

Our holiday on Crete in 2004

A friend of our son Martijn, came to pick us up for a holiday to Crete. This time our son Martijn and daughter Adinda would join us for a week. This was our gift to them, as we were married for 25 years in this month.

We left our luggage at the check-in desk. Much too little! Martijn had less than 9 kilos and Adinda had a little more weight in her (toilet) bag.

Arno and I were also just over 10 kilos.

We flew with "Dutch Bird" and sat in the back row. This had the disadvantage that the seats could not be in the "relax position". Moreover (it turned out) they had added extra seats, so that we had little space for our legs.

on the way

The trip went well. Adinda sat by the window and I was allowed to sit on her lap every now and then to have a look outside. Next to me was Arno and Martijn was sitting on the other side of the aisle (sleeping). We got a good look at Southern Germany, the Alps and Italy. Adinda borrowed a digital camera, so this holiday we will also have digital photos (for the first time).

According to the pilot, the weather in Crete was bad, 16 degrees, cloudy and rainy. The clouds looked grey, but when we landed it was quite sunny and definitely warmer than 16 degrees.

We landed at Chania airport and were picked up from the plane by bus for a one minute ride to the arrivals hall. I had asked Stelios, the taxi driver, via email to pick us up and he was already waiting for us.

He would have a piece of paper with my name on it. And he had it: my name was written on an A4 in huge letters. After fifteen minutes we already had our luggage and we were on our way to Georgiopolis.

development work

Martijn and Adinda had never been to Crete before and their 1st impression was: plenty of work for a cleaning team and for development workers.

At "Joanna Apartments" we were warmly greeted by Niki and were given the keys to our studios.

At the beach it was still quiet (May 26), nice high waves, but still cold sea water. Adinda was very brave and dived into the sea. Martijn also dived into the high waves. I didn't see any of it, because I was already asleep.

Small problem

In the centre of Georgiopolis there was an internet café, where we could check our email and where there was also a billiards table. Martijn and Arno played "nine-ball" on the billiard table and Adinda and I walked back to our rooms. Adinda was cold and asked if I had an extra blanket for her. When she walked back to their room with the blanket, she discovered that the door had fallen into the lock (he did NOT do this all day) and there was no door handle on the outside of the door, just a knob and the key was on the inside of the door .

And of course no windows were open.

I went to Giannis and Niki and explained the problem. According to Niki this was just a "small problem" and she woke up Giannis. He picked up the ladder and would try to climb into the bathroom through the small window. He didn't have enough light and I couldn't find our little flashlight in Arno's backpack. Fortunately, there was Niki with a ... spare key. She suddenly remembered having a spare key from the apartments.



playing Tavli

scooter

After breakfast on the terrace in the sun, we went to Ethon, rent a car, to rent a scooter. Arno and I were allowed on the backseats of our children, Arno with Adinda and I with Martijn. What a party! Adinda's scooter went much faster than Martijn's. Despite my glasses, tears ran down my cheeks. From the wind and also (a little) from the emotions.

We made our way to Rethymnon, to the market, about 30 kilometres away, via the National Road and fast we went. I was a bit scared.

Rethymnon

There was no market next to the bus station, it had been moved to a spot on the boulevard. It was a smaller market than in previous years and not as varied.

In the old centre we ate a delicious "pita gyros". On the way back to Georgioupolis (again over the National Road and again very fast) we turned off at Episkopi and drove to Lake Kournas via Dramia and Kournas. It was beautiful on the road, what a view and what a flowers.

Plaka

In the morning after breakfast we set out for Kalives on the scooter. We would drive through Plaka and see where Giannis was building houses. We drove up the mountain via Exopolis. This time I sat on the backseat of Adinda's scooter and I liked this much better than with Martijn. She drove much more slowly and did not play a game "how to loose my mother".

At Plaka we saw Gianni's truck and Arno went to look for him at the construction site. More houses were still built here for foreigners, and there are built more than 200!. While Arno and Giannis were talking a small disaster happened. Adinda wanted to turn her scooter and had started it, but then the gas stuck and there she went with the scooter

against a fence with her leg in the shrubs. A large, broad man in black arrived immediately to help, but this was no longer necessary. Adinda had already put the scooter on the street again. The scratches on her leg were not too bad.

