



NORTHERN PINDOS » Voio

In Paths of Voio



REGION OF WESTERN MACEDONIA
REGIONAL SECTION OF KOZANI



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At times when capital is rare or allocated on onerous terms, the natural capital of a place gains in value. Nature's reserves along with history and culture can act as springboard for the survival of each generation and each region as well as constituting the fundamental element of their identity.

Permanently attached to the construct of the protection and viable management of the natural environment, the Ecological Movement of Kozani has been giving its own attitude samples for three decades. Mainly focusing on the mountainous ecosystems of West Macedonia, it brings back to life old paths, which constitute the keys to the hidden beauty of the mountains, the legends and the signs history generously bestowed on them.

We hope that this effort will also prove fruitful.

On behalf of the Ecological Movement of Kozani

The Chairman of the Board
Lazaros Tsikritzis, Professor of the Western Macedonia TEI



Voio is the westernmost part of the Kozani district, between Western Macedonia and Epirus, thus being a historical and peculiar place, with rich vegetation, various geological formations and exquisite beauty. The best way to enjoy it to the full, is to evoke one's sense of adventure and explore it with the aid of a map.

Through the creation of a network of mountaineering and trekking paths, mountain ecotourism can prove to be a valuable tool of both protecting the nature and bringing it closer to the public, offering an alternative approach to the complex issue of the multi-level crisis we are experiencing today.

Thanks to the national program "PINDOS", the untrodden parts of Voio become accessible and its ecological, historical and cultural treasures are revealed. Twenty two routes that have been mapped, both old and new, are gradually opening paths for expert mountaineers as well as common trekkers who will have the chance to discover the history and the beauty of an area unknown to the wider public and untouched by mass tourism.

Vice-Regional Governor of Kozani

Yannis Sokoutis

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Introduction

Voio is the “Doorway” of Pindos, and the entrance to the high mountains, the traditional settlements and the large rivers. Consequently, there is great interest for the exploration of this mountainous corner of Greece. For the compilation of this guide, a plethora of bibliography and internet sources was used; the vast majority of the data, however, was created through first-hand material, namely personal observations and unforgettable experiences of the last 10 years, as well as testimonies from local inhabitants, which would have been lost forever. Thus, this is not a book aiming to guide the reader through a stroll among the paths of Voio, but a cumulative effort of recording the most significant aspects of the natural and cultural legacy of the area. Have a pleasant journey...

It takes time for this place to fit inside the mind. It takes time to learn the stories and the legends it conceals in its bosom. In Voio, beauty is not described... it is proven.
Argyris Pafilis

For more information about texts, maps, photographic material, as well as the entire guide in digital form along with the accompanying documentary, please visit the website
www.monopatia-pindos.gr

Welcome to voio

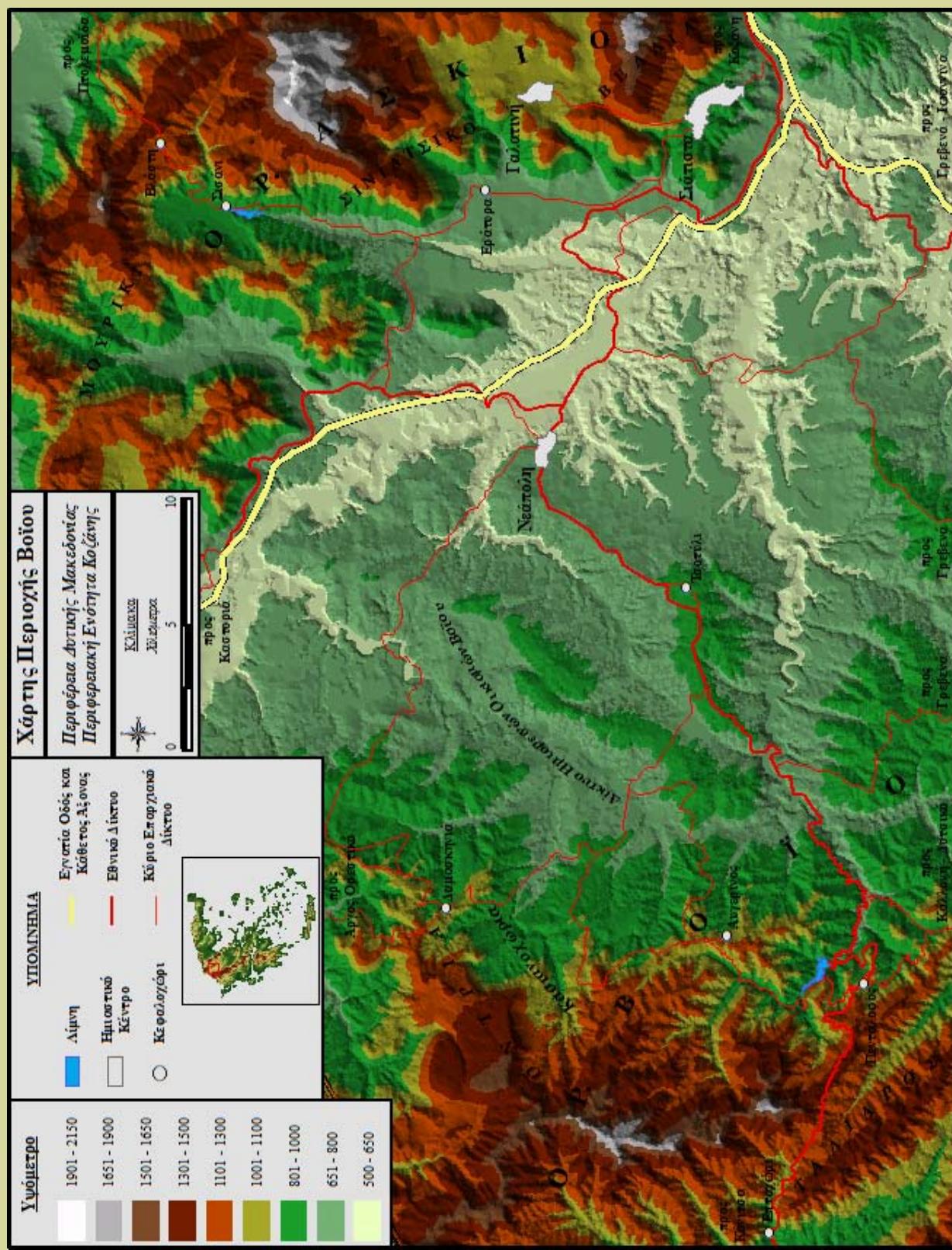
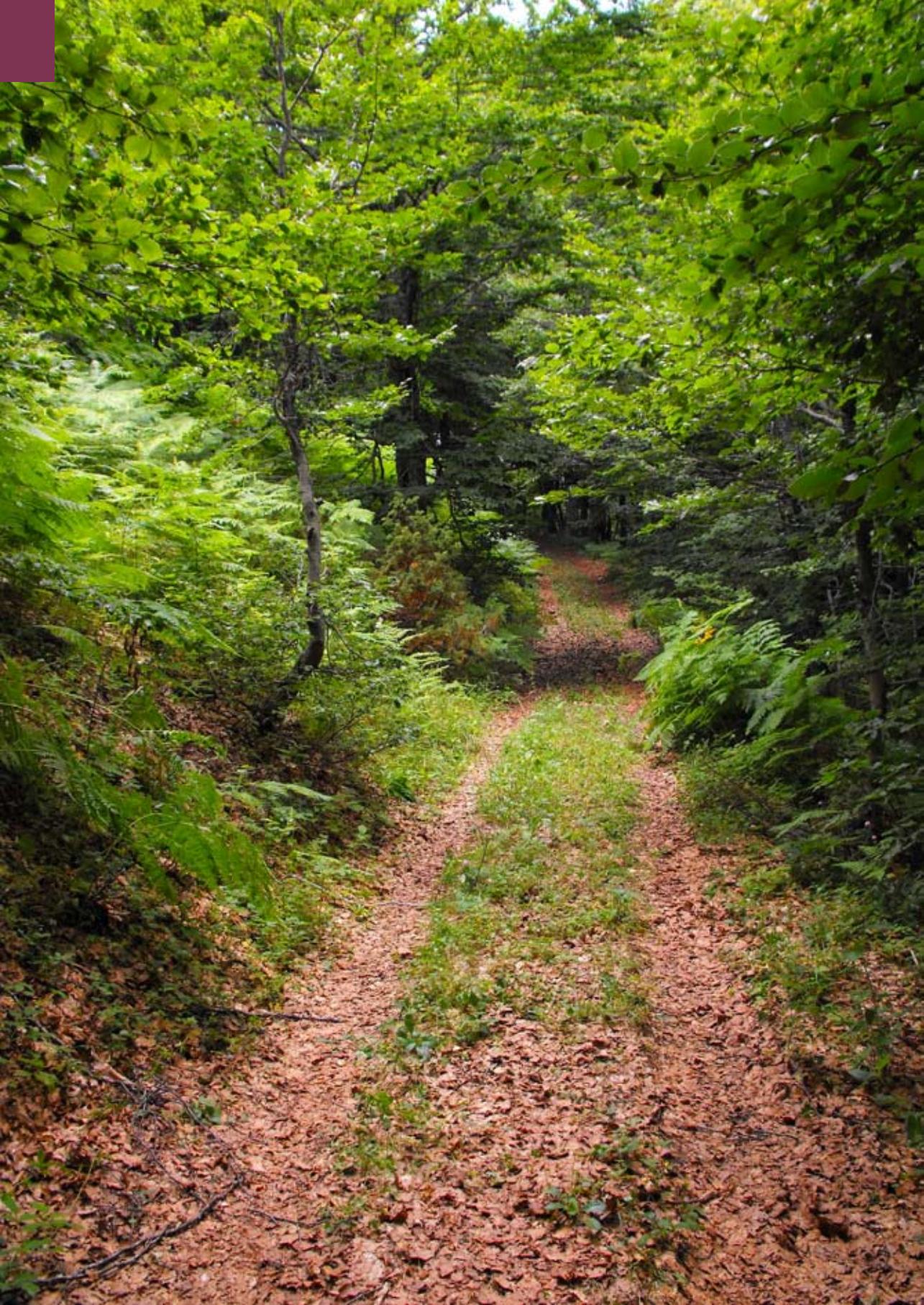


