

“Aphrodite” Thematic (Environmental & Cultural) Route in Ineia, Paphos

Study and Licensing Process: 2012 – 2020

Construction Period: July 2021 – October 2023

Total Project Cost: €1,997,923.75

INTRODUCTION

According to the project’s call and the terms of reference set by the Employer, the Project was included in the Rural Development Programme, which provided for the implementation of infrastructure projects aimed at improving the quality of life in rural communities. This was considered a necessary condition for retaining the local population, and especially the younger generations.

From the outset, the objective was to enhance the natural environment and promote the cultural heritage of this rural area. This would also help attract modern businesses and promote tourism in the region, which is considered one of the most important sources of alternative income for the local community.

Scope of Study:

The project concerned the development of a thematic route named “Aphrodite” on the western side of the community of Ineia, spanning approximately 2 km. It stretches from the south-western outskirts of the settlement to the rock formations (clusters of rocks) known as "Korakis" and "Alykous", located at a site with panoramic views of the Lara Bay and the Akamas Peninsula, at an altitude of around 550 meters.

The aim of the Project was to connect the area's geomorphological features, the two Middle Byzantine chapels of Saint James and Christ, the more recent chapel of Archangel Michael, a colonial-era water reservoir, several viewpoints, and other points of environmental interest through a low-traffic road suitable for cars, but primarily to serve hikers and trekking visitors.

The "building program" took its final form after suggestions from the architects, following repeated visits to the area, familiarization with the site, and analysis of the local conditions of the study area.

A. ANALYSIS (FAMILIARIZATION WITH THE STUDY AREA)

A1. BROADER STUDY AREA

The community of Ineia is located in the Paphos District and borders the communities of Drouseia, Arodes and Androlykou. It lies within an area of environmental interest (Akamas) and is close to regions of tourist development (Polis Chrysochous, Coral Bay). The broader environment in which the settlement is located, and particularly the area under study, presents unique environmental interest, with a rich variety of visual impressions and a diverse historical heritage, findings, and monuments.

The aim was to identify and highlight this cultural heritage (both environmental and historical), so that it could become a catalyst for increasing the area's attractiveness and for drawing alternative forms of tourism (agrotourism, cultural tourism).

In the report we prepared during the design phase for the open presentation to the local community (Community Council and residents) of the project's intentions and design principles, the following, among others, were mentioned:

A2. STUDY AREA

Beyond the route itself and the natural environment—which alone presents exceptional interest, diversity, and seasonality—other points of interest or areas with potential for design and enhancement include the following:

Chapel of Archangel Michael

The chapel dominates the starting point of the route, and within its grounds, a viewing platform was already proposed by the team of consultants who design the revitalization of the settlement's core.

A two-storey community building opposite the chapel that helps define and mark, along with the chapel, the beginning of the route. The building itself is more recent and presents no architectural interest. Its replacement and rehabilitation as an Information and Visitor Centre is proposed.

In its first part, the route passes alongside two private traditional houses—one of which is being restored, while the other survives in its original form but is in poor condition. This second building is a typical example of traditional Ineia architecture and retains all its authentic features. It is a two-room structure with an arch, *asieroni* (hay storeroom), *sente* (low mezzanine), *niskia* (hearth), and the entire construction is original (wooden beams, *stroteri* flooring, traditional flat roof, etc.). In the courtyard, there is an oven and a *stiadi* (outdoor covered space) and the property is enclosed by dry-stone walls and natural rock. Its acquisition and restoration by the community are recommended.

In general, the path/road is defined by dry-stone walls (*xerolithies*), which in some places remain nearly intact, though the majority have collapsed or are only faintly visible due to wear or human intervention.

More recent stonework is, in most cases, poorly constructed and alien in character when compared to the authentic traditional walls.

There are continuous and striking views along the route, with vistas toward the sea, the open horizon, cultivated land, and forest areas, which pleasantly surprise the visitor (Akamas, Lara, Pykni Forest).

The surviving traditional buildings, even those in a ruined or semi-ruined state, are fully integrated into the landscape and form an inseparable part of it—unlike some modern

constructions near the starting point of the route, which are entirely out of place in both style and context.

