

# EXPLORING INEIA AND THE BEACHES OF LARA



**Ineia Community Council**

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*Cover photo: Northern Bay of Lara (Ammoudi)*

# Exploring Ineia and the beaches of Lara

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# Ineia

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The village of Ineia is located in the Pafos district, around 30km north of the town of Pafos in a privileged location with a panoramic view of the Laona plateau. You can reach Ineia either through Pafos town by following the B7 main road from Stroumpi towards Polis Chrysochous, or via the E701 road from Pafos towards Pegeia, which also leads to Polis Chrysochous.

The geographical coordinates of Ineia are quite significant, as it is an integral part of the Laona plateau, occupying a dominant position on Laona's ridge at an altitude of around 620m. Ineia is also associated with Lara and its attractive beaches, which fall within the administrative boundaries of the village, as well as Akamas, since Ineia and other adjacent villages are part of the Akamas peninsula, a stone's throw from the Akamas Forest.

Geography and history have blessed this region of our island with natural beauty, picturesque landscapes of particular morphological features, historical, folklore and other cultural treasures, legends and traditions, interesting spoken narratives and diverse written testimonies. A trip to this remote part of the island is not only an experiential touring experience popular among nature lovers, but also an exploratory walk through thousands of years of history. In fact, the wider area of Akamas has been inhabited since the Neolithic or at least the Chalcolithic Age, experiencing times of population boom and socio-economic prosperity, both during the Hellenistic-Roman periods and during the Byzantine Age.



Vineyards

When you visit Ineia you will instantly feel the magical attraction of the plateau, which starts at a height of 600m, as well as the uninterrupted view of the sea. You will have the opportunity to enjoy the cool climate of the village during the summer months, while in very close proximity you can swim off the virgin sandy beaches of Lara, next to the famed stars of the area – the sea turtles. In fact, during the summer - if you are lucky - you may find yourself witnessing one of nature's miracles: turtles laying their eggs.

You will also have the chance to walk along the stone-paved alleys of the village, through vineyards and fruit trees, as well as fields of crops, and to enjoy hiking or cycling in the wider Akamas region. And if you are a photography enthusiast, here you have the chance to capture the magnificence of nature, in the sublime Akamas National Park. You will also discover unique landforms and rich geodiversity, while at the same time you will see secluded byzantine chapels and forgotten sights of the island's rich cultural heritage. You will be impressed by the authentic folk architecture that uses local limestone, you can stay in guesthouses that are loyal to traditional Cypriot hospitality, and taste the gastronomical traditions of the area. You will also be able to learn about the local customs, but above all you will feel the heartfelt welcome and genuine intimate hospitality of the local residents.

Undoubtedly, this renowned part of Cyprus offers visitors a plethora of experiences and countless recreational opportunities, as an alternative for a peaceful and relaxing holiday. You can enjoy unique strolls away from the mass tourism that is characteristic of the more cosmopolitan resorts and crowded destinations.



Natural vegetation



# A road trip to Ineia and Laona

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The Laona plateau includes Kathikas, Pano and Kato Arodes, Ineia, Drousia, Kritou Tera, Androlikou, and Fasli, all villages of unparalleled natural and cultural wealth.

The virgin forest of Akamas is in the northwest of the plateau, the coastal plain of Chrysochous is in the north, the tree-lined valley of Chrysochous is in the east, and the northern part of the coastal plain of Pafos is in the west.

A winding asphalt road follows the ridge of Kathikas, Arodes, Ineia and Drousia, as mentioned in historical texts (see Jane Ferjwer, 1995, "Ancient Akamas", page 103, "road 12b ridge way road from Ineia to ridge of Akamas"); part of it was used by the Romans. Travelling along this road towards the villages of Laona, you can see an exceptional landscape with vineyards, legumes, almond trees, carob trees, and olive trees. Natural vegetation coexists with century-old terebinth trees, whose dense branches and foliage are home to several endemic and migratory birds.

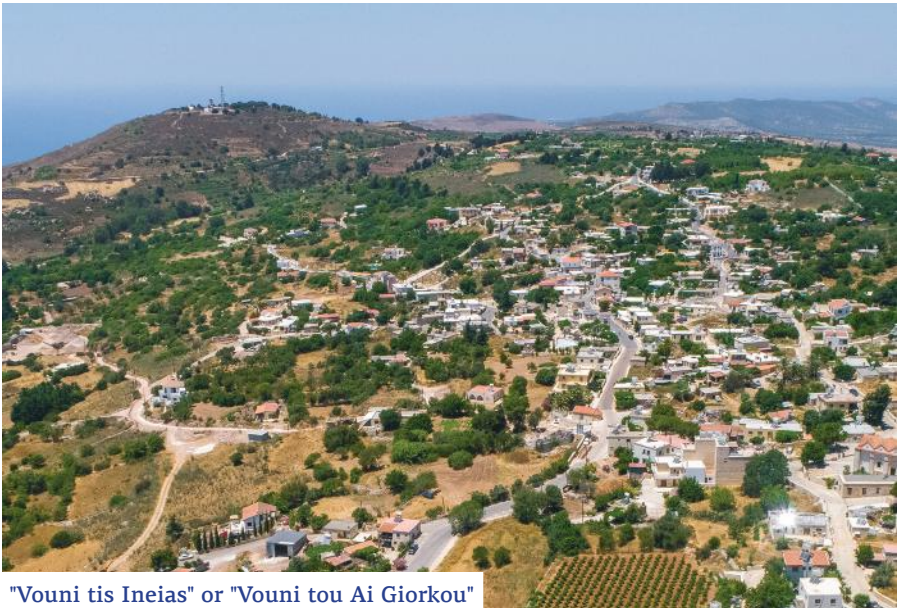


Traditional house

Despite the modernization of the area with the development of autonomous facilities, contemporary buildings, agrotourism accommodations, and restaurants, the distinctive identity of Laona has not altered, when compared to other rural areas of the country. The traditional houses, remnants of the old original local houses that had two rooms, arches, wooden roofs, and stone ovens in the courtyard, coexist with today's modernized buildings. You can still see villagers riding donkeys, the traditional vine harvest, the preparation of 'palouze' and "soutzoukos", the customs of Easter, and flocks of sheep and goats grazing in the valleys of the region.