Kalives

We drove on to Kalives. Adinda was driving very carefully now. Imagine the gas lingers again. On the way we stopped at the glasswork factory and saw how they made the little shot glasses.

In Kalives we had lunch on the beach at a tavern that offered its beds and umbrellas to the guests for free. So after dinner we settled on this. Martijn stayed in the shade, because his forearms were already badly burned on the scooter. Arno and Martijn went to the village and Adinda and I went for a swim.

Down

There were high waves and the beach descended very quickly, it got deep quickly. You also felt the waves pull on your legs as they rolled back into the sea. According to Adinda, that was not bad, because the next wave washed you up on the beach again. And that happened!

When I walked back to the beach I sank with my feet in the sand and I staggered a bit. At that moment there was just a high wave and there I fell. Just when I got up again, the next wave came and I was floundering in the waves again. I no longer knew what was above and what was below and even wanted to hold on to the sand. All I saw was white foam from the waves and a smiling Adinda. I had to laugh a lot myself, so I kept getting water and sand. I was happy when I finally got out of the water. Later it occurred to me, "where is the Bay-Watch when you need them?"

The men came back from their village tour and they took the scooters with them. Here we went again. Now on our way to Vrisses, where you can eat delicious yogurt. We would drive through Vamos again and then in the direction of Vrisses. In Vamos the road went up quite steeply and just as we left the village something snapped in Martijn's scooter, the drive belt. He could no longer drive.



waiting for another scooter

Martijn and Adinda then drove back on the working scooter to Vamos to call Ethon. Arno and I followed them with the broken scooter. When we arrived in the centre after a 15-minute walk, Martijn and Adinda were on the phone in the telephone cell. They had to buy a phone card first because there was no other place to call. We didn't have cell phones at the time. Ethon would call someone who would pick us up!?! It could take a while.

We then went for a drink on the terrace at the cafeteria. After 45 minutes, a pick-up from Ethon arrived with an orange scooter in the back. He took back the broken scooter and we could continue to Vrisses with the orange scooter.

We ate yoghurt on a terrace under the plane trees by the river, but whether this is the best yoghurt, as they say? We didn't think so.

Rethymnon

The morning started well: I sat on the terrace in my shirt and shorts, drinking coffee. But the clouds kept coming, so I put on a T-shirt and pants. That was actually not warm enough either. After breakfast it even started to rain.

We had not planned anything for today, but decided to drive to Rethymnon, because in a city it is usually warmer and maybe we could drive to the Mili gorge to hand over the photo of "Josef" (Theodosius). So we put on our long pants and a sweater and were off.

Rain

And it was raining on the way to Rethymnon !!! And cold it was !!! The street was not really wet yet (fortunately, because in many places there is no wear layer, so it becomes very slippery)

It was dry in Rethymnon. After strolling through the old centre, we had a drink on the boulevard.



The Rimondi spring

After this we headed for Mili, straight through the busy centre of Rethymnon. After \pm 8 kilometres uphill and downhill we saw the tavern in the gorge. Adinda definitely didn't have the right shoes for "such a walk on such a small path", but she managed it to the tavern. Here we ate and drank something. Theodosius was no longer working here, but the owner met Theo from time to time and would give him the photo we had brought.



Mili gorge

Meanwhile, it started to rain heavily and the boys who left the tavern to leave on the scooter were warned to be careful. It would be slippery on the roads. When we also returned a little later to the road where the scooters were parked, it was still raining. We took shelter at the mountain wall under the trees and when it seemed to rain a little less we went on our way. We just left in time, because when we later left Rethymnon the sky behind us (where we came from) turned completely black.

When we got close to Georgioupolis the road became drier: it had hardly rained here. Moreover, it was a lot warmer here. In our rooms we had a nice cup of hot tea and after a hot shower we felt great again.

Arno and I went for a walk in the area, because our walking shoes were screaming.

Wedding day

This day we celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary and we would spend a day in South Crete. Arno had picked up the rental car and we had to leave before 9:30 a.m. to catch the 10:30 a.m. ferry to Loutro. I was afraid we would arrive too late, but after an hour's drive through the mountains we were in Chora Sfakion on time.

