

**North-Pindos self-guided:
strenuous hike with 7 stages in the Zagoria,
Vikos gorge and Astrakas,
with overnight stay in mountain refuge
2024 (PZWT314I, 9-day tour)**

**May be shortened, altered or extended with
more hiking and/or free days.**



Our hiking philosophy: active during the day, and in the afternoon a warm shower, a good meal and a comfortable bed in a small-scale accommodation.

We invite you to join us!

more information: www.annahiking.nl



About AnnaHiking

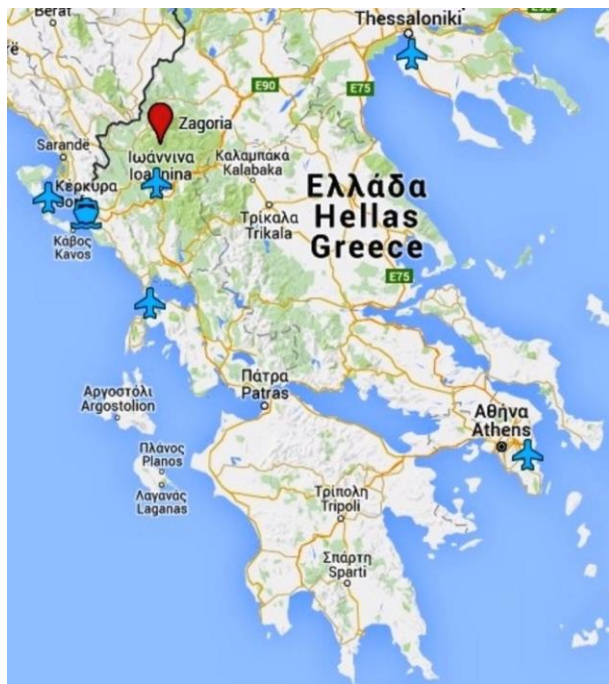
In 1991 we visited Greece for the first time. Our love for the country, the culture, the climate, the food, the language and the Greek has grown ever since. We feel at home here and want to communicate this feeling to others.

Many people are familiar with the Greek beaches: is there more? Sure! The mountainous mainland offers the traditional way of living, close to nature. Here you won't find beaches, but gurgling streams with waterfalls, small houses hugging the mountainside and welcoming people.

We explored several hiking routes and described them in detail. We regularly revise the routes and the description where necessary. As an individual traveller we offer you these descriptions together with GPS-tracks and marked detailed maps, so you can find your way easily. We also offer you an information package with background information, tips for the best meals and several other useful trivia.



The tour location



General tour information

The Pindos mountain range runs along the borders of Epiros and Thessalia provinces in the northwestern mainland of Greece.

The net walking time is between 4½ and 7 hours (excluding the breaks). You may extend your stay in each accommodation; we offer more hikes from the Astrakas refuge, Tsepelovo and Monodendri. You may also extend the tour by starting in Konitsa or Elafotopos.





Most walks are on narrow and sometimes steep mountain paths. The paths are open and adequately waymarked. There are often loose stones and steep drop-offs. You must be sure-footed and fit and not vertigo-prone.

We advise you to start the trip trained with well worn-in ankle-high hiking boots. Good shoes enable you to walk without worries about your feet so that you can fully enjoy the surroundings.

It's a hiking tour for active people who love peace and nature and who are not afraid of a heavy ascent or descent.

Modular set-up: extensions/alterations/abbreviations

The arrangement can be shortened by starting the tour in Elafotopos or Monodendri, and to be extended with walks and free days in the Zagoria.

You might also stay some days in Ioannina to explore the city and her environment.

You may also travel on to another destination in Greece, like the [Corfu Trail](#) or the [Olympos](#). We'll gladly help you with the logistics.

For all your wishes: ask for an estimate!

Walking in the North Pindos

The area has been inhabited since 5000 b.C. In the 4th century b.C. many fortifications were built, but little is still visible. The golden age was from 1200 to the start of the Turkish domination in 1430. The famous Plakida or Kalogeros bridge was only built in 1865, when the Turks had as good as left.



