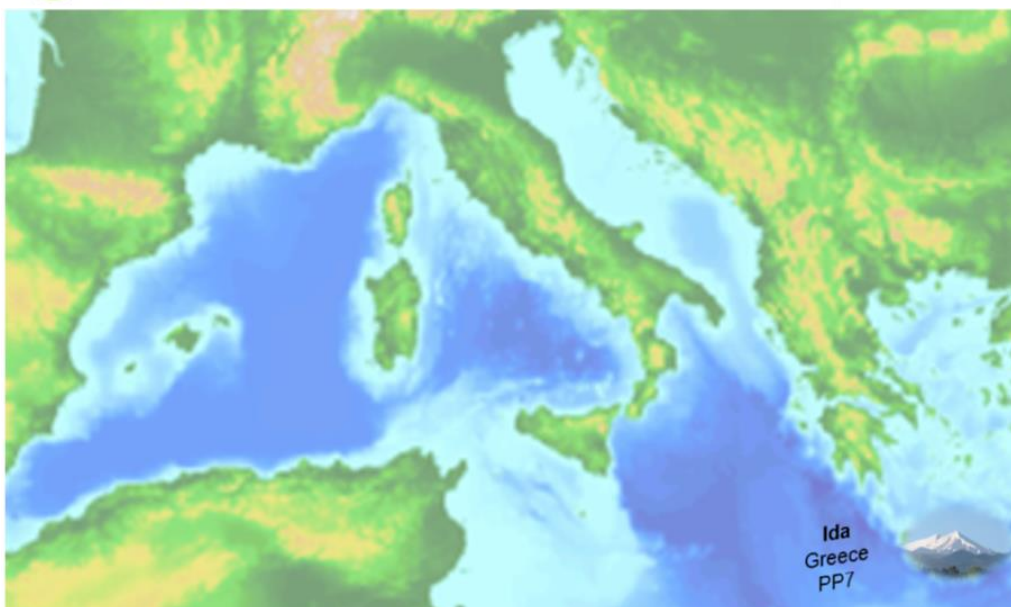
Popular events and festivals are organized all year-round in all villages of Psiloritis. Dancing, celebrating and feasting grow generation after generation. Here meets the impressive a capella songs (rizitika) with the tender mandinada, the competitive posture of men with the nobility of the feminine figure. Weddings and christenings are fair opportunities as all participate in the joy. Furthermore, the inhabitants of the area turn the harvest of fruits into spree: during the distillation of wine and raki, in the picking of the olives, the cherry and citron picking, when shepherds shearing their sheep in the mountains.

Still, pastoral festivals are held at local saint's feast day, on 15th August for the Dormition of Virgin Mary and other celebrations on anniversaries of historical events. Cultural Associations and Spiritual Centers of the Villages are the bodies that strive hard for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage.

It is worth mentioning the rich cultural activities of all municipalities in the region mainly during the summer months and in winter. For example the "Cultural August" of the Municipality of Anogeia, the "TALLEA" OF THE Municipality of Mylopotamos, the "Renaissance Festival", the "Carnival" and the "Hidden Treasure Hunt" of the Municipality of Rethymno, the "Amari Green Festival" of the Municipality of Amari, the "Matala Festival" of the Municipality of Phaistos, the "Apokrigiomata" of the city of Gergeri, Municipality of Gortyna, various events organized by the cultural associations in the Municipality of Malevizi, the "Yakintheia" organized by the Association "Friends of the Yakintheia cultural events" in the Municipality of Anogeia etc.

Noteworthy also are the celebrations taking place in many villages of the region mainly during the summer months complied to promote local products of primary production, such as the Cheese and Shepherd Feast, the Water, Cherry, Apple, Citron, Wine festivals, etc.

Over the last few years there is an increase in interest for sport events that are organized in the region such as the ski mountaineering race "Pierra Creta", the Ultramarathon race "Heroes Ultra" a 154 km race and the "Street of Psiloritis from Livadia to the top" complied to promote and preserve the cultural heritage of Psiloritis.



1.3 Spatial cohesion

Psiloritis belongs administratively in the Regional Units of Heraklion and Rethymno and in the Region of Crete. The area extents to a total of about 1.497 km² and its population is 47.578 inhabitants. The area corresponds to 17.95 % of the area of Crete and 7.64 % of its population. It consists of Municipalities involving 14 Municipal Units and 117 Municipal/Local Communities. The Municipalities of the region are: Anogia, Amari, Mylopotamos, and part of the Municipalities of Rethymno, Agios Vasileios, Gortys, Phaistos, Malevizi. Those sections of the Municipalities are located in the physical and functional region of Psiloritis Mountain and have common characteristics in terms of economic and productive activity, demographics, social organization, etc.

To the dominant sectors of the local rural economy are agriculture, livestock and fisheries with lower percentages. Specific livestock farming is the main activity in the area of Psiloritis with a long presence, dating back to ancient times. The vast majority of farms are family farms with mixed capital, low intensity, i.e. production of milk, cheese and meat. The main form of farming is the sheep and goat keeping.

As regards the secondary sector developed in the region, its basic characteristic is that it is directly linked with the primary production. The majority of enterprises activates in the processing of agricultural and livestock products and is small in size, investing little in technological modernization and the organization of automated production methods. It is mostly about small family craft enterprises that employ a small number of workers, often with seasonal contracts rather than permanent staff.

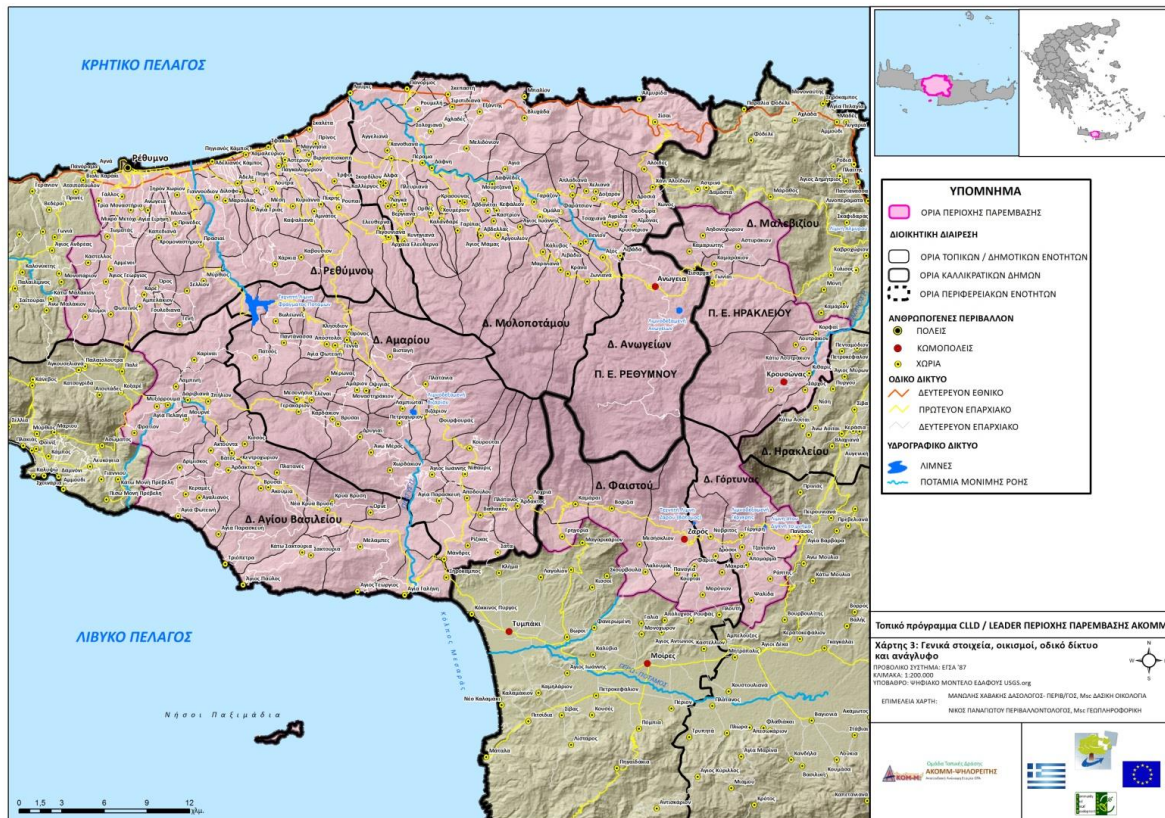
The tertiary sector ranks first in economic importance in the region over the past years, but maintains strong and close links to traditional specialization in processing and

farming. In General, income and employment in the sector is offered by numerous shops, tourist accommodation and tourism businesses in restaurants and in leisure, as well as other services related to health, education and social care that are scattered in all the municipalities of the region, with trade and other services to be mainly found in the administrative centers and tourism to develop in surrounding areas or traditional settlements.

In this context, the dominant sector in the service economy is first and foremost tourism and accommodation services. Apart from the coastal zone and especially the area of Panormos where large and high capacity hotels 5 * can be found, in the mountainous area, there is a significant reserve of tourist infrastructure, which consists of small units (Hotel, holiday rentals etc.).

In particular, in recent years there are two key processes that directly affect the tourism offer. On the one hand, there is increased tourist traffic mainly thanks to higher domestic tourism but also the firm interest of foreign visitors. On the other hand, the local product is gradually enriched and its quality improves, due to private investments aiming at enhancing local traditions and the unique characteristics of the region, in a structured way of highlighting local traditions and unique characteristics of the region, but due to the cooperation of all local development bodies in that direction.

Especially in regards to the mountainous part of the intervention area, traffic growth is directly related to the effectiveness of previous interventions and the combined effort of business and development strategy for the creation of a separate, coherent and competitive tourist product. This is based on a separate identity-name, which is now enshrined in the recent recognition and institutionalization of Psiloritis Natural Park on the UNESCO Geoparks program and the implementation of new strategies.



PART II

C1 Proud Local People

«There is no real wildlife in the Mediterranean landscape. Even in the highest mountains and in the most inaccessible areas, the influence of man is evident - else intense, else more discreet».

"Mediterranean Landscape, (The EcoGeography of the Mediterranean) Dimos Chandilis.

In the area of Psiloritis, the presence of man dates back to antiquity. History, mythology, traditions and legends are a source of pride, courage and boldness for the inhabitants, who have created a strong and sacred bond with the mountain. Without exaggeration the mountain is in the mind of its residents the center of the world. They believe that the most beautiful and impressive mountain is their mountain which is so friendly and hospitable as wild and imposing.

People of Psiloritis cannot imagine their existence without the presence of the Mountain, that impacts them in every step of their lives.

This relation of the people of Psiloritis with their place created a peculiar simple folk culture that kept indelible its characteristics through centuries.

C2 Institutional recognition

Large area of the region of Psiloritis is already:

- included in the Natura 2000 network (Sites of Community Importance, Special protection areas).
- Many regions are classified as wildlife sanctuaries and important areas for birds,
- There are several listed monuments, landscapes of great natural beauty, sites of archaeological and historical value, Villages with recognized cultural value and Monuments of Nature.

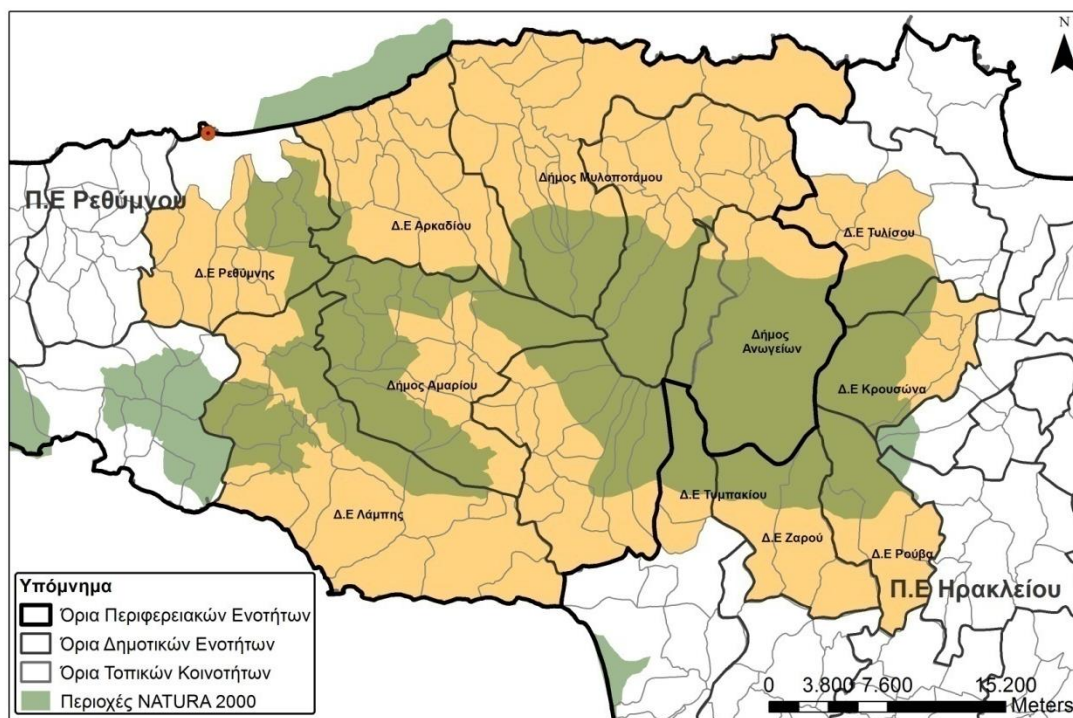
It has also joined the European and global network of Geoparks and was designated as a UNESCO Geopark.