The landscape is dominated by water and by two large mountains orientated to the north and to the south. The largest river of Greece, Aliakmonas, separates it into western Voio, where mount Voio is located (alt. 1,812 m), characterized as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with many Wildlife Resorts; and Eastern Voio, which is essentially the area of mount Askio (alt. 2,111 m), characterized as Natura 2000. River Aliakmonas springs from the west, as do its largest influents, Pramoritsa, Velos, Stravopotamos and the northern streams of Venetikos. From the basin formed by mount Voio, Smolikas and Grammos, river Sarantaporos also springs, which debouches in Aoos.

Ancient Greek geographers would use the name Voio for the entire mountain range of Pindos. It is mentioned that Voio is a long mountain that marks the border of the land of Aitolia. Centuries later, when European explorers were travelling and mapping a Greece unknown, obscure and conquered by the Ottomans, they mention that Voio made a special impression on them, due to the number and peculiarity of its peaks.

This is where the vast mountain chains and proud stony villages begin, with their unique nature, traditions and architecture. Whatever meets the eyes in these spectacular highlands is included within Voio. Untrodden peaks, waterfalls, canyons, precipitous rocks, enormous eerie forests teeming with life, legends and buildings of days of yore, caves, lakes, winding rivers and steep streams, stone bridges and hidden paths characterize this blessed land. The rich alpine ecosystems are dominated by deciduous and conifer and mixed forests, where one can find biotopes of every kind of flora and fauna, characteristic of Northern Greece.

Here, love for the mountain grows and even more so grows the idea of thinking of them as omnipresent in stories from afar narrating legends and feats of days long gone ...



Voiotia - History

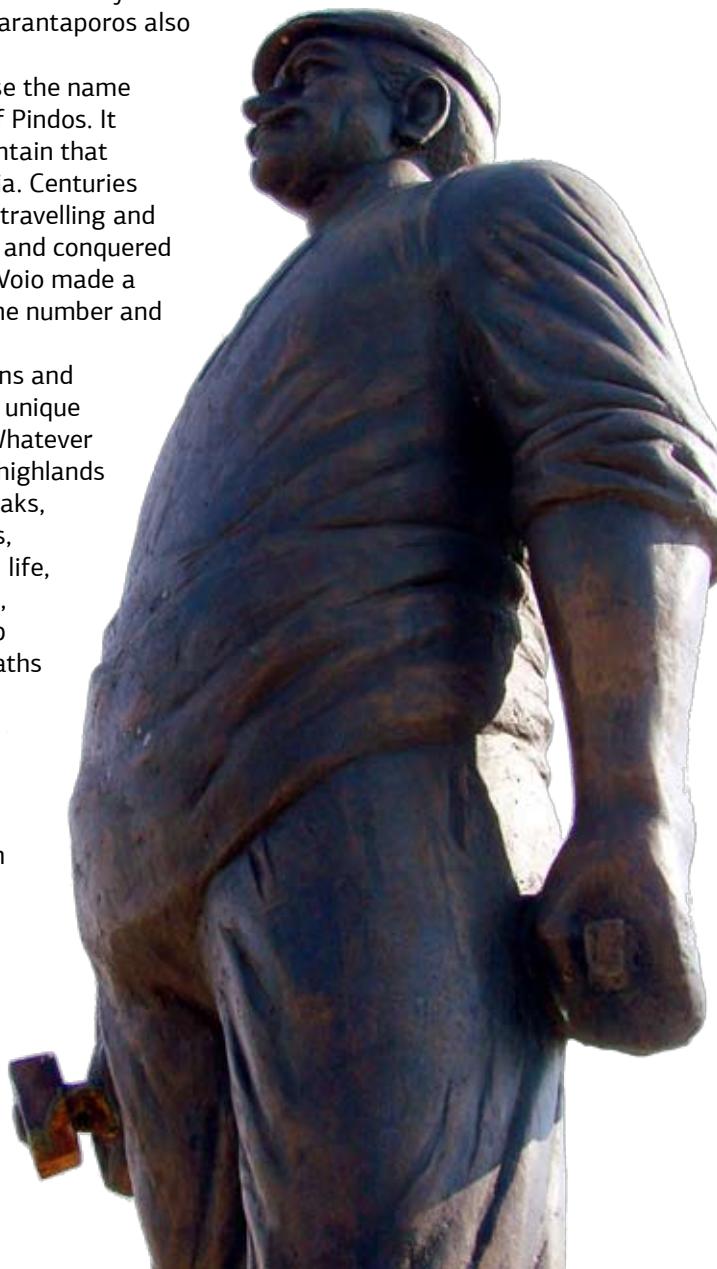
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Voiotia – The Greek army crosses the bridges of Eptahori, during the epic battles of World War II



Anoitsi Bolois, Voiotia. Small stone and clay vessels used in daily life.