The geomorphology and geology of the settlement is rich, with a terrain dissected by many creeks, hills, steep slopes and valleys. Its rich geodiversity comprises limestone, sandstone, chalk, marl, lava, serpentinite and an array of other allochthonous rocks of the Mamonia complex.

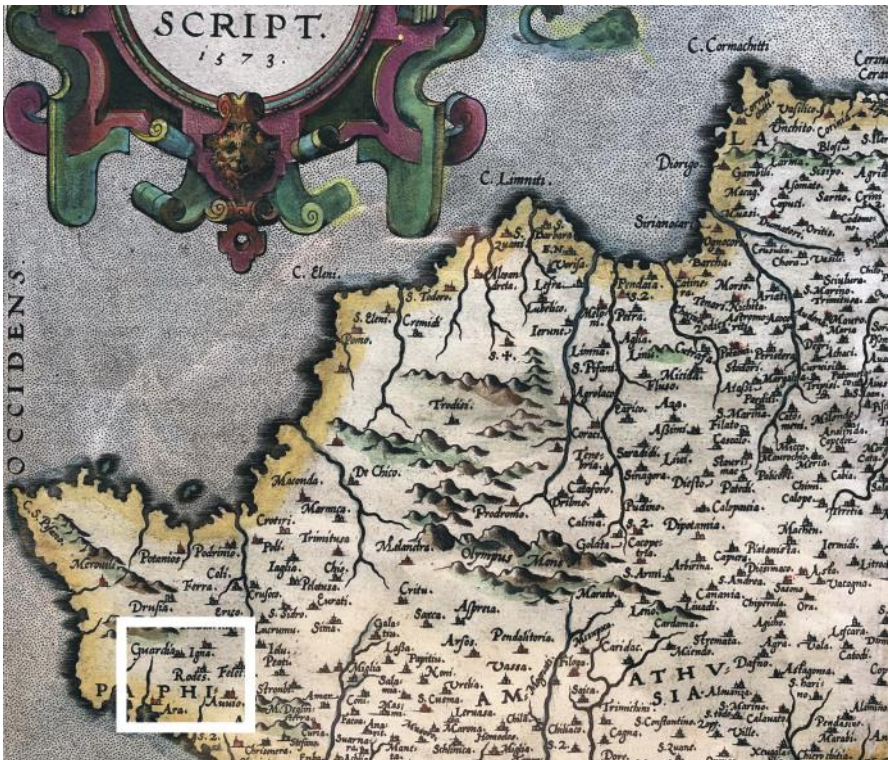
Although the village is located on the ridge of the plateau and the view is unobstructed in many directions, you must climb to the highest peak of the beautiful conical hill to the northwest of the village, known as "Vouni of Ineia/Vouni tis Ineias", to enjoy the uninterrupted view of the surrounding area. The elevated hill, with the chapel of Agios Georgios, offers the dominant view of the area. The mountain of Ineia, otherwise known as "Vouni of Agios Georgios/Vouni tou Ai Giorkou", which is situated on deep-water sediments like radiolarites and clays embedded with quartz sandstones, extends to an altitude of 668m above sea level and is the highest point in the entire Akamas peninsula.



"Vouni tis Ineias" or "Vouni tou Ai Giorkou"

However, the most impressive elements of this area are the imposing rocks of quartz sandstone, such as "Konneftis", "Gerakoptera" and many other landforms, which are an important habitat for birdlife. Up until the end of the last century, these peculiar geophysical features were home to flocks of vultures, which unfortunately have almost disappeared. Today they have been replaced by corvids, such as Jackdaws (*Corvus monedula*) as well as Rock doves (*Columba livia*), various birds of prey, like peregrines (*Falco peregrinus*), kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*), and Barn owls (*Tyto alba*). The above landforms are also probably the most important destinations for athletes and amateur climbers in Cyprus.

Briton George Jeffery mentioned in his book "A Description of the Historic Monuments of Cyprus", 1918, that there may have been a 16th century observatory in this location, as the place is ideal for overlooking the coast.



Ortelius's map "Cyprus Insula Nova Descript" (Antwerp, 1573)

This is confirmed by several ancient maps, like Ortelius's map "Cyprus Insula Nova Descript" (Antwerp, 1573), Vincenzo Maria Coronelli's map "Acamantis Insula, hoggidi Cipro" (Venice, 1689) and others, where there is mention of the "Igna" settlement (now Ineia), along with mention of the word "Quadria", meaning Observatory. In fact, these maps also mention a settlement named "Ara", probably referring to today's Lara.

Since ancient times, Ineia has been a predominantly agricultural and viticultural village. It is no coincidence that members of the Order of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem, who settled in the rich plain of Kolossi during the Medieval Age, chose to include the remote village of Ineia in its administration. That included a few villages of the Great Commandaria area which were mainly vineyards. Besides, Ineia was famous for the production of Commandaria, as were other villages of the Knights of St John.

In the aforementioned medieval maps, as well as in several other ancient maps, the settlement is referred to as Igna. There is a version, according to which the settlement was named during the time it belonged to the Order of the Knights after the Latin word 'vinum', which means wine; or during the Byzantine era after the word 'Oinos', hence the name Oineia, which was a past spelling of the word Ineia.

Another version heard from the residents of the village is that the name comes from the word "inia", because that part of the plough was often severely damaged while farmers were ploughing the fields, due to the presence of quartz in the soil. The village already appears in ancient maps during Frankish Rule and originally belonged to the order of the Knights Templar. After the dissolution of this order, it became the property of the Knights of the Order of St. John.

