

FOOTPATHS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN



FROM HILANDAR TO VATOPEDI VIA CHERA

Distance: 15 km

Journey Time: 6 – 7 hours

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WARNING: *This route is very isolated and without sources of water.*

This route, far from any sign of human habitation, is an attractive alternative to the usual one via *Esphigmenou* and the coast. As far as *Chera* ('The Hand') it 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. It then joins the route from *Zographou* which descends to *Vatopedi* through woods. This path is steep and stony in places, especially where the *kalderimi* has been washed away.

Note: All distances given (in metres) should be taken as approximate. 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)

Description of Route:

Walk And then . . .

- 0 Turn L out of ***Hilandar Monastery*** main entrance and walk downhill on the main road, passing the graveyard and ossuary on the L and ignoring road entering from R.
- 130 At junction, fork R on road.
- 10 Take FP on R (signed ***Zographou***). FP climbs, steeply at times.
- 300 FP meets road. Turn L along road.
- 30 Take FP on R, climbing steep and difficult bank off the road onto the FP.
- Caution: Easy to miss – marked with orange tape.***
- 1100 Cross stream. FP begins to climb again.
- 400 Cross another stream.

- 40 Pass stone obelisk, on R of FP. (This has inscriptions on each side and is a frontier marker between *Hilandar* and *Esphigmenou* territory.)
- 350 FP straight ahead is blocked. Turn L through gap over bank and immediately turn R onto FP coming from ***Esphigmenou***.
- 350 At top of hill, KSO past large stone monument with marble cross (*Marmarenios Stavros* in Greek) on L and descend hill (good views behind monument).
- 400 FP emerges at road. Turn L along road.
Note: Turning R here leads (after 7.5km) to ***Zographou*** (signed). This route is very isolated and without sources of water.
- 100 Turn R off the road, down bank and over stream-bed to find FP after 20m (marked with orange tape). Turn L onto FP and go uphill on *K*, emerging into the open from woodland.
- 70 At T junction turn R, keeping uphill on *K* that becomes a forest track. (Views to R towards ***Zographou***.)
- 750 On arriving at a small open plateau bear L downhill, still on track. (Good views of ***Mount Athos***).
- 600 Pass to R of old stone water cistern. KSO on track.
- 400 Arrive on the ridge at the top of hill. Stay on track which turns L. Then turn R off track onto FP after 20m.
The FP then roughly follows 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 towards ***Mount Athos***.
- 3200 Arrive at ***Chera*** ('The Hand') – a brownstone monument with directions marking the crossing of the ridge. FP from ***Zographou*** to ***Vatopedi*** joins from R. KSO/L following sign to *Karyes*.

(Estimated time to this point: 4 – 5 hours)
- 40 Fork L, signed *Vatopedi*. (R is ridge path towards ***Karyes***). FP soon begins to descend, gently at first, but later steeply, with remains of *K*, very rough in places.
- 2000 Cross forest road. KSO on path.
- 200 Cross forest road. KSO on path.

- 100 Ignore FP to R and KSO down.
- 700 Reach open area with olive grove – **Vatopedi** visible ahead. Continue on FP downhill through olive grove keeping man-made reservoir on R.
- 500 Come to T-junction of tracks and KSO/L on track towards sea on level.
- 230 Track reaches the sea and turns R along shore.
- 220 Turn R up steep paved road. (Straight on leads to **Vatopedi Arsanas**.)
- 150 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.