The Villages of Voio

Siatista, Pentalofos, Vlasti, Haravgi, Namata, Eptahori, Pelekanos, Skalohori. Beautiful and peculiar names that correspond to their natural attraction and history.

The slopes of Voio, lush in vegetation and rich in waters, have contributed to the creation of a network of traditional settlements, known as Mastorohoria, or Kastanohoria. They are one of the four major units of stone-built settlements of Northern Greece, equivalent to Zagorohoria, the villages of Grammos and of Pilio. More than forty small picturesque settlements are located one after the other in the mountainous and semi-mountainous zone of the mountain, from 700 to 1400 meters in altitude. These are the villages of the districts of Kozani, Grevena and Kastoria, which lie west of Tsotyli until the rivers Venetikos and Sarantaporos. Thus,

several Mastorohoria of the area of Grevena belong to Voio, such as Dasyllio, Trikorfo, Kalloni, Dotsiko, Agios Kosmas, Kydonies and others, as well as Mastorohoria from the area of Kastoria, such as Eptahori, Kypseli, Nea Kotyli and Pefkos, built in the mainland of Voio, as well as Kastanohoria Vrahos, Lagka, Niki, Kastanofyto, Agios Ilias, Petropoulaki, Nostimo and others, which are found in Mikra Ontria. Kastanohoria is the name for the settlements of the mountainous zone of Voio that are famous for their production of chestnuts, between the areas of Pentalofos and Ontria. In some of the villages, many buildings are not made of stone, or may be stony but smaller than in the past. This is due to the fact that they were burned down in the period between 1943 and 1944 by the German

bouxorina



kalloni

occupational forces, due to their leading role in the Resistance. On the day of the fire, their inhabitants were hidden in neighboring forests and watched their beautiful, two-storey homes perish in the flames. Afterwards, to protect themselves from the harsh winter that ensued, they were forced to rebuild them quickly with what materials remained, while others returned after the war and restored them with new materials. Some of the villages that experienced this disaster were Tsotyli, Vythos, Rodohori, Eptahori, Morfi and Koryfi, which nevertheless managed to preserve exquisite elements of tradition, thanks to the love of their inhabitants



Anthousa

THE VILLAGES

The villages of Eastern Voio, built on mount Askio, despite their common history, customs and traditions, are quite distinct in color and size. They are less in number, distant from each other and considerably larger. In western Voio, with the exception of Neapoli, Tsotyli and Pentalofos, the rest of the settlements are small. On the contrary, in Eastern Voio we find in essence small towns built on the mountain's slopes, at an altitude of 750 to 1200 meters, such as the well-known Siatista, Galatini, Eratyra, Sisani and Vlasti. Here, most of the houses are modern in style, however

some considerable specimens of Macedonian architecture are preserved in magnificent mansions, public buildings and churches. It is worth mentioning that in many cases villages appear in pairs, possibly in order to supplement each other and increase the feeling of security. Known pairs of villages include Neapoli-Tsotyli, Vlasti-Namata, Koryfi-Hrysavgi, Dilofo-Dasyllo, Morfi-Agia Sotira, Polykastano-Zoni, Damaskinia-Dragasia, Lagka-Vrahos, Kotyli-Kypseli, Skalohori-Nostimo, Krimini-Rodohori and Kalloni-Trikorfo



Rodohori

Damaskinia



Agiasma



During summer months, settlements awake from their hibernation and the daily hustle and bustle returns. The cafes reopen, barbecues are lit and the sound of the clarinet echoes in the slopes and valleys.

Voio remains authentic, because there is a genuine desire for the preservation of local architecture and tradition and not merely their restoration as part of a scenery. The stony alleys still bear the aroma of knit bread and pies baked by housewives in their homes, the elderly still narrate stories from war and migration, while local customs are an integral part of the daily routine. Last but not least, the people, simple and creative, are unbelievably gentle and polite.

Koryfi

The Mastorokalfades of Voio

Locals of Voio never had a reputation as stock breeders. In fact, the area's herds belonged to Vlachs who brought their stock here from Thessaly during summer months. On the other hand, locals used to maintain small numbers of animals for family use and were more fond of farming garden produce and fruit trees. However, their main preoccupation was stone chiseling. The inhabitants of the area were passionate with the obedient stone that is shaped in the hands of the experienced artisans. They are the ones that gave life to this craft and took it to unparalleled levels.

Local folklore is intertwined with local stone dressers. Throughout Voio there are remarkable specimens of a unique Folk Architecture that dominated the early 18th century, mainly represented by the famous Mastorokalfades (artisans). These competent craftsmen built magnificent mansions, elaborate drinking fountains, sturdy churches and baronial monasteries with enormous clock towers. They linked river banks, erecting single-arch or multiple-arch stony bridges.

Their technique is mainly evident in local residences. Built in stone, with wooden windows, doors and roofs, they can be found perched on mountain slopes and so perfectly integrated in the landscape, that one thinks they are part of the natural scenery. They are not only single-storey structures, but also two-storey and three-storey, with plans that serve the needs of the residents and their daily way of life. Large stones emphasize the outline of the buildings,



18

Drinking fountain "Mpnari" at



Church of Koryfi

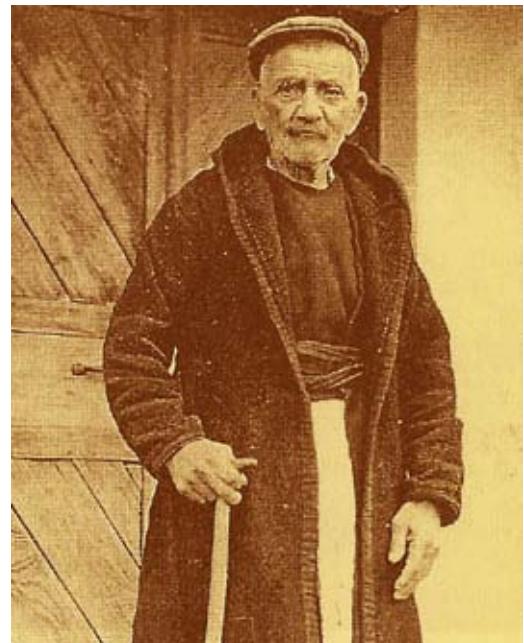
while the characteristic slates in the corners bear the date of building, the figures of the owner, the master builder, or even religious symbols that protect the house and the residents from evil. In the interior, the carved fireplaces feature themes of birds, roses and flowers, illustrating stories inspired by the artisans. The buildings are complemented by the cobblestone yards, which are framed by tall, stone fences with characteristic wooden gates. Adorned with large nails, the gyftokarfa ("gypsy nails") in interesting patterns, they are sheltered by roofs with wooden frames and stone slates.

It was only natural that the fame of the artisans went beyond the limits of the Voio area and led them to migrate. These artisans were the beginning of a historic route that gave Greeks every right to feel proud for their deeds during Turkish occupation. Organized in craft unions and speaking their own language, Koudaritika, so that their employers wouldn't understand them, they worked mainly in Pilio and Thessaly, but also in the entire occupied country and beyond. The team included the master builder, who secured the deal and had the chief responsibility for the project, two carpenters, various stone carvers, two quarry workers, two bushelers, two renderers and apprentices.



Residents at Kato Pentalofos – mount Olympus at the background

Pentalofos, old Zoupani, was the point of reference where most artisans came from. This is why locals used to say proudly: The people of Zoupani built the world. In the preparations of their departure an entire ritual was carried out, as is described very vividly by Nikolaos Moutsopoulos: They would set out, before midnight, in silence, the master builder, the artisans, the animals and the children. All relatives with their youngest offspring would escort them to the curve of the road and bid them farewell. The artisans would constantly stop and whisper something to their wives. When the heavily laden horses had disappeared in the forest, the relatives would return to the village and women would let water run from the bronze pitcher, in accordance to the old custom, so that it would leave a trail and allow the master to find his way back home.



