

FOOTPATHS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN



FROM VATOPEDI TO HILANDAR VIA ESPHIGMENOU

Distance – 12.8 km. Journey Time 3¾ – 4¼ hours

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The journey to *Esphigmenou*, 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 For the final section, the path has been superseded by a forest road which descends steadily, partly along a ridge, to the *Monastery of Esphigmenou* and the sea.

The short, pleasant journey on to *Hilandar* is a through olive groves, vineyards and fields with cypress trees, entirely at low altitude (no more than 70m) . Although it consists only of tracks and roads, the peaceful scenery and the views towards the sea and *Milutin Tower* compensate for this. A detour leads to *Milutin Tower*, *Hilandar Arsanas* and the cell of *Agios Vasilios* on the shore.

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: ΕΣΦΙΓΜΕΝΟΥ = *Esphigmenou*; ΒΑ ΤΟΠΑΙΔΙΟΥ = *Vatopedi*;
ΧΙΛΑΝΔΑΡΙΟΥ (Serbian: ΧΙΛΑΗΔΑΡ) = *Hilandar*

Description of Route:

Walk (m) And then . . .

1 On leaving the gate of *Vatopedi Monastery* bear R to pass kiosk on L. KSO down paved road past workshops, etc, ignoring paved road to R (which is the route to the *Arsanas*). Descend steeply on broad paved path to the shore, ignoring routes to L (which lead to garage and cultivated areas).

150

2 On reaching the shore, turn L (signed *Esphigmenou*, *Hilandar* and *Zographou*) along track beside sea. (R leads to the *Arsanas*.)

- 200 **3** Cross stream using footbridge if necessary.
- 30 **4** At point where track turns L inland, KSO (signed *Esphigmenou* and *Hilandar*) along shore with wall on L.
- 350 **5** Where shingle ends, bear L away from sea, below and to the L of a small chapel (signed *Esphigmenou*). FP becomes *K*, with wall on L.
- 150 **6** Cross rough track coming from back R. Continue up *K* with wall on L and larger track and olive grove beyond it. Ignore paths on R.
- 650 **7** Fountain (dry) ahead. FP turns R in front of it.
- 800 **8** Pass second fountain (dry) set back in clearing on L.
Note: In spring 2018 the area round the fountain had become overgrown and the fountain was no longer visible.
- 500 **9** *K* starts descent to shore.
- 200 **10** *K* ends at beach (signed *Esphigmenou*). Route continues across beach, but path itself may not be obvious.
- 80 **11** Reach track descending from L. KSO/R along track with sea on R.
- 400 **12** Track bears L (signed), inland, with river-bed on R.
(Approx time to this point: 1 hr 10 mins.)
- 250 **13** Fork right off track onto FP (signed *Esphigmenou* and *Hilandar*), initially level.
- 500 **14** Cross forest road and KSO on FP which starts to climb (signed).
- 700 **15** Cross forest road and KSO, with large rock on left.
- 1000 **16** Reach clearing in forest road on L. (***Mt Athos*** peak may be visible behind.) KSO/R on FP (signed).
- 700 **17** Pass stone pillar on L (the boundary between ***Vatopedi*** and ***Esphigmenou*** land). KSO.

- 400 **18** FP ends at former track, now rough, washed away and overgrown.
(Approx time to this point: 2 hrs 15 mins.)
- Turn R down former track which continues all the way to **Esphigmenou**.
- 300 **19** Cross fence and KSO. Track begins to improve.
- 450 **20** Ignore tracks on right. KSO/L (signed).
- 550 **21** Ignore track on R (signed back to *Vatopedi*). 150m later track passes through olive grove (new plantation).
- 350 **22** Pass shrine on L. **Note:** May not be evident.
- 350 **23** Join another track entering from L (signed).
- 200 **24** Ignore track to R; KSO through gate (signed).
- 150 **25** At junction KSO/L downhill, ignoring tracks to L and R.
- 600 **26** Reach junction with buildings (motor pool); turn R before buildings with cultivated valley on left. View of **Esphigmenou Monastery** soon appears.
- 300 **27** Reach monastery wall. Turn L and follow wall around to main gate.
- 100 **28** Arrive at main gate of **Esphigmenou Monastery**.

To continue to Hilandar Monastery

- 28** Turn R out of **Esphigmenou Monastery** main entrance (KSO if coming from *Vatopedi*) and walk under pergola with wall on R.
- 150 **29** Turn L and cross bridge. (Turning R here leads to **Esphigmenou arsanas**).
- 60 **30** Turn R on track.
- 80 **31** Pass through gate.
- 300 **32** Ignore track to L (with a small building and antenna). KSO through fields and vineyards. Ignore track to R **32A** leading to **Cell of Ag. Tryphon** (signed).
- 520 **33** Continue on main track which bears R. Ignore track uphill ahead and track back to L (which is an alternative route coming from **Esphigmenou Monastery**).

380

34 At junction KSO/L on road (signed *Hilandar*).

Note: Turning R here, road leads to **Milutin Tower** (after 520 m), to the *Arsanas* and beach of **Hilandar** (after 1050 m) and to the **Cell of Agios Vasilios** on the shore (after 1400m).

Pass monument with cross and fountain and then field with tall cypress trees on L. Ignore road to R opposite another shrine.

720

35 Ignore track from R with ford and a small bridge beside it. KSO.

180

36 Bear R off road onto broad *K* path, soon passing large shrine on L and KSO, now on broad *K*. Ignore tracks to R and L.

300

37 Ignore tracks to R towards Monastery buildings and KSO slightly uphill. Ignore roads back L and half left uphill. KSO on *K* to pass graveyard and ossuary chapel on R.

130

38 Arrive at the main entrance to **Hilandar Monastery**.

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