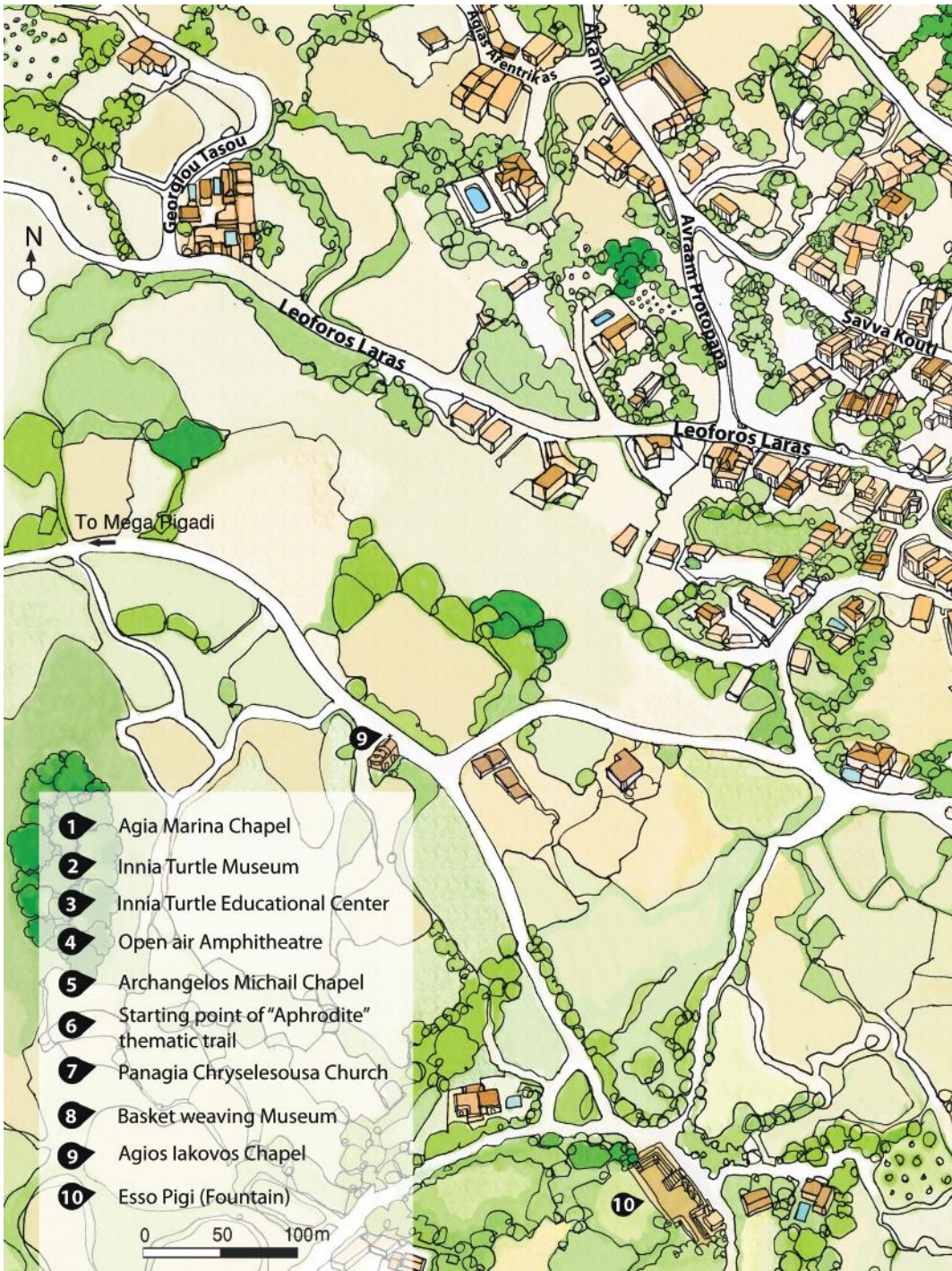
The current name Ineia was given to the village quite recently.

In 2023 the village had around 400 inhabitants. It has notably not been depopulated by urbanization, as has been the case in neighbouring villages of the Laona plateau. The occupations of the inhabitants are mainly agricultural, such as cereal and olive cultivation, viticulture, and animal husbandry (mainly sheep and goats), also offering a few services, such as a post office, mini markets, restaurants, and a few tourist accommodations.



Panoramic view of Ineia







# CHURCHES

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The chapels and churches of Ineia are very well-known.

The English author Gunnis, in his book "Historic Cyprus" (1936), mentions the medieval church of **Agios Iakovos** with remnants of frescoes, and the chapel of Agios Agapios attached to it, outside the village. Today, the residents of the village refer to both as the chapels of Agios Iakovos and the Christ, a name that has been used for years. It is one of the only 12th century chapels in Cyprus with sanctuaries of two churches side by side, and with clear remains of frescoes.

Gunnis also highlights the ruined church of **Archangelos Michail** in the centre of the village, although the church of **Panagia Chryseleousa** is the main church of the village, built in 1883. The chapel of **Agia Marina**, a medieval construction of the 16th century that has since been restored, is also worthy of attention.

According to Gunnis, there were other chapels: Afentrika, Agioi Pateres, Panagia tou Vlou, Ais Giorkis/Agios Georgios, among others, remnants of which can still be found today. The local name "Agioi Afentikoi" is also recorded somewhere in the village, indicating an old place.



The church of Panagia Chryseleousa



The chapel of Agia Marina



The chapel of Archangelos Michail

# CULTURAL MONUMENTS

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As far as cultural monuments are concerned, it is worth mentioning the two fountains of the village, dating back over 120 years, the water of which was carried by the inhabitants to their homes for their drinking and household needs. They are also described in the Thematic Aphrodite route below.