Kalfas Vraggas



The night before, relatives and friends would gather in the artisan's house to bid him farewell and bring him gifts, such as crepes, bread and red wine. The entire village was in upheaval. They ate all together, but could not enjoy it. Their hearts were heavy. They then drank wine and sang all together:

As many mountains I have passed, I bid to all of them,

O mountains do not snow, valleys do not cover yourselves in dew,

Not until I go and return,

And it takes twelve years and fifteen months,

And I return to my homeland,

I find snow in the mountains, dew in the valleys,

And I find my dear mother dead in the grave,

Curse you foreign lands. Curse you thrice.

*Come out in the tree of tears,
To bid me farewell,
To watch me disappear,
And sing for me.
Makarios Pileas (1899)*



Figure gravée du maître maçon

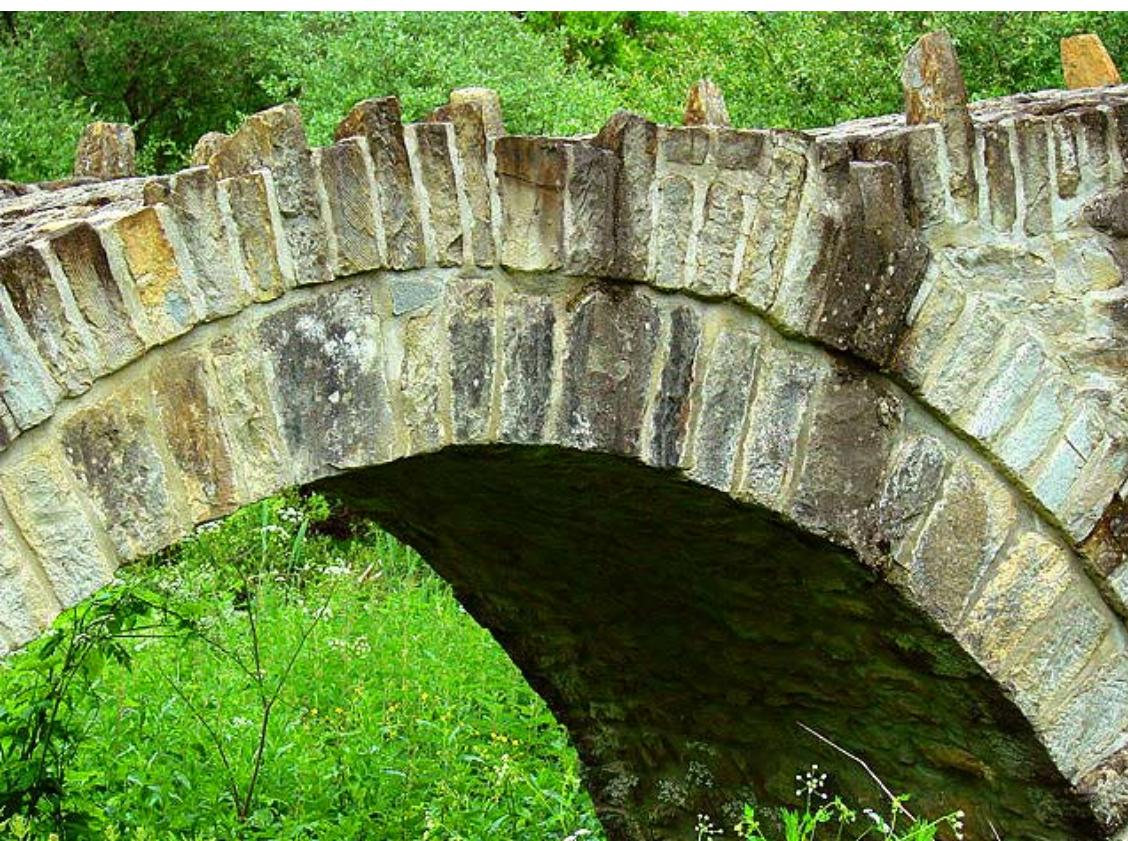
The Stony Bridges

The dialogue of the master builder with nature...

The river Pramoritsa and its several streams posed an obstruction during transport, not an unsurpassable one, though. A series of stone bridges connect from very early the banks of the river and of its streams.

Voio is one of the characteristic areas of Greece where stone bridges are aggregated, which are also recognized as works of rare art. Here we can find more than 20 stone bridges, which are built by local artisans in their entirety. They are scattered in well thought-out positions in different periods of the Turkish occupation, each with its unique legends and identity. Single-arched, double-arched or multi-

arched, they vary in form and size as Pramoritsa widens in its descent down the mountain's precipices. They are monuments of the period of prosperous stock breeding in Northern Pindos when the highland settlements were teeming with life. Merchants from western Macedonia and Epirus, with communities all over Central Europe, would cross them carrying commodities across Greece and along the Danube. The Greek army used them in its course to the Albanian front and the mountain partisans would set up their ambushes to the German phalanxes on them.



Of course, times have changed, paths have been abandoned and most bridges are no longer used but they keep the memory alive. Today, for most visitors, they are an occasion for pleasant treks in the great outdoors, simultaneously offering valuable lessons in architecture. To build a bridge, the artisans would first define the spots where the foundations would be set. Its construction would start simultaneously from both sides, with carven slates and strong binder. With the aid of a scaffold, the two sides would meet at the peak of the arch. The stones around the arch would be masterfully carved and placed around the center where the coign-shaped rock called kleidi (key) would be placed and ensure the stability of the whole structure. The remaining body of the bridge would then be built with carved stones (or not, depending on the design). To achieve optimal cohesion between the outer and the inner layers, iron T-shaped components would be fitted inside the structure.

Nature

Ecology of Voio

Voio is one of the most densely forested areas of Greece. Especially mount Voio is covered by forests by up to 80%. Large areas of black pines, beeches, Macedonian firs, oak trees and chestnuts cover the valleys and mountain slopes, while inside and around villages there are many walnuts, cedars, hazels, cornels, quinces, apple-trees, willows, cherries, pears, poplars and almond trees. Native wildflowers can also be found, such as *Lamiropsis carpinii* Greuter and a multitude of rare species, such as anemones, orchids, wild saffron, tea and orchis. This rich plethora of flowers is also home to many and rare insects.

Voio is also known for its mushrooms, with the most dominant species being kalogerakia (*Boletus aereus*), vasilika (*Boletus edulis*), kokkinouskes (*Amanita caesarea*), zarkadisia (*Macrolepiota procera*), and proveia (*Agaricus campestris*) while truffles can also be found.



Hawk at Avgerinos



Erodium Hern at Pramoritsa

NATURE

The ecological value of the area and its natural continuation with the mountain chain of Pindos renders it a significant biotope for all large, wild mammals that are found in the Greek vicinity, such as wolves, foxes, squirrels, deer, wild boars, wildcats, hares and the brown bear. Voio is home to large numbers of bears that nest and reproduce here, while even more prefer it for finding their food, due to the multitude and variety of the flora. In parallel, there is remarkable biodiversity in serpents such as the adder, the asp, the grass-snake, the tree-snake, turtles and rare amphibians, such as the salamander salamandra salamandra, as well as the common and the Triturus alpestris, a native species of Northern Pindos.