The inhabitants lived from agriculture, cattle breeding and trade. Only recently has some income been gained from (mostly Greek) tourism. Still not many people live here, especially not in winter. In summer Greek daytrippers and weekend guests come to admire the bridges and enjoy the fresh air and lovely food.

Wolves and bears still exist in the woods, although the chance of an encounter is very rare.



The North Pindos is famous for its Zagoria villages with their stone houses and paved mule paths (kalderimia), the characteristic stone formations that look like piles of coins (schists) and the Vikos Gorge.

You walk along and above the Vikos gorge. According to the



Guinness book of records this is the deepest gorge in the world: 900m deep at the narrowest point. (Deeper gorges like the Grand Canyon are not this narrow.)

During the walks you'll view the Tymfi mountain range with the highest peaks Astraka (2430m) and Gamila (2495m).



The accommodations

You stay in lovely guest houses and small-scale hotels built in the Zagorian style: thick stone walls, cool in summer (but chilly in spring and autumn!). All accommodations have a courtyard or patio inviting you to relax. The hotel in Monodendri boasts a small swimming pool.

One night is spent in a mountain refuge at 1900m altitude. Here you sleep in dormitories with 4 bunk beds, so possibly 8 sleepers, and shared facilities with a (cold) shower.

Most accommodations offer an excellent local cuisine where the food is prepared with love and expertise. The Tsepelovo guest house does not offer meals, but you'll find several tavernas in the village.



Booking period

You may book this arrangement from 20 May until 10 August and 26 August until 15 October.

Prices per person 2024

# travellers	room type	20-5 / 10-8 26-8 / 30-9	1-10 / 15-10	surcharge national holidays
solo	single	€ 1275	€ 1290	€40
2 pax	2x single	€ 915	€ 935	€40
2 pax	double/twin	€ 775	€ 785	€40
3 pax	double/twin + single	€ 700	€ 715	€40
3 pax	triple	€ 600	€ 605	€40
4 pax	2x double/twin	€ 610	€ 620	€40

Note:

- Price is per person, flight excluded.
- If your tour is around one of the Greek holidays (Easter, Pentecost): surcharge of €40 per person and little availability unless you book early.
- For other group sizes, contact us for an estimate.
- From January 1st 2018 in Greece an 'overnight tax' is applicable. This tax has to be paid at check-in at your accommodation. The rates per room per night were until 2023: € 0,50 for 2*-hotels, € 1,50 for 3*-hotels, € 3,00 for 4*-hotels and € 4,00 for 5*-hotels. It seems they'll be lifted to: €1,50 for 2*-hotels, €3,00 for 3*-hotels, €7,00 for 4*-hotels and €10,00 for 5*-hotels. Tourorganisations are not allowed by law to pay this tax.

Start and finish: Ioannina bus station or airport.

Included

- 7 overnight stays in guest houses and small-scale hotels and 1 overnight stay in a mountain refuge, all including breakfast.



- A hiking map of the Zagoria region. If you live within the EU we'll send it to your home address, otherwise you'll get it at the first accommodation.
- GPS-tracks, detailed route descriptions and marked maps of each walk according to the program; digital, sent by WeTransfer, to be printed by you at your own wishes.
- Information package with background information and information about catering, shops and facilities; digital, sent by WeTransfer, to be printed by you at your own wishes.
- All transfers and luggage transports according to the program. **(No luggage transport to and from the refuge; the luggage is transferred to the next accommodation in Tsepelovo.)**

Not included

- Flight, travel expenses to Ioannina, insurances.
- Overnight tax (see above).
- Lunches, diner, drinks and other personal expenses. Packed lunch can be bought from the accommodations. There are hardly any shops.
- Transfers not mentioned in the program.
- Everything else not mentioned under "included".

Own travel expenses and flight

You travel to Ioannina on your own account; we gladly advise you about the possibilities. For more information you may download our [document with possible logistics](#).

