



FOOTPATHS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

FROM SIMONOPETRA TO DIONYSIOU VIA GRIGORIOU

Distance: 5.9 km

Journey Time: 3½ hours

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Warning: The path from Grigoriou to Dionysiou is challenging. Pilgrims need to be careful, especially if not physically fit.

This magnificent route connects the three monasteries of the rocks. It has special importance as it is the start of the SW route from *Simonopetra*, which then continues to *Ag. Pavlou*, *Ag. Anna*, *Mount Athos Summit* and the ‘desert’ (*erimos* in Greek) and thence to *Megisti Lavra*. This route is one of the most beautiful on all Athos, offering spectacular views down the western coast of Athonite peninsula, Mount Athos summit and nearby *Sithonia*.

The first half, from *Simonopetra* to *Grigoriou*, starts as a traditional *kalderimi* (stone paved path) which descends to the sea. The attractive path then continues parallel to the shore and through the olive groves of the Monastery, but ends with an unattractive track just before *Grigoriou*. The second half, from *Grigoriou* to *Dionysiou*, is almost entirely on footpath. The views from the path are stunning, but, the walk is much more difficult than the short distance between the monasteries might suggest. Pilgrims should be very careful.

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: ΔΙΟΝΥΣΙΟΥ = *Dionysiou*; ΓΡΗΓΟΡΙΟΥ = *Grigoriou* ;
ΣΙΜΩΝΟΣ ΠΕΤΡΑΣ = *Simonos Petras*; ΑΡΣΑΝΑΣ = *Arsanas*

Description of Route:

Walk (m) And then . . .

1 Coming out of *Simonopetra*'s main gate, turn immediately R through the high wall of the former aqueduct.

Pass the *Archondariki* (on L) and then turn immediately L, descending a stone staircase that leads to a small square surrounded by beautifully crafted buildings.

KSO, across the square, to reach attractive *K* that descends past the last of *Simonopetra*'s buildings, zigzagging first

through a long vineyard tunnel, then past the gardens of the Monastery. There are spectacular views of the shore and of the famous façade of the Monastery.

750

2 Arrive at fork of paths at shrine and fountain. KSO/L (signed) still on descending FP (initially *K*), which soon becomes very steep. **Note:** Turning R here leads to the Monastery *Arsanas* (signed) in 500m.

340

3 FP arrives at stream bed, at sea level. KSO across stream and continue on pleasant shaded FP (opposite direction signed *Simonopetra*).

80

4 Pass fountain on R (dry) and gate of *Kelli* on L. KSO on FP which starts to ascend (steeply in places).

300

5 At fork, KSO/L (signed), still on ascending FP, ignoring gated FP straight on / R to *Kelli*. View of **Grigoriou Monastery** soon appears.

140

6 FP bends and arrives at olive grove (opposite direction signed *Simonopetra*). Continue on FP (watch for waymark, orange tapes and sign) which zigzags into olive grove.

200

7 Path emerges at road. Turn R along road, descending.

800

8 Cross small bridge close to shore at Monastery's *Arsanas*. KSO parallel to shore to cross a second small bridge. Then KSO/R on ascending paved (*K*) track, passing shrine with fountain dedicated to Saint Nicolas, towards Monastery main gate.

200

9 Reaching the top of the paved track, pass on R a beautiful pine tree on a small platform with benches, offering a superb view of **Grigoriou** bay, and the wall of a large house with ascending concrete steps on L. KSO through a vineyard tunnel and arrive at **Grigoriou Monastery** main gate.

(Approx time to this point: 1 hour 15 mins.)

To proceed from **Grigoriou Monastery** to **Dionysiou Monastery**:

9 Leaving **Grigoriou** main gate, KSO through a vineyard tunnel and turn R uphill on concrete staircase, immediately at the end of the vineyard tunnel (signed). Continue on ascending FP (mainly *K*) which initially follows Monastery walls. The FP goes through gate and continues to ascend (steeply in places).

370

10 At fork KSO/L, still on ascending FP (signed).

- 50 **11** After small building on L (water tank), FP levels out. Turn hard L onto ascending *K* (signed).
- 70 **12** Pass through gate and KSO (signed). FP soon starts to descend.
- 220 **13** Cross stream.
- 370 **14** Pass through metal gate (not forgetting to close the gate properly behind you).
- 20 **15** Cross streambed (which runs down from Athos' largest waterfall, *Gravanistis* – look upwards).
Note: Depending on the weather, the streambed may be dry or a raging torrent, when use the concrete bridge.
 KSO uphill, very steeply (signed).
- 180 **16** Arrive at local summit with excellent views of **Mount Athos Summit** and back to **Simonopetra Monastery**. FP starts to descend before climbing again.
- 420 **17** Pass close to distinctive vertical rock. FP starts to descend again.
- 440 **18** Pass outcrop on R with wooden cross. View of **Dionysiou Monastery** appears ahead.
- 50 **19** Arrive at place where many rocks have fallen onto the FP. FP descends steeply. Take care.
- 410 **20** FP crosses a small bridge and ends at concrete track. KSO/L on track, parallel to the shore towards *Arsanas*.
- 200 **21** After passing the *Arsanas*, at junction turn L inland on concrete road. 30m later, opposite small building on L, turn R onto broad ascending *K* beside outlying buildings (worker's houses).
- 210 **22** At fork, where *K* reaches paved track (also *K*), turn hard R towards Monastery main gate.
- 80 **23** Pass under arch to arrive at **Dionysiou Monastery** main gate.

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.