The rich ecosystem, with a vast variety of forests, rivers, valleys, rocks and inhabited areas, contributes to the presence of remarkable species of fowl. In total, 97 species of birds are mentioned, among which the carrion, the blackbird, the finch, the robin, the mavis, the goshawk, the sparrow hawk, the owl, the eagle-owl, the war eagle, the hawk, the buzzard, the bullfinch, the Short-toed Snake Eagle, the woodpecker, the hoopoe, the cuckoo, the chickadee, the jay, the stannel, the Crag Martin, the House Martin, the Honey Buzzard, the craw, which is particularly large, the tit, the turtle dove, the carrion crow, the nutcracker and the Black Woodpecker.

In parallel, in the artificial lakes in Sisani, Vythos and Vrahos, new wetlands seem to be formed, as the first aquatic birds begin to appear. In the waters of the rivers and lakes there are also various species of fish, such as the salmon trout, the wells catfish, as well as eels and crayfish.

In mount Voio there are four designated Wildlife Reserves and in Askio a vast area designated as Natura 2000.

The climate is clearly alpine, with very cold winters and brief summers with common rainfalls, which makes it very healthy and ideal for the cure of a series of conditions. The area is one of the lowest in pollution with many springs of high quality.

*O my mountains of Pindos,
with your many branches,
with your large pines and elderly beeches,
I have envied your haunts,
your shades, your dew.*

K. Krystallis



Newts at Vythos

The Paths of Voio

"The paths yearn to be trodden ...»"

In Voio we find the largest network of signaled routes in Greece. It includes everything from large mountaineering paths up the mountains' peaks to short treks around villages and stone bridges, with a total length of 185 kilometers. Of those, a network of paths 120 km long is in mount Voio and the remaining 65 km are in mount Askio. More specifically, the path of Pentalofos-Tsotyli is perhaps the only one in Greece where 9 settlements are connected with their old paths as well. Separate destinations include the crossing of the Park of the Fossilized Forest in Skalohori and the Path of the Horsemen in Siatista. There are also many routes that have not been signaled, offering opportunities for exploration.

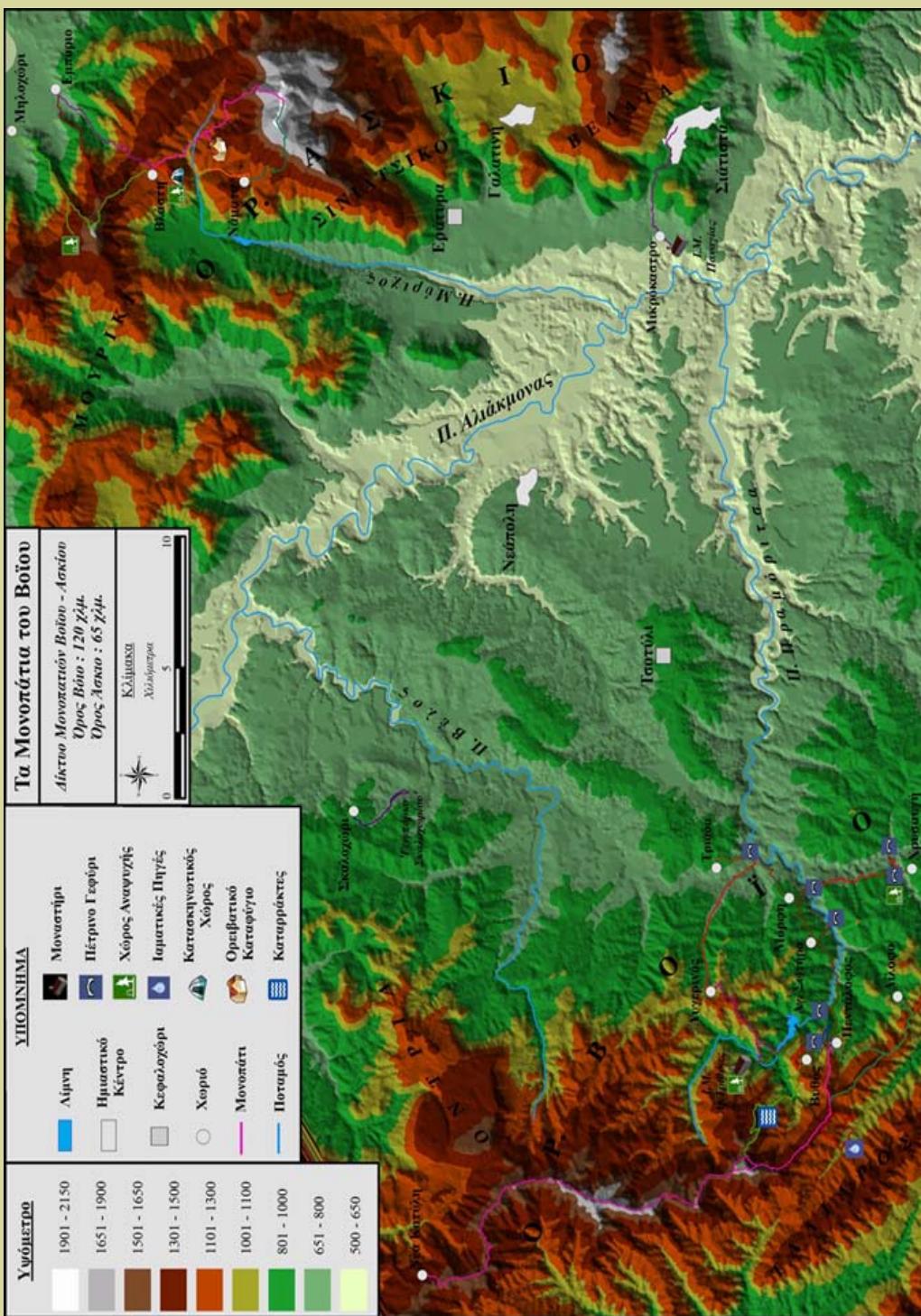
The special geographical characteristics of the soil and the high number of settlements have resulted in the development of a labyrinthine network of paths that used to facilitate communication and transport. Apart from travelers, animals and commodities would also circulate through these paths and this had as a consequence a width of impressive proportions at certain spots. Their significance was such, that inhabitants of nearby villages were forced to abandon their personal chores and clean up the paths, build benches and repair cobblestones where access was difficult. Several of these structures are preserved to this day, and pose great architectural interest.



Apart from their obvious cultural value, many of the paths traverse areas of high aesthetic and ecological interest; as a result, the most impressive of them have been signaled and are visitable.

The path's network have been thus constructed to satisfy everyone from the simple trekker to the mountaineering connoisseur, while it offers the perfect occasion for a visit to Voio and an acquaintance with local architecture, cuisine, people and its rich history.

*Going uphill is tiresome,
But it brings you to the top ...*



Map Paths Voio

Culture

The People

Most inhabitants are locals, while there are also many Vlachs from Grevena and Epirus. Further down, in the semi-mountainous zone and the valley of Aliakmonas, where Turks used to live, refugees have settled mainly from the area of the Pontus. Relationships among people of Voio have always been amicable and characterized by respect and appreciation for

the misfortunes that each has experienced. The abandoned houses are many, as their residents have moved to Kozani, Kastoria, Trikala, Athens or Thessaloniki. Still more are those that have left farther, emigrating to Germany, America, South Africa and Australia, ultimately becoming benefactors for their hometowns. In previous years, in view of the depopulation

Women at Kleisoria



Stone relief of Nikos Kalogeropoulos



and abandonment of their villages, the people of Voio felt in a disadvantageous position, away from big urban centers. Today this mentality has begun to change, however, as everybody has begun to appreciate the value of clear, highland air, lush vegetation, healthy climate, crystal clear water of the springs, peace and quiet, social solidarity and humanity that are so bounteously offered in this blessed land.

