



## FOOTPATHS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

### FROM KARYES TO ESPHIGMENOU

Distance: 20 km

Journey Time: 7 – 8 hours

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

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 short 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 *Esphigmenou*. 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 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 (m)    And then . . .

- 0 From the **Karyes** square where the buses arrive, face down main street towards **Protaton** and turn R, uphill on K, immediately before fountain (on R).
- 20 Pass WC on L. KSO uphill.
- 90 Ignore FP (*Kalderimi*) up L. KSO on K.
- 300 Cross *Daphni-Karyes* road. KSO on track, signed *Vatopedi* & other monasteries, with **Skete of St Andrew** on R.
- 400 Ignore gated track R to Kellion. KSO on concrete, now uphill.

- 300 Ignore track R (signed to *Kellion Pateritsa*).
- 150 At junction with large painted metal cross (ahead, L), turn hard L uphill.
- 30 At junction, turn R onto FP (*K*) uphill (remains of fountain in wall to L of FP).
- 100 FP joins track from back L. KSO/R on track.
- 100 Ignore track up to L (signed *I K Marouda*). KSO on track (now *K* in places).
- 250 At junction, fork L, signed to *Vatopedi* and various kellia.
- 400 At fork in tracks, turn R, downhill, signed *Vatopedi apo monopati* (*Vatopedi by footpath*).  
**Caution: not L, uphill, which leads to main road to Vatopedi.**
- 200 Where main track begins to descend steeply to R, ignore track slightly to L ahead. KSO on level onto narrow FP ahead signed *Vatopedi*, just to R of this track, initially towards white building.  
**Note:** Early sections of this path may become seasonally overgrown, but it becomes *K*.
- 900 FP crosses road. Turn L along road, uphill (FP straight on leads eventually to ***Vatopedi***).
- 900 Arrive at cross-roads with main *Karyes – Vatopedi* road, with large wooden cross (***Stavros Makrygenous***). Turn R along road.
- 100 Fork L onto track which climbs to L.
- 25 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 Reach and pass to L of stone pillar. Ignore track up to R before pillar. FP enters wood and begins to descend.
- 300 Pass fountain on R and cross stream. Bear L on level to pass below and to L of large chestnut tree. Path then climbs gently.
- 300 Emerge from trees and KSO across level scrubby area.
- 100 At outcrop with view of sea ahead, bear R to follow FP back into woods and begin gradual descent.
- 400 Towards bottom of slope, FP becomes less distinct. KSO, downhill, following waymarks and orange tape, past distinctive 8-trunk tree to emerge from woods. Bear R to cross open area along narrow FP, which is likely to be

seasonally overgrown. FP becomes indistinct track which descends towards building.

- 100 With building immediately ahead, turn R onto larger track on level.
- 40 Another track joins from back L. KSO.
- 250 Track joins road from back R. 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 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 Just after passing large stone plinth with cross inlay on L, road bears L, downhill. KSO/R along ridge path, soon uphill.
- 200 At T junction of paths, turn R (signed *Zographou*). (FP to L (signed) leads to **Konstamonitou** and **Dochiariou**.) After climbing initially, FP soon levels out, with views of **Bay of Vatopedi** to the R.
- 700 FP crosses to west side of ridge. KSO, initially downhill, ignoring traces of path along the crest of the ridge.
- 1050 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 Pass large covered well (disused) on R.
- 120 FP joins another FP coming from back R. This is the route from **Vatopedi** (signed) to **Zographou**.
- 40 Arrive at **Chera** ('The Hand') – a brownstone monument with directions marking the crossing of the ridge. 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**
- 3200 FP ends at forest track. Turn L onto track which turns R in 20m and starts to descend.
- 400 Pass to L of old stone water cistern. KSO on track.
- 600 At a small open plateau (Good views of **Mount Athos**),

- turn R, downhill, still on track that becomes *K*.
- 750 At junction with *K* to L, turn L, downhill (views back L towards **Zographou**).
- 70 FP bends R.
- 20 FP crosses stream to end at road (marked with orange tape). Climb bank up to road and turn L along road.
- 100 Turn R off road onto FP which begins to climb (marked with orange tape).  
**Note:** Continuing along the road leads to **Zographou** (signed) in 7.5km. This route is very isolated and without sources of water.
- 400 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).
- 350 Arrive at the point where the paths to **Hilandar** and **Esphigmenou** divide.  
 KSO for **Esphigmenou**. (The FP to **Hilandar** is to the L.)
- 850 Stone wall on L of FP. KSO. The path (partly *K*) descends through trees.
- 1000 FP emerges on track – Monastery is now in view. Turn R along track over bridge.
- 110 Arrive at the main entrance of **Esphigmenou Monastery**

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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](http://www.athosfriends.org) and in a number of places on or associated with the Holy Mountain.