I walked to the place where the tickets for the boat were sold, but I saw nothing there. Ticket sales had moved to a kiosk near the bus station. So I ran back. I already heard the boat honking, so I quickly bought 4 boat tickets and then we could run on the boat.

After 15 minutes of sailing we got off the boat in Loutro and walked to tavern "Kri-Kri", where we were warmly greeted by Nikos. Martijn and Adinda thought the sea water was very clear, you could snorkel well there. And they were gone. A little later they came back with goggles, snorkel and flippers (bought in one of the shops). It was lovely on the small (pebble) beach. Martijn received an offer from an English lady to use her canoe. And away was Martijn... paddling towards Libya. We had a lovely day In Loutro.



When we got back to our studio we saw Sifis, the son of Giannis and Niki. He was keeping an eye on a chick who had walked into the road and was hit by a car. His wing was a bit lame, but Sifis had put a clothespin on it and so fastened the lame wing. Hoping for the best!

Chania

The next day we were in Chania and we visited the market halls and the old town. This city is special, with the many old buildings, the Ottoman and Venetian influences, the narrow street. No matter how often we come there, we always discover something new. Of course Arno went looking for a nice komboloi. Hundreds of komboloi were hanging in the Amber shop in prices range from € 40 to € 5,000.

Kalives

On the way back we drove via Stilos, around here there would be a nice garden with many stone objects, but we could not find it. They were busy with the road here and we had to drive through a detour, so maybe we missed it because of that. The main road to Neo Horio was closed, so we were diverted through all kinds of narrow roads. On the way we almost had a collision twice and we were almost flattened by a truck.

At our studio we saw that the chick with the clothespin was almost dead. Sifis sat there and tried to take a closer look. He said he was dying. Arno offered to practice euthanasia, much to Sifis' delight. As a thank you for the euthanasia, we received potatoes and eggs for at least 3 days.

"Off day"

When we got back to Georgioupolis, Martijn and Adinda already packed their things, because they were going home the next day.

In the evening we had dinner on the square in the centre and when it was time for a drink, as an exception, Martijn would also join us. Together with a number of friends and acquaintances, the first bottle of Raki was soon empty and a second bottle was added. Arno and I walked back to our studio as best as we could and Martijn and Adinda stayed for a while: Adinda was a fan of apple juice with ??? and with a straw, an umbrella and stars.



We would get up early, because Martijn and Adinda had to be at the airport by 10:00 a.m. Adinda was not feeling well: "I have an off day, my eyes are backwards in my head and my stomach is being eaten by the Raki". She sat in the shade and tried to eat and drink everything, but nothing helped her to feel better. Martijn was not bothered by anything (he said). They had had a very nice party the night before. Adinda is expected again next year, they said.

We were at the airport by 10 am. We parked the car and Martijn and Adinda checked in. They wanted to drink and eat something. Martijn drank a frappé !!! And he never drinks coffee !!! After saying goodbye, our kids (with a hangover) walked to the gate and we walked to our rental car. We would stay in Crete for another 2 weeks.

Stavros

We drove to Stavros, where recordings were made for the film Zorba the Greek. We didn't find it really special here and then drove to Kastelli Kissamos on the west coast. Here too we found it disappointing: very touristic and no atmosphere. After a short walk at Lake Agia we went back to Georgiopolis.

Our hiking boots were screaming... we had barely used them this holiday. So backpack on our back, katsouna with us and on the way to Fones and surroundings, a nice walk of about 14 kilometres.

Vrissinas

In the morning we took the scooter to Rethymnon to try to find the Vrissinas for the third time. First we drove steeply up the mountain with the scooter. The weather was strange, the wind was very strong. The hiking trail was difficult to find. In the undergrowth we scratched our legs and Arno lost his sunglasses. We turned out to be in the wrong place again. We drove a little further and then we finally found the right path. Even our name VRIJ was on a sign on the rocks.



Agia pnevma

The (bright) red dots were easy to find. It was quite a climb and the wind was very strong. Finally we reached the small monastery, the Agia pnevma. The man who was here said he was here all summer during the day. We had seen a motorcycle. So this one was his. This man was here to make sure the candles could be lit. And he kept an eye on everything with his binoculars. He was especially alert to fires, because in the dry summer with strong winds, a fire spreads quickly. He was in contact with the outside world with a walkie-talkie and with a man near Heraklion on top of a mountain.

