

Full day excursion

When: Saturday, 3 June 2023

Departure time: 10:00 am

Meeting point: In front of the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, Eleftheria sq.

Drop -off: In front of the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, Eleftheria sq.

Route: Archaeological Site of Gortyna, Archaeological Museum of Messara, Holy Monastery of Kalyviani, Lunch at Matala, back to Heraklion.

Includes: Entrance fees to the archaeological sites, Lunch and Drinks.

Not suitable for People with mobility impairments

1. Gortyna.



History.

Gortyn was first inhabited at the end of the Neolithic period (3000 B.C.) and flourished much later, in the Late Minoan period (1600-1100 B.C.), when the villa with the shrine was founded at the site of Kannia, near Metropolis. Remains of the Archaic habitation (7th century B.C.) were located in the area of the Acropolis, while the large inscription, the Gortyn Law

Code, dated to the 5th century B.C., attests the prosperity of the city, which continued until the Hellenistic period (3rd-2nd century B.C.).

Gortyn became an ally of Rome and during the Roman period (1st-5th centuries A.D.) reached the peak of its prosperity as the capital of the province of Crete and Cyrene. Here, Apostle Titus preached Christianity and in A.D. 250 the Ten Saints martyred. In A.D. 824 the city, which had become the seat of an Archbishop, was destroyed by the Arabs.

The first investigations on the site were conducted in 1884 by the Italian archaeologist F. Halbherr. Since then, excavations have been carried out by the Italian Archaeological School and the 23rd Ephorate.

Some of the uncovered buildings were consolidated during the excavations. Only the famous Code of Gortyn was incorporated and sheltered within a small building in the north circular wall of the Odeion.¹

In the main section of the site, one can see the Roman Odeum (Odeion), the so-called Great Inscription, which bears the Law Code of Gortyna, and an Early Byzantine church of St. Titus (Agios Titos). In the Sculpture Gallery, which is situated next to a refreshment stall, one can admire the Roman sculptures unearthed at Gortyna. In the Minoan period, a rather insignificant settlement is believed to have existed there.²

During the Geometric years (10th-8th century BC) the citadel of Gortyna was fortified, and the original foundation of the urban sphere was created, surrounding the temple of goddess Athena. From the 8th century, the city

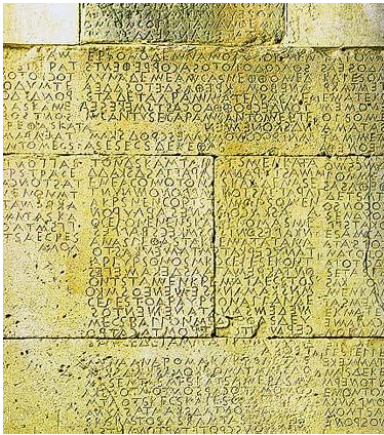


¹ [Ministry of Culture and Sports | Gortyna http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/3/eh351.jsp?obj_id=2355](http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/3/eh351.jsp?obj_id=2355)

² [Archaeological site of Gortyna - Crete Guide \(destinationcrete.gr\)](http://destinationcrete.gr)

expanded towards the south, covering the foothills and the sides of the northern heights, and the banks of the river Litheos. The agora, which was the centre of all political activity in ancient Gortyna, was created later. At the same time, small settlements started to appear in the plain to the south, where the sanctuary of Pythian Apollo (Pythios Apollon) was situated. In the Archaic period, a second centre was added to the city, which was dedicated to Apollo, its patron god.

During the Hellenistic period, Gortyna grew and prospered even more. A second agora was created east of the temple of Apollo, and a sanctuary of the Egyptian deities Isis, Anubis and Serapis was also established. A large square connected the two parts of the city (old and new), and the initial urban nucleus, on the northern elevation, was fortified. Gortyna also had a stadium and a gymnasium. The nearby cities of Phaistos, Syvritos, Matala and Lebena became mere neighbouring dependencies and ports of Gortyna. According to Greek mythology, when Zeus reached the shores of Crete in the form of a white bull, carrying Europa, the daughter of the king of Phoenicia, on his back, he first went to Lebena, and then he went on to Gortyna. There, Minos and Rhadamanthus were conceived under an evergreen plane tree, near the river Litheos.