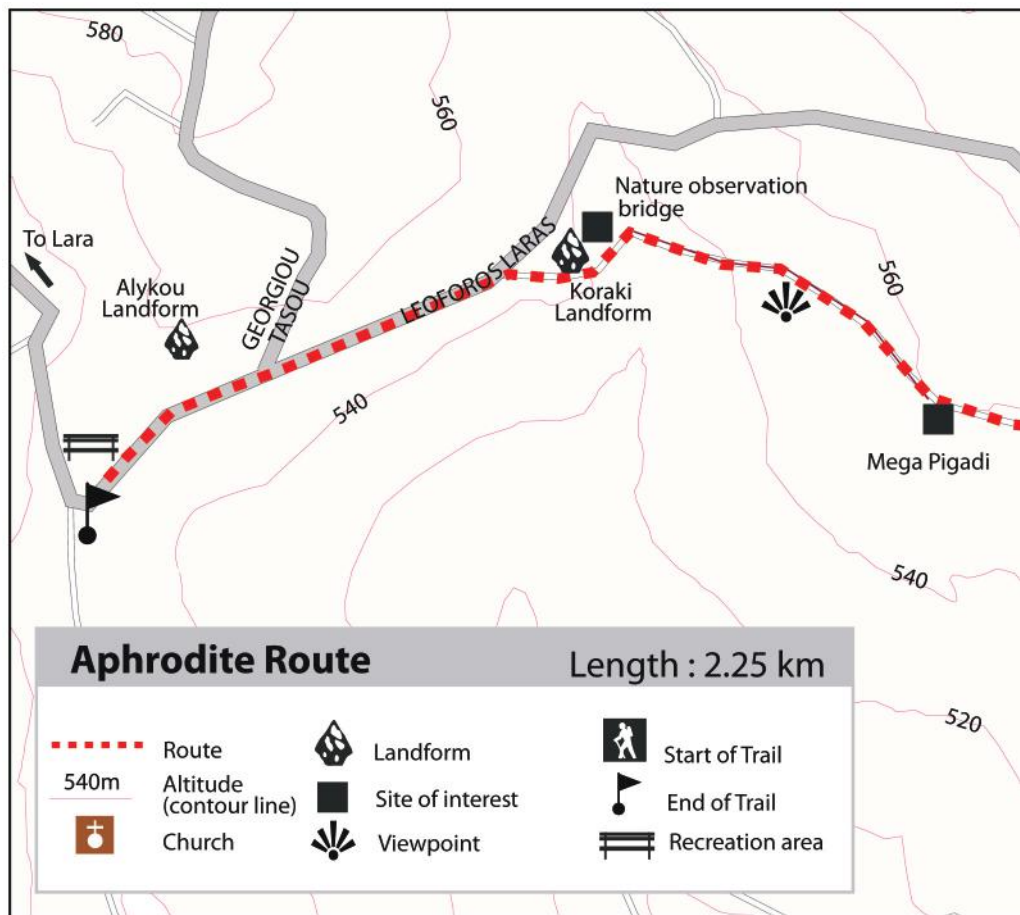
The **Basket Weaving Museum** in the centre of the village also attracts a lot of interest, and is home to unique Folk Art exhibits of masterful colourful design, such as baskets of various sizes and uses.

## THEMATIC «APHRODITE» ROUTE

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In the western part of Ineia, an interesting thematic linear route has been created, approximately 2.25km long, which can be navigated following a smooth road either by car - or better, on foot. This thematic route was named "Aphrodite", because the goddess Aphrodite gave birth, after her erotic encounter with Adonis, at the rock of Alykou which can be seen at the end of this route; according to Cypriot mythology, the rock of Alykou was divided in two by the pain of childbirth, which foretold the rebirth of nature.

The route is pleasant, since you can experience both the beneficial effect of the sea, and the exquisite elevation of the plateau at an altitude of about 550m. But it is also interesting, since you will get to know the unique landforms of "Koraki" and "Alykou", two impressive formations, from which the view is imposing. You can also see the two traditional fountains of the village, the Byzantine chapel of Agios Iakovos and the chapel of Archangelos Michail, as described above, but most of all, you will admire the panoramic view of Lara bay and the Akamas peninsula.



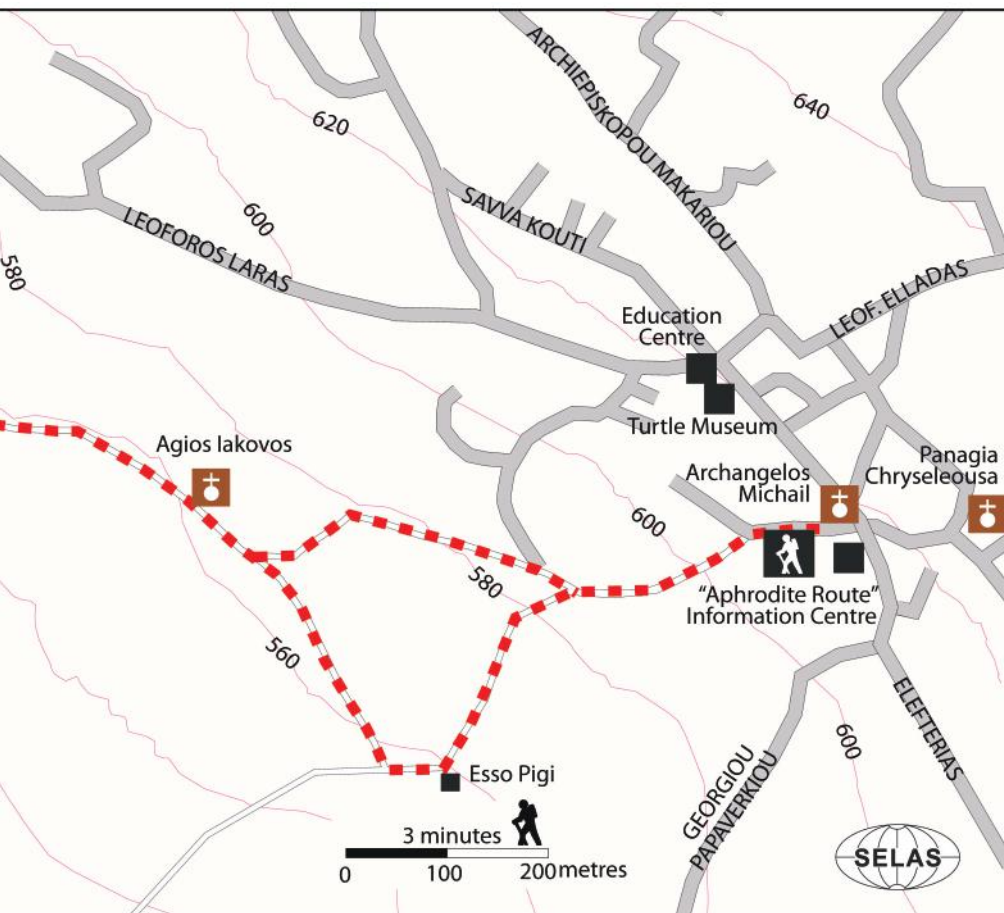
## ROUTE CHARACTERISTICS

**Linear route**                      2.25 km long

**Difficulty level**                      Easy

### Points of interest

Esso Pigi (Inner Water Spring),  
 Agios Iakovos chapel, Mega Pigadi (Great Well),  
 and the landforms of Koraki and Alykou



## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

The starting point of the route is the Information Centre, opposite the chapel of Archangelos Michail. Following the downhill cobblestone road towards "Esso Pigi", after about 750m, between dry stone walls and a few detached houses, you will see on the left-hand side the small fountain of Vota, as the locals call it, but the water of the fountain is not potable. Scattered carob trees, prickly pears and especially terebinth trees will accompany you along the way. If you are a Botany expert, you will spot the endemic climbing bush *Bosea cypria*, or "Zoulatzia" as it is called locally, branching through the dry stone with its impressive reddish fruit in autumn.



