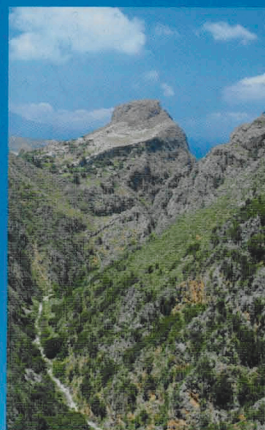


KISSAMOS

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- GEOGRAPHY
- HISTORY
- ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MUSEUM OF KISSAMOS
- FOLKLORE
- RELIGION
- EUROMEDITERRANEAN
YOUTH CENTER
- NUTRITION
- FLORA & FAUNA
- GORGES
- ROUTES
- KISSAMOS OF PAST



A SIGHTSEEING GUIDE FOR THE MUNICIPALITIES OF
KISSAMOS - MITHYMNA - INAHORIO



ORTHODOX ACADEMY OF CRETE (OAC)

EUROMEDITERRANEAN YOUTH CENTER (EYC)

From the beginning of the episcopal service of the Metropolitan of Kissamos and Selinon Eirinaios, an intensive work concerning educational and social matters for young people, especially from the countryside, was begun. The main interest lay in the technical education and in facilitating the young girls and boys in attending high school as well as university. Towards the end of the 1970s, this effort had declined more and more. New circumstances, new needs dictated a new way of the diaconia of the Church regarding young people.

The Gen. Director of the OAC and advisor of the Pedagogical Institute (Ministry of National Education / Athens), Dr. Alexandros K. Papaderos, had elaborated a study proposing the creation of a Euromediterranean Youth Center on the islands of Crete and Gavdos. In the beginning of the 1980s, the Board of



the OAC accepted this proposal. In two following phases, the OAC bought 17 hectares of land in the area of Nopigia, on the eastern side of the Gulf of Kissamos. It stretches 200 m alongside the beach and up the hill, offering a panoramic view. The OAC gave this piece of land of striking beauty for the EYC. The official decision for the foundation of the Center was taken on June 6, 1988. From 1990 on, the fencing and modeling of the land began, and also the organization of work-camps.

The study had had in mind the needs of the young Cretans, the developing multi-cultural society with its related challenges and possibilities, the wishes of the Cretans in the Diaspora and generally of the Greeks, that possibilities might be created for their children to get to know the country of their ancestors, the history, the culture and the contemporary life in Greece. Furthermore, it was concerned with the obligation of the Orthodox Church to facilitate the communication between young people on an international - ecumenical level and to give them the chance to get acquainted with the principles and values of the Greek-orthodox tradition as well as that of other societies.

During the years that have passed, at the EYC were hosted tent-camps of the Diocese of Kissamos and Selinon, groups of young people trying to overcome the use of drugs, thousands of school children in the frame of the program "traditional sowing, harvesting and threshing", students of Orthodox Theological Faculties from

* The Orthodox Academy of Crete (OAC) is a non-profit Foundation, which works in relation with the Holy Metropolis of Kissamos and Selinon and functions under the auspices of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. The OAC, which was founded by the Metropolitan of Kissamos and Selinon, Eirinaios and Dr. Alexandros K. Papaderos, is situated next to the Holy Monastery of Gonia in Kolympari, Chania. It started to work in 1968 and is an internationally recognized center for the dialogue between the Orthodox Church and modern man concerning the problems of our time and life. More than 1.900 conferences have taken place there until today, on a regional and international level, dealing with a very wide range of issues (social, spiritual, inter-orthodox, inter-Church, inter-religious, inter-cultural, scientific, political, philosophical etc.). Meanwhile, President of the Board is the new Metropolitan of Kissamos, H. E. Amphilochos.



several countries, as well as organized groups of young adults between 17 and 25 years from Greece and 43 other countries mainly of Europe and the Mediterranean region.

Basic keystones in the life of the Center are the fellowship and the creativity. For this, programs of daily work are applied, which help the young people to detect capabilities inside them the existence of which they were ignorant of. This pedagogical method promotes self-knowledge and self-confidence, the acquisition of skills, exercise in team-work and solidarity as well as the achieving of common goals.

With the help of young people the fencing of the whole area, some basic facilities for accommodation and board and other necessary installations were accomplished. The construction of a stone-built open-air-theater with a capacity of more than 1000 seats followed. It was opened in May 1992. Since then, artistic programs of the OAC, but also of the surrounding area are hosted there. Roads were opened up on the land, a vineyard, olive trees and other fruit-bearing trees and plants were planted, houses for the personnel were built, offices and also a chapel, dedicated to the Transfiguration of Christ. The young people are accommodated in tents and other provisional installations; a



multi-purpose-hall is under construction.

The Faculty for Architecture of the Technical University of Graz/Austria made, free of

charge, two studies for the Theater and the final constructions, and studies of advisability and environmental implications were made by the local public Authority for the Development of Western Crete. In order to host groups in more permanent facilities, a village with elements of the traditional life and modern functions is foreseen to be built, with several workshops and other possibilities for creative activities. The young people shall be motivated to learn, understand and respect the "Other", overcome prejudices and enmities, seeking personal advancement .

The theater allows a number of different programs of artistic education and recreation to be developed. With great success, the program of "Reconciliation through art" was launched. This program gives young artists and spiritual originators from countries traditionally or lately at enmity the chance to live together at the Center, to prepare together and to stage works with strong messages of reconciliation and peace.

The writer Robert Fulghum (USA), who lives and writes at the OAC for several months per year, was the sponsor of the first application related to the above program. People working in the fields of theater, music and literature





from Bosnia, Germany, Greece, UK (Royal Shakespeare Society) and the US (Virginia Tech), took part. Following a proposal by the OAC, three versions of the Myth of the Minotaur were elaborated and then performed at the Theater with talent and inspiration.

Another program that was started is "The Garden of the Greeks abroad". Children of Greeks in the Diaspora may plant a tree at the Center. They receive an official certificate affirming that the tree (not the land!) belongs to them for life. So, they become "rooted" on Crete. This idea refers back to the olive tree planted at the EYC by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaïos in 1992 – the tree of peace, reconciliation and hope!

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