

FOOTPATHS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

FROM DIONYSIOU TO SIMONOPETRA VIA GRIGORIOU



Distance: 5.9 km

Journey Time: 3½ hours

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Warning: The path from Grigoriou to Dionysiou is challenging. Pilgrims need to be careful, especially if not physically fit.

This magnificent route connects the three monasteries of the rocks. It has special importance as it completes the SW route from *Megisti Lavra* which goes up to the ‘desert’ (*erimos* in Greek), and thence on to *Mount Athos Summit*, *Ag. Anna* and *Ag. Pavlou*, ending up at *Simonopetra*. This route is one of the most beautiful on all Athos, offering spectacular views down the western coast of the Athonite peninsula, Mount Athos summit and nearby *Sithonia*.

The first half, from *Dionysiou* to *Grigoriou*, is almost entirely on footpath. The views from the path are stunning, but the walk is much more difficult than the short distance between the monasteries might suggest. Pilgrims should be very careful. The second half, from *Grigoriou* to *Simonopetra*, starts with a stretch on an unattractive track, but then a nice path continues into the olive groves of the Monastery and parallel to the shore. Finally, ascending broad traditional *kalderimi* (stone paved path) leads from sea level to *Simonopetra* at over 200m.

Note: All distances given (in metres) should be taken as approximate. The numbers shown in the form **1** are Waypoints to be found in associated **GPS tracking**. The route described is liable to unpredictable change: for example, forestry work, road or track construction and plant growth may alter the route, or its appearance. Signposts may disappear or new ones appear. The Friends of Mount Athos strives to keep this description correct and up to date but cannot take responsibility for its accuracy.

Abbreviations: L = Left; R = Right; KSO = Keep straight on;
FP = Footpath; K = *Kalderimi* (stone-paved FP or track)

Transliterations: ΔΙΟΝΥΣΙΟΥ = *Dionysiou*; ΓΡΗΓΟΡΙΟΥ = *Grigoriou* ;
ΣΙΜΩΝΟΣ ΠΕΤΡΑΣ = *Simonos Petras*; ΑΡΣΑΝΑΣ = *Arsanas*

Description of Route:

Walk (m) And then . . .

- 80 **23** Turn L out of **Dionysiou Monastery** main gate on descending paved (*K*) track, under archway.
- 210 **22** At fork 20m after former fountain, turn hard L onto fine *K* descending towards the *Arsanas* of the Monastery.
- 200 **21** The *K* ends at concrete road beside outlying buildings (worker's houses). Turn L towards sea and, after 30m, turn R at junction onto concrete track (signed *Grigoriou* and *Simonopetra*) which continues parallel to the shore, past jetty and modern harbour.
- 410 **20** At fork, bear R up concrete and cross small bridge to take ascending FP (signed *Grigoriou* and *Simonopetra*).
- 500 **19** Arrive at place where many rocks have fallen onto the FP. Take care. KSO uphill on FP, passing outcrop with wooden cross on L.
- 420 **17** Pass close to distinctive vertical rock (on L). FP starts to descend and then ascends again.
- 180 **16** Arrive at local summit with excellent views of **Simonopetra Monastery** and back to **Mount Athos Summit**. FP starts to descend again.
- 15** Cross streambed (which runs down from Athos' largest waterfall, *Gravanistis* – look upwards). KSO (signed).
Note: Depending on the weather, the streambed may be dry or a raging torrent, when use the concrete bridge.
- 20 **14** Pass through metal gate (not forgetting to close the gate properly behind you).
- 370 **13** Cross another stream. KSO.
- 220 **12** Go through gate and KSO/L, descending (signed).
- 70 **11** Close to small building (water tank) on R side of the FP, turn hard R onto descending FP (signed in opposite direction).
- 50 **10** Another FP joins from L. KSO on FP (partly *K*) which continues to descend (steeply in places), reaches Monastery walls and continues parallel to them.

370

9 After descending concrete staircase, turn L through a vineyard tunnel and arrive at **Grigoriou Monastery** entrance.

(Approx time to this point: 2 hours 15 mins.)

To proceed from **Grigoriou Monastery** to **Simonopetra Monastery**:

- 9** Leaving **Grigoriou** main gate, KSO through a vineyard tunnel, pass on L a beautiful pine tree on a small platform with benches, offering a superb view of **Grigoriou** bay and continue towards *Arsanas*, passing shrine with fountain dedicated to Saint Nicolas. At sea level, KSO/L to cross small bridge and continue parallel to shore.
- 200 **8** Cross second small bridge and turn R, uphill, on unattractive broad track.
- 800 **7** Turn L off track onto descending footpath (signed) which zigzags into olive grove (watch for orange tapes and sign).
- 200 **6** Olive grove ends at bend in FP. Continue on FP (signed).
- 140 **5** Ignore gated FP to *Kelli* from back L. KSO/R on FP which continues parallel to the shore.
- 300 **4** Pass working fountain on L and gate of *Kelli* on R. KSO to cross stream-bed.
- 80 **3** After crossing stream-bed take FP (signed) which ascends very steeply in places. Pass beach on L.
- 340 **2** Arrive at fork of paths at shrine and fountain. KSO/R (signed) on ascending broad *K*.
- Note:** Turning L on the *K* here leads to **Simonopetra Monastery Arsanas** (signed) in 500m.
- The ascending *K* zigzags past the gardens of the Monastery with spectacular views of the shore and of the famous façade of the Monastery. A long vineyard tunnel leads to a small square surrounded by beautifully crafted buildings. Ascend a stone staircase on L, pass the *Archondariki* (on R) and continue through the high wall of the former aqueduct to reach . . .
- 750 **1** **Simonopetra Monastery** main gate.

This description has been produced by ***The Friends of Mount Athos***, a charitable organisation which, among other activities, works with monasteries to keep this, and certain other footpaths on the Holy Mountain, open. Copies of this and similar descriptions are available, free, from the Friends website, www.athosfriends.org and in a number of places on or associated with the Holy Mountain.