According to topographic maps, some *rymes* (narrow alleys defined by dry stone walls) have been identified, though they are lost due to overgrown neglect. In another location, oral accounts recall the existence of an olive mill and a threshing floor. These elements should be located and highlighted.

Due to the sloping terrain, in many places the dry-stone walls on either side of the path served dual purposes—on one side acting as retaining structures to support the soil of the higher level adjacent properties, and on the other side as auxiliary retaining walls, forming the second boundary of the road.

Generally, property boundaries are defined by linear plantings, but more prominently by dry-stone walls, which add distinctiveness and character to the landscape. Shrubs and wild vegetation have covered parts of these walls.

Along the entire route, the visitor maintains almost constant visual contact with the impressive geological formations of “Korakis” and “Alykous”, which stand out dramatically at the end of the trail.

In some cases, the boundaries of the route are defined by natural rocks and boulders, in combination with dry-stone masonry walls.

In the area near the sports field, a linear, rocky formation becomes more distinctly visible, with shrubby vegetation extending along a significant part of the route and strongly characterizing the landscape.

Just before the sports field, a recent attempt to widen the road resulted in the breaking of rock—an intervention that could and should have been avoided.

The road surface is mostly concrete and in very poor condition, full of cracks and fissures.

At about one-third of the route are the hilltop chapels of Saint James and Christ, dating from the 12th century, with an extensive surrounding open space. Failed attempts of restoration have partially altered their form and authenticity. These chapels should be properly restored in accordance with recommended conservation methods and under the supervision of the Department of Antiquities. From the outdoor area of the chapels, the geological formations are visible to the west, and the broader landscape to the south. This point is potentially one of the most interesting and could become one of the most significant features of the route.

Along the trail, one encounters wild vegetation—both shrubby and large trees (oaks, cypresses, eucalyptus)—as well as cultivated trees (olive, almond, carob and citrus trees).

The electricity poles of the national grid are perhaps the most disruptive human intervention. The entire network should be placed underground.

Roughly halfway along the route lies the “Mega Pigadi” (“Great Well”). This is a stone-built reservoir (lake) dating to the 1950s, constructed to collect running water and channel it into a network of irrigation canals (some of which still partially survive) for the watering of crops. Parts of the original stone paving/foundation are still preserved. The stone walls have been grouted with cement, and during a past “upgrade” of the road, a reinforced concrete retaining wall was constructed directly behind and above the northern stone wall of the reservoir. The area is surrounded by lush vegetation, and at this point, the linear rocky formation comes to an end.

Some of the irrigation channels are still in relatively good condition or remain functional.

As one ascends immediately after “Mega Pigadi”, a panoramic view of the geological formations is outlined against the open horizon.

Seventy meters from “Mega Pigadi”, there is a plateau reminiscent of an acropolis, offering panoramic views in all directions. From this point, as the geological formations are approached, they exhibit pronounced sculptural features, evoking organic forms.

The sense of landscape variation becomes more intense as one descends toward the ravine, at the foot of the “Korakis” formation.

Walking around and within the rock complex of “Korakis” offers the visitors an exceptional experience, as they face a truly primordial landscape. In some areas, the visitors walk between the rocks, while in others, the rock surface close to them is nearly vertical.

An element surprising along the route is a rock with a large, cavity carved into it, which appears as if sculpted by a master artist, who has shaped the natural rock, giving it this unique form.

As we move towards the end of the route, the landscape becomes more rocky and wild, with low vegetation. To the southwest, a valley with rich vegetation extends, while behind us, the village of Ineia can be seen perched on the plateau—also surrounded by lush vegetation. However, modern structures stand out starkly, failing to blend into the landscape due to their mass and form.

The end of the route is defined by the “Alykous” geological formation to the north, the open horizon to the south, and the panoramic view of Lara and Akamas to the west. Shrub vegetation sprouts from the rock’s formation. The sculptural, organic forms of the rocks, with impressive earthy colors—shades of brown, ochre, and grey—are striking.

