

ONAR VILLAGE - THE KYRENIA WALKS

MONDAY **GEÇITKOY RESERVOIR** *(5.6 miles/8.9km)*

After picking you up from your hotel we head for Geçitkoy and the reservoir, set behind a small dam in a pleasant valley some 7 miles west of Riverside.

Geçitkoy is the first village at the western end of the main mountain block and the coastal roads passes through the range at this point, heading inland. The mountain (the highest point of the whole range at 1024m) behind the reservoir provides a stunning backdrop for the whole day's walk.



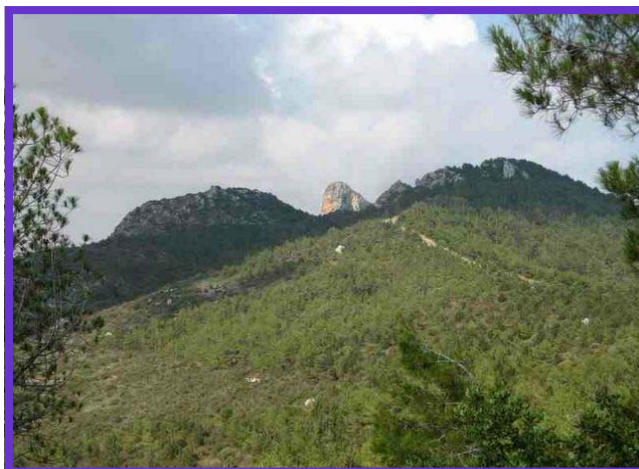
The dam was constructed in the 70s and though seriously depleted in recent years has mainly provided irrigation water for the immediate area, which accounts for the surprisingly green patches in the valley, including the famous St Hilarion Vineyard (a highly recommended red wine).

Ground grown melons, tomatoes, peppers, courgettes etc. are all produced in the valley.

We start by passing over the dam and the spillway and head south on the eastern side of the reservoir. The hillside alongside us is covered with the usual tough, dense Mediterranean shrubs providing habitat for many birds. The reservoir is usually full of waterfowl and in the migratory season we see lots of birds passing through. The trees standing in the water are often full with hundreds of cormorants.

We climb gently on the trail through the more wooded lower slopes, passing several fire breaks with a view over the other side of this attractive valley. As we head south under the cliffs there are some steep ravines carved by water over centuries with pockets of mature trees giving shade as birds fly to and fro under the canopy. Every now and then we come across boulders and rock outcrops with a very pronounced green hue which are an ore of copper, confirming the link between copper and Cyprus.

As we walk further we move inland and even in such a short distance we note the lessening vegetation as a result of the majority of the incoming rains being caught by the mountain range to our left.



Ahead we can see the little village of Kozankoy tucked under the glowering mass of the mountain range and as we head down into the valley floor and at the cross roads we carry on over to the track up to Hisarkoy. This little area remains wet for quite a long way into the summer month and small frogs etc. tenuously hold on to a life that must have a far from great future! There is limited agriculture here; the small flat areas have been ploughed for wheat crops but the lack of water and the arid conditions do not hold out much promise of an even half reasonable crop.

Our climb part way up to Hisarkoy passes pleasant low vegetation and it is in this area that I have seen foxes. Rather funny small creatures with disproportionately large ears, foxes are rare - probably a function of lack of quarry than the effects of predation, of which there is effectively none. There are a few strands of ancient olive trees, some are maintained and obviously harvested but in the main the olive harvesting is a thing of the past, certainly as a commercial enterprise. Families however still turn up in November to harvest olives, mainly I assume for their own consumption.

We head back down to the valley, this time following the river bed. The undergrowth here, especially the clumps of bamboo, is more established as it has the benefit of more water and again provides an excellent habitat for the numerous little birds. The cliffs to our left are interesting as there are outcrops of natural Gypsum, and a little digging will reveal sand roses which are crystals of pure gypsum. There are also odd occurrences of natural sulphur, a find associated with volcanic areas. We pass through some stands of larger pine trees and other conifers full of Jays and other woodland birds. We regain sight of the reservoir which has only been properly full once in the last nine years. This dam is shortly to be increased in capacity by increasing the height of the dam itself as there is an on going project to pipe water from Turkey to help alleviate the dire water shortages in the island. We finish our walk by wandering into the little hamlet of Geçitkoy for final refreshments before returning you to your hotel.