NATURA 2000 Network

The Natura 2000 Network consists of two categories:

- 1) The "Sites of Community Importance (SCI)", as defined in Directive 92/43/EEC, where after the finalization of the list, Member States are obliged to declare these areas as SCA: special areas of conservation (SACS) "Special Areas of Conservation". In the study area the following three (3) are recorded:
 - a) Mount IDA (Vorizia, Geranoi, Good Madara) (GR4330005)
 - b) "Prassiano Canyon-Patsos-Sfakoryako stream-Rethymnon Beach and Estuary of Geropotamos, Headland Lianos Kavos– Perivolio» (GR4330004) – part of the region
 - c) "Mountain Cedar" (GR4330002)
 - d) Kourtaliotiko Gorge-Preveli monastery-wider region (GR4330003)
- 2) The special protection areas (spas), ' Special Protection Areas ' SPA: for bird, as defined in Council Directive 79/409/EK "for the conservation of wild birds", where 4 such zones are recorded:
 - a) "Prasiano Gorge" (GR4330008)
 - b) "Koyrtaliwtiko Gorge, Preveli Gorge" (GR4330007) – part of the region
 - c) Zoros-Agathe – Kedros (GR4330006)
 - d) Mount Psiloritis (southwest) (GR4330009)
 - e) Krousonas – Ida Bromonero (GR4310009) – part of the region

Natura 2000 Network

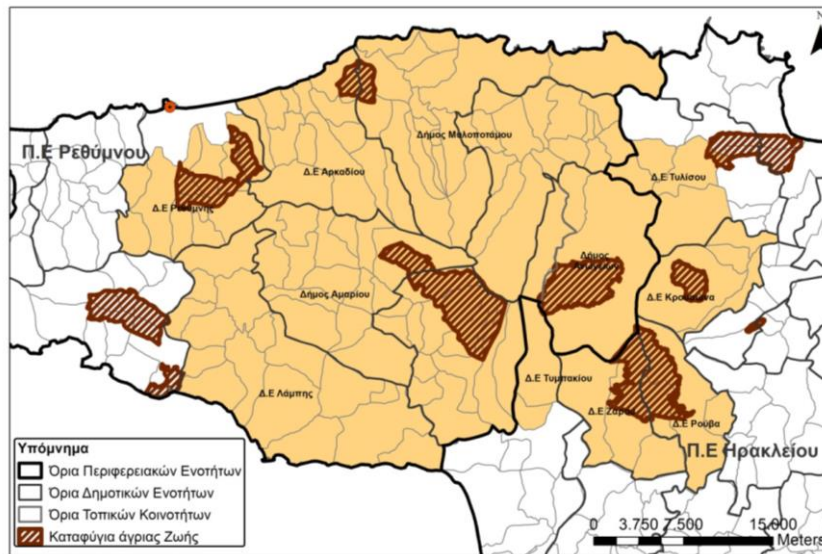


Wildlife Shelters (WS)

As wildlife shelters (WS) are classified natural sites (terrestrial, wetland or marine), which is of particular importance as important land development of wild flora or as breeding habitats, foodstuff biotopes, wintering sites for species of wild fauna or as fish and spawning grounds or finally, as important marine habitats” in accordance with Law 3937/2011 (GG A’ 60) amending the 1650/1986. In the study area the following nine (9) wildlife shelters were recorded:

1. K 772-Vrysinas Prassano Gorge Municipality Rethymno, (G.G. 1147/05-09-01, GG 1090/21-08-02)
2. K763-Kouroupa Municipalities Phoenix and Lambi (GG 1090//21-08-02)-part of the region
3. K 761-Preveli Municipalities Phoenix and Lambi (GG 1105/23-08-02)-part of the region
4. K 550 Profitis Elias (Aggelianwn-Prinos-Alfa) (G.G 161757/32167/16-07-81)
5. K 759 – Psiloritis (G.G. 680/31-5-2002, GG 1119/28-08-02))
6. K 760-Trigiodio Municipality of Anogia (G.G. 1119 B’ /28-8-02).
7. K 861-Area Gournas (G.G 769/19-06-01)
8. K 860-Psiloritis (former municipalities of Zaros and Rouva (G.G. 769/19-06-01, GG 680/31-5-2002)
9. K 705-Almyros River – Keri (G.G. 763/18-06-01, GG 680/31-5-2002)

Wildlife Shelters

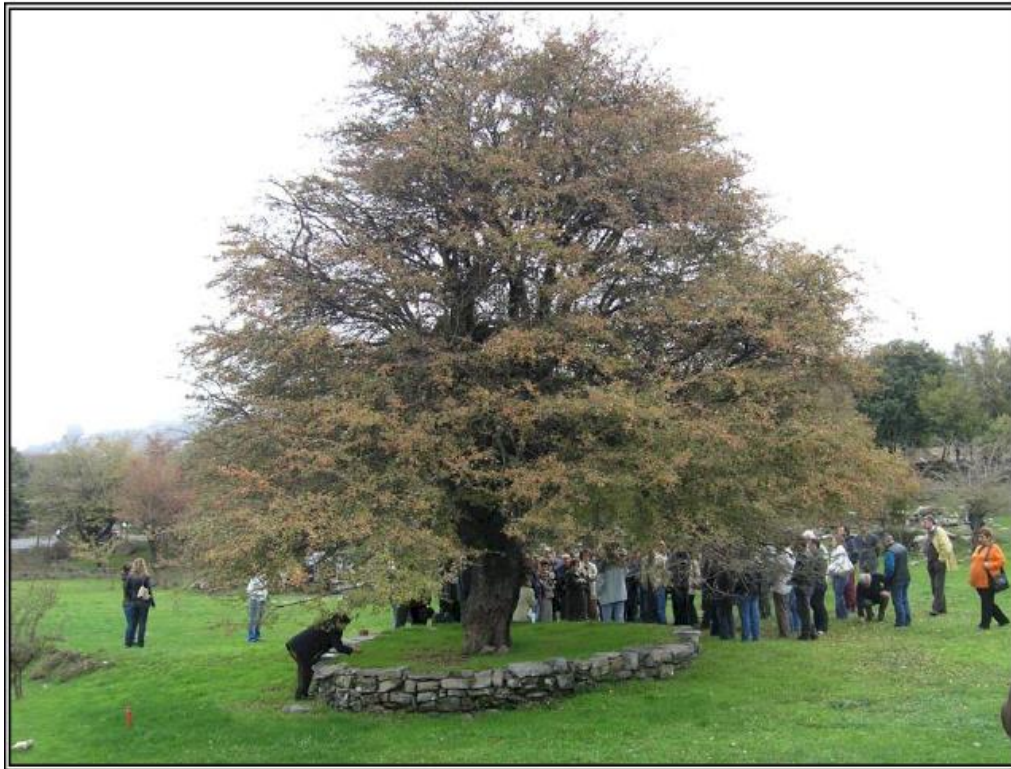


Natural Monuments

Natural Monuments are protected natural areas in accordance with the Legislative Decree 996/1971. There are public or private areas that have natural characteristics of high ecological value. In Greece 51 areas have been declared as Natural Monuments, with a total land area of 16.840 hectares. In the intervention area there are three identified:

- The Common Hawthorn of Zominthos, in the Archeological Site of Zominthos, Municipality of Anogia (GG128/24-4-2012). It's a century hawthorn with particular aesthetic, botanical and historical value.
- The Oak at Korfes, Heraklion (G.G. 121/D/1980). Located near the village of Korfes in the Municipality of Malevizi. It is a century oak with particular aesthetic, botanical and historical value which is connected with historical events in the region, as under its canopy the chieftains were gathered to take decisions about the Cretan revolution against the Turks.
- The Cretan cephalanthera in Kamares, Heraklion (G.G. 589/b/1985). It is found in the location "Mana nerou» at an altitude of 1,400 meters near the villages Kamares and Voriza of the municipality of Phaistos in an area of two acres. The protected area is the habitat of the rare and threatened species of Orchid, called Cretan cephalanthera (*Cephalanthera cuculata*), to which reference has already been made in the previous chapter.

The Common Hawthorn of Zominthos



Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a place distinguished for its aesthetic value and which remains to a significant extent natural, although it may be built up. Its size is defined by human measures; it generally should not exceed one day's hiking, unless for specific exceptions. AONB often include traditional settlements and archeological or historical sites. At national level 449 Sites have been identified as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) with a total area of 6.270 km², 12 of which are in the study area.

- AT6010086 – Monastery of Vrontisi
- AT6011005 - Sivas
- AT6011049 – Agia Triada
- AT6020015 - Voros
- AT6010085 – Camares Cave
- Tylisos and Prinias, Municipality of Malevizi
- AT6010084 – Cave of Zeus or Agia Triada
- AT6011008 – Psiloritis Mountain (Idi)
- AT6020005 - Syvritos
- AT6010052 – Patsos (Gorge of Patsos)
- AT6011059 – Eleyftherna
- Caves of Melidoni and Ideon Andron

Declared Archeological Sites

Many declared archeological sites are located within the boundaries of the intervention area:

- The archaeological site of Zominthos (GG 342/A. A. P. IX/3.8.2007).
- The archaeological site of Ancient Eleftherna (GG 168/B/9-3-1967).
- The archaeological site of the wider region of Tylisos region (GG 671/B/22-10-1990)
- Late Minoan Tomb in Apodoulou (GG 605/1965).
- Archaeological area of Monastiraki (GG 473/B/1962).

Monasteries as Preserved Monuments (G.G. 209/B/1980)

There are also five (5) monasteries deemed to be preserved monuments.

- St. George Arsani, Municipality of Rethymno
- All-Holy Chalebi, Municipality of Rethymno
- St. George Diskouriou, Municipality of Mylopotamos
- Saint John in Bali, Municipality of Mylopotamos
- Taxiarches Assomaton, Municipality of Amari

Finally, the Watermill in the Local Community of Gonies Malevizi has been deemed to be a

Historical Preserved Monument (MINISTRY OF CULTURE ARC/B1/F38/944/26/25-2-2000-GG 363/b/22-3-2000.)

Mitata

Fifteen of the total number of Mitata in the area of Psiloritis (Nida Plateau), in the Municipality of Anogia, has been declared as Work of Art, according to the GG 837/B/31-12-1985).

The abundance of the square shaped stone schists has constituted the main element of construction throughout the ages all around Mount Psiloritis.

The unadorned usage of the stone of Mount Psiloritis which is observed both in the giant blocks of the walls of Zominthos, and in the dry-stone terraces and shepherd's constructions, as well as in the contemporary chapel of Saint Yakinthos and "The house of the Shepherd", is the dominant architectural feature.

The most outstanding samples of this architecture are the Mitata, which are to be found only on Mount Psiloritis. These are circular in shape like the Minoan tombs, completely bioclimatic and dry even without the presence of joining material, and well adapted to the landscape and environment, serving the needs both of the shepherds and also of the seasonal travelers.

A typical construction consists of two buildings, one without an entrance in order to mature the cheeses and a yard in which to keep sheep and goats during milking. The circular ground plan and their simple appearance reflect both the communal way of life for the shepherds and the collective team spirit that characterizes the whole area of Mount Psiloritis.

Till now, 300 mitata have been recorded within the territory of the Municipality of Anogia, most of which are now abandoned. The continuous efforts both for their restoration and their preservation has now resulted in some of the most picturesque scenes on Mount Psiloritis.

