

FOOTPATHS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN



FROM HILANDAR TO VATOPEDI VIA ESPHIGMENOU

Distance: 12.8 km Journey Time: 3¾ – 4¼ hours

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The short pleasant journey to *Esphigmenou* is through olive groves, vineyards and fields with cypress trees, entirely at low altitude (no more than 70m). Although it consists only of tracks and roads, the peaceful scenery and the views towards the sea and *Milutin Tower* compensate for this. A detour leads to *Milutin Tower, Hilandar Arsanas* and the *Cell of Agios Vasilios* on the shore.

The journey on to *Vatopedi*, with fine views and scenery, divides into three roughly equal sections. For the first section, the traditional path has been superseded by a forest road which climbs steadily up a valley and along a ridge. The remainder of the route is almost entirely along historic *kalderimi* or stone paved paths. The second section leaves the road near the top, crosses into the next valley and descends to the sea. The final part of the route follows the coast to the *Monastery of Vatopedi*.

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: ΕΣΦΙΓΜΕΝΟΥ = *Esphigmenou*; ΒΑΤΟΠΑΙΔΙΟΥ = *Vatopedi*;
ΧΙΛΑΝΔΑΡΙΟΥ = *Hilandar*

Description of Route:

Walk (m) And then . . .

38 Turn L out of *Hilandar Monastery* main entrance and walk downhill on the main paved road, passing the graveyard and ossuary chapel on the L and ignoring road entering from R.

- 130 **37** At junction, fork L on road (soon broad *K*). Pass shrine with wooden cross on R and continue through olive grove. Pass big shrine on R. *K* bends slightly R. Ignore track coming from back R. KSO now on track.
- 300 **36** Broad *K* ends at road. Turn L along road, downhill passing shrine with trough and fountain.
- 180 **35** Ignore track from L with ford and a small bridge beside it. KSO to pass field with tall cypress trees on R and monument with cross.
- 720 **34** At junction, fork R uphill on track (signed *Esphigmenou*).
Note: Taking the road straight on/L here leads to ***Milutin Tower*** (after 520 m), to the *Arsanas* and beach of ***Hilandar*** (after 1050 m) and to the ***Cell of Agios Vasilios*** on the shore (after 1400m).
- 380 **33** Ignore track back R and track half R uphill (which is an alternative route to *Esphigmenou*).
 KSO/L through fields and vineyards. Ignore track to L **32A** leading to ***Cell of Ag. Tryphon*** (signed). View of ***Esphigmenou Monastery*** soon appears. At end of vineyard, ignore track from L.
- 520 **32** Ignore track to R (with a small building and antenna). KSO.
- 300 **31** Pass through gate.
- 80 **30** Turn L on track to *arsanas*. Cross bridge.
- 60 **29** Turn R under pergola.
- 150 **28** Arrive at the main entrance of ***Esphigmenou Monastery***.

To continue to Vatopedi Monastery

- 28** Turn L out of ***Esphigmenou Monastery*** gate (KSO if coming from ***Hilandar***) and L again round monastery wall.
- 100 **27** Take main track R opposite monastery wall and follow side of cultivated valley.
- 300 **26** At buildings (on R), take **first** track to L, uphill (signed).
- 600 **25** At junction KSO uphill, ignoring tracks to L and R (signed).
- 150 **24** KSO uphill (signed *Vatopedi*) on track through gate, ignoring track to L.

- 200 **23** Bear L on track (signed). Ignore track straight on/R. 550m later, track passes through olive grove (new plantation).
- 700 **21** Bear R on main track at fork (signed *Vatopedi* and again 30m after fork) and continue along ridge with sea below on L.
- 550 **20** At crossroads go R (signed).
- 450 **19** Cross fence across track which becomes continues along R side of ridge. Track becomes increasingly washed away and overgrown, reducing to rough path.
- 300 **18** L Opposite large sign to *Vatopedi* (on R of track), turn diagonally off track up bank on small rocky FP which soon becomes more distinct and later *K*.
- (Approx time to this point: 1 hr 15 mins.)*
- 400 **17** FP emerges at track (which is part of a major project of a broad network of firebreaks / tracks construction) with ***Esphigmenou – Vatopedi*** boundary stone on R. Cross track and KSO on FP, downhill.
- 700 **16** With clearing on R, KSO/L on FP (signed) and continue to descend.
- 1000 **15** Cross forest track and KSO on FP ahead, downhill.
- 700 **14** Cross forest road and KSO on FP (signed), now almost level.
- 500 **13** FP ends at track. Turn L onto track (signed *Vatopedi*) towards sea, with river-bed on L.
- 250 **12** Track reaches sea and bears R (signed), now parallel with sea.
- 400 **11** Where track bears R, inland, KSO/L across beach, heading for signpost below further headland.
- 80 **10** At foot of headland, pick up FP (*K*) climbing diagonally R (signed *Vatopedi*).
- 200 **9** After zigzag bends uphill, FP levels out and continues with sea below on L.

Note: This section of FP may be overgrown.

- 500 **8** Pass stone fountain (dry) set 30m back in clearing on R.
Note: In spring 2018 the area round the fountain had become overgrown and the fountain was no longer visible.
- 800 **7** Pass second stone fountain (dry) on R. FP turns L in front of it.
- 650 **6** FP has wall on R, with track and olive grove on further side. Cross rough track and KSO on FP. Chapel appears above on L.
- 150 **5** K ends at shore soon after passing the chapel. Continue along shore with wall on R.
- 350 **4** Join track coming from R and KSO (signed *Vatopedi*) on track with sea still on L. Cross stream by footbridge if necessary.
- 250 **2** Turn R (signed *Vatopedi*) up steep broad paved path between buildings. (Straight on leads to ***Vatopedi Arsanas.***)
- 150 **1** Arrive at ***Vatopedi Monastery*** entrance.

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.