

FOOTPATHS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

FROM KARYES TO ESPHIGMENOU



Distance: 19 km

Journey Time: 7 – 8 hours

© The Friends of Mount Athos, 2007 – 2017. All rights reserved. – Version 1.5

WARNING: *Much of this route is very isolated and without sources of water. In a few places (indicated below) the route after Chera may be difficult to follow.*

For most of the way, this route follows the historic ridge path, the *Way of the Bey*, from which there are fine views down either to the East or to the West, or occasionally to both at once. Since the initial section of the historic route from *Karyes* to the ridge is now the main vehicular road to *Vatopedi*, the route here described follows the *Karyes-to-Vatopedi* footpath before climbing briefly to the point where the *Vatopedi* vehicular road and the ridge path diverge. From there, apart from a few sections along track and minor road, the route is entirely along the historic *Way of the Bey* which remains *kalderimi* in places, before descending to *Espigmenou*. Less obvious parts of the route have been marked with orange tape and/or red-and-white waymark arrows.

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: ΧΕΡΑ = Chera; ΔΟΧΕΙΑΡΙΟΥ = Dochiariou;
ΚΩΝΣΤΑΜΟΝΙΤΟΥ = Konstamonitou;
ΒΑΤΟΠΑΙΔΙΟΥ = Vatopedi; ΚΑΡΥΕΣ = Karyes;
ΕΣΦΙΓΜΕΝΟΥ = Espigmenou; ΧΙΛΑΝΔΑΡΙΟΥ =
Hilandar; ΖΩΓΡΑΦΟΥ = Zographou

Description of Route:

Walk (m) And then . . .

1 From the *Karyes* square where the buses arrive, face down main street towards *Protaton*. At the end of the square, before the street begins, immediately before fountain (on R side of street), turn R, uphill on K, signed WC.

20

2 Pass WC on L. KSO uphill.

- 90 **3** Ignore FP (*Kalderimi*) up L. KSO on *K*.
- 300 **4** Cross *Daphni-Karyes* road. KSO on track, signed *Vatopedi* & other monasteries, with ***Skete of St Andrew*** on R.
- 400 **5** Ignore gated track R to Kellion. KSO on concrete, now uphill.
- 280 **6** Ignore broad concrete track R (signed to *Kellion Pateritsa*). KSO/L, uphill.
- 180 **7** At junction with large painted metal cross (ahead, L), turn hard L uphill.
- 30 **8** At junction, turn R onto FP (*K*) uphill, signed *Vatopedi* (remains of fountain in wall to L of FP).
- 100 **9** FP joins track coming from back L. KSO/R on track.
- 100 **10** Ignore track up to L (signed *I K Marouda*). KSO on track (now *K* in places).
- 250 **11** At junction, fork L, signed to *Vatopedi* and various kellia.
- 400 **12** At fork in tracks, turn R, downhill.
Note: L, uphill leads to the main road to *Vatopedi*.
- 200 **13** At fork, where main track bends R, downhill, and lesser track bears L, uphill, take narrow FP ahead, between the tracks, signed *Vatopedi*, initially towards white building.
Note: Early sections of this path may become seasonally overgrown, but it becomes *K*.
- 900 **14** FP crosses road. Turn L along road, uphill (FP straight on leads eventually to ***Vatopedi***).
- 900 **15** Arrive at cross-roads with main *Karyes – Vatopedi* road, with large wooden cross (***Stavros Makrygenous***). Turn R along road.
- 80 **16** Fork L onto track which climbs to L.
- 25 **17** Turn L off track up low bank to pick up FP signed *Hilandar*, *Esphigmenou* and *Konstamonitou* (watch for orange tape and waymarks). FP soon curves L following contour of the hill and may become seasonally overgrown.
- 400 **18** Reach and pass to L of stone pillar. Ignore track up to R before pillar. FP enters wood and begins to descend.

