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THE PARK

Samaria National Park (White Mountains) Management Body was established according to article 13 of National Law 3044/27-08-2002 (Government Gazette, Issue A 197). Its operation began in April 2008 with the employment of the first personnel and the startup of the Project “Management and Operation of Samaria National Park”, Measure 8.1, Operational Program “Environment”, of the 3rd Community Support Framework, 2000-2006. The legally-

prescribed responsibilities of the Management Body (MB) are according to article 15 of National Law 2742/07-10-1999 (Government Gazette, Issue A 207). The Park is located on the Southwest part of island of Crete (Greece, East Mediterranean). It was designated a National Park via a Royal Decree in 1962. It is a mulidesignated area and specifically a National Park, Landscape of Outstanding Beauty, Natura 2000 site (SCI and SPA codes GR 4340008 and GR4340014)

a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve (MAB) and has been awarded the European Diploma of protected areas by the Council of Europe (CoE). It is characterized by high mountains (more than 50 peaks over 2000 m. a.s.l) with subalpine zones covered by snow for a long period, forests of pine and cypress species, pastoral areas, temporal cultivations, various shrubland types, several gorges and karstic phenomena and an extended coastline, on a predominantly limestone substrate. The

terrestrial biodiversity is unique, with more than 1000 species of both flora and fauna; 34 plants are endemic or stenoendemic in the National Park. The coastal zone is characterized by several kilometers of isolated shores and beaches. There visitors can hike to several directions following the European E4 route. Seagrass meadows and rocky reefs exist in several locations where visitors can snorkel or SCUBA dive in order to discover the seascape.

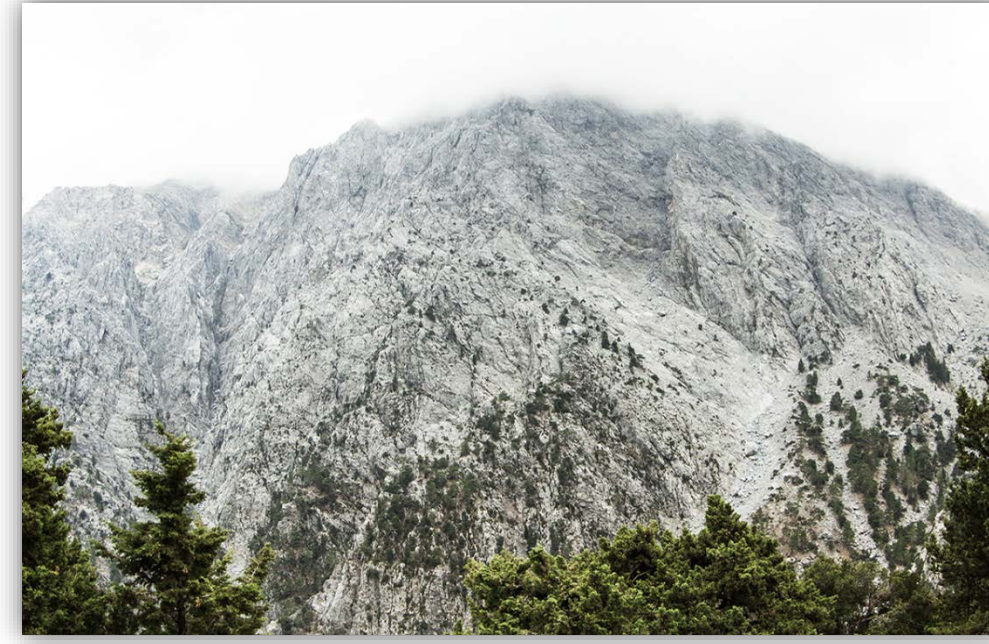
SCENERIES OF LAND AND SEA

The broader area of Samaria constitutes a clearly established and spatially defined territory. Within this area one encounters a diversity of landscape features with particular characteristics of ecological and cultural value, some of which are the Gorge, the abandoned village in the center of the Gorge, with the old crops

still observed, the chapels, which are often found on the same site as ancient temples, the fortress above Samaria, and at the Gorge exit, the ruins of the ancient city of Tarra, the Gorge’s special biodiversity and the complex ecosystem in both the terrestrial and coastal marine environment. Both the Gorge and the

broader Samaria region bear powerful symbolizations regarding the cultural identity of the local communities. The occasional passerby through the Samaria landscape can powerfully comprehend its wild forms. The visitor is consumed by the sense of freedom, feels awe in front of the coexistence of such an

inhospitable landscape with the presence of humans, senses the dominance of nature over man and comprehends his or her inability to control the forces of nature.



The local population feels a powerful sense of pride, through the strong effect of the Cretan landscape which is deeply rooted within them, and constantly hammering out their character within the presence of such an imposing landscape. Just as people’s characters

are the result of social, cultural, intellectual, psychological, aesthetic and economic factors, and this synthesis provides a comprehensible image of their personalities, so the landscape of Samaria is the comprehensible sum of factors and values, which are attributed

to it by people. The most important characteristic, however, of the landscape of Samaria is the intense interaction between humans and nature. This relationship exists both in today’s presence of humans as observers/walkers and in the historical

imprint that the inhabitants of Samaria have left on this space as pastors with their livestock all around the Park, feeding with the unique vegetation, beekeepers in unique faunal environments and local population with their cultivations.