Esso Pigi (Fountain)

Reaching the stone-built fountain of "Esso Pigi" with its three arches, you will be amazed by its architecture. This outdoor space, landscaped with local stone, hosts various community events. The fountain, which supplied water to the residents and their animals (horses and oxen) in the past, as well as the **old washhouse**, have been preserved, and at the same time the place has been restored. This was where the women of the village used to meet, washing their clothes with "alousiva" (ash water), drying them on the dry stone walls and then carrying them home along with a jug of water.

The village was built in the area between the fountain and the chapels, before it was moved higher to its current position for hygienic reasons (to avoid annoying insects like mosquitoes, and epidemic diseases). The old cemetery, the ancient tombs and carved stones confirm the existence of the settlement in this specific location.

The land plots on this part of the route are separated by dry stone walls, as well as trees, such as white mulberry trees (*Morus alba*), the leaves of which were used for feeding silkworms until the 1960s. There are also fig trees (*Ficus carica*), which provided both fresh and dried figs, and almond trees (*Prunus dulcis*), the fruits of which were used for the preparation of the famous Cypriot "soutzoukos" made with grape must and "palouze", made with grape must and flour.

Returning from 'Esso Pigi' and continuing the route towards the chapel of Agios Iakovos, you will find a large area on your right which was used as a football field in the village until a decade ago. On the side of the road there is dense growth of wattle trees (*acacia cyanophylla*), and about 300m from the water spring, you will reach the chapel of Agios Iakovos, as described on page16.

'Mega Pigadi' is a stone-built dam, built in 1950 for the water supply and irrigation needs of the village. The water flows from where the limestone rocks and the underlying clay come into contact 'Mega Pigadi' is the main water source of the village. The water supplies a reservoir, which serves as a storage for the irrigation of the orchards. The watering system that was established in the past for irrigation required the distribution of water from the reservoir to the orchards, the landowners of which had a water supply permit, depending on the size of the land plot and with relevant irrigation time for an allocated time slot within the week.



Agricultural activities in the village

In the past, mainly vegetables were cultivated in the summer, as well as various trees, such as lemon, walnut, apricot, and peach trees. The water bearer was the person who supervised the smooth operation of the whole process. Unfortunately, most of the orchards have nowadays been abandoned, and as a result, wild bushes have taken over, making the fields inaccessible.

From "**Mega Pigadi**" you can continue straight down the route towards the well-known landforms of Ineia with a slight downward direction for about 300m. While crossing the creek, where there is dense aquatic vegetation with brambles and reeds, the landform of Koraki rises on your left. It is a majestic fractured rock with thick bushes and rich fauna. Before continuing your stroll, you can walk over the creek on a footbridge built as part of the route.



Overlooking the Lara beaches



Alykou landform

Moving towards the last part of the route, in the direction of the landform of Alykou, you will see individual scattered small and large rocks, as well as scrubby vegetation made up of Narrow leaved *Cistus* (*cistus monspeliensis*). The route is smooth with olive, oak, wild pear trees etc. On the right, after about 450m lies Alykou. It is an imposing landform surrounded by wild vegetation, bird and reptile fauna. The rocks of Alykou and Koraki, along with other rocks on the hill, are quartz sandstone and have the same composition and age.

At the end of the route there is a refreshment and rest area, from where you can gaze out into the distance and be amazed by the magnificent unspoilt landscape down to the sea and the beaches of Lara. If you wish, you can continue the route by car down to the beach of Lara, as described on page 24 (see *First route towards Lara*).



Koraki landform

The charm of Ineia is undoubtedly at its peak on the shores of Lara. When we refer to Lara, we mean the entire coastal area, i.e. the Lara peninsula with its two bays: the southern bay of **Lara or Loura**, as it is mainly known, and at a distance of about 1km, the northern bay of **Ammoudi**, as well as the salt lake.

The enchanting beaches of Lara and Ammoudi attract eclectic swimmers who seek hours of absolute peace, tranquillity and relaxation, especially during the summer months. The beach of Lara can be reached by following two rural roads from the village towards the two bays of Lara. The distance is around 9km.

## FIRST ROUTE TOWARDS LARA

This route can be a continuation of the thematic "Aphrodite" route, as described on page 17. Afterwards, by following the relevant signs, you can carry on with your excursion towards Lara. As an alternative option, you can attempt to access Lara from the centre of the village. Follow Leoforos Lara (see map) and cross the first creek, where the landform of Koraki is located around 1km away.

Following the extension of the "Aphrodite" route, at the end, from the refreshment area next to the landform of Alykou, a downward road continues through an exquisite area with olive trees and crops, as well as uncultivated lands with wild scrub vegetation. The road that you will follow passes through low-rise hills on both sides, with a constant change of scenery. As you approach the beach, the route becomes smoother, as the area is flatter. The vegetation here consists of crop cultivations, olive and carob tree orchards, while along the land plots there are uncultivated scrub lands with Lentisk, Phoenician juniper, etc. Arriving at the coastal road of Pegeia-Lara, follow the signs, and on the right, less than 1km away, you will see the southern bay of Lara (or Loura) stretching in front of you.

It is a pedal-shaped cove. On the north side you will see cliffs predominantly composed of white chalk, which gradually descend towards Lara bay. With its semi-circular shape, the sandy beach of Lara (or Loura) extends over a distance of about 1.5km, surrounded by low bushes. Continuing your itinerary for another kilometre, you can reach the northern bay of Lara or Ammoudi.