Mitato



C3 Reputation

Due to the particular cultural identity of the region, the particular characteristics of human resources, the morals, the customs and the traditional activities that continue to be brought up so far, the site has gained at local and national level significant reputation.

A significant number of visitors come every year to see and to experience events and cultural traditions and also to taste the local cuisine.

Due to the classification of the area as a UNESCO Geopark and its participation in networks such as EMM, area's reputation is beginning to spread, in European as well as in global level.

The outcome of the reputation of the region is the development of tourism industry and the creation of important infrastructure, mainly small tourist units.

A) Accommodation and Infrastructure

In the region there are 154 hotels recorded, with 8.340 rooms and more than 16 thousand beds. In general, the average number of beds per hotel (107), is considered satisfactory – high in the region, since it excels even marginally in the region (105).

Regarding the category of hotel classification, on the basis “Star” system, in the region operates businesses that cover the whole spectrum. The majority of units, however, are classified as two stars (62 hotels) and three stars (35), although luxury hotels are 7 and offer 2.589 beds and thus constitute a critical size. In total, these are found in the coastal zone of the region. In any case, in the region are tourist infrastructures available that can constantly “feed” a tourist stream either for day accommodation or overnight stay in the area.

Concerning the apartments, the situation is similar to that in the hotel, where the vast majority of a total of 269 accommodation establishments and 3.462 beds.

In the area there are also two Camping spots, one in the area of Agia Galini and one in the District of Amari.

There are also other business and professional activities related to tourism. For example, there are 359 travel agencies, over 500 car rental offices (cars and motorcycles) and 140 tourist shops. Other tourist facilities, in the mountainous region of Psiloritis are the 5 mountain huts. On the top Samari next to the mountain hut in the area of Zaros, is the only organized climbing field of Psiloritis with 7 opened educational routes of varying levels of difficulty.

Mountain huts in the region of Mount Psiloritis

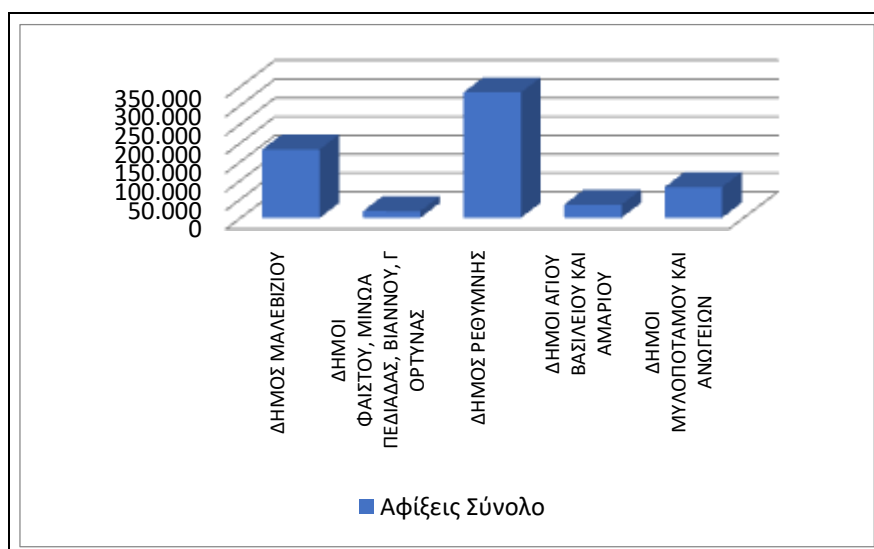
S/N	Mountain Huts	Location	Altitude	Capacity
1	"Toumpotos Prinos" Psiloritis	"Aplytra" area – west slope of Psiloritis	1.500 m	28 climbers
2	Zaros	Top «Σαμάρι»-south ridge of Psiloritis	1.400 m	20 climbers
3	Anogia Municipality	"Trigiodo" mountainous area Zominthos	1.100	10
4	Gonies	Mountainous area of Gonies	800	10
5	Krousonas	Mountainous area of Vromonero	1000	10

Tourist demand and seasonality

The tourist demand is described using data on arrivals and overnight stays in the region, at the level of Municipality (Municipality total) and/or Regional Unit. Generally, the tourist demand in the region comes mainly from foreign tourists, while completeness is generally high, hovering near the limits of the region and is higher than the average occupancy at country level.

Arrivals in the municipalities included in the intervention area, 2014 (items in total municipalities)

Arrivals in the municipalities within the area of intervention 2014 (data in all municipalities)



Traffic poles and opportunities from the sea

The region is divided into two zones in terms of tourist demand / offer, but also the tourist model chosen or can be selected in the future. Specifically, the Mountain-Hill zone and the Beach (North and South) zone. The company's strategy focuses on the further development of an individual alternative tourism product, which builds on the main overnight stay, restaurant etc infrastructure, and at the same time, will be located in the mountain-semi mountainous zone. The mountain-semi mountainous zone is divided into the sections Mountainous Mylopotamos, Lower Mylopotamos, Mountainous Malevyzi, Upper Rizas and Amari. This does not mean that the lowland or coastal part of the region is neglected. By contrast, when designing these are perceived as consistent evidence of a growth model with a focus on multidisciplinary organization of the economy and spatial integration. Moreover, we should not neglect the fact that these zones attract important part of the tourism offer and constitute strong poles of visitors, with benefits spread throughout the rural and disadvantaged inland.

C4 Legends and myths

Psiloritis is connected with the birth and activity of immortal gods. At the glaxis of mountain Idis, Rea hunted by Saturn, hid Zeus and the mythical goat Amalthia nurtured the king of Dodecatheon. Here, Kourites with the growl of their shields covered the cry of the little god that was meant to become the father of Gods and people. Above the table-land of Nida at Idaion Andron was the center of worship of the Cretan born Zeus.

Deservingly, the cave was characterized as the Vithleem of ancient times. According to the ancient myth, Zeus disguised as a bull, crossed over the river Litheos and transferred Europe to the island of Crete ending up to ancient Gortina. Here is the labyrinth; the cave where in its rambling corridors lived the infamous Minotaur.

The copper giant Talos was assigned by king Minoa to protect the island of Crete from any intruder. The mythic creature is linked with the mountainous bulk of the Talea Mountains that spread north of Psiloritis. Gerondospilios of Melidoni was the worshipping place of Talaïos Hermes.

The sacred mountain from the era of the first residence defines the fate of humans that are fed with myths and form history.

Ideon Andron



C5 Power of inspiration

Psiloritis though it looks like a wild beast, it shows through its people a dual nature that it posses, the hard and steep mountain on the one hand and the hospitable and friendly to the inhabitant and the visitor on the other. The presence of the mountain, intense in shaping the character of its inhabitants, contributes to the formation of human beings with a strong revolutionary mood, rebels of life, hard, sometimes distant and towering but at the same time glib, friendly, expressive, kidder and artistic.

The beauty of its natural richness, the beauty and wildness of the peaks and its dominant and imposing appearance visible from almost every part of Crete, made Psiloritis a place of inspiration for residents and visitors, for locals and strangers.

Painters, musicians, sculptors, dancers, poets, writers, composers, directors etc. have created countless artistic works inspired by the legends, the myths, the natural beauty, the history, the productive and everyday life of people.

Examples of this inspiration have been displayed and are displayed from time to time times through exhibitions of popular art, through book presentations, through cultural events etc.



C6 Picturesque landscape

The land of Psiloritis popped out millions of years ago in the Mediterranean with rocks that were forged from the constant collision and movement of the lithospheric plates of Africa and Europe. This is how the mountain area o Psiloritis was created.

Within 5 million years the mountain gained approximately 1500 meters of height due to the tectonic changes and became the tallest mountain of Crete and one of the tallest mountains of the Mediterranean.

The water dug deep into the mountain rocks creating coombs, fountain forests, gorges and caves. At the same time, the breaches marked the difference between Psiloritis and its twin brother Kouloukonas.

Psiloritis is narrow with a few peaks. Five of these peaks are over 200 meters with the peak of Timios Stavros being the highest peak in Crete reaching the 2.456 m while the lowest are the ones of Skinakas, Koudoun Mavri, Korouna, Spathi, Champatha, Chalasokefala.

The image of the mountain is interchangeable from the one end to the other! The north and western side gets gradually lower at the semi-mountainous areas and the feeding grounds of north Psiloritis and then we come across historic settlements in the entire center.

The south and eastern side of the mountain is wild and abrupt with sharp mountain tops reaching the fertile down countries of Heraklio and Messara ending up to the valley of Amari. There, the settlements are in the root of the cliff or at the lowland and rich grounds with the valleys, the fountains and the rivers (Zaros, Rouvas).

Like a backbone across the island there are the hard, platter-like limestones, the remains of the bottom of an ancient ocean. These rocks that we come across at Psiloritis are actually dark marbles that are picked out from thin, white or tile-red strips of a harder silicic material.

At the northern coast and in some valleys of the mainland, schist rocks create beautiful coombs, valleys and table-lands.

The numerous caves, the gorges and the table-lands are all a result of the dissolution of rocks. For thousands or millions of years, water found a way out into the mountains creating underground rivers that formed the caves. Many of these underground rivers find their way towards the surface forming important fountains such as the ones of Gergeris and Zaros.

Water digs into gorges at the sides of the mountains, expanding the holes of the surface to form table-lands or landscapes. Characteristic are the table-lands of Nida in Anogia, Ious Kampos in Gerakari, Rouvas, Evdomos in Gonia, Stroumpoulas in Tylisos as well as gorges that are demarcated from Eleftherna-Margarites - Orthe, Agia Eirini in Krousonas, Gafaris at the forest of Rouvas, Vorizia in Zaros, Patsos in Amari, Kalandares at the south of Mylopotamos and Moussai next to Mourtzana and Migia in Anogia. Many of the table-lands and the gorges of Psiloritis consist of an oasis of endemism and biodiversity gathering and protecting unique species of flora and fauna of Crete.

C7 Particular ecosystems

Geotope

The monuments of the Earth and the geotopes of Psiloritis are widespread throughout the area. They comprise unique rock formations, fossil sites, spectacular landforms, caves and many other karstic structures, faults and folds in the rocks, which are important sources of water for the natural environment, constituting elements of interaction between human, rocks and landscape.

All together they constitute the history of the Earth and man on Psiloritis. Many of these geotopes are close enough to each other that they are able to reconstitute a small part of the mountain's history. Others have similar geological and physical characteristics, where one complements the other, and together they constitute an overall view of Psiloritis. For all the above reasons, but also for reasons of displaying them to better effect, several geotopes have been grouped together in individual sub-areas.

These sub-areas are the "Talea Ori section: a 250 million-year journey in the past" at the Kouloukonas mountain, the "Psiloritis Karstic Landscape" up in the Psiloritis peaks, the "From Mountain to Plain" at the eastern and southern borders of the mountain, the "Amari cliffs" in the Amari valley and the "Speleopark" which comprises all the important caves of Psiloritis Natural Park. Finally, some special or isolated geotopes, which for several reasons have not been included in the sub-areas, occur as individual sites.

This subdivision of the most important geotopes of Psiloritis Natural Park will be followed in the subsequent presentation. Most geotopes are easily accessible through the existing road network, some only through hiking trails, whereas some others have been included in a network of walking routes.

Information panels already exist at several sites while several others are scheduled to be set up by the Natural Park or the Local Authorities.



Speleopark

Apart from the visible geotopes of Psiloritis Mountain, there also exist many others that in order to be seen, one has to follow the same underground routes of the water, within the carbonate rocks. These are the caves, the special formations of the Earth's interior, formed by the karstic weathering of carbonate rocks.

The reasons for the abundant caves that occur in Psiloritis Mountain has to be searched for in the predominance of the carbonate rocks, in the succession of the carbonate rocks with other impermeable rocks and in the complex geological history of Crete. From the sinkholes and potholes on the surface, to the underground caves and other formations, the underground cavities of Psiloritis are the missing rivers of its surface.

Life adapted in these underground worlds giving rise to species that can survive in the ageless darkness as easily as their ancestors did on the surface.

Apart from the different species of bats; snails, spiders, false-scorpions, woolise and insects are the main groups which constitute the fauna of Psiloritis' caves.

The caves however are closely related with the people of the mountains and their diachronic activities. From their first appearance on the island the caves were their places of worship, the houses, the cheese-dairies, refuges during difficult periods and also sacred places. That's why most caves have a significant archaeological and historic value (and like all the caves in Greece are regarded as potential archaeological sites).