CULTURE

The people of Voio are active, hospitable and cultured, as the area has a tradition in eminent scientists. Many occupations that used to be quite popular are now extinct, such as the farrier, the miller, the saddler and the blacksmith. There are still artisans that can work with the local stone. Cobblestones, bridges, drinking fountains and other stone artifacts are still constructed in today's Voio. Commerce, municipal services and tourism are also sectors of the economy that thrive. Benevolent old women remain the heads of families, with impressive perceptivity despite their age. They are the ones that kept their households despite the hardships of the past.



Damaskinia of Voio



Snowy alleys of Zoni



They also make sure the old, traditional dishes are still present in the weekly family gathering, such as various kinds of pie, mpatzios (a local cheese) with eggs, milkcheese, cooked meat, drippings, sausages roasted on the woodstove, green stuffed peppers pickle, fried mushrooms, etc. Because of low temperatures, dishes here are heavy and locals are especially fond of fatty meat, red wine and beer.

Thematic Feasts in the Villages of Voio

The best opportunity for a visit to the mountain and an acquaintance with traditional villages is during their thematic feasts.

The most important cultural event in the area is the feast of 15th of August in Siatista. Large crowds gather from all over Western Macedonia to admire the Horsemen, who in the morning, with their horses adorned, revive the custom of traversing the old path from the Monastery of Mikrokastro, where there is a pilgrimage and a procession of the icon of Mother Mary. At noon they return and the parade begins. Every group passes separately accompanied by brass instruments, while the local authorities and the crowd are gathered to welcome them. A feast ensues, first in the town's squares and then at homes, where they celebrate until the morning hours. The custom has deep roots in the period of Turkish occupation. Back then, the feast of Mother Mary gave the opportunity to the occupied Greeks to live a day of freedom and ride their horses, as this had apparently been conceded as an unwritten privilege by the Turks.

Furthermore, in Siatista and Galatini there is a local carnival on New Year's Day called Mpoumpousaria, where locals in disguise dance in the alleys to welcome the new year and cast out evil. In Eratyra, the custom is celebrated with a parade of the disguised on the second day of the year.



In recent years, Kastanogiortes (chestnut feasts) have been organized in early November in Damaskinia and Pentalofo, with the famous sweet chestnuts of Voio. The entire mountain is dressed in its lovely, autumn colors, the crowds pour in, the chestnuts and the wine offer exquisite gastronomic delights while traditional dances are often performed. In Pentalofo and Vathy, the custom of Flight of the Balloons has been held for the past 200 years on Clean Monday accompanied by lenten dishes.

The trademark of Hrysavgi is the Feast of Batzios, Voio's traditional cheese. The feast is impeccably organized in early August and includes dishes with batzios, recreations of the process of its production and traditional dances.



CULTURE



Wine Feast in early October in Agiasma, the Mushroom and Batzios Feast in early July in Zoni, the Dripping Feast in Moloha and the Pork Feast in Avgerinos, which takes place during the Christmas period.



Traditional musicians



The Mountain Feast is an alternative happening of Polykastano, which is simple and authentic. For two days in early August, all inhabitants of the village ascend the plateau of Paliokrimini where they set up camps, trek, offer dishes with local meat and boiled goat, gather wild tea leaves and bathe in the crystal clear springs. A series of other feasts that are also held include the Lentil Feast in August in Vronti, the Tsipouro Feast in late October in Morfi, the



Local Products

Western Voio is famous for its rich production of high quality chestnuts, which is why several of its highland villages, such as Pentalofos, Vythos, Avgerinos, Polykastano, Zoni, Dafni, Damaskinia, Dragasia and Kastanofyto are also known as Kastanohoria (chestnut villages). Local chestnuts are characteristically sweet and are an entirely biological product, since they undergo no process whatsoever. They have a special place in the heart of the locals, because, as the elderly narrate, during the hardships of German occupation they saved people from hunger. They used to be one of the main sources of income. Every family has its own chestnut trees, which have belonged to the family for generations, however this does not mean that there will be any hard feelings if a neighbor or a visitor gathers a few fallen chestnuts from under one of the trees. They are also useful during the autumn as feed for the stock, while wild animals such as the brown bear and the wild boar also feast on it.

Local goat and lamb is also famous for its tastiness, due to the rich flora that the animals feed on, as well as sausages with leek, which are prepared in many villages, such as Tsotyli and Pentalofo, where they are called loukanitses.

The product with a protected designation of origin (PDO) from Voio, is Batzios. It is a traditional brined cheese, semi-hard or hard, which is produced from sheep or goat milk, or a mixture of the two, partially skimmed. It originated a very long time ago by mountain nomads and its name means sheepfold, or cheese made in the sheepfold. It is white or yellow-white, salty, aromatic and slightly spicy. Its special flavors and aromas come out when it is fried in oil, when it becomes tastier and more tender. Apart from Batzios, other types of cheese are produced in local cheese factories in Koryfi, Galatini and Dilofos, as well as the famous vlahotyria (vlachs' cheeses) in Vlasti, such as the well-known manouri.



Timber transfer at Agia Sotira



Goats at Avgerinos



Chestnut branch



Liknades – rose



Cellar at Siatista

The wines and leathers of Siatista, Galatini and Eratrya are also famous, and an enormous commercial network has been established to connect them with countries abroad. The visitable wine cellars and fur shops are also abundant in the capital of Voio.

In the semi-mountainous regions, roses and high quality pulses and grains are cultivated, such as lentils and beans, the most famous being the beans of Sisani and the lentils of Vronti. Clubs of women make tasty sweet preserves with



Arable land at Fytoki



Batzios with eggs



traditional recipes from local products, such as cherries, nuts, pumpkin and figs, while high quality chestnut honey is also produced, as well as honey from other flowers.

The stone of Western Voio is systematically excavated and delivered all over the world, as it is considered an excellent material for building and decorating residences, while the abundant timber from the various forests is also significant as a national product.