Near the end of the Hellenistic era, Gortyna governed over the whole of south-central Crete, and part of the region of Rethymno. Gortyna and the town of Axos competed for supremacy over the

Ideon Cave (Idaion Andron). The fact that the first silver coins of Crete were minted in Gortyna (470 BC) is indicative of its wealth and power. It was the most populous city of Crete, with 35-40.000 inhabitants, and 5.000 mercenaries. It is also believed that Gortyna was considered one of the best-governed cities of Crete; this is strongly suggested by the so-called 'Great Inscription', a summary of inheritance law, family law, and civil procedure law which was found on the site.³ *The Monuments*⁴.

Temple of Saint Titus Inside the main archaeological site (near the road) still stands a small part of the imposing basilica dedicated to the first bishop of Crete, Saint Titus. The temple was built in the 6th-7th century and was dedicated to Saint Titus after the destruction of the larger basilica of Saint Titus located nearby. The small part that has survived is currently used for the worship of Panagia (Virgin Mary). Around the church, several stone sarcophagi have been identified, used for burying the priests.

The Roman Odeon. The Roman Odeon is the largest Odeon in ancient Crete, which is actually an indoor Roman theater. It was a very important part of the ancient city, where the Romans watched performances and talks. The auditorium has been maintained in quite good condition, as well as the semicircular orchestra and the stage which was decorated with statues. Next to the theater, there was the Agora and temple of Asclepius.

The Inscriptions with the Law of Gortyn, Crete. Next to the small theater, Halbherr discovered in 1884 four stone columns in the Doric dialect, where the civil law of Gortyn was engraved in boustrophedon script (bi-directional / alternation writing direction per line). Later, parts of the rest eight columns were found, some of them embedded on walls of houses in the village Agii Deka(!), thus completing the puzzle of the Law of Gortyn. The twelve columns (deltas) of Gortyn

³ Ibid.

⁴ Travel Guide for Island Crete, Greece. Ancient Gortyn cretanbeaches.com

had about 640 verses, 605 of which have been found. The very progressive laws refer to 450BC and were inspired by Minoan elements. The Law of Gortyna is the oldest surviving law in ancient Greece.

Roman Emperor Antoninus Pious statue. Near the parking place, a small room houses the Roman sculptures found in Gortyn. One of the most important statues probably depicts the emperor Antoninus Pius.

The plane tree of Gortyn. At the back side of the archaeological site, you will find a tall plane tree, which has something very rare. It is evergreen, unlike other deciduous plane trees, and has been the center of a fabulous myth. According to the Greek Mythology, this is the perennial plane tree of Gortyn under which Zeus and Europe mated. From this union, the three kings of Crete were born (Minos, Rhadamanthys and Sarpedon). Indeed, it is no coincidence that at Gortyn, several coins were found depicting Europe and Minos (or Zeus). Moreover, the name of Gortyn is believed to be related to Gortyn, the son of Radamanthys.

The Acropolis of Gortyna. Within walking distance from the city (northwest) and atop a hill, you can visit the ruins of the acropolis of Gortyn. The hill was inhabited till 6000BC, but after the Dorian invasion (1100BC) it was fortified with a polygonal wall with towers at its corners. On the Acropolis, the archaeologists have identified the ruins of a Byzantine basilica (6th century AD) built on the site of an older Greek temple dedicated to Athena (7th century BC).

Praetorium in Roman Gortyna. Within walking distance from the main archaeological site of Gortyn and south from the main road, there is the Praetorium (1st century AD). The Praetorium was a large, luxurious and imposing building used as the headquarters of the Roman Province of Crete and Cyrenaica. It is still interesting to see the elaborate luxury marble floors, columns and statues. In the complex there were Roman baths, courtyard with columns, temple for the deified Augustus, courts and other public buildings. During the Byzantine period, the building housed a monastery.



The Roman Spas (Thermae). The Romans, as in every place they went, they built their favorite spas. As expected, in Gortyn they built a large complex of spas (thermae) with several auxiliary rooms and toilets. Like most Roman baths, in Gortyn there were warm baths, baths of intermediate temperature and cold baths. The ruins of the spas in Gortyn have not been fully excavated, but still the visitor can get a good feel for the area (near Praetorium).