Many of these caves are of high aesthetic value, important places for the ecosystems and critical for the water cycle and appearances. Some are easily approached and accessible by the public, like the caves of Sfentoni at Zoniana and Gerontospilios at Melidoni, while some others are a challenge even for the speleologists like Chonos at Sarchos or Tafkoura at Petradolakia.

The most important caves of Psiloritis mountain could easily constitute an individual sub-area, the speleopark, that could be used for any kind of activity such as training, science, outdoors activities or tourism. Even if only a few are open to the general public, most of them are accessible, adding an additional responsibility to the visitors regarding safekeeping this unique natural beauty and the fragile life that it hosts.

E1. Sfentoni Trypa cave, E2. Kamares cave, E3. Gerontospilios cave, E4. Hainospilios cave, E5. Tafkoura pothole,
E6. Mougri cave, E7. Doxa cave, E8. Trapeza cave, E9. Kalo Chorafi, E10. Chonos Sarchou



Flora

Psiloritis, with the wildness of life and nature is a true paradise full of high peaks, beautiful mountain chains, coombs with fountains and rivers that offer bountifully water, forests full of life,

rocks that popped out of the earth, gorges as the doors of the big mountain, caves-shelters of wild animals, rich valleys and cultivated lands at the mountainous areas.

The anaglyph of Psiloritis favored the growth of vegetation, so in some areas there different kinds of flora. The most significant wealth is located at enormous cliffs. At Gafaris gorge, in the forest of Rouvas, one can see enormous cypresses, Kermes oaks and hollies, while many endemic plants present a particular interest such as the Cretan arum, the Cretan cyclamen and two rare and endemic orchids, the Cretan Kephallantiro and the Cretan orchid called “Lipitero”.

At the gnarled gorges of Vorizia and Kamares villages, one can admire the beautiful plants that grow in the clefts of vertical rocks many of which are endemic, such as the rock lettuce, the Cretan Hypericum jovis and the plant symbol of Crete, dictamus. The gorge of Patsos presents a significant botanical interest as it is consisted of planes, tiny solenopsis, holm oaks and the endemic bear’s tail.

The gorge of Goniana is also ideal for collecting oregano and admire herbs called Staehelina petiolata, Centaurea argentea, the endemic Cretan ebony the autumn cyclamens. Table-lands are also areas with particular vegetation and unique species. The endemic red tulip at the table-land of Ious Kampos at Amari village spreads impressively, the crocus and the Pilygonum idaeum an endemic plant that grows at the table-land of Nida. Around the table-land of Skinakas, grows one of the rarest plants of Crete. This perennial species of Horstrissea is endangered to habitat loss due to the grazing of the animals. The geological and climatic diversity of the mountain is reflected on various types of vegetation. The arboratious forms of vegetation sometimes form small clusters and sometimes large forests.

The forest of Rouvas is one of the forests in Crete with giant Kermes between the deciduous maples. Here, is located a very important biotope of the which due to its rarity is often referred as the “Unrecognizable tree”. A smaller but equally impressive kermes oaks forest is located at Vromonero place at Krousonas village. At the southern banks of the mountain there are forests with cypresses and rough pines, while the deciduous acorns are present near Margarites and Vroulidia villages in Anogia.

The Common Hawthorns and the wild pear trees are especially impressive when they come to fruition, breaking the monotony of the mountain genista. The forest of Mylopotamos and the kermes oak tree forest at Kalivos are remarkable. In relation to the forests, the genista (low brushes) have clearly larger biodiversity.

During spring and summer, the low glaxis of Psiloritis are full of colors and aromas: spiny brooms, Genista acanthoclada, pink savory, thymes, sage, crowberry-leaved trees, burnets, tree spurges use their aculeuses for protection against animals, blooms and the change of foliage for dehydration, aromas for attracting the insects or forcing back the enemy. We also come across Asphodels, cyclamens, autumn daffodils, tulips, dragon lilies and a variety of orchids.

At higher altitudes the genista are shorter mainly due to the wind, the snow and the grazing of the animals. One can also find plants spiny spurges, the perennial herbs Astragalus angustifolius, Astracantha cretica, barberries, the flower Acantholimon androsaceum, bulbed plants such as the Prospero automnale, the Cretan colchicums and crocuses. The bushes that consist makia

vegetation are evergreen. Locust tree, wild olives, mustics, junipers, kalmias, arbutuse that resist the dry spell of the Cretan summer have hard, coriaceous leaves and deep roots. Inaccessible clusters of bushes create ericas and arbutuses at the north glaxis of Kouloukonas.



Fauna

The geological wealth of Psiloritis, the intense geomorphology and the variety of its rocks are responsible for the presence of an incredible variety of animals that survive in microclimatic conditions of every area. Hundreds of birds find places for nesting, places for hunting, relaxation after exhaustion from migration or places to hide and mate. One of the few remaining populations of the Cretan wildcat lives here. According to the researchers, it is regarded as an animal ghost.

In the heart of Psiloritis hundreds of tiny animals, beetles, snails, centipedes, isopods have lived for thousands of years and continue to evolve silently (and blindly)

The isolation of the island makes the rocky mass one of the most important “hot spots” of high biodiversity and endemism in Greece and have led the last five years in its integration with NATURA network.

Psiloritis is the home for "KOKKALAS" or lammergeyer, which is one of the biggest and most spectacular raptors in Europe. The Cretan population of this raptor is probably the last viable population across the Balkans, since the use of poisons and growth has led the bird to extinction from the landlocked Greece. It seems that it is the last shelter in Crete.

The carrion buzzards of Psiloritis leave the visitor of the mountains speechless with their enormous “mass” flight. They create large colonies and nest in abrupt rock roofs and “lofts” that are always against the winds that they use in order to ascend in higher altitudes in order to look for dead animals.

Most of the nests at Idi Mountain (Psiloritis) are located in Amari and Pano Riza villages, using the north smooth glaxis of Mylopotamos for food hunting.

A population of raptors completes the ornithological peregrination of Psiloritis. War eagles, lannerets, Bonelli's eagles, haggards and common kestrels.

In the area of Psiloritis we are likely to come across the three types of the Cretan amphibians: the green toad, the Cretan tree frog and the Cretan waterfrog, all the types of the Cretan reptiles (snippets, lizards and the island's four types of snakes. A unique and sad absence from Idi is the Cretan goat a species that was eliminated from the mountain due to the prevalence of gun-runners during the previous century.

Many caves and precipices of the area host large colonies of protected cheiropteras (bats) in the caves of Erfoi at the lowland Mylopotamos (hosts several hundreds of the species), the cave of Kamilaris at Tylisos village (with at least four types in large populations), at Chonos cave of Sarchos at Krousonas villages (five types), the cave of Kamares and many others. Among the invertebrates, snails, isopods and several families of ground living beetles present endemic forms that spread exclusively on the mountain area of Idi (Psiloritis).

Seventeen species of snails of Mylopotamos are Cretan endemic species. Recent studies on "warm" points of bioersivity based on invertebrate fauna of south Greece, bring out the mountainous area of Psiloritis at the second most important point of south Greece.



C8 Mediterranean cultural identity

History, mythology, legends and traditions are a source of pride, courage and boldness for residents who maintain a sacred bond with their place. Without exaggeration the mountain is in the mind of its residents the center of the world.

Over the centuries, the inhabitants developed a peculiar simple folk culture that kept indelible its characteristics.

A popular culture expressed variously in dance, singing, in mantidada, in rizitiko, in everyday life, at birth, to baptism, marriage, death, in architecture and art, with humor, sarcasm and fiction. Samples of this peculiar culture can the visitor meet in all villages of Mt Psiloritis, where the warmth and hospitality of the locals will fill the soul with the strength and aroma of old times.

Especially fortunate should feel guests of the mountain farm villages where every productive livestock activity becomes a never-ending feast. Also, the visitor through his participation or presence in these activities will be able to have a closer look at the traditional houses of shepherds, the vaulted buildings called 'Mitata'. Their construction is similar to that of Tholos tombs of the Minoan period and for their construction, local materials are used.

In later history and cultural tradition of the area innumerable small chapels have been added which highlight the religious faith of the inhabitants. Hundreds of pilgrims come once a year to commemorate the Saint to whom the chapel is dedicated and also the family that organizes this religious feast.

Another important dimension of the culture of the region is the diet that consists of a treasure of flavors, colors and aromas. Identified with the Cretan diet, the nutrition in the region produces and consumes a number of food products which derive from the activities of the primary sector.



C9 Sustainability and anthropogenic environment

The influence of the natural environment in an area is crucial not only for human activities but also for the existence of life itself. The abiotic environment is the determining factor for all human activities but also for the characteristics of flora and fauna in the region.

The rocks and the other features of the natural environment (soils, terrain etc.) was the determining factor for the development for centuries now, of an economy that relies mainly on livestock farming.

The individual characteristics of biotic environment and especially the aromatic and pharmaceutical plants of Psiloritis contribute in a way that all produced products, such as milk, cheese, honey, etc. are considered of exceptional quality due to the unique flora and environment of the area.

What is very characteristic and unique probably for the region of Psiloritis is the impact of nature in humans, in their character and culture. The rough rocky landscape of Mt Psiloritis, and the absence of fertile land forced inhabitants to deal with extreme weather conditions, to struggle to cultivate the land and survive in the end enjoying the other beauty of nature. This made people persistent, hard several times, patient, tireless, clever and inventive. At the same time nature contributed to the creation of liberal, courageous and proud characters.

Psiloritis region due to its mountainous geomorphology is agricultural and farming. Livestock farming remains a traditional occupation. The cheese making and the standardization of dairy products is now done in well-equipped modern craft units.

The lowlands of Psiloritis are among the most oil producing regions of Greece. The fertile earth favors the cultivation of olives, wine yards and fruit trees. Due to the abundance of wild herbs and especially of thyme, beekeeping but also the harvesting of wild herbs is particularly developed. The life of inhabitants however, who were traditionally engaged in agriculture and livestock farming has changed dramatically with the emergence of tourism.

The tourist traffic has provided new opportunities and activities to local residents, as modern infrastructure created new job offer for many residents. Agri-tourism facilities, cafes, taverns, folk art workshops, shops and tourist enterprises, etc. offer new perspectives for the region. In the coastal zone, fishing remains up today one of the occupations of the local people. Man, of Psiloritis using simple materials from Earth and his imagination creates artworks.

The folk arts maintained even today, offer handmade masterpieces throughout the zone of Psiloritis. In Anogia, Axos and Zaros the tradition of weaving is kept alive. In Margarites pottery art is booming. In Alfa and in Laga of Mylopotamos the traditional stone carvers still practice the art of stone carving. In Vizari and Anogia we can find woodcarving workshops, in Kalogerou pottery workshops, in Gergeri and Apostoloi we can find stone carving workshops, and in Nyvritos the traditional basket weavers. In Zaros and Gergeri, there are two excellent luthier's workshops, while in the upper Part of Amari there is a traditional cretan boots workshop. Housewives maintain the cottage industry producing projects with crochet hook.



C10 Historic places

The history of the area is indissolubly linked with the history of Crete. The first residents of the island inhabited places near the coasts of the island during the Stone Age. We come across Minoan habitations across the mountain with important centers those of Tylisos, Gonies, Zominthos, Monastyraki and Apodoulos of Amari.

During the Geometric and Archaic era the city of Aksos in Eleftherna bloomed. After the Roman invasion, Crete became the district of an endless empire. During that period Gortina became the centre of cultural and economic life of the island. The predominance of Christianity demarcates the Byzantine period of the land's history. Gortina, Aksos, Eleftherna and Syvritos were the centers of bishops. The Byzantine presence in the island was violently interrupted with the Arabic invasion at 823. From the dark ages of the Arabic invasion we do not have essential information for the islands status. At 961 Nikiforos Fokas conquered Crete again. The second Byzantine period in the island began this way. At that time, according to the legend, noble families inhabited the land from Istanbul. During the 4th Crusade (1204) the Byzantine Empire essentially broke down. Crete was then conquered by the Queen of seas, Venice. The Cretans did not stop insurrecting against the Venetians with constant rebellions. Thus, the wider area during the rebellions of the family of Kallergis (1299) abstracted privileges for the Greek orthodox residents.

The area was occupied by Turks in 1645. Similarly to the earliest period, the residents of Psiloritis never accepted to subject to the foreign dynast. They were fighting for freedom with constant rebellions. During this period, the caves of the area of Malevizi offered a hideaway to the legendary insurgents of the mountains (Also known as "Chainides").

During the big revolution for independence at 1824, the area fought with great courage for its freedom. During this revolution for independence in 1824, four hundred people from Melidoni village were tortured to death at the historic place of Gerondospilios.