Stone residence at Krimini



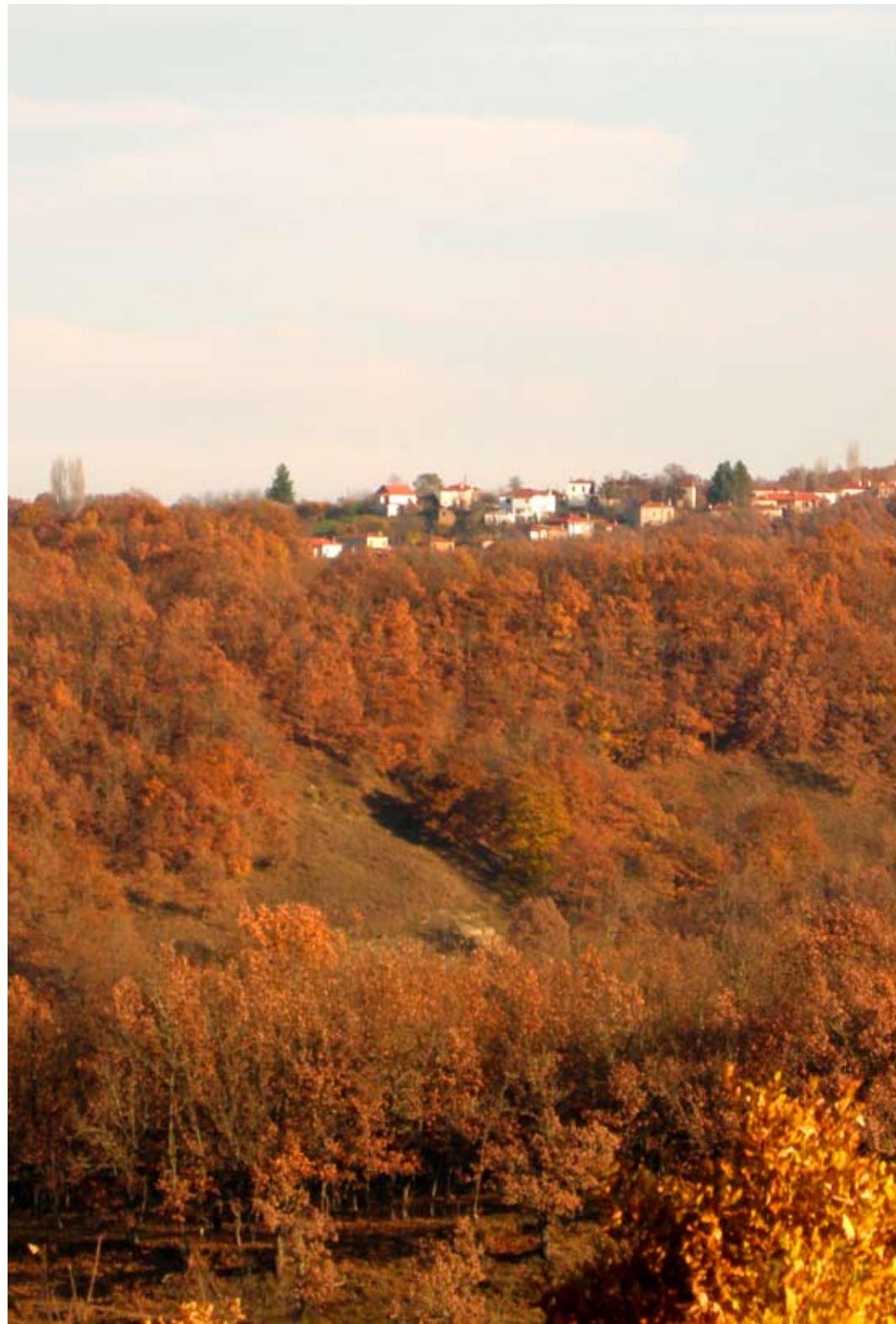
Voio and the Mushroom Madness

Mushrooms, as fungi, belong to a different Kingdom from animals and plants. They have a peculiar behavior and high nutritional value. They thrive when there are conditions of warmth and humidity, rich soil and abundant food from fallen leaves. They can even move a few centimeters in search of a more favorable environment. They exhibit a large variety of shape, size and color and are among the most nutritious, tasty and low-fat foods, rich in proteins, vitamins, minerals and trace elements. It has also been proven that they are anticarcinogenic and that they protect the heart. They are not to be uprooted but cut at the stipe, otherwise they fail to reappear.

The land of Voio offers an abundance of dozens of species, either edible or not. We find them in forests and valleys twice a year during early summer and mid-autumn. Their behavior is so unpredictable, however, that at times they may not appear at all or appear at a different, totally inappropriate period, etc. When they are detected and there is word that their quantities are great, mushroom collectors from all over Western Macedonia flood the mountain slopes. They are always accompanied by an expert that can distinguish them, or take it to nearby villages where they are distinguished or cooked on the spot. Well known spots for mushrooms include the forests around Morfi, Koryfi, Vouhorina, Anthousa, Zoni and Vlasti.



A favorable ground for the appearance of mushrooms



Forests of Vouhorina – a typical area of mushrooms



Poisonous mushroom



Geological park of Skalohori



Collection of Royal Mushrooms



Zarkadisio



Western Voio

Mount Voio – Nature

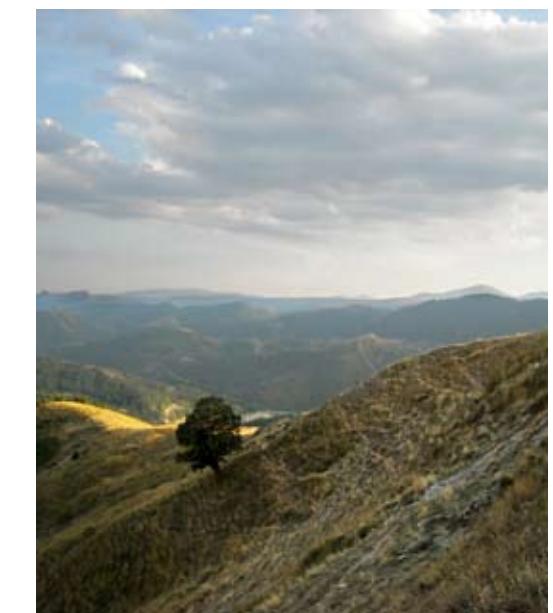
In the foot of Pindos

At mount Voio, from which the new municipality and the old province of Voio took its name, is a mountain of the Northern Pindos mountain chain unknown to the wide public, as it is remote from urban centers and almost untouched by modern civilization. It appears quite low compared to the nearby giants of Grammos, Smolikas and Vasilitsa, but in reality many of its peaks exceed 1,700 meters. The identity of its highest peak is still a mystery to this day. Zoupaniotikos Ailias (1,810 m.) in the southern side, because of its volume, shape and many precipices, appears to dominate the scenery. However, the highest peak is most probably the isolated Paliorimini (1,812 m), which is at the center of the mountain chain. The third peak is Petritsi (1,784 m) and the fourth Pyrgos Kotylis (1,764 m).

The length of Voio is nearly 50 km, beginning from Nestorio and crossing the entire area of Pentalofos-Tsotyli all the way to the town of Grevena. Its maximum width is 30 km, from Eptahori in the west to Tsotyli in the east. It is not a homogenous mountain but a mountain chain with a slightly oblique orientation from north to south, as is the rest of Pindos. In essence, it includes four mountains of exquisite beauty. The largest part of its main body is in the district of Kastoria, where it is often confused with Grammos. Its ridge north of Zoupaniotikos Ailias to Pyrgos Kotylis is the mountain's highest part, forming along with Grammos the valley of Sarantaporos, while to the south of the peak of Ailias, after Pentalofos, the lower part continues, where most of the villages are built. The second largest mountain of Voio is Ontria, which is perpendicular to the main body and its landscape is quite peculiar due to the level platform that is formed. Parallel to the main body we find the densely forested Taliarios below Zoupaniotikos Ailias. Finally, the lowest part is the rippled chain of hills Polykastano – Avgerinos – Tsotyli, with many peaks exceeding 1,000 meters. Here, the lovely tiny valleys of Voio are formed and the rich forests of oak trees alternate with grasslands. This semi-mountainous complex is irregular, but generally follows the direction of the main body.