The southern Bay of Lara or Loura



**The northern Bay  
of Lara or Ammoudi**



**The southern Bay  
of Lara or Loura**



**Lara Salt Lake**

## SECOND ROUTE TOWARDS LARA

There is another way to reach Lara, following Leoforos Akama to the north of Ineia village (*see map p. 14*), which leads to the village of Pittokopos. Then, following the signs, you will be led to the Pegeia-Lara coastal road. This road leads to the **northern bay of Lara or Ammoudi**, where the turtle hatchery is located.

Keeping to this route, after about 2.5km you will see a pavilion, from where you can admire Chrysochou bay on one side and the beach of Lara on the other side. Approaching the beach, the landscape becomes flatter. Along the narrow coastal zone, cereal crops coexist with large carob and olive trees. Crossing the scrub forest, you will see the white-sand dunes of the majestic beach of Ammoudi. Here you will also find the Department of Fisheries' turtle protection Information Centre.

The beach starts from the limestone cliff of the salt lake and extends for about 1km, surrounded by low bushes of Lentisk and Phoenician juniper, terebinth trees, wild olive trees, narrow leaved Cistus, and other shrubs. The sand is fine-grained with scattered pebbles. Somewhere in the middle, sand dunes have been formed by the power of wind and water, about 15m high, held in place by umbrella-shaped Lentisk. The massive volume of sand deposited in this bay justifies the name given to the area. Ammoudi derives from the word "ammos", which means sand, so there is no need for further etymological research.



The northern Bay of Lara or Ammoudi



Lara Salt Lake

**Ammoudi** is perhaps the most secluded beach in Cyprus. Protected from strong winds, it is quiet and peaceful with crystal clear water, attracting visitors mainly during the summer months. During this season, you can also see the beautiful sea daffodil (*Pancratium maritimum*), which blooms on many of the island's beaches.

The **Salt lake of Lara** is located between and in front of the two bays. The north-south direction of the salt lake, which is vertical to the direction of the wind and the waves, protects the two bays. The erosion from the raging waves is so intense, that it has created a steep front several metres deep and several tens of metres wide. This area is mainly characterized as a wild elevated landscape without vegetation, while the irregular sized hollows fill up with vast amounts of sea water after every storm. It is the evaporation of this sea water that produces the white and frothy sea salt. The extraction of salt was strictly forbidden during the British Rule, with the salt-keepers who lived in the area overseeing the salt lake. The remains of the salt-keepers' colonial buildings are still preserved at the salt lake. Here it is worth noticing one of the few plants that grow in the cracks of the salt lake rocks: sea fennel (*Crithmum maritimum*), which is collected by the locals in spring to make a delicious pickled culinary appetizer.

## THE BEACHES OF LARA, A SEA TURTLE NESTING SITE

Apart from the unparalleled charm of the two beaches, what makes them famous around the world is the fact that they are home to two of the world's seven species of sea turtles, the Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) and the Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), the two most iconic turtle species in the Mediterranean.

In Cyprus, the Green turtle breeds in the protected area of Lara-Toxeftra, as well as in certain beaches on the north coast and Karpasia. The Loggerhead turtle also lays its eggs in the beaches of Lara and Toxeftra, as well as on the south coast at Pervolia and Kiti, but their main breeding beaches are the ones in the Polis Chrysochous and Gialia area, which belong to the Natura 2000 network.

The Loggerhead turtle is the third largest turtle in length and is classified as a "vulnerable species" worldwide. The population of the Loggerhead turtle in Cyprus during the summer months is estimated to reach around 1200-1500 individuals.

The Green turtle is one of the largest sea turtles and is classified as an "endangered species" in the Mediterranean and worldwide. It was named after the colour of the fat on the bottom of its shell. Its population in Cyprus during the summer season is estimated to be around 250-350 individuals.



The newborn turtles  
emerge from the egg



Newborn turtles



Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)

These two turtle species are the main characters of Lara and Toxeftra beaches: it is no coincidence that this specific area is a nesting site where sea turtles to lay their eggs. This is due to a combination of interactive ecological factors and key characteristics of the beach, such as sand temperature and softness, salinity, length and height of the beach, percentage of organic matter, moisture content, wave power, sand compaction, and local vegetation. When they reach adulthood, the newborn turtles will return to the beach where they hatched, in order to lay their own eggs. Turtles imprint their birthplace in their memory, which they remember and use later as a compass to return to the same beach.

The loggerhead turtle usually lays its eggs from late May to early August and the Green turtle starts and finishes two weeks later. The eggs hatch in about 7 weeks, depending on sand temperature. When the incubation cycle is complete, the newborn turtles emerge from the egg. Their shell is soft and black, which makes them very vulnerable to predators. This is one of the reasons why they hatch at night.

Baby turtles have phototropic behaviour, meaning that when they leave the nest, they head towards the brightest point on the horizon. For this reason, they instinctively steer themselves towards the sea, using the reflection of the moon or stars on the surface of the water as a guide.

It is estimated that only one in a thousand turtles will reach adulthood and return to the beach where it was born. Sea turtle hatchlings are vulnerable to many natural threats, such as crabs, birds and foxes, which patrol the beaches late at night and early in the morning in search of food. In addition, there are anthropogenic threats, such as sea pollution, especially from plastics, light pollution, noise pollution, and beach erosion, especially in nesting areas. These threats, in combination with the natural hazards they face, are increasingly reducing the population of sea turtles. The turtles that do manage to return and lay their eggs are marked with special numbered tags, so it can be confirmed whether they have repatriated to the same beaches. The nests are secured in special protective cages.



Newborn turtle heading towards the sea



Protection cage for turtle nests



Turtle digging the egg chamber to lay the eggs

If a nest is built near the sea, it is moved to a higher point to avoid being covered by sea water. After the eggs have hatched, the people in charge of the Hatchery open the nests and record all available evidence (e.g. unhatched eggs), and help any turtles that may have been left stranded in the sand to head towards the sea.

The coastal area of Lara-Toxeftra, which includes the most important nesting sites for sea turtles, has been preserved as a Nature Protection Area since 1989. The "Lara-Toxeftra Marine Protected Area" falls within the European Ecological Network Natura 2000 for the long-term safeguarding of endangered species and habitats of nature, and in this case the Special Protection Area of the Akamas Peninsula, declared in 2009-2010.