The overlapping hills in the background lend the landscape a strong sense of atmospheric depth.

Overall, the route is characterized by the rich variations of the landscape and a strong sense of seasonality.

For the visitor, it is a pleasant surprise to still encounter, in this corner of Cyprus, elderly women on donkeys, cows grazing under trees, horses galloping in enclosures, flocks of goats, and even pigs roaming freely! A particularly strong impression is left by the bull at the end of the route,

resting beneath an olive tree among the rocks. According to local tradition, this is the place where the goddess of Cyprus, Aphrodite, gave birth—and from the labor pains, the rock of “Alykous” split into two. The connection with the myth of Aphrodite, as well as that of Europa and the bull, becomes inevitable.

Our first contact with the village of Ineia was in 1993, when we undertook the task of recording the village’s traditional buildings, a project assigned to us at the time by the Conservation Sector of the Department of Town Planning and Housing. Even back then, the primordial character of the village left a deep impression on us—the unique Cypriot landscape, with its narrow paths and dry-stone walls, where human constructions were fully integrated into and formed a natural extension of the surrounding environment.

Our contact with the architecture of Ineia during that time profoundly influenced the way we understand architecture to this day.

It is with great sadness that, nearly thirty years later, we observe a significant alteration of the village’s character. A telling example is the loss of the high dry-stone walls that once defined the roads at the village’s entrance, and more broadly, the heavy-handed interventions on traditional buildings that led to the loss of their authenticity.

Fortunately, the part of the village we have been entrusted to highlight remains almost untouched.

It is with awe and a deep sense of responsibility that we undertake this Project, fully aware that in landscape architecture, if you are not sure of what you are proposing, it is far better to do nothing at all.

This perception makes the challenge of defining the character of our proposal even more profound—a proposal that must aim to highlight, utilize, and promote, while at the same time protect, a cultural landscape that is truly unique in all of Cyprus.

B. OBJECTIVES AND ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY BASED ON THE TERMS OF THE CALL & ENRICHED BY THE ON-SITE LIVED EXPERIENCE

1. Upgrading the functional infrastructure of the route, both for vehicle access but primarily and simultaneously for the safe and comfortable use by the pedestrian visitor. Connection with services of EAC (Electricity Authority of Cyprus), Cyta (Cyprus Telecommunication Authority), and water supply in the part of the route within the residential zone.
2. Promotion of the cultural and environmental wealth of the area, while simultaneously providing facilities and opportunities to attract visitors, both local and foreign.
3. Protection and management of the landscape through documentation and evaluation of its constituent elements.
4. Creation of conditions that facilitate the development of economic activities in the wider area.

5. Adoption of simple and modest design that respects the landscape and harmonizes with the unique character and scale of place.
 6. Introducing a balanced relationship between artificial/man-made and natural elements, in proportion to the authentic traditional models. Special attention will be given to minimizing the extent of "hard" surfaces and the proper management and enhancement of greenery, aiming to highlight the authentic rural character of the area.
 7. Promotion of participation of the local community in the decision-making processes.
 8. Collection of other studies and surveys (planning, architectural, archaeological, traffic, environmental) that may have been conducted or are being conducted for the area.
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C. PROPOSAL

C1. BASIC DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1. The route should become an organic part of the landscape, not a dividing one. The scale of the path/road should have geometric characteristics that preserve the existing relationship of the route with the scale of the landscape. The 11-meter-wide road stipulated in the terms of reference should be revised and drastically reduced, as its implementation would be disastrous for the landscape (dry stone walls, rocks, vegetation, and trees on both sides of the current road would have to be cleared). A continuous 11-meter-wide road would cut through the landscape and essentially negate the very intention, destroying all natural elements and man-made formations along the road and dramatically altering the landscape.
 2. The integration and moderate use of new constructions. New structures should be part of the landscape and organically integrate into it.
 3. Simple and modest design, without elaborate or extravagant design solutions.
 4. Structures that require minimal maintenance, or even better, improve rather than degrade with time.
 5. Avoidance of hard surfaces beyond the limits of the road. In general, use of hard surfaces only where necessary and in combination with the natural rock.
 6. Use primarily of local flora for new plantings to enrich the greenery, where needed.
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C2. BUILDING PROGRAM

