

Discovering the history and the natural environment of Heraklion - Rethymnon #EduTourism



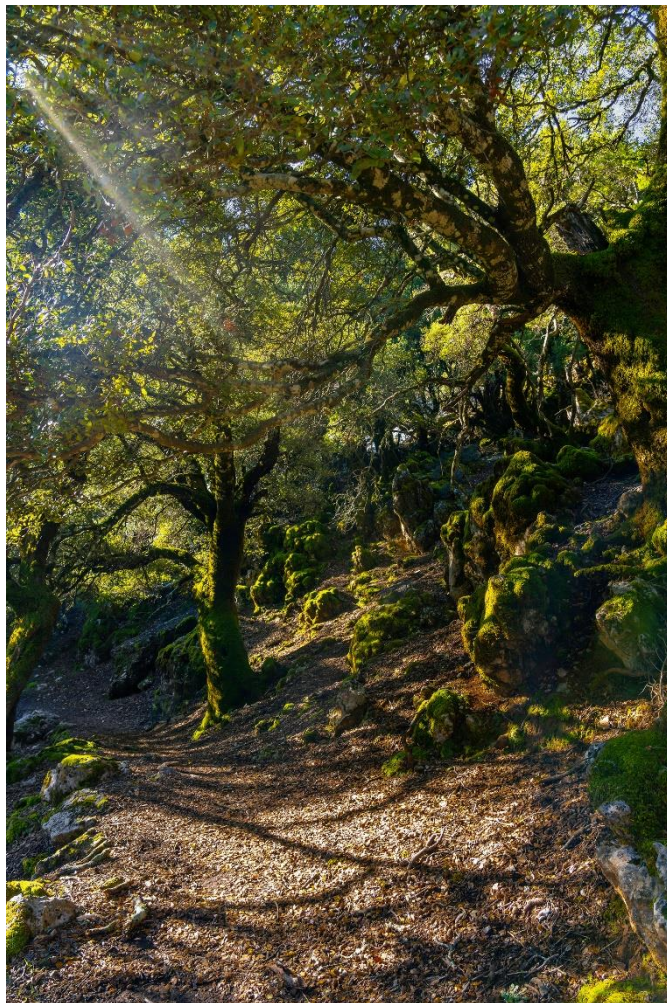
The EduTourism Project entitled "Promotion of educational tourism for the promotion of natural and cultural beauty" is implemented in the framework of the INTERREG V-A Cooperation Programme "Greece - Cyprus 2014-2020" and aims to create an integrated package of educational tourism for young people aged 16-25 years old.

One of the most important actions of the Project is the design of educational tourism routes in the intervention areas. A total of eight (8) routes were designed in Crete, six (6) in Cyprus and (3) cross-border routes connecting historically, environmentally and culturally Crete and Cyprus. The routes will be included in the EduTourism educational platform accompanied by rich audiovisual material and descriptions for all destinations.

The combination of the history and natural environment in Heraklion and Rethymnon has created a route with a total of seven (7) destinations including Knosano-Syllamian Gorge, Rouva Forest, Zaros Village, Platanias Gorge, Margarites Village, Melidoni Cave and Lake Kournas.

The route starts with the crossing of the Knosano gorge located near Archanes and the route has a total length of about 5.7 km. The area of the gorge, also called Paradise, is classified as a Site of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is included in the Natura 2000 network. There is little diversity of flora due to the dense shade along the gorge.

The next stop, Rouva Forest, is the largest ancestral forest in Crete. It has a total length of about 4 km with a 2.7 km landscaped trail in a truly unique environment. From Rouvas forest, the trail that connects the core of the forest with the eastern areas of Psiloritis starts. It is suitable for nature camping, mountain biking and climbing.



The village and Lake Zaros are nearby. Zaros is a beautiful traditional village with running waters located 45 km from Heraklion on the Psiloritis plain. The visitor can admire the beautiful lake but also start one of the biggest off road bike rides in Crete with the highest point at 1307 m.

Afterwards, one can visit the Platanias Gorge, which is located above the village of the same name and extends along the slopes of Psiloritis. While crossing it, the visitor can admire the lush green landscape with the dense vegetation, the unique rock formations and the dominant mountain of Psiloritis.

The next destination on the route is the historic village of Margarites, located 25km northwest of Psiloritis, in the prefecture of Rethymnon. Vegetation is a dominant feature, as

the village is built between two densely vegetated valleys. Starting from Margarites, the visitor can get to know the rich natural environment, the local history of the area and admire its special architecture.

Following the provincial road from Margarites, one will reach the village of Melidoni where the cave of Melidoni dominates with great historical value and great interest of natural beauty. At its entrance, the cave, located at an altitude of 220 meters, has a low arch and by entering the cave, the visitor begins to descend. There he sees various formations of stalagmites and stalactites.

The route ends with Lake Kournas, which is the only natural freshwater lake in Crete and is located in the prefecture of Chania, very close to the village of Kournas. It is an important ecosystem in Greece as well as an important stopover for migratory birds. It is part of the Natura 2000 network and is a protected area for birdlife. In the wider area there are habitats included in the European network of Corine protection zones.

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