Ioannina may be reached in the following ways:

- Flight on Ioannina, always with flight change in Athens.
- Flight on Thessaloniki, Preveza Akti or Athens, public bus to Ioannina.
- Flight on Corfu, ferry to Igoumenitsa and public bus to Ioannina. Very suitable should you wish to extend your stay on Corfu (walking arrangement or just accommodation).

We can arrange transportation from Thessaloniki or Preveza Akti airport or from Igoumenitsa harbour. Ask for an estimate.

Luggage

You carry a day pack with water, lunch, warm and rainproof clothing, possibly swimming gear, items for personal care, binoculars/camera etc. For the stay in the Astrakas refuge you carry your overnight gear with you, while the remainder of your luggage is transferred to the next guest house.

On the transfer days the remaining luggage is brought to the next accommodation while you walk. During your stay in the refuge your luggage is transferred from Papingo to Tsepelovo.



Before departure we send you a list with essential and advised items.



Day to day program

(You can download the elevation profiles separately.)

Note: walking times mentioned are net times without breaks.

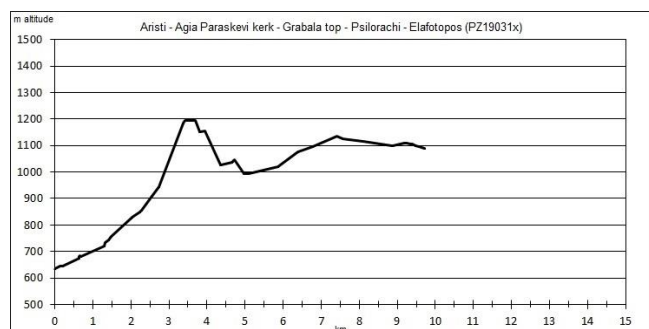
Day 1: To Aristi



You travel to Ioannina on your own account. Here you'll be met and taken to the accommodation in Aristi. From the square, below the plane trees, you may admire the views over the tour area and the Astrakas mountain range.

overnight stay: Aristi

Day 2: From Aristi over the Grabala summit to Elafotopos (PZ19031x)



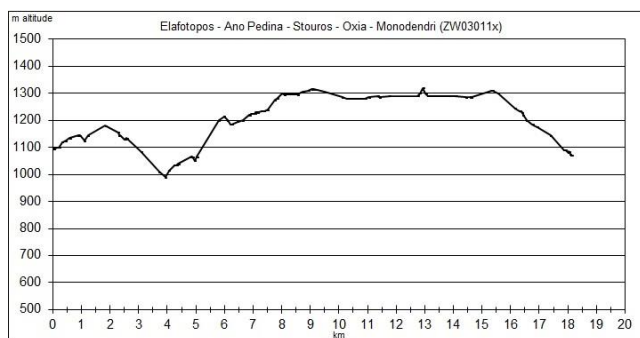
You leave Aristi village and turn into a country road. You cut a wide bend by a path and reach the road again near the Agia Paraskevi chapel. You again leave the road and climb the Grabala summit by the gently ascending slope. On this spot an important battle has been fought in the Balkan War; later you'll pass the monument for the fallen.

From the summit the views are magnificent: over the plateau of Pedina and the Aoos river and past the Vikos gorge over the Astrakas plateau and summit. Then you descend to the asphalt road with the afore mentioned monument. You follow a cattle path around the hill, cross the asphalt road and enter Elafotopos by a country road.

walking time/distance: 4h20' / 9,7km

ascent/descent: 740m / 285m

overnight stay: Elafotopos

**Day 3: Along Oxia viewpoint to Monodendri (PZ03011x)**

You ascend along mountain paths towards the pass with a remarkable red iconostasis and views back to Elafotopos. Then you descend by mountain paths and meadows to Ano Pedina. You'll pass through the village, then past a chapel in the (deserted) Agia Paraskevi monastery. From there you'll ascend to the stony Stouros plain, cattle area.