The center of the revolution in 1866 was at Arkadi that is a humanitarian symbol of freedom and voluntary sacrifice. During the Second World War and the Battle of Crete great battles took place between the allies and the German intruders. During the Nazi years, resistance groups were made up and found their shelter in the gnarled tops of Psiloritis. The revolutionary activity lead to the revenge of the Germans such as the case of the holocaust if Anogia, the villages of Kedros and the execution of fifteen people from Gergeri, Nivritos, Gournolakos and Damasta.



Synthesis of the extraordinary-emblematic characteristics of the mountain

As shown by the above analysis and presentation of emblematic characteristics we can say that the Mount Ida (Ida) or Psiloritis is a mountain with unique features that meet the emblematic criteria as reflected in the study of ETAM SA.

- Spatial cohesion,
Although it is not a single administrative unit all characteristics of the mountain financial, social, environmental and cultural forms a very specific single entity that also has spatial variations.
- Institutional recognition,

The region has already joined the European and Global Geoparks Network and has been designated as a UNESCO Geopark. Moreover, a large part of the region is included in the Natura 2000 Network and there are also classified 9 wildlife shelters, 3 monuments of nature, 12 areas of outstanding natural beauty, 5 archaeological sites, 5 Monasteries as preserved monuments and 1 historical preserved Monument

- Reputation,

The reputation of the region at a national level is indisputable as many local tourists visit the region all year round and the integration into European and global networks is expected to improve the criterion.

- Legends and myths,

About the mountain there are many myths and legends but Psiloritis is mainly connected with the birth and the action of the immortal Gods. It is no coincidence that Ideon Andron was the center of worship of Cretanborn Zeus and was described as the Bethlehem of antiquity.

- Power of inspiration,

Has been and still is an inexhaustible source of inspiration for many artists.

- Picturesque landscape,

The massif with its peaks sprang up millions of years before through the Mediterranean Sea with rocks and landscapes formed by the ongoing tectonic plates of Africa and Europe. It took 5 million years to reach the height of 1.500 meters, to acquire the charm that distinguishes today its landscape, plateaus, canyons, valleys, mountain peaks, landscapes of aesthetic beauty, etc. and to become the highest mountain in Crete and one of the highest in the Mediterranean.

- Unique ecosystems,

Of the 1,130 endemic plants of Greece, 268 were found in Crete and of these 168 are found in Mt Psiloritis. The region has also a significant number of species of fauna and is rich in geotopes.

- Particular cultural identity,

The peculiar popular culture of the region, developed over the years is one of the main and essential characteristics of the mountain.

- Sustainability and anthropogenic environment,

The absence of significant environmental disasters, the existence of small-scale infrastructure, the mild and qualitative intervention in the area and the pursuit mainly of the basic productive activity which is livestock farming in the traditional way, allows us to say that the area has not suffered considerable pressure.

- Historic places,

The timeless presence of local residents but also of the mountain in important historical events that determined the course of this place makes the massif an important historical site.

The most important emblematic characteristics of the massif that are at the same time also keywords are the following:

1. Culture, special local identity, cultural events / C8 Mediterranean cultural identity / C1 Proud Local People
2. Traditional Settlements / C8 Mediterranean cultural identity
3. Psiloritis Natural Park / C3 Reputation, C6 Picturesque landscape
4. UNESCO Geopark / C2 Institutional recognition
5. Geodiversity and Biodiversity / C7 Particular ecosystems
6. Music, Dance, Song, Verse / C5 Power of inspiration
7. Cretan diet, Agri-food products / C8 Mediterranean cultural identity
8. The highest mountain of Crete, short distance from the sea / C6 Picturesque landscape
9. The Bethlehem of Antiquity / C4 Legends and myths
10. Fights for freedom and human values / C10 Historic places

PART III

III.1 Tourism infrastructure and supply

Although it is not a single administrative unit and therefore it is very difficult to record statistics related to tourism in the region, tourism infrastructure and tourist flows in the region of Psiloritis are already mentioned above in the analysis of the criterion “C3 reputation”.

In the region there are recorded 154 hotels, with 8.340 rooms and more than 16 thousand bed places, 269 establishments with 3.462 bed places, 2 Campings and many other companies related to activities of the tourism sector (tourist offices, car rental offices (cars and motorcycles), tourist shops, etc.

Despite the efforts made in the private sector to meet the needs of tourism in the region at all levels, public infrastructure needed to support the tourism sector is lagging behind. On the one hand there is a lack of leisure tourism infrastructure such as information centers, footpaths associated with the observation of nature and the geological wealth, sightseeing posts, observatories, inadequate marking of areas of special beauty or historical and archaeological interest, etc., and on the other hand similar infrastructures that already exist, they either do not work or underperform. Such infrastructures are the mountain huts that require major interventions in order to be safe, to provide visitors the necessary supplies and have the necessary equipment.

However, the quality of services provided, the cultural and the natural environment of the region, the highly developed primary sector, habits, customs and traditions, nutrition, religious events, the interesting archaeological sites, etc. are an important attraction for local and foreign visitors.

Strengths	Weakness
<i>A large number of archaeological and historical monuments and monuments of natural, cultural heritage and traditional settlements</i>	Lack of leisure tourism infrastructure (information centers, footpaths associated with the observation of nature and the geological wealth, sightseeing posts, inadequate marking etc.)
<i>Habits, customs, nutrition, cultural environment</i>	Non-organized and fragmented efforts to highlight and promote tourism product in the region
<i>Natural environment with rich biodiversity and geodiversity/A high proportion of the area is occupied by the Psiloritis Geopark recognized as “UNESCO Global Geopark”</i>	Existing public infrastructure Incomplete or out of operation
<i>Traditional cuisine which attracts tourists and</i>	

<i>residents of urban areas throughout the year</i>	
<i>A strong brand name of livestock and agricultural products at national level</i>	
<i>Proximity to very popular sites (archaeological sites, urban centers)</i>	

III.2 Tourism operators

Tourism as mentioned above is the main branch of the tertiary sector. In the area there is a significant number of bed places at hotels with stars mainly located on the beach but in the Mainland, there are also small units scattered mainly of family character.

A) Lodgings and Infrastructure

The region recorded 154 hotels, with 8.340 rooms and more than 16 thousand people. In general, the average number of bed places per hotel (107), shall be considered satisfactory — high in the region, since even marginally outweighs the region (105).

Regarding the category of hotel classification, on the basis “Star” system, in the region operates businesses that cover the whole spectrum. The majority of units, however, are classified as two star (62 hotels) and three star (35), although luxury hotels are 7 and offer 2.589 beds and thus constitute a critical size. In total, these are found in the coastal zone of the region. In any case, in the region are tourist infrastructures available that can constantly “feed” a tourist stream either for day accommodation or overnight stay in the area.

Concerning the apartments, the situation is similar to that in the hotel, where the vast majority of a total of 269 accommodation establishments and 3.462 beds.

In the area there are also two Camping spots, one in the area of Agia Galini and one in the District of Amari.

There are also other business and professional activities related to tourism. For example, there are 359 travel agencies, over 500 car rentals offices (cars and motorcycles) and 140 tourist shops. Other tourist facilities, in the mountainous region of Psiloritis are the 5 mountain huts. On the top Samari next to the mountain hut in the area of Zaros, is the only organized climbing field of Psiloritis with 7 opened educational routes of varying levels of difficulty.

Mountain huts in the region of Mount Psiloritis

S/N	Mountain Huts	Location	Altitude	Capacity
1	"Toumpotos Prinos" Psiloritis	"Aplytra" area – west slope of Psiloritis	1.500 m	28 climbers
2	Zaros	Top «Σαμάρι»-south ridge of Psiloritis	1.400 m	20 climbers
3	Anogia Municipality	"Trigiodo" mountainous area Zominthos	1.100	10
4	Gonies	Mountainous area of Gonies	800	10
5	Krousonas	Mountainous area of Vromonero	1000	10

III.3 Tourism demand

The wider area of Psiloritis, due to:

- all the characteristics which we analyzed in the previous sections of the case study (mythology, history, culture, natural environment, etc.),
- the significant improvement of the services provided,
- the increase in tourist flow, mainly thanks to the increase of domestic tourism and the steady interest of foreign visitors,
- the fact that the local tourism product is progressively enriched as a result of private investment that aim at the promotion of local traditions and unique characteristics of the region, tourist demand increases significantly in particular during high season and mainly concerns one or two-day travelers.

Especially in mountainous part of the region, traffic growth is directly related to the effectiveness of previous interventions, and to the combined effort for the establishment of a distinct, coherent and competitive tourism product. This is based on a separate identity-name, which is now enshrined in the recent recognition and institutionalization of the Natural Park of the UNESCO Geopark programme and the implementation of new strategies for the integrated spatial and sustainable development in the region.

Analyzing the available statistical data but also through the field research made by AKOMM-PSILORITIS AAE OTA the following conclusions are extracted:

- The last years there is an increase of tourism demand in a large part of the region concerning the mountainous and semi-mountainous area. The coastal zone appears to have clear stability and growth.
- Visitors, except those who reside in the coastal zone, stay in general one or two days in the region.
- During summer season the majority of visitors are foreigners while in the winter the number of local visitors increases significantly.
- In the last years there is a considerable interest in alternative tourism activities such as educational activities in the mountain (e.g. ski lessons), organization and

participation in sport events (e.g. Idaios Road, Psiloritis Race, Pierra Creta-ski mountaineering race etc.), in the participation in cultural activities (festivals, music lessons, etc.), and to the participation in production activities.

The main strengths and weaknesses in this area are:

Strengths	Weakness
An increased tourist demand in recent years.	Lack of leisure tourism infrastructure (information centers, footpaths associated with the observation of nature and the geological wealth, sightseeing posts, observatories, inadequate marking of areas etc.)
Significant improvement of service in the region	Non-organized and fragmented efforts to highlight and promote tourism in the region
Demographic dynamics in mountain areas (population growth, substrate for young people)	Low promotion and utilization degree for the designated traditional settlements
Dynamic wider tourist market (Heraklion, Rethymno primarily)	
Steady gradual increase in visitor numbers and satisfactory occupancy of accommodation infrastructure (around 70%)	
Large number of archaeological and historical monuments and monuments of natural, cultural heritage and traditional settlements	
Strong brand name of the produced livestock and agricultural products nationwide	

III.4 Tourism impact

The tertiary sector ranks first in economic importance in the wider area of Psiloritis but maintains strong and close links to traditional specialization in processing and farming.

In General, income and employment in the sector is offered by numerous shops, tourist accommodation and tourism businesses in restaurants and in leisure, as well as other services related to health, education and social care that are scattered in all the municipalities of the region, with trade and other services to be mainly found in the administrative centers and tourism to develop in surrounding areas or traditional settlements.

In this context, the dominant sector in the service economy is first and foremost tourism and accommodation services. Apart from the coastal zone where high capacity hotels can be found which employ a large number of people during the touristic period, in the mountainous zone there is a significant reserve of tourist infrastructure, which consists of small units (Hotel, holiday rentals etc.). The enterprises activate in tourism are mainly small or very small, as well as family business, meaning that in most cases more than one member of a family works in the same business.

The tourism industry that constitutes the largest share of the service sector contributes significantly to the local economy and potentially is the branch that will play an important role in the recovery of the economy. It is also the sector of the economy which through the agri-food cluster will contribute significantly to the support of the primary sector and the promotion of local products.

Strengths	Weakness
Strong brand name of produced livestock and agricultural products nationwide	Not organized and fragmented efforts to highlight and promote tourism products in the region
A wide variety of agricultural and livestock products benefiting from a particular quality, nutritional and dietary value and are designated as PDO/PGI	Low competitiveness in services provided in the secondary and tertiary sectors
Demand for new alternative activities in tourism industry	Insufficient connection of the primary sector with the other two sectors (secondary and tertiary).
Dynamic wider tourist market	

III.5 Public infrastructure and services

The private sector has in recent years made a serious effort to meet the needs of tourism in the region (creation and modernization of tourist accommodation and catering units, opening tourist offices, development of alternative activities etc).

In the public sector the infrastructure needed to support the tourism sector is lagging behind. On the one hand there is a lack of leisure tourism infrastructure such as information centers, footpaths associated with the observation of nature and the geological wealth of sightseeing posts, observatories, inadequate marking of areas of outstandingly beauty or historical and archaeological interest, etc., and on the other hand exist infrastructures which are either not working or underperforming, or need an upgrade so as to provide security to the visitor. For example, such infrastructures are mountain shelters requiring significant building operations and interventions in the surrounding area and also to be equipped with the appropriate equipment.