We enjoyed the view. Unfortunately it was very cloudy this day. The descent of 850 meters was fast and we think you can also drive to the top with a good moped or car. As long as you find the right path.

Olive oil

In the morning we first bought a new pair of sunglasses for Arno in the village, because you really can't do without it. After this we walked to Vrisses. Just before the exit of Vrisses is an olive oil factory with bottles and cans outside. Arno went to take a look and saw that a litre bottle cost € 5. He asked if they also exported and they did so to Australia, France and Germany. Not to the Netherlands. Arno was given a small bottle of oil to try.

Alikambos

Via the asphalt road and through Vrisses we walked on to Alikambos. In this village in the kafenion we drank a frappé and ate a chocolate croissant, they didn't have anything else edible. I wanted to go to the bathroom, but it wasn't in the kafenion. I was allowed to go to the toilet at Papous (grandfather), next to the kafenion. I followed him in and there Grandma was resting on the bed in the room. Behind the kitchen area was the toilet.

Photo

When I took a picture of Arno sitting on the terrace in front of the kafenion, the old men who were inside also wanted to have their picture taken. "Hello, hello", they shouted, the moustache smoothed, their most beautiful smiles were conjured up and they were ready

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I took a picture, but I doubted the picture was successful, it was so dark inside. A little later when I went inside the kafenion to ask for a frappé, there were 3 concerned ladies who pointed to my brown knees and asked if they didn't hurt, they were so thick !!! I had no problems with anything, but according to the ladies this was impossible.

My knees are always thick when I have walked a lot. According to my doctor I just suffer from "greasy knees". That is nothing special.

Maza

After coffee we headed for Maza. Before the exit to this village we walked in the direction of Fones. We had been here before, but then we could not find the way to Maza. This was not so strange, because this road was hardly visible from the place where we were before. In Fones we walked past the concrete factory and soon we were back in Georgioupolis.

After a late lunch I lay in the garden on the grass. Suddenly I heard something next to me and when I looked I saw all the chicks walking around me. One chick almost pecked my nose.

Tomorrow I will take a rest day, my legs can just make it to the beach and back again.

Loutro

We told Niki that we were going to Loutro for a few days, so we got up early: the bus left at 8:30. After 10 minutes we were already in Vrisses and here we had to change to the bus to Chora Sfakion. This bus was due to leave at 9:00 am, so we had plenty of time to buy a ticket in the cafe at the bus stop. While we were waiting, we enjoyed life in the main street of the village.

Next to the bus stop, men and women (especially older ones) were waiting on wooden chairs on the sidewalk. It seemed as if they were in a waiting room (outside). This turned out to be true because I suddenly saw the sign "jatos", "doctor" on the door.

bus trip

When the bus stopped a little later, right on time, and we put our backpacks at the bottom of the bus. The bus was quite full with a group of South Germans, among others, who knew a lot about the area. A German regularly took a pinch of snuff, it still exists !!!

The bus driver carefully drove south, up the winding steep road. I am always happy when I am on the right side of the bus (on the mountain side and not on the side of the Imbros gorge) Despite all the steep drops and curves it remains a beautiful route.

In Chora Sfakion we got out and bought a boat ticket for Loutro. We immediately walked to the boat and before 11 am we were already on the terrace of Kri-Kri with a frappé.

Loutro

We asked Nikos if we could get the same room as last year, but unfortunately we couldn't. Nikos showed us room 3, all the way up, very hot and with a broken, rusted shower head. Room 5 was an apartment with a kitchenette, but this was intended for 6 adults and we had the feeling that we got lost there. Nikos had another option, Hotel Protopapas. In the tavern he looked in the tin for the right key: Room 14 with sea view, a double bed and 2 single beds, a good toilet and a good shower. When Arno asked the price, Nikos said: "Pay what you want". That was a deal!



Loutro

quiet

After lunch Nikos spoke with us about the peace and the few tourists on the island. It seemed to be the case all over the island. But Nikos had an idea: 8 days fully catered, including trips, hiking, fishing, diving, swimming and barbecuing. Pick up from Chania and return. He was curious what price was charged for this. I told him what prices I had seen on the internet. He started calculating and asked if we could not organize this from the Netherlands? We have promised to look into this. The idea seems good.