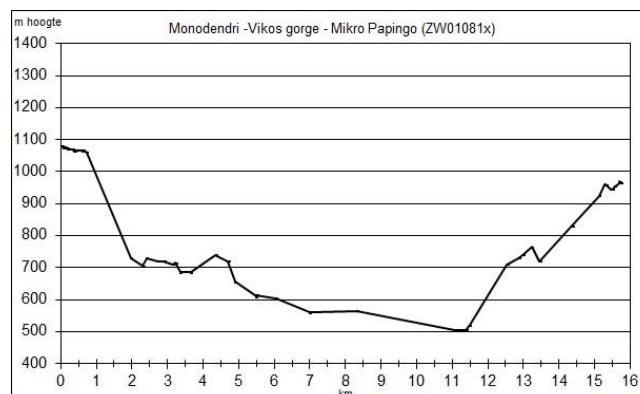
Upon arrival on the plateau you'll soon reach the Oxia 'balcony'. with spectacular views into the Vikos gorge. You are right above the Klima spring which services the hikers in the gorge, but 900m higher! You descend through the 'stone forest' with the particular Zagorian piles of stone (schists). An easy descent by a lovely forest path brings you in Monodendri village.

(You may skip Oxia and take the asphalt road to Monodendri.)

walking time/distance: 5h50' / 17.8km

ascent/descent: 545m / 585m

overnight stay: Monodendri

Day 4: Through the Vikos gorge to Mikro Papingo (PZ01081x)

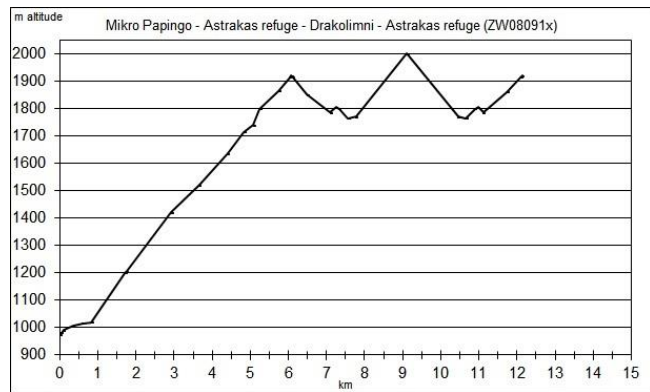
Hike through the Vikos gorge. The descent from Monodendri is steep and can be slippery but the path is not too difficult. The morning shade helps you enjoy the weed-covered slopes.

After about an hour walking and 350m further down you arrive at stream level and sometimes even walk through the rocky stream bed. Mostly, however, the path is good. You gradually descend another 200m until you reach the Voidomatis springs: the clearest water you've ever seen! From there you ascend again about 500m to the village of Papingo at the foot of the impressive 'black towers'.

walking time/distance: 7h / 15.8km

ascent/descent: 710m / 825m

overnight stay: Mikro Papingo

**Day 5: Along the Dragon Lake to the Astrakas mountain refuge (PZ08091x)**

With your overnight gear in your daypack you leave Papingo and start the long ascent to the Astrakas mountain refuge. You'll pass 4 springs on your way up. The views are getting ever more panoramic. At the refuge you may leave part of your luggage and continue to the Dragon Lake.

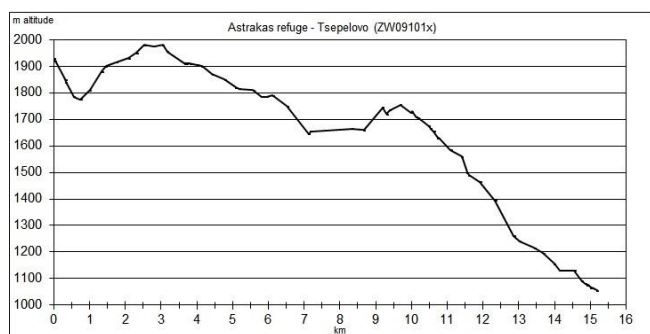
Here swim the small 'dragons' (Alpine newts) in the cold lake. Behind this special lake the slope is almost vertical down to the Aaos river: a splendid sight. You return to the refuge by the same route.