For the improvement of public infrastructure in recent years the municipalities of the region in cooperation with the Region of Crete have embarked on a major effort of restructuring

settlements, roads and squares, restoring designated monuments and sites, highlighting areas of natural beauty and creating view and observation spots. In general, the potential services to visitors can be said to be complete. In general, the potential services available to visitors can be said to be complete. The region presents deficiencies in managing extreme weather conditions. Regarding health care, in the region there are very well equipped and manned health centers and pharmacies and also the region is close to the two big hospitals located in the two major urban centers (Heraklion and Rethymno).

The road network we can say that has gaps such as the bad condition of the road surface (asphalt) in some places, incomplete and appropriate road signs.

The telecommunication network in the study area is generally satisfactory, as it has broadband service and serves all settlements of the region. The study area, almost in its entirety, and especially within the settlements and its greater area where the terrain permits, is covered by mobile services.

III.6 Partner's perception of the tourism vision of their territory

The massif of Psiloritis and the wider region is probably the most vibrant cell of the Cretan countryside and has a strong growth potential. In the district there is a demographic dynamism mainly in mountain settlements, namely a population growth greater than the regional average and the existence of young population showing interest in both residing in the region and activate financially in the tourism sector as well as in other sectors of the economy.

The region is divided into two zones in terms of tourist demand/offer, but also the tourist model chosen or can be selected in the future. Specifically, the Mountain-Hill zone and the Beach (North and South) zone. The company's strategy focuses on the further development of an individual alternative tourism product, which builds on the main overnight stay, restaurant etc infrastructure, and at the same time, will be located in the mountain-semi mountainous zone. The mountain-semi mountainous zone is divided into the sections Mountainous Mylopotamos, Lower Mylopotamos, Mountainous Malevyzi, Upper Rizas and Amari.

This does not mean that the lowland or coastal part of the region is neglected. By contrast, when designing these are perceived as consistent evidence of a growth model with a focus on multidisciplinary organization of the economy and spatial integration. Moreover, we should not neglect the fact that these zones attract important part of the tourism offer and constitute strong poles of visitors, with benefits spread throughout the rural and disadvantaged inland.

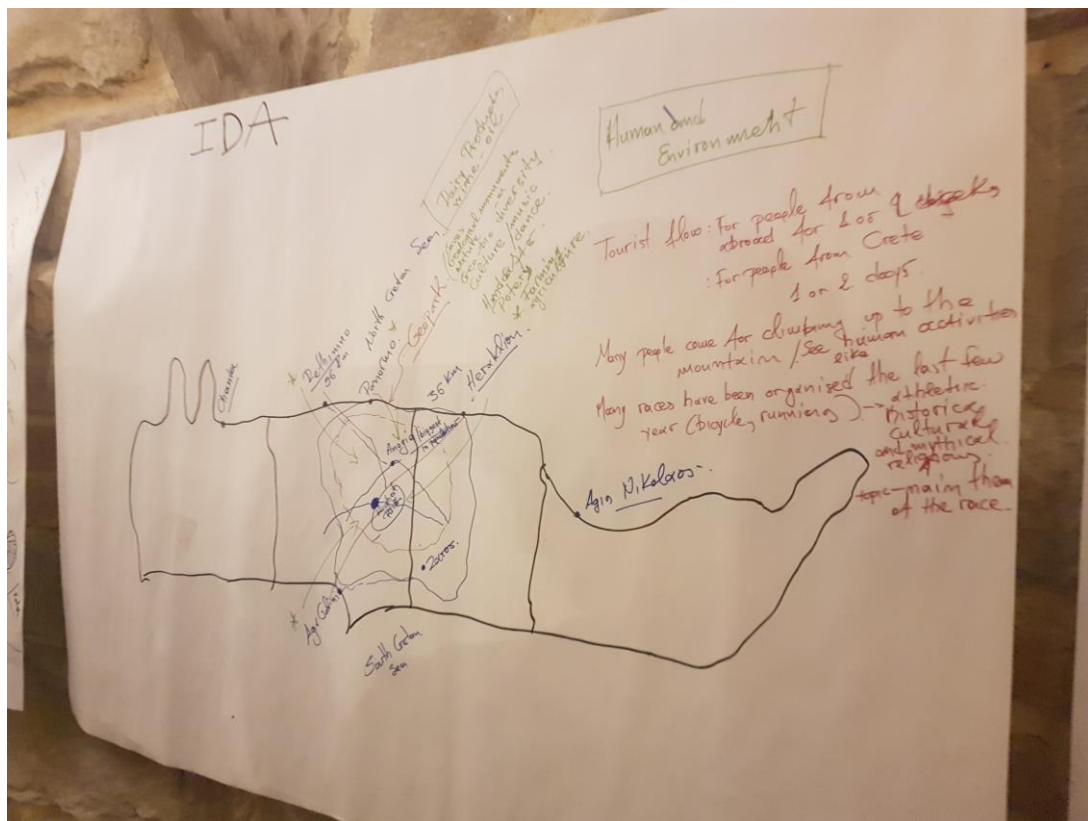
Therefore, the new tourism model which embraces the partner, although should be part of broader planning and discussions with the involvement and consensus of local, regional and national bodies, is based on:

- (a) the operational interconnection of the economic sectors (agri-food complex),
- b) will have as main pillars man and environment and

c) will aim at highlighting the comparative advantages of the region and the improvement of the quality of life of inhabitants

(d) will seek to optimizing the services provided, extending the tourist season and connecting the beach to the mountain area.

In conclusion we can say that these four parameters could constitute the fundamental pillars of a developing tourism model that would contribute significantly to the development of tourism in the region of Psiloritis.



PART IV

IV.1 SWOT analysis regarding the implementation of an emblematic slow tourism product (eco-itinerary)

SWOT analysis synthesis at critical issues that local strategy faces			
STRENGTHS		WEAKNESSE	
S1	Neighborhood with places with great visitation (archaeological sites, urban centers)	W1	Lack of leisure tourism infrastructure (information centers, footpaths associated with the observation of nature and the geological wealth sightseeing posts, observatories, insufficient marking etc.)
S2	Dynamic broader tourist market	W2	Non-organized and fragmented efforts to highlight and promote tourism product in the region
S3	Steady gradual increase in visitor numbers and satisfactory occupancy of accommodation infrastructure (around 70%)	W3	Low competitiveness in services provided in the secondary and tertiary sectors
S4	Less reliance on seasonality of demand for tourism compared to Crete and Greece	W4	Insufficient connection of the primary sector with the other two sectors (secondary and tertiary).
S5	A large number of archaeological and historical monuments and monuments of natural, cultural heritage and traditional settlements	W5	Degradation and deterioration of the natural and urban environment
S6	Habits, customs and traditions which create a special and unique cultural identity expressed through song, poetry (mandinades), dancing, etc., which is directly linked to the terrain of the landscape and the mountain ranges		
S7	Traditional cuisine which attracts tourists and residents of urban areas throughout the year		
S8	A strong brand name of livestock and agricultural products at national level		
S9	Natural environment with rich biodiversity and geodiversity/A high proportion of the area is occupied by the Psiloritis Geopark recognized as "UNESCO Global Geopark"		
S10	The 40% of the area of the region occupy nine (9) designated NATURA 2000 sites		
S11	An adequate level of social cohesion and sense of common identity		
S12	Demographic dynamics in certain regions- a critical mass of young population		
OPPORTUNITIES		THREATS	
O1	International increasing trend for alternative forms	T1	Emergence of competitive alternative

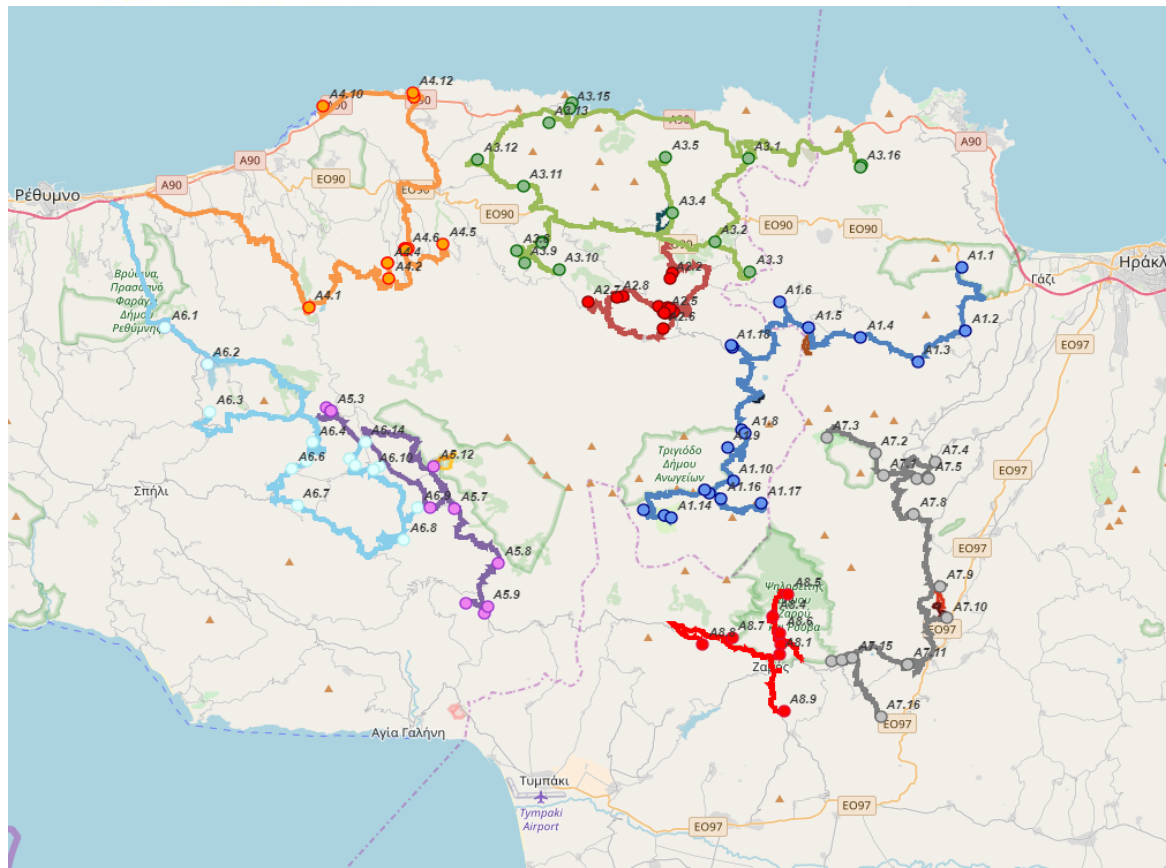
	of tourism		tourism destinations
O2	Establishment of Crete as an international tourist destination (2015 was the year with the most tourist arrivals — around 6 million tourists, corresponding to 25 % of arrivals in Greece)	T2	Danger of deterioration in the quality of the tourist product of Crete
O3	Increasing demand for local food products of high nutritional value	T3	Risk of deterioration of social cohesion due to economic crisis
O4	Policies of the Region of Crete on the agri-food industry, tourism and culture (RIS Crete)		
O5	Innovations and new technologies (electronic applications, maps etc.)		

IV.2 Indication of ideal locations for an eco-itinerary and possibilities to engage stakeholders

Below you can find some Eco-tourism routes, which are divided into one-day, two-day, three-day and four-day trips.

A. One-day excursions in the Natural Park of Psiloritis

The one-day tours in Psiloritis Natural Park include short one-day visits without overnight stay within the Park. They are mainly organized for guests living in other regions of the island outside the Park and who wish to spend one day in the Park.



Trail A1 - Stops

A1.1 Voulismeno Aloni / A1.2 Archeological Site of Tylissos / A1.3 Gonies Gorge / A1.4 Minoan Farmhouse / A1.5 Gonies Ophiolite / A1.6 Basilica of Agios Georgios / A1.7 Archeological Site of Zominthos / A1.8 Agia Marina / A1.9 Agios Yakinthos / A1.10 Agios Mamas / A1.11 Petradolakia / A1.12 Mitato / A1.13 Nida Plateu / A1.14 Monument to the Rebel / A1.18 Agios Ioannis / A1.19 Museum of Anogia / A1.20 Gryllios' Museum.