After we greeted Kostas, we walked to the fort and to Phoenix. We saw a large group of vultures on a rock nearby. At the end of the afternoon we went for a swim and enjoyed the last rays of the sun. That is the disadvantage of this bay on the south coast, the sun disappears far too quickly behind the mountains.

Aradena

Today we wanted to walk the Aradena gorge. So, get up early, have breakfast and hit the road. First up the mountain to Anopoli. We wanted to pass by the church of Agia Ekaterina. That meant all the way uphill, a steep climb. We had a beautiful view from the church. The church was built on a strategic point and was actually used in times of war. You can see the loopholes in the walls. It looked a bit like a fortress. Unfortunately, a German couple and their daughter arrived, who visited the church with a lot of noise, lit a candle and just left without extinguishing the candle. We did that for them.



Anopoli

Anopoli

We walked downhill via a brand new asphalt road to the village of Anopoli. Here, at the tavern on the square, we ate an omelette with yogurt and we bought a large bottle of

water. Via the asphalt road we walked further to the Aradena bridge. Suddenly we heard a terrible noise: we approached the bridge, a car drove over it.

We went down into the gorge on the right side of the bridge via an old kalderimi (stone path). When I walked under the bridge I made 3 quick prayers and hoped that no car would drive over the bridge if we walked under it, because that makes a lot of noise. The prayers seemed to help, as no car came.

When I thought we had the bridge far behind us, a car drove over and a noise... the bridge was much closer than I thought. I was so shocked that I even started running.

Aradena gorge

The gorge was beautiful. We soon came to the stairs, but because of the bad winter many parts of the stairs had collapsed and the banister was missing in a number of places. But it was still better than the iron ladders, although Arno would have liked to go up the ladders, I think.

We didn't meet any people at all. It was only when we were eating at the olive tree near the turn to Livaniana that we saw a group of people arriving. After a short picnic, we climbed the mountain towards Livaniana.



The Aradena gorge

Livaniana

We have seen a few birds of prey. At the top of the church of Livaniana we met the mad man again who kindly showed us the way to Loutro. We walked through the deserted village to the tavern of Nikos. On the terrace of the tavern, a German tourist sat chatting with Chrysoula, Nikos's mother. They didn't understand each other very well, but it sounded very pleasant.

We ordered 2 frappés and when I asked if Nikos was not there, Chrysoula told me that Nikos had moved to Chania. The German tourist had to pay for her drinks and then there was a complete play: Nikos's mother fetched a pen and paper and sat down to write what the lady had had and reading aloud she came to the conclusion that the lady had to pay € 3.60. The German lady thought this was far too little.

She had already asked us how long it would take her to walk through the Aradena gorge to the Marble Beach and then on to Loutro. We thought it was about 2.5 hours walking

and since it was now 16.30 p.m. it was possible and she headed for the gorge. If she wasn't back in Loutro tonight, we should report her missing, she said.

We found it a bit irresponsible to enter the gorge alone. What if she needed help? Maybe she had a cell phone with her.

cookies

With our coffee we received homemade cookies from Chrysoula. It tasted like everything except biscuit. It looked like shortbread, but it tasted undercooked, floury, sandy, and above all salty. Nikos's big dog was on the terrace and luckily he liked the biscuits. While we secretly gave him some biscuits, the goat, who stood one floor below in the garden, smelled that there was something to eat and before he would jump on the terrace I quickly threw some biscuits in the bushes for him.

After drinking another glass of goat's milk, we paid the bill, filled our empty water bottle with water by the tap and headed for Loutro.

At the memorial of yoga teacher Rob, Arno suddenly became very sick, probably from the cookies. The few bites I had were also heavy in my stomach. She wouldn't want to poison us, would she?

At 7 p.m. we were back in Loutro, tired, but satisfied and with great memories to a beautiful gorge.

Pavlos

5:30 am !!! the alarm went off. Arno would go with Pavlos to his vegetable garden. First a Greek coffee and some pieces of hard bread and then they left. Pavlos had a backpack with about 5 kilos in it and Arno only had a 1.5 litre water bottle and his katsouna with him.