The remaining luggage is taken to Tsepelovo.

walking time/distance: 6h / 12,6km

ascent/descent: 1385m / 440m

overnight stay: Astrakas mountain refuge

Day 6: Over the Astrakas plateau to Tsepelovo (PZ09101x)

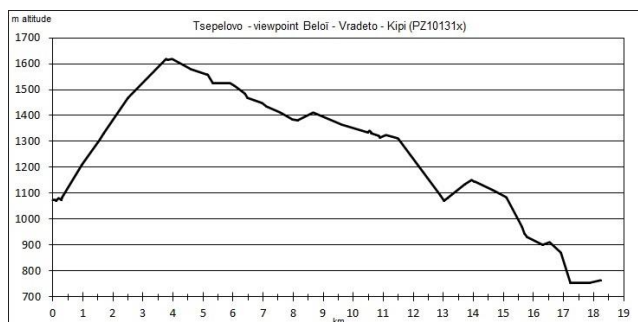
You leave the refuge and walk over the Astrakas plateau with the Astrakas and Gamila summits on your sides. Here is a good chance to spot chamois. You'll pass the 'bride hole' and walk over meadows and barren limestone plains and along the Mega Lakas side gorge. Then you'll descend into Tsepelovo which you'll see when you still have 700 altimeters to go.

In Mrs Gouris traditional guest house you'll find your luggage waiting for you. High time for a drink in one of the local cafes in the lovely square!

walking time/distance: 5h40' / 15.0km

ascent/descent: 325m / 1185m

overnight stay: Tsepelovo

**Day 7: Along Beloi viewpoint and the Vradeto steps to Kipi (PZ10131x)**

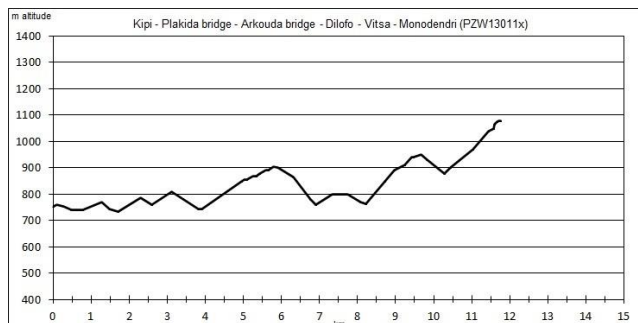
From Tsepelovo immediately starts the ascending path to the plateau. After another stoney descent you'll find yourself on a lovely restaured kalderimi leading to the Beloi viewpoint, opposite Oxia (near Monodendri). From this balcony the views into the Vikos gorge are marvellous.

From Beloi you continue to Vradeto village. Besides the square with traditional taverna this village is famous for its 'Vradeto steps', a winding kalderimi down to Kapesovo. You cross the asphalt road, follow an old connecting route, cross the asphalt again and finally descend by a forest path to the Vikakis stream and the village Kipi.

walking time/distance: 6h40' / 18.2km

ascent/descent: 705m / 1015m

overnight stay: Kipi

Day 8: The arched bridges of the Zagoria (PZ13011x)

A relatively easy walk to conclude your tour past the splendid arched bridges of the Zagoria.

From Kipi you cross the small Milou bridge (with old watermill) and follow the path the famous tri-arched bridge Plakida or Kalogero. Then a mountain path over a small summit to the Arkouda bridge to cross the Vikos river.

By paths and dirt roads you ascend to Dilofo, a traditional and sleepy village. Enjoying the magnificent view you ascend further to Vitsa, where you may enjoy a drink on the central square with age-old plane tree. A forest path along a small brook finally leads you to Monodendri.

walking time/distance: 4h25' / 11.8km

ascent/descent: 720m / 395m

overnight stay: Monodendri



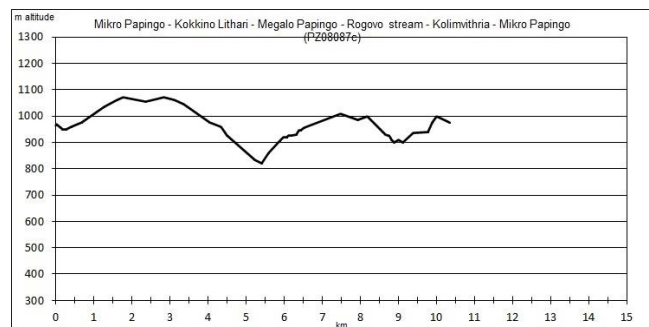
Day 9: Departure

You're taken back to Ioannina.