Taking into account all the above—i.e., the study objectives based on the terms of the call, the landscape analysis, the codification of basic design principles, consultations with the Project Coordinator from the Paphos District Administration, as well as meetings with members of the Ineia Community Council and the local residents—the following "building program" and specification of the project's design goals are formulated:

1. **Route Configuration:**

The configuration of the main route is divided into three zones:

- The central vehicle lane, which will have a fixed width of 3.10 meters, and
- Two lateral zones on either side, which will accommodate the variations in the width of the existing route. Where necessary and permitted by site conditions, vehicle waiting bays will be formed.

In this way, the route configuration does not negate the existing condition but becomes more user-friendly and less rigid. For the central vehicle lane, asphalt paving is proposed for a more stable and smooth surface, while for the two lateral zones, variable-width stone paving is proposed, extending up to the natural boundaries (rocks, trees, dry stone walls) of the route.

Widening plans for the route (two continuous vehicle lanes with pedestrian zones on both sides) are not recommended, as they would result in scheme's failure, being out of scale, fragmenting the landscape and destroying all natural elements and man-made formations along the route.

2. Beyond the main route, secondary paths/trails with special and distinctive interest have been identified and recorded in the design intent plans. Specifically:
 - Movement along the edges and through the complex of rocks of the Koraki geomorphological formation.
 - Movement along a part of the streambed (Arkatzin of Lakkos), focusing on the flora, with the construction of a small pedestrian bridge (Implemented).
 - Movement around "Kato Alykous" rock formation, that ends both at the east and west at a viewing platform between "Pano" and "Kato Alykou" (this structure was not allowed).
 - Maintenance and enhancement of the stream east of the "Mega Pigadi" (Great Well), along with partial maintenance and enhancement of the irrigation channel network (Implemented).
 - Restoration, enhancement, and reintegration into the circulation network of the stream 70m east of the chapels of Saint Jacob and Christ (Implemented).
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The **starting point** and **the end** of the of the route are marked with structures that have both practical/functional and symbolic significance. These structures themselves will create a "living experience" and will be integrated within the route (the path will pass through them).

3. **Starting Point:**

Demolition of the existing building owned by the Community Council and construction of a new one, utilizing the dominant position of the plot at the beginning of the route, thereby marking the start of the Project through the form and design of the building (Implemented).

This new structure is proposed to function as an Information and Visitors Center, related to the settlement and especially the route, with references to points of interest, history, myths and local

traditions. Information will be provided through maps, photographs, brief texts, and even interactive screens, with no need for permanent staff.

4. Points/locations where the view is exceptional and unique have been identified and recorded on maps and intention plans, including the viewing angle. These points are proposed to become rest and pause areas, with special “framing” constructions direct the viewer’s attention on points of interest (Implemented).
5. Integration of the “triangle” defined by the aforementioned stream, the main route, and a path to the east leading to the settlement. The rocky terrain relief, the excellent view from the highest point, and the traditional building in a semi-ruined state offer potential for utilization, even for uses related to rural life (production of agricultural products, outdoor exhibition space for farming tools and objects combined with the aforementioned traditional residence).
6. The traditional abandoned house located at 50 meters after the starting point of the route is proposed to be utilized through exemplary maintenance and restoration, to be used as an example of a traditional rural house of Ineia. This house gathers — as has been mentioned in the analysis — all the characteristic elements of the traditional Ineia house.
7. The hill (a small plateau like an “acropolis”) northwest of the Great Well is proposed to be acquired by the Employer, integrated into the route, and serve as a special point for stopping, resting, and enjoying the view from different vantage points. (Implemented).
8. The chapel of Archangel Michael at the starting point of the route has already been included in the scheme concerning the core of the settlement. Based on the plans provided to us, we will proceed to connect these two schemes at this point so that one project becoming an organic continuation of the other.
9. The chapels of Saint James and Christ are proposed to be restored in cooperation with the Department of Antiquities. The surrounding area of the chapels will be arranged to become one of the stopover spots and a forecourt space for the monument. It is also proposed to reclassify, based on cadastral plans, the road east of the chapels, in order to better utilize the plateau to the west for the benefit of users (Implemented).
10. “Mega Pigadi” (“Great Well”):
Maintenance/restoration of the reservoir (removal of cement-based mortar, restoration of the stone masonry), removal of the concrete retaining wall above the northern wall of the pool, maintenance and completion of the stone pavement, maintenance of the irrigation channels. The vehicle route at this point is proposed to be slightly shifted north of the water reservoir in order to give back to the monument its vital space that was lost due to the road elevation. Pedestrian movement will be routed at the lower point, next to the pool (Implemented).
11. Football Field:
Regarding the field, which is currently abandoned, a basic arrangement could be made with a small number of temporary stands, and perhaps a lightweight structure to house basic services for that use, such as changing rooms and sanitary facilities. Especially in the area of the field, a larger number of parking spaces could be accommodated (Partially implemented).
12. Parking spaces:
Parking areas are proposed to be located at various points in small numbers along the entire length of the route. Parking can be incorporated in the area of the field, in the

