



FOOTPATHS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

FROM VATOPEDI TO ESPHIGMENOU

Distance – 10 km. Journey Time 3 – 3½ hours

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This attractive journey, with fine views and scenery, divides into three roughly equal sections. The first section is along the coast; for the second, the route turns inland and climbs up a wooded valley to the pass. Both these sections are mainly along historic *kalderimi* or stone paved paths. For the final section, the path has been superseded by a forest road which descends steadily, partly along a ridge, to the *Monastery of Esphigmenou* and the sea.

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 takes no 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 120m.

- 150 On reaching the shore, turn L along track beside sea.
- 250 At point where track turns L inland, KSO along shore with wall on L.
- 350 Where shingle ends, bear L away from sea, below and to the L of a small chapel. FP becomes K, with wall on L.
- 100 Cross track coming from back right (olive grove on L and cypresses beyond). Continue up K, ignoring paths on R.
- 650 Pass fountain (dry) on L. FP turns 90° R.

Note (1): Some 700m later, there is a second fountain set back from path on L, but this is now obscured by bushes.

Note (2): As of May 2012 it was necessary to climb over a

- large pile of earth deposited across this stretch of the FP.
- 1100 K bears R towards sharp bend starting descent to shore.
- 200 K ends at beach (signed *Esphigmenou*). FP continues across river-bed and beach.
- 100 Reach track descending from L. KSO/R along track which winds along cliff.
- 400 Track reaches wide valley and bears L, inland, with river-bed on R.
- (Approx time to this point: 1 hr 10 mins.)*
- 250 Fork right onto FP.
Caution: May be difficult to spot.
- 300 Cross first of several rivers.
- 500 At sharp L turn, begin to climb more steeply.
- 350 Cross forest road and KSO, with large rock on left.
- 900 Reach clearing with bend in forest road on L; **Mt Athos** peak may be visible behind; path continues R (signed).
- 700 Pass stone pillar on L (the boundary between **Vatopedi** and **Esphigmenou** land). KSO.
- 400 FP ends at broad track. Turn R down track which continues all the way to **Esphigmenou**.
- (Approx time to this point: 2 hrs 15 mins.)*
- 400 Cross fence over road (opposite direction signed *Vatopedi*). KSO.
- 350 Ignore tracks on right. KSO/L (signed).
- 550 Ignore track on R (signed twice back to *Vatopedi*).
- 350 Pass shrine with flag on L.
- 350 Join another track entering from L (signed).
- 200 Ignore track to R; KSO through gate (signed).
- 150 Fork L (signed).
- 600 Reach junction with buildings (motor pool); turn R before buildings (signed) with cultivated valley on left. View of **Esphigmenou Monastery** soon appears.
- 300 Reach monastery wall. Turn L and follow wall around to main gate.
- 100 Arrive at main gate 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.