Extra possible hikes

From Mikro Papingo: circular walk Kokkino Lithari and Rogovo (PZ08087c)



Forest paths and a small stretch of asphalt road, along a viewpoint, river and a village. First you go to the "Kokkino Lithari", the "Red Rock". At the foot of a stretch of red stone you have a wonderful view over the mountainside. You pass the Potistres river (usually wading untill June!) and arrive in Megalo Papingo.

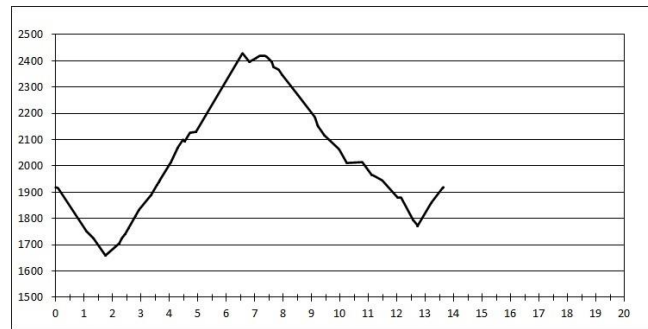
From Megalo Papingo you ascend along a gravel road with lovely views until you've reached the Rogovo stream. You follow a path downstream, along the Rogovo, via a ridge west of the stream. You reach the asphalt road near the natural pools of the Rogovo which you may visit. In summer usually the pools are dammed so you can swim.

Bring your swimsuit and water sandals!

walking time/distance: 3h45' / 10,4km

ascent/descent: 445m

overnight stay: Mikro Papingo

***From the Astrakas refuge: circular walk Astrakas summit (PZ09091a)***

Marvellous tour along the highest parts of the the Timfi mountain range. You'll need good visibility and compass and/or GPS! You have mobile signal until the summit, nothing after the summit.

First you descend a while towards Papingo and then veer to the left towards the Sheep Cave ("Provatina"). You may visit the cave and return, it's not really worth the while. Better keep to the left until you've reached the Astrakas summit with 360 degrees view over the Timfi mountain range! If the weather's clear you may see the sea at Igoumenitsa and the Nemertsika on the Albanian border. Past the summit you descend through rocky terrain towards the Astrakas plateau. Here the markings are scarce.

At the plateau you veer again left (Tsepelovo is to the right) until the moors Xeroloutsa Tsoumani. By cattle paths you reach the much-trodden path to the Astrakas refuge.

walking time/distance: 5h10' / 13,6km

ascent/descent: 955m

overnight stay: Astrakas hut

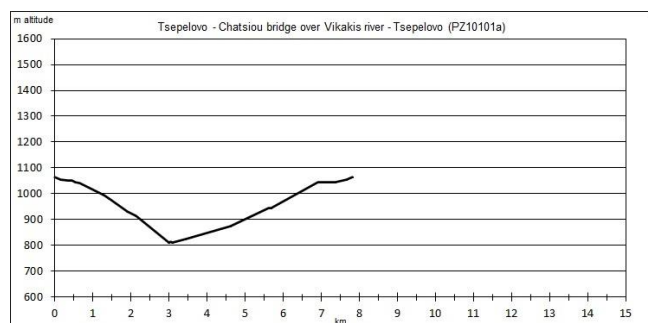
From the Astrakas refuge: to the Gamila summit

From the Astrakas refuge you may walk to the Gamila summit. From there you have views over the Aaos gorge towards Smolikas mountain. This walk has not been explored by Anna, you'll use the track from the mountaineering club she's a member of.

walking time/distance: 5h / 10km

ascent/descent: 950m

overnight stay: Astrakas hut

From Tsepelovo: circular walk Vikakis river (PZ10101a)