Along the way, Pavlos stopped a few times to tell something. Why stop? Because when you walk your heart has a certain rhythm and talking has a different rhythm and both are not working at the same time, you will get short breathered. A wise lesson.

To walk in the mountains you have to pay attention to your path and if you want to see something you just have to stop. If you do not do this, you really risk falling. Wise lesson number 2, which we already knew.

Pavlos and Arno first stopped at the goats on the other side of the field behind the fort, overlooking Phoenix. There Pavlos tied the goats' food to the fence. This already saved some weight.

They walked on to Pavlos' garden and there Pavlos opened the gate and went first to drink some water.

Then he opened the water supply: 5 minutes each time. Pavlos told us that he was born in Livaniana, his parental home had fallen into ruins and he has largely renovated it. He has also built a new house in Livaniana. In order to maintain his rights to this house it is necessary that he occasionally sleeps there overnight, which he does. His parental home remains as a memory.

He emigrated to New York in 1968 and worked as a painter in construction.

In 1992 he opened a restaurant in New York with 4 employees, which later became 10 people. In 1998 Pavlos opened his tavern in Loutro. After a year he turned out not to be

able to combine both restaurants well. He decided to sell the restaurant in New York and keep Loutro. In Livianiana only Chrysoula lives, everyone else has left. Pavlos stays in Loutro from March to November. After this he goes to New York, where he has his friends and family.

Pavlos cut off the horta (wild spinach) and Arno watered the plants. Everything grows in his garden: spinach, cucumber, eggplant, grapes, onions, paprika, pepper, tomatoes, watermelon, figs. He doesn't need a greengrocer. Everything was ready at 8.15 (it goes fast with 2 people). First a few sips of water and then packed for the way back. They were back before 8.45 am. First a large cup of Greek coffee and water. Lesson number 3: first dry quietly with coffee and water and then take a shower and then breakfast.

You can take a lovely walk in the area of Loutro, but otherwise there is really nothing to do, except relax and read or chat. Only the ferry, which moors about 6 times during this time of the year, provides some entertainment and conversation: are new guests coming, are people leaving, and who are leaving, were there many hikers in the Samaria gorge?

A new road has been built from Livianiana to Phoenix, a zigzagging wide gravel road. Cars can now also reach Phoenix more easily.

At the fort at Loutro we saw a small gym with real concrete dumbbells weights. A barbell with concrete was also located next to the barbell tray. Arno has indulged himself here. We spent the rest of the day on the beach beds. What a life.

This was very good for my feet, they did their best yesterday. A real lazy day in Loutro.



fitness at the fortress

Fire
When we took a shower in the evening we found the bathroom smelly, it seemed like a burning smell. A smouldering air. We grumble: who does such a thing, would there be a fire somewhere? We saw nothing inside and outside we smelled a little. Only on the roof of our room at the back it smelled really bad. We told Nikos when we saw him and he would find out what it was.

When we got back to our room I discovered what the burning smell was: we almost had a fire in the bathroom: the medicine cabinet had lights built in and on top of it was our plastic bag with paper washcloths and these had started to smoulder from the heat of the lights. So that meant cleaning time: doors and windows open, rinsing and cleaning the doors and walls.

cliffs

At 8.40 am we left for Agia Roumeli (according to our walking guide a walk of \pm 5 hours and a distance of 15 kilometres). The first part of the walk passed the fortress and gardens of Pavlos and Ilios. Both men were working hard (painting and lighting a fire). Via Phoenix and Lykos we arrived at the cliffs. Time for climbing and scrambling. It was not so bad, the wind was not so hard as the last time when we walked here and maybe you get used to the steep heights and deep valleys.

Marble Beach

Soon we were at the Marble Beach. Here we did not enter the Aradena gorge, but walked straight ahead along the E4 path. The first part went up a bit, but it was not that hot yet, so it was not too bad. After the first few turns, the route was a piece of cake, not steep up or down. The path ran high along the seacoast, we always saw the sea on the left below us. At \pm 11.00 we arrived at the beginning of the forest and this last part before Agios Pavlos was a lovely walk, under the pine trees in the shade.