The Ineia Community Council, in the context of promoting the Lara beaches as turtle nesting sites, created the Turtle Museum dedicated to these species.

# Turtle Museum and Education Centre

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The Turtle Museum, as of 2023, is housed in a specially designed building. It is the first dedicated space in Cyprus, meant to exclusively showcase the sea turtles, and it is the result of scientific research and solid museum design.

The modern museum concept, the quantity, quality and variety of the exhibits, accompanied by thematic digital interactive presentations, offers a unique experience and reveals less well known aspects of the world of turtles and the wider area that hosts them, in an attractive environment for people of all ages.

The 178m<sup>2</sup> space is divided into three rooms, and the fascinating world of the two turtle species that visit Lara, the Loggerhead and the Green turtle, is presented through unique exhibits, photographs, maps, short films, an interesting diorama that simulates the beach of Lara, and other related visual media.

The first room of the Museum includes the Reception Area and welcomes visitors with an impressive 3D detailed map of the Akamas Peninsula, through which they get a visual contact with the beaches of Lara and Toxeftra and the virgin forest of Akamas in the northwest. The map also suggests ideas for excursions to the surrounding area, as the main points of interest of the area are included in detail. In the same room there is a large touch screen display, which includes presentations on the evolution of the turtles, from their appearance around 200 million years ago until the present day as well as their adaptation to various climate changes on Earth, and maps showing the distribution of the two turtle species around the world.



The Turtle Museum in Ineia

From the reception area, you move into the main hall of the Museum, which hosts a variety of exhibits and interactive presentations. On the right side of the room, an impressive diorama shows the beach of Lara and the turtles, along with the natural threats they face from crabs and other animals. This imposing exhibit brings all the characteristics of the real beach at Lara to life, right in front of your eyes.

In the same room, modern touch screens show films created especially for the Museum, including footage from the beaches of Lara and Akamas. They also feature scenarios on the geomorphology, flora and fauna of the area and the life-cycle of our turtles, from their birth on the beaches of Lara and Toxeftra to their adulthood and their return to the same beaches to lay their own eggs.

Additionally, interactive programmes on screens present the human threats that directly or indirectly endanger its survival, and its important ecological role in the protection of marine biodiversity, life on Earth, and the sustainability of our planet.

There are also impressive displays of turtle shells collected from various parts of the world, as well as a display presenting the two turtle species that visit the beaches of Lara and Toxeftra. One of the innovations of the Museum is the dedicated station that includes exhibits specifically for the blind.



Photos from inside the Turtle Museum

Returning from the main hall to the reception area, on the left, there is a specially designed screening and lecture area equipped with a projector, showing films about the sea turtles. The Ineia Community Council of has also produced an outstanding animation film, through which young visitors can enjoy the two turtle species' journey through time and space, from their first appearance on Earth until they reach the beaches of Lara and Toxeftra, including the natural and anthropogenic threats they will encounter on the way. In the same room they will be able to test what they have learned at the Museum through engaging interactive games.

At the exit of the Museum is the Shop, which offers a variety of turtle-themed souvenirs, such as cards, key rings, fridge magnets, books, and other memorabilia.

The Turtle Museum offers multidimensional education and entertainment to people of all ages, imparting knowledge to visitors and stimulating their emotions.

## EDUCATION CENTRE

Right next to the Turtle Museum is the Education Centre, housed in a pre-existing building that was renovated in 2015.

It operates as an environmental education centre, with specially designed educational programmes and digital learning for students of all ages. The Education Centre provides lessons on a variety of topics, with the ultimate goal and philosophy of cultivating environmental awareness.

Through the variety of the programmes at the Education Centre, as well as its equipment with computers, maps and other visual media, students of all ages have the opportunity to watch educational programmes, as well as dynamically participate in various activities, in order to learn about the sea turtles, the ecosystems of Lara and Akamas, its geography, geomorphology, geology, and other interesting features of the area.



The Education Centre in Ineia

# Nearby excursions in the surrounding area

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## EXPLORING THE AKAMAS NATIONAL FOREST

Undeniably, a visit to Ineia requires a trip to the nearby Akamas National Forest. If you want to explore the western coast of Akamas, you can follow one of the routes towards Lara, described on page 24, where you will have beautiful picturesque sandy beaches on your left, while on your right is a wild landscape with deep, narrow gorges, sloping land descending from the Laona plateau towards the sea, and steep cliffs.

At a short distance into the sea, there are some secluded rocks known to the locals as ‘**Karavopetres**’ (ship rocks), which are part of the administrative boundaries of Ineia. According to tradition, pirates used to rest in the area before they went on to ravage the villages, monasteries, and chapels, especially during the Arab Invasions. According to another similar tradition, the monastery of Panagia tou Vlou (Virgin Mary of the Blind) was located somewhere in the area. Today, only the deserted chapel of **Panagia tou Vlou** remains - a remnant of the old monastery. According to the legend, when the monastery was looted by the corsairs, Virgin Mary could not bear the disgrace, so she turned the ships into rocks, which now lie petrified in the sea.



Photo from inside the chapel  
of Panagia tou Vlou



The chapel of Panagia tou Vlou

After the "Karavopetres", further along the coastal road you will discover another road on your right; if you follow it for about 6km, you will reach Smigies, which is a beautiful little valley surrounded by pine and cypress trees and Lentisk, with a large picnic site. This is the starting point for the Pissouromoutti nature trail (see page 41). Near the excursion area is the chapel of Agios Minas.

From there you can head towards Neo Chorio or take the shortest way back to Ineia (around 12km), a hike that follows the ridge of Akamas and offers breathtaking views across the peninsula.

If you want to be more adventurous, you can take the coastal road leading to Tzioni. Along the way you will come across the "Erimites" (Hermits), a range of raised caves carved into the limestone cliffs, resembling tombs. Tradition has it that, long ago, hermits used to live there. Further on, "Geronisos" islet rises several metres above sea level with its elongated shape, enchanting you with its beautiful landscape. Other smaller islets that look like they float on the sea surface are prominent nearby, until you reach Tzioni. A few metres into to sea, a small section of a pillar stands upright after centuries, testifying to the existence of a port here, long ago. It's thought that anchored ships were probably once tied to the pillar.