The tour of the proposal A1 is primarily a road journey with small hikes at some stops. It starts from the road that drives from Heraklion to Tylisos. A small detour to the old National road drives after 3 km at the first stop of the tour, Voulismeno Aloni (A1.1).

Returning by the same route the visitor will follow the provincial road to Tylisos where after 3 km will stop at the archaeological site of Tylisos which is located just before the village (A1.2).

Then the road continues to the Gorge of Gonies (stop A1.3: arrival at its entrance after about 4 km) where in several points the visitor can make a short stop to enjoy the view. The tour continues and after 4km drive we reach the fourth stop which is the Minoan Farmhouse after the Gorge in the Valley of Sklavokampos (A 1.4). We continue and reach Gonies Village which we overtake and shortly after is the next stop the Gonies Ophiolite (Stop A1.5) represented by distinctive green peridotites of the ophiolite complex i.e. rocks of the oceanic crust (4.75 km). Continuing, after 1.5 km, we arrive at the junction to Anogia. A short detour to Kamariotis lead (after 1km) in the settlement where the sixth stop is, the Basilica of St. George (A1.6). We return by the same road at

the junction and continue towards Anogia where after 5.6km we reach the entrance to the village and turn towards Nida. We continue tirelessly for the next 8.3 km. where we reach the seventh stop at the archaeological site of Zominthos (Stop A1.7). A little below (0.4 km) is the chapel of Agia Marina and the spring (Stop A1.8).

Getting back on the road, we continue southward and after 1.5 km we can turn left towards Agios Yakynthos (Stop A1.9 after 1 km). The next stops are in theraw and include the Chapel of Agios Mamas (Stop A1.10 after 3 km), the Geotope Petradolakia (Stop A1.11 after 1.4 km) and the traditional Mitato (Stop A 1.12 after 0.2 km). Then we drive for about 5.5 km and we finally reach the plateau of Nida (Stop A1.13). The plateau of Nida is the highest plateau of Crete with an average altitude of 1360 meters. On the western edge of the plateau and especially on the steep eastern slopes of the Psiloritis, which creates the big fault line of the area, is located the Ideon Andron cave (Stop A1.15 after 0.6 km) where we can go on foot. Remaining on the plateau and as long as we have an appropriate vehicle to cross the dirt road within the plateau up to its end, and then continue on foot to get to the Rebel's Memorial (Stop A1.14 after 1.5 km).

Returning by the same route to Anogia we can turn right towards the Observatory of Skinakas (Stop A1.17 after 5.5 km) making a stopover in the small church of Agios Fanourios (Stop A1.16 after 0.8 km from the intersection).

The tour ends in Anogia, where visitors can visit at first the Church of Agios Ioannis (Stop A1.18), the information center of the natural park, the Museum of Alkibiades Skoulas or ' Gryllios ' (Stop A1.19), the Birth House of Nikos Xylouris, the Anogia Museum (Stop A1.20), and to have a closer look at a variety of popular arts like the loom, the traditional cretan bootmakers, glassblowing workshops, etc. To return to Heraklion we take the same road towards Gonies and Tylisos.

Alternative routes:

Hiking in the "Trail of Mygias"

Hiking in the "Geotrail of Gonies»

Rock climbing at Voulismeno Aloni

In Anogia visitors can enjoy a meal in one of the numerous traditional taverns located within the village, and to buy local products and folk-art ornaments.

Route A6-Stops

Stops:

A6.1 Bridge of Potamos /A6.2/6.3 Lake of Potamos / A6.3 Patsos Gorge / A6.4 Koules Meronas/ A6.5 Late-Byzantine Church of Panagia/ A6.6 Agios Nikolaos Late-Byzantine Church/ A6.7 Late-Byzantine Church Agios Ioannis Fotis/ A6.8 Ancient olive trees forest / A6.9 Paleochristian Basilica in Vizari / A6.10 Archangel Michael/ A6.11 Archeological Site Monastiraki/ A6.12 Agia Anna / A6.13/ Panagia Kera/ A6.14 Assomaton Monastery

The A6 suggestion concerns more visitors coming from Rethymno as it is closer. It starts just outside Rethymno where there is a detour from the New Highway to Amari. The first stop (A6.1) is

in the 10.2km after the bypass where a very impressive tall stone bridge is located over which the provincial road passes. We continue towards Amari and after about 2.7 km we reach on the artificial lake of Potamon which is the second stop of our tour (A6.2).

After the Lake we follow the Provincial road driving approximately 10.5 km until we reach the junction to Agia Fotini, where we turn right (South) towards Patsos. Final destination is the entrance of the Gorge of Patsos (Stop A6.3) where we arrive after about 9.5 km passing through the settlements of Pantanassa and Patsos. We return by the same road and at the intersection we turn to Apostolouss and Agia Fotini.

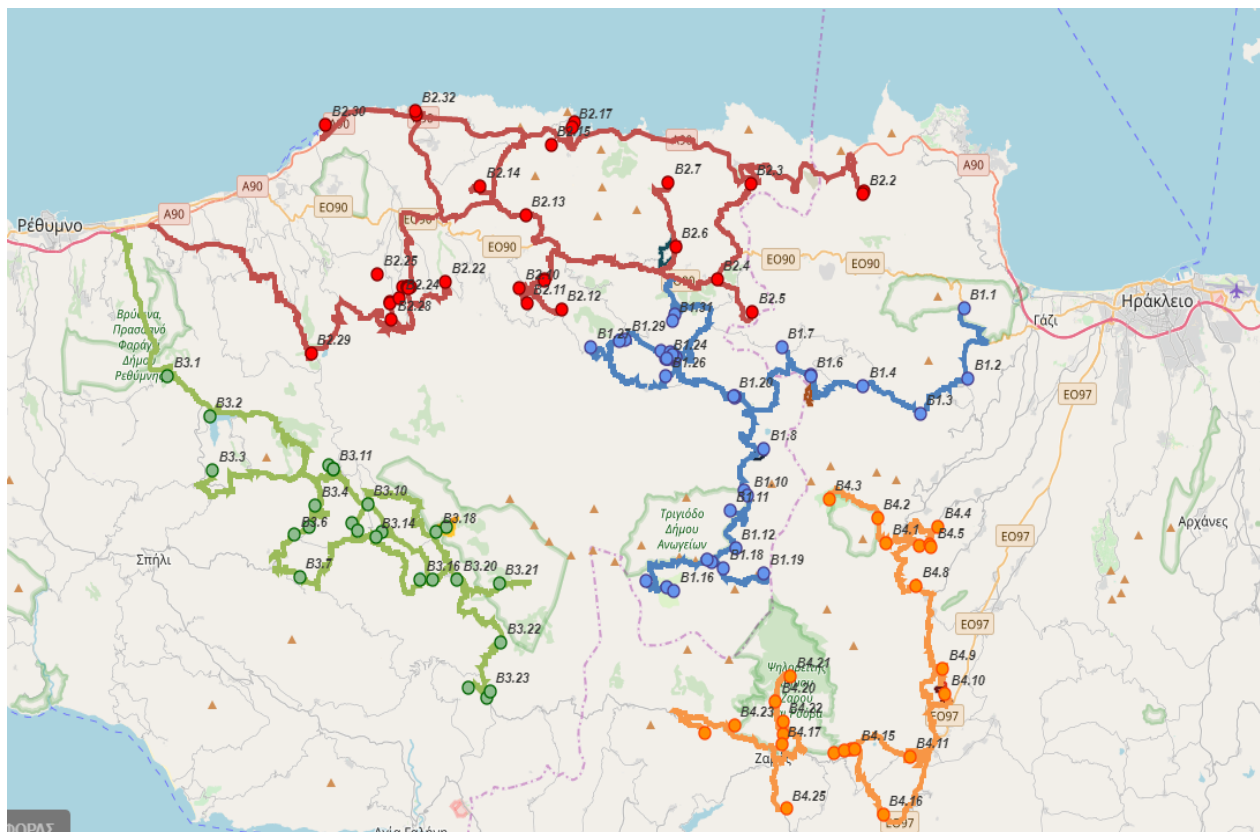
When we arrive to the Agia Fotini we turn right towards Meronas. After 2.7 km we reach the point that we should leave the country road and turn right towards the next stop which is the Koules of Meronas (Stop A6.4). There we drive up to a point while in the last part of the route, up to Koules, we walk. Returning to the country road we continue to Meronas, where we arrive after 1.2 km in order to stop to the Late-Byzantine Church of Panagia (Stop A6.5) that is located in the village.

We leave Meronas and very soon (after 0.6 km) we are in the sixth stop, which is the Late-Byzantine Church of Agios Nikolaos (A6.6). We continue our drive, drive through the villages Mesonisia and Gerakari and after 6.5 km we arrive in the Late-Byzantine Church of Agios Ioannis Foti (Stop A6.7). Then we head towards Ano Meros which we drive through and after a total driving of 9.7 km we meet a junction with a dirt road where we can turn right to get to the eighth stop where there is a forest of ancient olive trunks in a Valley (A6.8).

We can reach this stop only if we have the right 4 × 4 vehicle, since we must drive 1.5 km. poor quality dirt road, otherwise we have to ignore it. Unless we want to walk. Returning to the asphalt road we turn right towards Petrochori. Shortly before Petrochori (after 2.2 km) we turn right towards Vizari in order to get (after 2 km) in ninth stop which is the early Christian Basilica of Vizari (A6.9). We turn back the same way and we drive through the villages of Lambiotes and Petrochori until we get (after 4.8 km) in the settlement of Monastiraki.

There will be a stop in Michael Archangel church (Stop A6.10) and then we will visit the Archaeological site of Monastiraki (Stop A6.11). Leaving behind the Monastiraki we continue towards the village of Amari passing through Opsigias. Approximately 2km. after our start and just before the Amari we will turn right to reach after 0.6 km the Byzantine Church of Agia Anna (Stop A6.12) while continuing North (also after about 0.6 km) we get and the Byzantine Church of Panagia kera (Stop A6.13). Finally, continuing the road to North we arrive in Assomaton Monastery that is our 14th and last stop (A6.14).

B. Two-day sightseeing in the Natural Park of Psiloritis



Route B2 – Stops

Day 1st

B 2.1 Museum Domenicos Theotokopoulos / B2.2 Presentation of Virgin Mary / B2.3 Talea Ori Section / B2.4 Ottoman Fountain / B2.5 Sculptures of the Nature / B2.6 Hiking in the trail Doxaros Ptyches Vosakou / B2.7 Monastery of. Vosakos / B2.8 Episkopi / B2.9 Agios Ioannis / B2.10 Abdanites / B2.11 Panagia / B2.12 Panagia Faneromeni / B 2.13 Kaminia / B 2.14 Melidoni Cave / B2.15 Monastery of St. John Baptist Atalis / B2.16 Bali / B2.17 Underwater Sources.

Day 2nd

B2.18 Agios Ioannis Theologos, Agios Ioannis Baptist, Agios Dimitrios / B2.19 Monastery Sotiras Christos / B2.20 Museum of ceramics / B2.21 Pottery Workshops / B2.22 Agios Georgios / B2.23 Hiking Margarites Gorge / B2.24 Hiking E4 Arkadi-Eleftherna – Margarites / B2.25 Hiking in the Gorge of Lagas / B2.26 Archaeological Site of Ancient Eleftherna / B2.27 Paleo-Christian Basilica of Archangel Michael / B2.28 Byzantine Church of Sotiras Cristos / B2.29 Monastery of Arkadi / B2.30 Spilies / B2.31 Paleo-Christian Basilica of Agia Sophia / B2.32 Panormos

Sightseeing Description:

First Day

The first day of the tour of the suggestion B2 starts from the village Fodele where the first two stops are found namely the Museum of Domenicos Theotokopoulos (Stop B2.1) and the Late Byzantine Church Presentation of Virgin Mary (Stop B2.2). Then we return to the New Highway and at the detour towards Aloides, at the height of the settlement Sisses we turn left. The third stop (B2.3) is a Geotope of the Natural Park of Psiloritis the "Talea Ori Section" that is located on the country road towards Aloides, 1.5 km from the bypass.

The road continues towards Drosia where we arrive after about 9 km and make a brief stop in the Ottoman Fountain of the village (Stop B2.4). The visitor continues towards Chonos and to the next stop which is also an impressive geotope, the "Sculptures of nature" (Stop B2.5 after 3.6 km). One of the most striking areas where the action of water on carbonate rocks has created works of art. On these two geotopes there are signs for visitor's easy detection and information.