forecourt of the chapels, in a bay at the Great Well, and at the end of the route. These spaces will not be strictly defined but will be allocated within the framework of the outdoor space arrangement (Implemented).

13. End Point: The plot south of the rock formation of “Kato Alykou” at the end of the route, in a commanding position with a panoramic view of Lara Bay and Akamas, is considered to be acquired by the Employer within the framework of the Project, so that it will meaningfully serve as the endpoint of the route.

Any constructions proposed should be semi-underground (sunken), with focused openings – vistas oriented towards the view, including maps and brief texts with relevant information.

Perhaps here a small traditional café could be integrated, with a covered resting area, sanitary facilities, and parking space for a limited number of vehicles. (Implemented, without the café and sanitary facilities).

Materiality – Construction materials:

The oxidized barrels and other makeshift metal structures, shelters, and property fences served as the inspiration for using pre-oxidized sheet metal as the main construction material for the new structures, together with natural stone and wood. These three materials age beautifully, require minimal maintenance, and integrate easily into the landscape.

Aris Konstantinides, a Greek architect, once said: “The open sea and the sky on the horizon are beautiful. But they become even more beautiful with the presence of a sailing boat, which is designed to exist and live within the water, under the open sky...”

It would be ideal for the proposed constructions to have this special relationship with the earth, the sky, and the landscape.

EPILOGUE

In summary, any design interventions clearly aim at the preservation, enhancement, and promotion of the unique cultural and environmental wealth of the area.

The visiting tourist will choose Ineia only if it can offer images, experiences, and impressions that cannot be easily found elsewhere, and that the uniqueness of place and landscape can indeed provide.

The rock formations of “Koraki” and “Alykou”, as they integrate within the broader landscape, with the open horizon towards the sea and Akamas, impress the visitor and remain engraved in his memory as a unique and unprecedented experience.

The prerequisites exist. What is needed beyond design is a long-term perspective and vision for the preservation and proper management, both now and in the future, of this unique natural and environmental wealth.

Perhaps the resident of Ineia, due to familiarity with the place, cannot fully appreciate the true value of this environmental treasure. However, even when seen in purely economic terms, the wealth of Ineia lies in its environment, history and traditions.

The above represented the main intentions and goals during the design process. Most of the proposed intervention points were accepted. Some were not, either due to insufficient budget, difficulties in acquiring the proposed land parcels, or objections to interventions from the

involved authorities and services (Department of Environment, Game Service, Department of Antiquities, Geological Survey Department, Central Traffic Study Agency, etc.). Nevertheless, we consider that the Project is not lacking compared to the initial intentions, because the primary aim was the protection and enhancement of the landscape and natural wealth of the area, and much less about new architectural interventions. The goal was for the visitor to have the ability to move not only along the route/path itself but also of it, around the rocks and geomorphologies, discovering elements that a strictly defined path cannot offer. The landscape and surrounding area are part of the Project. Essentially, these were the main requirements from the beginning and remained so until the end.

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