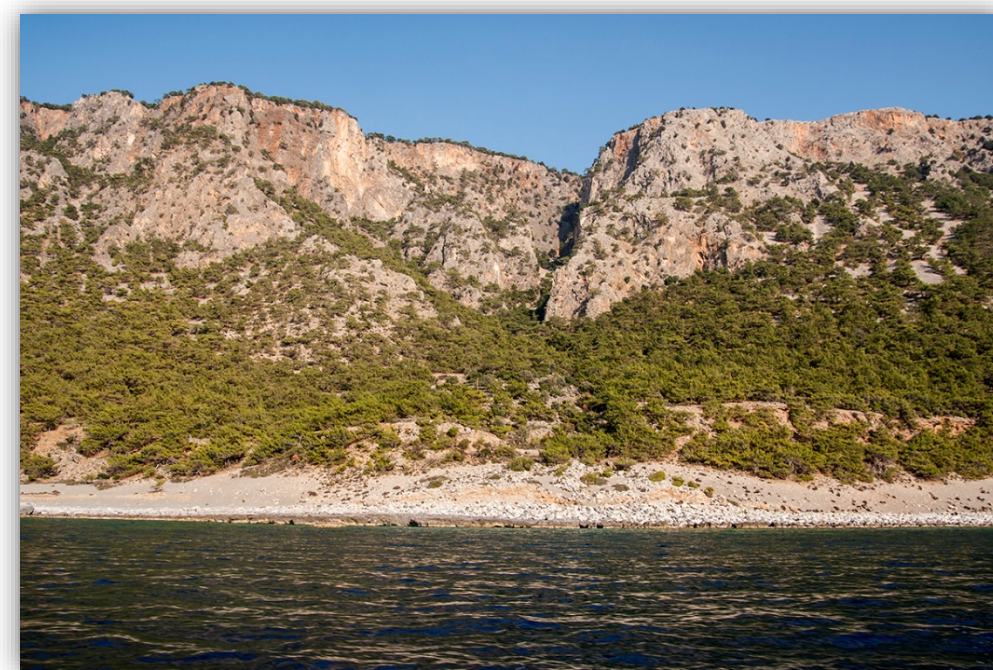
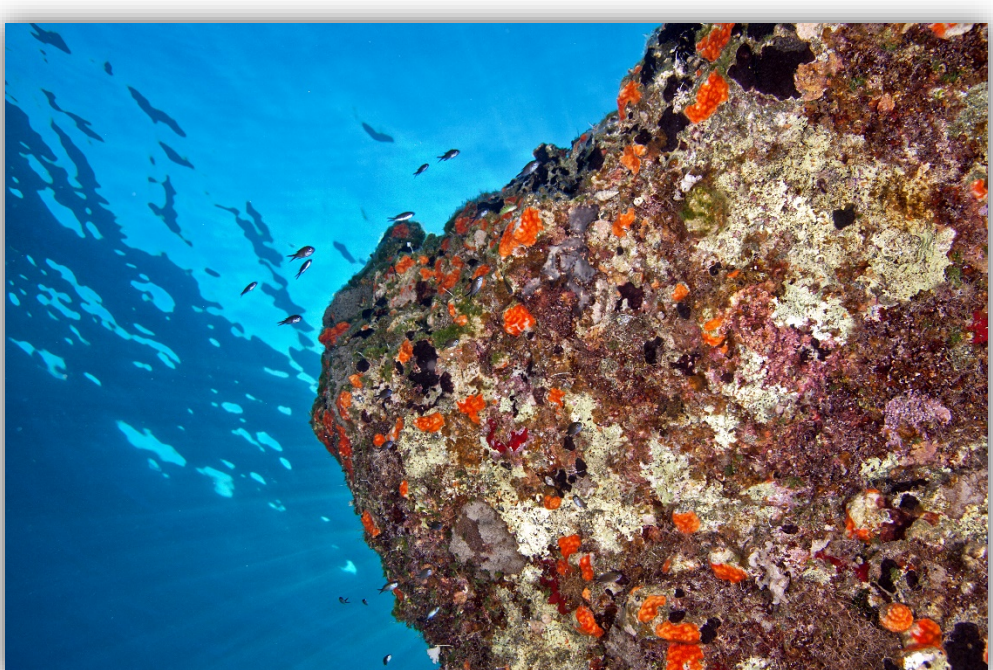


The cultural features of the old village with the olive trees, the remaining of vineyards, the preserved chapels and abandoned houses declare the powerful relationship that the inhabitants of Samaria had with this place and with what it provided them. This relationship

contains an understanding that may constitute an early expression of the much-discussed concept of sustainability: in contrast with today’s meaning, the inhabitants of Samaria built their lives around the core of “nature” thus shaping, organizing and satisfying

their needs on the basis of what the place offered. With respect for nature’s offerings, humans excluded any form of excessive exploitation, as they had early on realized that preserving the physiognomy of the landscape, either functionally or visually, was the key to

their survival. The coastline is a unique arc of history. Visitor can see the shoreline lift due to geological events in the past, the interaction with the water and the result as a small sandy beach or crevices and small semi merged caves, habitat on the monk seal.



For more information ask Dimitris Poursanidis

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