The Great Basilica of Saint Titus. The ruins of the Great Basilica of Gortyn is located 200m south of the main archaeological site, on the way to Mitropoli village. The five-aisled temple, discovered accidentally in 1978, was the largest church in Crete. The temple was dedicated to Saint Titus, but after its destruction by an earthquake (670AD), it was moved to the temple inside the current archaeological site.

The temple of Pythian Apollo. Few meters north of the Great Basilica, you can follow the path that leads to the Praetorium and will soon meet the sanctuary of the Pythian Apollo (7th century BC), discovered in 1887. The temple was the largest temple of Gortyn before the advent of Christianity in Crete (and the building of the church of Saint Titus). Next to the church there was a small theater, an aqueduct and some houses.

The temple of Egyptian Gods. Near the Temple of Apollo, you will also see the temple of Isis, Sarapis and Hermanubis. This temple is the only temple in ancient Crete dedicated to Egyptian deities. The temple was equipped with an underground crypt and a cistern.



The famous poet, musician, philosopher and legislator Thaletas (or Thales of Crete), who lived in the 7th century BC, originated from Gortyna. It is believed that he introduced the writing and reciting of paeans, as well as the performance of armed dances, to the Spartans. When the Romans invaded Crete, Gortyna sided with the conquerors. This was in contrast to most other Cretan cities that with Knossos as their leader, put up resistance and were consequently destroyed. After the conquest, Gortyna became the capital city of the Roman province of Crete and Cyrene and enjoyed great prosperity. A construction spree took place in the city; new districts were built, as well as a majestic praetorium, a large circular theatre, a new agora (the third one in Gortyna) and a hippodrome, which is unique in Greece.

Later on, during the early Christian years, Gortyna was the first Cretan city to welcome the new religion. The nearby village of Agii Dekka (= Ten Saints) was named after ten early Cretan Christians who were martyred in Gortyna, in 250 AD. The Apostle Titus was appointed bishop of Crete (based in Gortyna) by Apostle Paul and undertook the task of disseminating the Christian religion throughout the island. In the 6th century AD, the Metropolitan church of Saint Titus was built, the ruins of which can be visited today. The Saracens put an end to the long history of the city, in 828 AD, by destroying Gortyna and slaughtering Bishop Cyril inside the citadel.⁵

2. New archaeological museum of Messara.

New museum building with exhibition rooms and long-span steel ceilings, including several storerooms, laboratories, visitors' areas etc., covering a total area of 2,500m². Landscaping of the



surrounding area including a 500m² steel canopy roof, as well as the transport and environmental design of the junction connecting the museum to the regional road network.

The permanent exhibition is generally titled "In the Midst of the Mountains. Human presence in Messara from prehistoric to Christian times"⁶. Its aim is to demonstrate the catalytic effect of the particular morphology of the area, as vividly depicted in the toponym Messara, for the development of material and intangible culture

over time.

The museographic approach presents the exhibits with topographic logic, following the historical development and integrating the ancient landscape of Messara into the exhibition narrative, with the help of digital media. The exhibition experience is enriched with interactive information applications, the possibility of a digital tour and educational applications.⁷

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ https://www.huffingtonpost.gr/entry/krete-eykainiasteke-to-archaioloyiko-moeseio-mesaras_gr_64469790e4b011a819c2b868

⁷ Ibid.

3. Holy monastery of Kalyviani⁸.

The female monastery of Panagia Kaliviani is in the 60th kilometer of the road from Heraclion to Timpaki. The church with the 3 aisles is dedicated to the Birth, Annunciation and Dormition of Virgin Mary.

A Byzantine male Monastery was in the place where Panagia Kaliviani is now but it was destroyed by Turks and its monks became martyrs. The monastic compound developed around the single-



naive church of the 14th century. The small church of Zoodochos Pigi from the 14th century is only preserved today. The wonder-working icon of Evagelismos was found in the Zoodochos Pigi temple. This church, probably the catholicon of an older monastery of hut-dwelling monks, acquired great fame because of its miraculous icon and became an important pilgrimage site already from the 19th century. Initially pilgrim guest houses were organized around it while in the 1950s, after the foundation

of the female monastery, the remaining contemporary buildings were constructed.