Then we return to Drosia and continue West to the village of Kambos Doxaroy (after approximately 4 km). At the entrance of the village there is a sign posted from where the hiking route "Doxaro – Vosakos folds" starts, which was designed by the Natural Park of Psiloritis. Visitors can walk the trail which passes through the the homonymous folds "Vosakos Folds" (Stop B2.6).

The route is circular and we return to the starting point. From there we take get in the car and we can continue our tour with a short detour until the seventh stop (B2.7) which is at the end of the road (after 4.4 km) and is the Monastery of Vosakos. We return by the same road in the Valley of Doxaros and continue West on the Old Highway until the traditional village Mourtzana (after 7 km) where we turn left towards the Episkopi.

After 2.4 km drive we arrive in Episkopi which is the eighth stop of our tour (B2.8). Within the village there is the Byzantine Church of Agios Ioannis (Stop B2.9). Then we leave Episkopi and drive till the next village Abdanites (after 4 km.). In Abdanites we can make our tenth stop (B2.10) as the settlement is characterized as traditional. After Abdanites we can drive for 1.3 km until the Venetian fortress the settlement of Kastri to reach the eleventh stop (B2.11) which is the late Byzantine Church of Panagia.

We take the same road back and at the junction towards Episkopi we continue straight where after 1.4 km we arrive in the village Agios Ioannis to visit the late Byzantine Church of Panagia Faneromeni (Stop B2.12). We return by the same road to Mourtzana and from there we drive towards Agia passing through it.

After 4.5 km total driving from Mourtzana we arrive at the Stop (B2.13) where we can see an old art, the production of coal. After 2.2 km we arrive at the village of Melidoni and from there driving other 2.5 km we arrive at the cave of Melidoni, or Gerontospilio, the B2.14 Stop of our tour. Leaving behind Melidoni drive for 4.5 km until the New Highway and from there we turn right towards Bali. At the 2.1 km there is a bypass to the Monastery of Atali (Stop B2.15). Getting back again to the new Highway and after 1.2 km. is the bypass to Bali. In Bali the visitor can swim in one of the many beautiful beaches (Stop B2.16) and to observe the Underwater Springs (Stop B2.17) which constitute another Geotope of the Natural Park of Psiloritis.

Second Day

The second day of the suggestion B2 starts from Margarites. Margarite is a village famous for its traditional pottery art. The first stops start (Stops B 2.18) from the in churches of Agios Ioannis Theologos, Agios Ioannis Baptist and Agios Dimitrios. These churches are located within the settlement, while important is the visit in the Monastery of Sotiras Cristos (Stop 2.19). We stay longer in MArgarites where we can visit the Museum of ceramic art (Stop B2.20) and the numerous pottery workshops (Stops B2.21). From the village we can see the Margarites Gorge in which the Cypress forest grows. In several places there are sightseeing spots towards the Gorge and also access points to it.

There starts the hiking route that crosses the Gorge (Stop B2.23) which we can follow. Alternatively, we can take the route "Arkadi – Eleftherna – Margarites" (Stop B2.24) or in the Lagas Gorge (Stop B2.25). After the hike we drive up to the village of Kalamas, where we arrive after 4.3 km. There we can visit the Late Byzantine Church of Agios Georgios (Stop B2.22). We continue towards the village Ancient Eleftherna. The next stop is the archaeological site of Ancient Eleftherna and the Paleochristian Basilica of Archangel Michael located within the site (Stops B2.26 and B2.27 respectively). After visiting the archaeological site, we return to the village Ancient Eleftherna where the the Byzantine Church of Sotiras Christos is located (Stop B2.28).

Leaving behind the Ancient Eleftherna we continue southwest to the historic Monastery of Arkadi (Stop B2.29). After our visit to the Monastery of Arkadi we can return by the same road through Perama or take the country road of Arkadi and get to the new highway. Arriving in the new Highway we turn left to get to the Beach Spilies (Stop B2.30 after approximately 6 km) which is very impressive due to the coastal erosion landforms. If we wish we can also go for swimming there. After the Spilies we continue to Panormo where we stop at the Paleochristian Basilica of Agia Sophia (Stop B2.31) and where we can also swim in the beach of Panormo (Stop B2.32).

Route B4 - Stops

Day 1st

B4.1 Monastery of Agia Irini / B4.2 Krousonas Faults / B4.3 Plateau Livada / B4.4 Panagia Eleousa / B4.5 Watermills / B4.6 Folklore Museum / B4.7 Panagia Kera / 4.8 Monastery of Gorgolaini / B4.9 Archeological Site of Rizinia / B4.10 Hiking: "Pies of the old lady" / B 4.11 Agia Paraskevi / B4.12 Gergeri Museum of Natural History / B 4.13 Gergeri / B4.14 Christos / B4.15 Panagia Kera Chanoutia / B4.16 Venetian Village Raptis

Day 2nd

B 4.17 Watermill / B4.18 Lake Votomos (Zaros) / B4.19 Sternas Springs / B4.20 Hiking: "Canyon Gafari" (E4) / B 4.21 Agios Ioannis Rouvas / B4.22 Skete of Saint Euthymius /B4.23 Monastery of Agios Antonios Vrontisi / B4.24 Monastery of Agios Fanourios Valsamonero / B4.25 Church in the village Panagia

Tour Description:

First Day

The suggestion B4 includes a tour in the sites of Krousonas, Prinias, Gergeri and Zaros. The tour starts from the village of Krousonas where we arrive from Heraklion via Gazi. Arriving in Krousonas we continue towards the Monastery of Agia Irini which is about 2.3 km away. There we make our first stop (B4.1). Then we drive to the plateau of Livada. After driving for about 2 km we'll make a second stop (B4.2) to visit a geotope, the "Faults of Krousonas." We continue the way up to the plateau Livada but after a point the road is accessible only by a 4 × 4 vehicle; otherwise its better is to skip this route. If we drive the right vehicle we reach the plateau in about 5 km and stop for the third time (B4.3).

We return by the same road in Krousonas, we enter the village and follow the signs to the village of Kitharida where we arrive after about 4 km. In Kitharida we will visit the Panagia Eleousa (Stop B4.4). Leaving behind the village of Kitharida we continue in the neighboring Sarhos. In the village we can find the Folklore Museum (Stop B4.5) and a restored watermill (Stop B4.6) while a little further out is the Late-Byzantine Church of the Panagia Kera (Stop B4.7). We return in Krousonas and continue on the road to Ano Asites. On the road and after about 5.8 km we will meet the Monastery of Gorgolaini where we make our eighth stop (B4.8).

Then we drive up until the Kato and Ano Asites and continue South towards Prinias. After about 6 km and just before the village we turn East to visit the archaeological site of Rizinia (Stop B4.9) and the chapel of Agios Panteleimonas which is literally hanging on the edge of the Hill of Rizinia. The archaeological site and the Church we can visit through an easy path. Then we drive to the Prinias and passing it through after about 2 km we turn left and drive through dirt roads until we reach an impressive and unique geotope the "Pites tis Grias (Grandma's pies)" (Stop B4.10) where we can walk on the hiking route that has been designed by the Psiloritis Natural Park (Hike: "Pites tis Grias"). We return from the same way as we reach the country road, we turn left towards Agia Varvara. Within the settlement we drive on the main road until the intersection to Gergeri and Zaros where we turn right. Driving for 4 km and after Agia Varvara we reach the village of Panassos where we will visit the Byzantine Church of Agia Paraskevi (Stop B4.11).

We continue to Gergeri where we arrive after 4.5 km. Here we will visit the Museum of Natural History (Stop B4.12), as well as the Byzantine churches of Jesus Christ (Stop B4.14) and Panagia Kera Chanoutia (Stop B4.15). In the village live also significantly notable folk artists whose workshops are worth visiting (Stop B4.13) upon request. The last stop of the first day tour is the Venetian Village Raptis (Stop B4.16) located at about 6 km South of the City of Gergeri.

Second Day

The second day of the suggestion B4 includes a tour in Zaros and in the famous and very impressive canyon with the multiple names: "Gafari Gorge", "Gorge of Rouvas" or 'Gorge of St. Nicholas '. It starts from the village of Zaros and stretches north to Lake Votomos. About 0.7 km after the junction to the Lake we can see one of the traditional watermills in the area and make our first stop (B4.17). We continue to the Lake to which we arrive after 0.6 km (Stop B4.18). The Lake except that is the starting point of the hike is a geotope of the Natural Park of Psiloritis. A little further on, we will see the sources of Sterna which is a Roman aqueduct (Stop B4.19).

Then we start the hike at the E4 trail which starts from the Lake and crosses the entire Gorge of Gafari (B4.20) which is also a geotope. The route has a length of about 5 km and is accessible only by foot. At the end of the trail and after the Gorge we reach the Chapel of Agios Ioannis Rouvas (Stop B4.21) where there is place for picnics. From this point starts also the Rouva forest that stretches northwards. In case you don't wish to go hiking in the forest of Rouvas, there is a road that drives to the chapel of Agios Ioannis and starts from the Village of Gergeri, which however after a point is a difficult dirt road and needs an appropriate 4 × 4 vehicle. For the brave who will walk in the Gorge, they have to come back from the same path or use a 4 × 4 vehicle via the road that leads to the village of Gergeri, but this requires of course prior arrangement with a guide. In case you will not walk in the Gorge or in case you return early and have the time (and the strength!) the region offers a significant number of additional attractions. The next stops include the Monastery of Vrontisi (Stop B4.23) and the Monastery of Valsamonero (Stop B4.24) two very important monasteries in the area from the second Byzantine period.

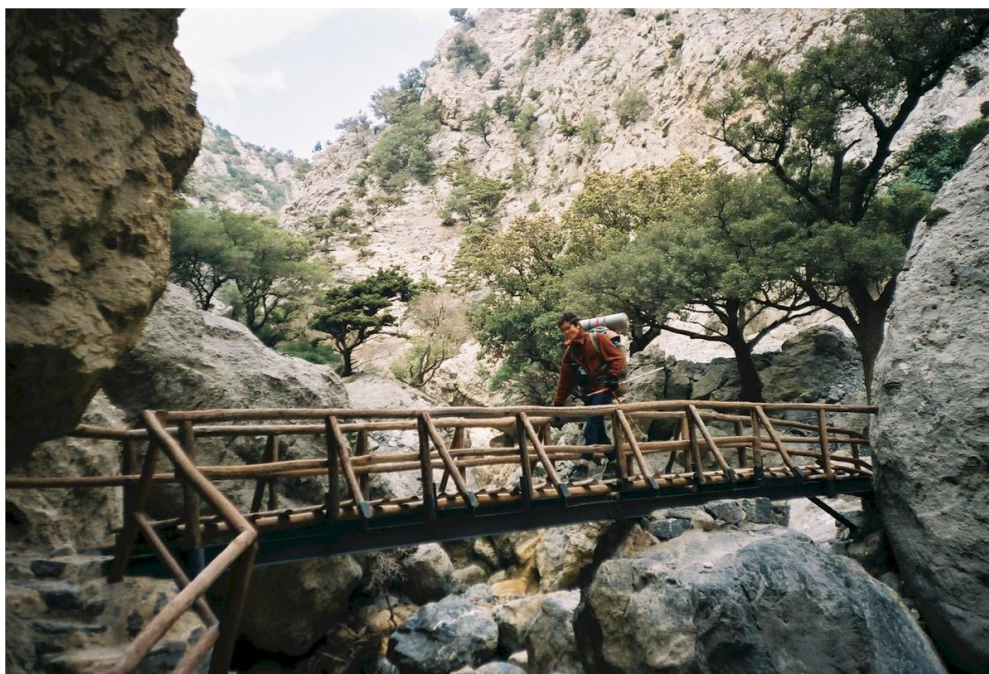
ANNEX

Tables and diagrams

Included in text

Photographs









Self-evaluation table

CRITERIA / ΚΡΙΤΗΡΙΑ		Score
C1 Proud local people	1-10	8
C2 Institutional recognition	1-10	8
C3 Reputation	1-10	8
C4 Legends and myths	1-10	10
C5 Power of inspiration	1-10	9
C6 Picturesque landscape	1-10	8
C7 Particular ecosystems	1-10	9
C8 Mediterranean cultural identity	1-10	9
C9 Sustainability and anthropogenic environment	1-10	9
C10 Historic places	1-10	9
TOTAL	10-100	87

1 very small, 2-3 small, 4-5 medium, 6-7 high, 8-9 very high, 10 paramount

Bibliography

Psiloritis Tourist Guide

Proposal of CLLD / LEADER 2014-2020

Proposal of Axis 4: Implementation of LEADER Approach of RDP 2007-2013

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