About 200m inland from the coast, a road leads to the chapel of Agios Kononas. The presence of springs around the church of Agios Kononas, suggests the existence of a settlement, probably inhabited in olden times.



We are already in the heart of Akamas, a natural and cultural site of Cyprus. The rich biodiversity and the other natural elements of the area, as well as the importance of their protection, have led to its declaration as a National Forest Park. The whole region, as we have noted above, has been declared a Protected Area following its inclusion in the Natura 2000 network.

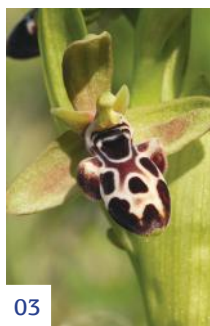
According to the Department of Forests, there are approximately 650 native plants recorded in Akamas, representing 40% of the total flora of Cyprus. Out of these, 43 are endemic to the island. Two of them are actually local endemics (*Centaurea akamantis* and *Tulipa akamasica*). There is also a record of 28 endangered species (according to the "Red Book of the Flora of Cyprus"). Four of the endangered species are limited to Akamas (*Arbutus unedo*, *Bellium minutum*, *Tulipa akamasica*, and *Centaurea akamantis*), and some of the rest are quite populated on the peninsula (*Alyssum akamasicum*, *Euphorbia thompsonii*, and *Taraxacum aphrogenes*).



01



02



03



04



05



06



07



08

01. *Nobortum cyprum* / 02. *Cyclamen cyprum* / 03. *Ophrys kotschyi* / 04. *Tulipa cyprica*  
 05. *Alcedo atthis* / 06. *Upupa epops* / 07. *Merops apiaster* / 08. *Sylvia melanocephala*

The Akamas Peninsula is also rich in fauna. The area is one of the main migratory destinations of Cyprus and is of great importance for many bird species. Around 152 migratory species have been recorded to date, while around 15 bird species are classified as permanent residents of the area. There are also around 15 species of bats in the area, as well as the endangered Mediterranean monk seal "Monachus monachus", and of course the Loggerhead turtle and Green turtle.

## AVAKAS GORGE

When you find yourself in Ineia, it would be a shame not to visit the nearby impressive Avakas Gorge. Following the route from Ineia towards Lara, which was described on page 24, you will reach the coastal road, and you should turn left following the signs towards Agios Georgios of Peyia. When you reach the beach of Toxeftra, at a distance of about 1.5km inland, you will see the entrance of the gorge.

The Avakas Gorge is one of the deepest and narrowest gorges in Cyprus. At some points the gorge is very narrow, around 3m wide, while elsewhere it reaches 6m or more. The sides are very steep, almost vertical. Small caves and hollows in the limestone rocks at the side of the gorge are home to wild flora and fauna species.

Crossing the river, you will come across some massive boulders that block the river bed, sometimes creating small waterfalls. There is a huge stone arch and several hollows, which fill with water in winter, making it difficult to cross. It is not recommended to explore the gorge during the winter months, as the river is very rapid.



Hiking in Akamas

# Useful Information

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## ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD

If you wish to stay in the area, there are villas and other tourist accommodation to rent in Ineia and the neighbouring villages, as well as hotels and tourist apartments in the nearby area.

There is also a tavern and a restaurant in Ineia, where you can enjoy lunch or dinner. Alternatively, there are traditional taverns and restaurants in neighbouring villages, where you will have the pleasure of enjoying traditional Cypriot cuisine.

## MUSEUMS

There are several interesting thematic museums in the area. Apart from the Turtle Museum in Ineia, you can also visit the Akamas Rural Life Museums in Droushia (750m from Ineia), the Akamas Geology and Palaeontology Centre in Pano Arodes (3km from Ineia), and the Akamas Regional Avifauna and Flora Visitor Centre in Kathikas (7 km from Ineia). More museums are under development in neighbouring villages.

## NATURE TRAILS

There are 8 Nature Trails in the area, five in the Akamas National Forest (Adonis, Aphrodite, Avakas Gorge, Pissouromoutti, and Smigies), one in the forest of Peyia, and two in the village of Kathikas (Agiasma and Mountikou).

Below is a description of just two of the Nature Trails that are included in this Guidebook, the Pissouromoutti trail and the Avakas Gorge trail.

(Source: Department of Forest)

## PISSOUMOUTTI TRAIL

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<b>Circular route</b>	3km long
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<b>Duration</b>	2 hours
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<b>Difficulty level</b>	2
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### DESCRIPTION

The path climbs steadily upward until you reach the top of the hill called "Pissouromoutti", which gave the nature trail its name. It then follows a downward route that goes in a circle all around the hill. Throughout the route there are many points with excellent views, the most impressive being the top of the hill, where you can enjoy uninterrupted vistas of the landscape towards all points of the horizon (South coast: Gioni, Geronisos, Lara, Agios Georgios tis Pegeias, and North coast: Polis Chrysochous Bay).

## AVAKAS GORGE TRAIL

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<b>Circular route</b>	4km long
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<b>Duration</b>	2 hours
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<b>Difficulty level</b>	1, 3
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### DESCRIPTION

The path follows a 4km linear route. The first 3km follow the flow of Avgas River, which inspired the name of the gorge. The first 700metres are Difficulty Level 1 and the rest of the path is Difficulty Level 3. The high difficulty level is due to the path crossing a creek and slippery rocks, and the fact that after the second kilometre the path goes downhill. It is advisable to wear a helmet when entering the gorge, as there is a danger of rocks falling. The danger is greater during and after rainy days.

At the beginning, the route follows a dirt road (closed for private vehicles) in an open valley, with large openings and natural vegetation. It then enters the gorge. In the last section, the trail passes through the creek, which usually has year-round water flow. The trail through the gorge is characterized by dense vegetation and a particularly attractive, shady and damp environment. The last kilometre follows a rural road to Arodes village.

This guidebook was created as part of the project «Supply of Equipment and Provision of Services for the development of the Turtle Education-Exhibition Centre in the Community of Ineia», funded by «National Resources».

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This guidebook was created as part of the project  
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