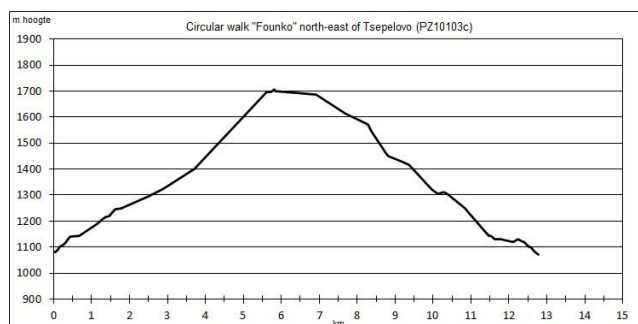
Easy round trip by dirt roads from Tsepelovo down to the Vikakis gorge with the Chatsiou arched bridge. There's a second bridge at the entrance of the gorge; you may swim here if you can stand the cold. By a different route you return to Tsepelovo.

walking time/distance: 2h15' / 7,8km

ascent/descent: 260m

overnight stay: Tsepelovo

From Tsepelovo: circular walk Founko plateau (PZ10103c)



Circular walk east of Tsepelovo. On the way up you hike over the characteristic Zagorian limestone fields; on the way back you enjoy the views over the mountain ridges. In this area you often hear and see rock thrushes.

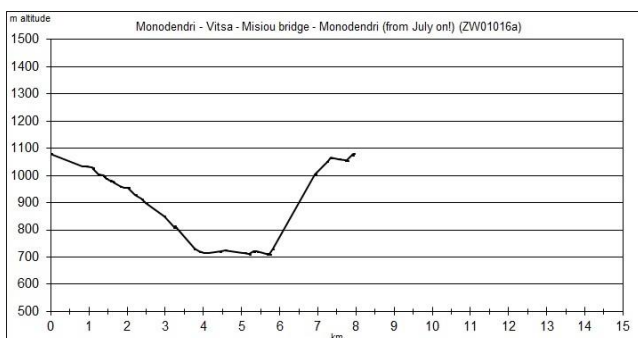
walking time/distance: 4h10' / 12,8km

ascent/descent: 650m

overnight stay: Tsepelovo

From Monodendri: circular walk Vitsa and Misiou bridge (PZ01016a)

THIS WALK IS ONLY POSSIBLE FROM MID JULY UNTIL END SEPTEMBER



You descend past the village Vitsa by the 'Vitsa Steps'. You reach the Vikis river near the Misiou bridge, the guardian at the entrance of the Vikos gorge. You follow the gorge north. The stream bed is dry from mid/end July, otherwise you'll have to swim!

You ascend by the 'Monodendri Steps' until you've reached the square of Monodendri.

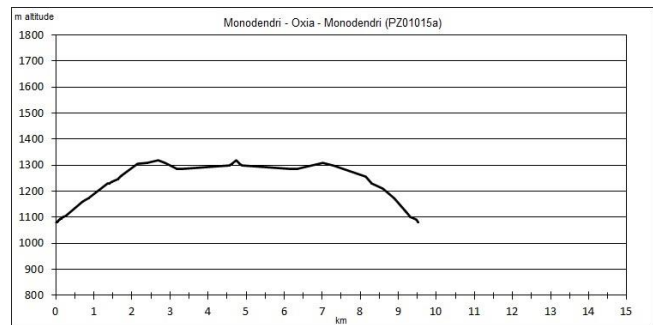
walking time/distance: 3h30' / 7,9km

ascent/descent: 405m

overnight stay: Monodendri



From Monodendri: circular walk through the Stone Forest to Oxia viewpoint (PZ01015a)



You make a circular walk from Monodendri. You ascend through the ‘Stone Forest’, limestone formations looking like piles of coins, specific for the Zagoria. Then an easy stretch through a flowery meadow until you’ve reached the Oxia ‘balcony’ for a great view into the Vikos gorge.

You walk back through the meadow and then about 1 kilometer of asphalt road. You head back into the forest and descend by forest paths back to Monodendri.

walking time/distance: 3h20' / 9.5km

ascent/descent: 300m

overnight stay: Monodendri