Agios Pavlos

The last part to Agia Pavlos we walked downhill through Sahara sand. Here is real desert sand, which blows from Africa with the south wind. We sat down on the terrace of the tavern and got from Georgios, the owner of the tavern and hotel, a Greek salad and something to drink.

More people were eating and drinking on the terrace and people were also swimming. Georgios gave us two glasses of fuel (home-made, delicious house wine). After an hour we left the tavern, because we wanted to take the 15.45 hour boat back to Loutro.

Agia Roumeli

It would be a \pm 1.5 hour walk to Agia Roumeli. The first part was very difficult, the sand was very fine, very hot and there was no shade and of course we walked at the hottest time of the day. I think we always manage to be on the worst part of the route at the hottest time of the day.

The long break, the food and the wine did not do me any good. I had a headache and stitches in my side and it was terribly hot (otherwise I never bothered). The last part went a bit better, after some water and a little shade. This was also not the most beautiful part of the route, only sand and occasionally some bushes on the right and the sea on the left. At 3.15 pm we were in Agia Roumeli. We walked past the campsite by the river to the village to buy a boat ticket.

A few Dutch tourists thought it was quite normal that they could pick branches from trees (from someone's garden). This was allowed their guide had said.

When the ferry left we had a nice spot on the deck. The boat was busy. Next to us were Englishmen who were surprised that we were staying in Loutro. Too quiet !!!!!

After a wonderful hour on the boat with a beautiful view of the coast where we had walked, we were back in Loutro. We had a nice swim and then packed our things, because the next day we would go back to Georgiopolis.

Arno's hiking boots almost died today, they couldn't deal with the hot Sahara sand.



swimming in Loutro

Loutro remains a special place and our holiday is not complete without a few days of Loutro. But after 4 to 5 days we always have the feeling that we have to leave. We have seen and spoken to everyone, are up to date with all the news, have seen and walked what we wanted, read our book, lazed, swam and snorkelled and, above all, enjoyed good food and drinks.

So time to say goodbye to the many friends and acquaintances and on to the ferry.

After sailing for 15 minutes we got off in Chora Sfakion and waited an hour for the bus to Vrisses. Nice in the shade behind the bus shelter.



waiting for the bus

The bus was full. We weren't on the Imbros gorge side, because there was no shadow there (what an excuse) and I was glad, because the driver was doing a competition: driving very fast on the straights and very scary through the corners. I was happy when we were on the Askifou plain, because then we had had the worst bends and the narrowest roads.

We were in Vrisses at 12.15 (anyway still 15 minutes late), but yes the driver had to get bread in Askifou and exchange the latest news with a colleague on the way.

Georgioupolis

In Vrisses we had to change very quickly to the bus to Georgioupolis which was already on the other side of the road. It rolled forward very slowly and all luggage and all passengers still had to get in !!! 15 minutes later we were back at our studio in Georgioupolis.

Alikambos

We wanted to get up at 7:00 today and leave in time to hike via Fones-Maza-Alikambos to Lake Kournas. But we had a bit of a delay and didn't leave until 9.15 am. According to Niki it would be 36 degrees today "poli zestie" (very hot) and then you wouldn't go for a walk, only early in the morning at 6:00 am. We had planned this too, but it failed.

Arno took his sandals with him just in case his hiking boots really broke.

We had enough water with us for the road. After about 2 hours we were in Alikambos. We stopped at the kafenion. And they were welcomed there with open arms (we had been here before and were almost a regular customer). The terrace was full of mainly "papoedes" (grandpas). They didn't have an old people's home here, so they put the oldies on the terrace with a cup of coffee.

Lake Kournas

They asked us where we were going and when we told them that we wanted to go to Lake Kournas, we were told that it was way too hot and that we had to be careful and we needed a lot of water. We were immediately offered coffee and water from a fire-fighter, who worked at the airport in Chania.

The crowds on the terrace turned out to be there mainly due to the elections to the European Parliament, the kafenion was also a polling station. We got the tip to visit Gavdos once, it must be very beautiful there.

In good spirits we headed for Lake Kournas, with clear directions and some tips from the owner of the kafenion. A villager also offered us cool water on the way. The walk went well, short climbs, beautiful view, very quiet.