- 300 **19** Pass fountain (dry) on R and cross stream. Bear L on level to pass below and to L of large chestnut tree.
- 200 **20** After a gentle climb FP Emerges from trees. KSO across level scrubby area.
- 60 **21** At outcrop with view of sea ahead, bear R to follow FP back into woods and begin gradual descent.
- 400 **22** Towards bottom of slope, FP becomes less distinct. KSO, downhill, following waymarks and orange tape, past distinctive 8-trunked tree to emerge from woods. Bear R to cross open area along narrow FP, which is likely to be seasonally very overgrown. FP becomes indistinct track which descends towards building.
- 250 **23** With building immediately ahead, turn R onto larger track on level.
- 40 **24** Another track joins from back L. KSO.
Note: This track leads to a fountain with running water to the R of the building.
- 250 **25** Track joins road from back R.
Note: In March 2017 the remains of an abandoned truck were at this point.
KSO/L, downhill, along road (signed on to *Konstamonitou* and *Zographou*), ignoring possible paths or tracks to L. Road levels out along crest of ridge.
- 1200 **26** At junction, ignore forest track to R. This is the route to **Vatopedi** (signed) from **Konstamonitou**. KSO along road with telecommunications mast visible on hill ahead.
- 90 **27** Just after passing large stone plinth with cross inlay on L, KSO/R along ridge path (signed *Konstamonitou*, *Esphigmenou* and *Hilandar*), soon uphill.
Note: Continuing on the road, bearing L, downhill is the route to **Dochiariou** (signed).
- 200 **28** At T junction of paths, turn R (signed *Esphigmenou*, *Hilandar* and *Zographou*). (FP to L (signed) leads to **Konstamonitou** and **Dochiariou**.) After initial climb, FP soon levels out, with views of **Bay of Vatopedi** to the R.
- 700 **29** FP crosses to west side of ridge. KSO, initially downhill, ignoring traces of path along the crest of the ridge.

- 1200 **30** Just after FP crosses back to east side of ridge, ignore FP joining from L signed *Konstamonitou*. KSO on level, signed *Chera*, *Vatopedi* and *Zographou*. Path soon returns to west of ridge, with good stretches of K.
- 1400 **31** Pass large covered well (disused) on R.
- 120 **32** FP joins another FP coming from back R. This is the route from *Vatopedi* (signed) to *Zographou*.
- 40 **33** Arrive at **Chera** ('The Hand') – a brownstone monument marking the crossing of the ridge with directions carved on it. Ignore FP on to *Zographou* to L. KSO/R following signs to *Hilandar* and *Esphigmenou*.

The FP continues roughly along the ridge for a long distance, through varying terrain, mainly wooded, sometimes open. There are a few very good views in both directions, especially of the coast and **Vatopedi monastery**, and back towards **Mount Athos**

- 3300 **34** FP ends at open plateau. Turn L and then after 20m turn R onto track, signed *Esphigmenou* and *Hilandar*, which starts to descend (may be overgrown).

Caution: Easy to miss.

- 400 **35** Pass old stone water cistern below on L. KSO on broad track (marked with orange tape). There are a few good views of **Mount Athos** and back L towards *Zographou*.
- 1350 **36** Just before broad track bends R and arrives at cultivated area, turn L off track onto FP (K), signed back to *Vatopedi*.

Caution : Easy to miss.

- 70 **37** FP bends R.
- 20 **38** FP crosses stream to end at track (marked with orange tape). Climb bank up to track and turn L along track (signed opposite direction).
- 100 **39** Turn R off track onto FP which begins to climb (signed *Hilandar* and *Esphigmenou*).

Note: Continuing along the track leads to **Zographou** (signed) after 4.5km by stream bed FP or 7.5km by track. Both routes are very isolated and without sources of water.

- 400 **40** At top of hill KSO past large stone monument with marble cross (*Marmarenios Stavros* in Greek) on R and descend hill. (Good views behind monument. 20m to the L, behind woods, there is a stone frontier marker obelisk.)
- 350 **41** Arrive at the point where the paths to *Hilandar* and *Esphigmenou* divide.
KSO for *Esphigmenou* (signed). (The FP to *Hilandar* is to the L.)
- 700 **43** Stone wall on L of FP. KSO. The path (partly *K*) descends through trees.
- 1000 **44** FP emerges on track – Monastery is now in view. Turn R along track over bridge.
- 110 **46** Arrive at the main entrance of *Esphigmenou Monastery*

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.