

FOOTPATHS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN



FROM VATOPEDI TO HILANDAR 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 the coast and *Esphigmenou*. Initially it follows the route to *Zographou*, climbing steep and rocky paths, first through the olive groves above *Vatopedi* and then the wooded hillside, to the crest of the ridge at *Chera* ('The Hand'). At *Chera*, it joins 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, and follows it until it descends to *Hilandar*.

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 On leaving the gate of ***Vatopedi Monastery*** turn R to pass kiosk on L, and KSO down paved road which descends steeply to the shore.
Note: Turning R after the kiosk leads down to the *arsanas*. If this route is preferred, leave the *arsanas* with the sea on the R to join the route below in 120 m.
- 150 On reaching the shore, turn L along track beside sea.
- 200 Track crosses stream.
- 30 Follow the track when it turns L, inland.
- 230 Turn R where track bears L with lesser track on R, KSO on small FP steeply uphill through olive grove (signed on trees). Views appear back L to man-made reservoir and

Vatopedi.

- 500 At top of olive grove, FP continues more distinctly, through trees.
- 800 Cross forest road and KSO. Track initially continues parallel to FP on L.
- 200 Cross forest road and KSO, uphill. FP is steep and rocky, with remains of *K*.
- 2000 FP flattens out and enters woodland to join ridge FP (signed *Karyes*) coming from back L.
- 40 Arrive at ***Chera*** ('The Hand') – a brownstone monument with directions (*Altitude 350m*) marking the crossing of the ridge.

(Approximate time to this point: 1½ hours.)

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) after 7.5km. This route is very isolated and without sources of water.

- 400 At top of hill KSO pass 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.

For FP to **Hilandar**, turn L through gap and over bank (signed *Hilandar* and marked by orange tape), and then immediately turn R. (FP straight on leads to **Esphigmenou**.)

- 350 Pass stone obelisk on L of FP. (This has inscriptions on each side and is a frontier marker between **Hilandar** and **Esphigmenou** territory).
- 40 Cross stream.
- 400 Cross another stream.
- 1100 FP ends at road. Descend steep and difficult bank and turn L along road.
- 30 Turn R off road onto FP (marked with orange tape and red-and-white waymark).
- 300 FP descends, sometimes steeply, to road. (Monastery is now in view.) Turn L along road. Ignore roads to R and L. Pass graveyard and ossuary on R.
- 140 Arrive at the main entrance to **Hilandar 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.