The old church, dedicated to the Dormition of the Theotokos (Virgin Mary, Panagia), in the western section of the monastery preserves in its interior a part of the original wall paintings with scenes from the Christological cycle and the Ten Saints in medallions on the relieving arch.

Of particular interest is the built altar screen, on the south of which Christ occupies the place of the -pilgrimage icon. North of the church of the All-Holy Virgin is the recently built church of St. Charalambos in whose interior are visible older tombs while remains of blessed fathers are displayed for veneration. To the west of it is the third and largest church of the monastery.

During the Turkish Occupation the area belonged to Xousein Vrazierdade and, after the interventions of Metropolitan Meletios, the governor of Crete, Reouf Pasha, ordered Kalivia village to buy it.

In the last decades many buildings have been built, as many charitable institutions are sheltered in the monastery. The orphanage "Storgi tis Panagias", the old people's home "Agioi Deka", the teenager protection center "I Agia Skepi", the child protection center "I Theotokos" are in the monastery.

Workshops of sewing vestments, Hagiography, Weaving, an Ecclesiastical and a folklore Museum, a primary and a nursery school for the children of the institutions and of the area are also in the monastery and a camp for the holidays of these children also works in Kokinos Pirog.

The construction of the new church began in 1911 and completed in 1924. It is dedicated to the three great Marian feasts: the Birth (September 8), the Annunciation (March 25) and the Dormition (August 15). The buildings to its south belong to the late 19th - early 20th centuries while the remaining ones are mainly recent constructions of the second half of the 20th. This period was the period of prosperity for the monastery and its charitable foundations which were established by the then Metropolitan of Gortyna and Arkadia, Timotheos.

Special reference should be made to the museum of the monastery which houses a rich ecclesiastical and folk collection with exhibits from the surrounding area of Messara.

⁸ [Holy monastery of Kalyviani - Orthodox Crete. Kaliviani monastery, Monasteries - Heraklion \(originalcrete.gr\)](http://www.originalcrete.gr)

4. Lunch at Matala beach.

Matala is a seaside village in south Crete. Matala became famous in the Sixties, when hippies came here from all over the world to live in the celebrated caves of Matala, next to the beach.



*"The night is a starry dome
and they're playin' that scratchy rock and roll
beneath the Matala Moon"*

This is how the Matala sky is described in Joni Mitchell's song "Carey".

That was the time when a large group of artists, including *Janice Joplin, Joan Baez and Bob Dylan*, spent their days and nights under the Cretan sky, in the pretty fishing village of Matala. When the slogan was *"Peace, Man"*, accompanied by the peace sign⁹.

Today Matala is no longer what was in the Sixties and early Seventies. It's nothing like the little village that attracted hippies who had been partying at Woodstock before coming here.



Today the Flower Children live in Matala no more, having given their place to thousands of tourists from all over the world, who come here to see a legendary place and get a taste of past glamour.¹⁰

*History*¹¹

The artificial caves in the cliff of the Matala bay were created in the Neolithic Age. Matala was the port of Phaistos during the Minoan period. In the year 220 BC, Matala was occupied by the Gortynians, and during the

Roman period, Matala became the port of Gortys. It has been suggested that the caves were once used as tombs, but it is more likely that they were used as living spaces, given their volume (corpses do not need that much room to walk around). One of the caves is called "Brutospeliana" because according to the legend it was frequented by the Roman general Brutus.

*Mythology*¹²

When Zeus seduced the princess Europa in the form of a white bull, he crossed the sea and brought her to the beach of Matala. There he changed into an eagle and flew her to Gortys where he had sex with her.

⁹ Thompson, Thomas. "Crete: A Stop in the New Odyssey", Life, Chicago, 19 July 1968. Retrieved on 2010-05-25.

¹⁰ Copyright explorecrete.com [Matala, information about matala \(explorecrete.com\)](http://www.explorecrete.com/Matala_information_about_matala)

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matala,_Crete

¹² Ibid.