Travel directions

We took a short break under one of the few trees, in the shade.

We ate something, took a rest and checked the directions. It seemed to be right: at a side road to the right... after 400 meters shepherd's hut... According to the description, we had to turn right at a shepherd's hut and a hole in the wall? and a signpost on a tree? an old olive tree, but which one? a burnt olive tree, where?

The route would be indicated with dots and cairns, but we didn't see any of this. We just kept walking ...

Suddenly we came to a fence tied with rope. Here you can usually go through as long as you reattach it. After a while we passed a gate with a picture of a dog and the text: "I'm watching here". This gate was open so we just kept walking. After a climb we suddenly heard a lot of barking left and right of the road and an echo all around. We also saw a house under construction and a car, but we saw no one. I saw a kind of wall and a fence, you could go left here.

We walked on until the dogs raged so much that I dared not go any further. I called Arno back, because I could already see the dogs attacking him. Arno turned to me but also immediately turned back to the dogs and that was a good thing, because they were very close. Arno walked backwards in my direction.

We decided to walk around the fence with an arc and then with a wide curve around the house. Arno's shoes were really about to give way. The sole kept coming off. Arno has fastened the sole with an elastic of the backpack.

In the meantime I had found a path past the house so we walked on. We could still hear the dogs barking. After a bit through the bushes we came back to a path. We saw Lake Kournas far below us so the direction was good.



Kournas Lake

We walked further downhill via the gravel path. Arno had still wrapped his shoes with a piece of string. They seemed almost bandaged now. After a while we came to a kind of sheepfold, through the "yard" we could continue on a smaller path. This seemed to be going well until the trail got worse and worse and Arno 's shoe sole got stuck all over. Arno did not like to descend further in his sandals between the bushes. So there was only one good solution and that was to go back.

Suddenly we heard dog barking again and when we looked around we saw those same scary dogs again. We also saw the same house under construction. Now we also saw a man standing by the house and he pointed to the road (we were still standing in his garden). He called the dog back, but this seemed to have little effect. When Arno gave a roar at the dog, he turned with raised upper lip (whether this was because of the roar or it was the boundary of his territory) and we could walk back to the road. We stopped under the first (and only) tree on the side of the road to recover from the shock.



On the way up, the bandage on the shoe gave out. I discovered that we had to pass the dogs again. We didn't feel like walking around the house through the bushes for another 30 minutes to avoid the dogs. We then slowly started walking and as soon as we saw the man we asked him for directions to Georgioupolis.

He wanted to send us back up the mountain paths, but we didn't feel like it at all. When we asked the way to Alikambos, we were allowed over his yard by the grace of God. Fortunately, the man wanted to hold the dog (for this time) for a while.

Then on the way back to Alikambos we passed the shepherd's hut of the description and we saw blue dots and a path. We had gone too far and we had to turn left just after the "hut". Better luck next time!!!

By now we only had 1 litre of water left and 1 kilometre before Alikambos all the water was gone. When we entered Alikambos, the first man who saw Arno said that his legs

must be stiff and painful. When Arno denied this, his legs were felt and squeezed and found to be in order: "bravo atletico".

The oldies were sleeping again on the terrace in Alikambos. 2 bottles of coca cola later we felt a lot better. After we bought 2 bottles of water for the way back, we went on. I didn't want to sit too long, otherwise I was afraid that my legs would suffer because we had to walk quite a bit.

Fortunately the road was downhill. The last part I had the feeling that my legs were walking and that I was following, a kind of automatic pilot.

shepherd

On the way we met 2 more shepherds, one real shepherd, by foot, who asked us where we had been and where we were going: "bravo It's good exercise". The other shepherd was one of the modern kind, chasing the sheep in a car.

When we got home it turned out that we had been walking for almost 9 hours. I felt broke. After a foot bath, lifting my legs, a nice shower and a good meal, I felt a lot better again

Goodbye

Just like the previous times, saying goodbye was difficult again. It seems like it gets worse every year. We now left Arno's katsouna with Giannis and Nikki, we would come back.

With a backpack richly filled with olive oil and Raki we were back at the bus stop to go to Chania. From there we would take a taxi to the airport.

A little sad, but with many beautiful and special memories we went back to the Netherlands. See you next year.