In Voio there are no concrete and round peaks. It is southwest oriented, resembling a huge wave ready to crush on the beach. The western slopes are covered in pine forests while the eastern ones in dense, deciduous trees. It intersects the western Macedonian land in such a way, that the waters of its eastern side end up in the Aegean sea, while the ones of the western side flow into the Ionian sea. There are many names that could characterize



The successive hills

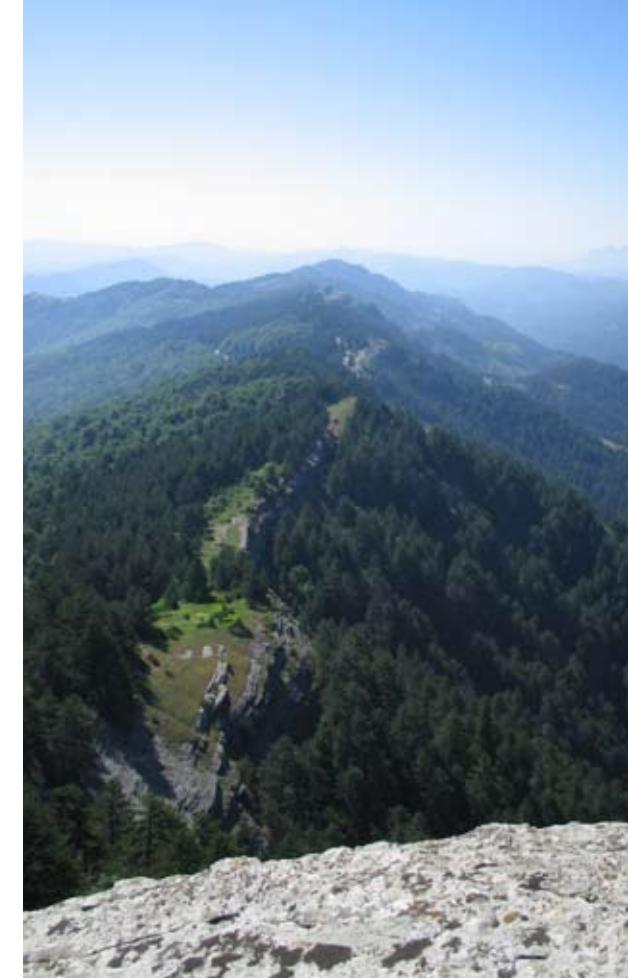


Petritsi

WESTERN VOIO - MOUNT VOIO

Voio, such as The Mountain of Stone Artisans, The Mountain of Stony Villages and Bridges or The Mountain of Chestnut Villages. Undoubtedly, it could also be described as The Mountain of Paths, as they are countless. Their destination was most often Tsotyli, where the famous bazaar was held and that's why this is the place where many of the paths started and ended to all directions, the so-called Pazarostrates (bazaar paths).

Here, the slopes ascend abruptly like stone walls, the ominous precipices are crowned with the fog and the lush vegetation provides nests for wild animals in the vast forests. Here, the song of the running water is interchanged with the whisper of the gigantic trees and the cracking of the rock.



Zoupaniotikos Ailias

Zoupaniotikos Ailias

The austere peak of mount Voio, which dominates the western part of the Region of Kozani, is Profitis Ilias, or Rosoutari. There are many who use the name Voio when referring to the mount Ilias. Locals also refer to it as Ailias Zoupaniotikos or Ailias tou Voiou. In the texts of French ambassador François Pouqueville it is mentioned as Rosoutari. It reaches 1,810 meters and, along with Paliokrimini creates another remarkable sight in Voio, that of the twin peaks, as it is lower than its "twin" by only two meters. From here on, the mountain grows wilder, great forests of beech and pine cover the steep slopes and enormous precipices create wonder and awe.

Right on the peak we find a snow-white chapel dedicated to saint Helias, which can be seen sparkling in the sun from afar. Every July 20th, inhabitants of Vythos and Pentalofos organize a group ascent, where they perform Mass and celebrate on the mountain. This route used to be carried out on horseback. The date of erection of the first temple, which was destroyed during World War II by an Italian bombshell, remains unknown. It was reconstructed in 1955 by two artisans from Pentalofos and funded by Kosmas Pantazis. Today, it is maintained by donations from citizens from the two villages and the personal efforts of the old local artisan Giannis Kassos.

*I went up Ailias,
And beheld Grammousta,
Which the Turks have spoiled,
They took a thousand sheep from
us, and two thousand goats*

(Vlachian song)



Northern Side - forests of Ailias and Paliokrimini

Right beneath it, on the foot of the mountain, the exquisite chapel of Taxiarches is still preserved in the location Fteri, where the village bearing the same name was raided by Turks and Albanians and the old inhabitants took refuge in Vythos. Today the area provides the nearby villages with high quality drinking water.

From the peak of the mountain, the unobstructed view to the steep slopes of Voio, the rest of Pindos, Olympus, the lake of Kastoria, the artificial lake of Vythos, the mountains of Western Macedonia and the enormous mountain chains of Albania is nothing short of spectacular.



The peak of Ailias and Megali Skala



The "Pyramid" of Ailias



Η παλιά Φτέρη - εκκλησάκι Ταξιαρχών

WESTERN VOIO - MOUNT VOIO

Zoupaniotikos Ailias forms a steep mountain, dominating the scenery, as the rest of Voio's peaks appear quite lower, while in reality they are not. It is one of the most characteristic peaks of Northern Pindos, due to its shape, which from the west resembles a perfectly equilateral pyramid. The lush vegetation does not cease until only a few meters from the chapel. Forests of beech on the northeast side interchange with pines on the southwest, in an area characterized as being of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where several streams spring from.

This area is not accessible by car, but there are paths that begin from Pentalofos or Vythos and cross the southeast side of the mountain. From Vythos and Agerinos there is also the possibility to access the peak through a dense network of forest roads in just 40 minutes both from the south and from the north side, meeting the European path E6. The northwest side is

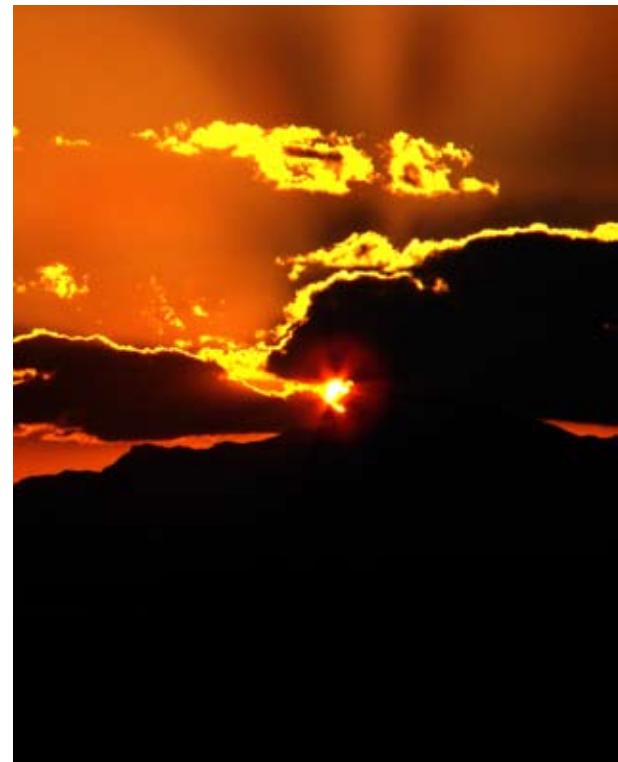
steep and inaccessible. Just before the peak, the path crosses two iron staircases perched on a rock, placed there by the Commercial Club of Pentalofos to facilitate the ascent.

Ailias Zoupaniotikos, the master of old Anaselitsa. This mountain has always created feelings of awe in me. Even now, as I read or listen about remote and misty mountains, I bring the image of this mountain in my mind. The teacher would talk to us about Olympus and the Olympian gods and I would unwittingly cast my gaze on that mountain, in case I would see one of them descending from Anaselitsa.

Day and night, the gaze of farmers scans its peak to detect the daily meteorological messages. At dawn, it smiles as it coyly accepts the caresses of the sun's rays and at dusk its breast swells with pride as it wears its golden-scarlet gown and bids the world goodnight.

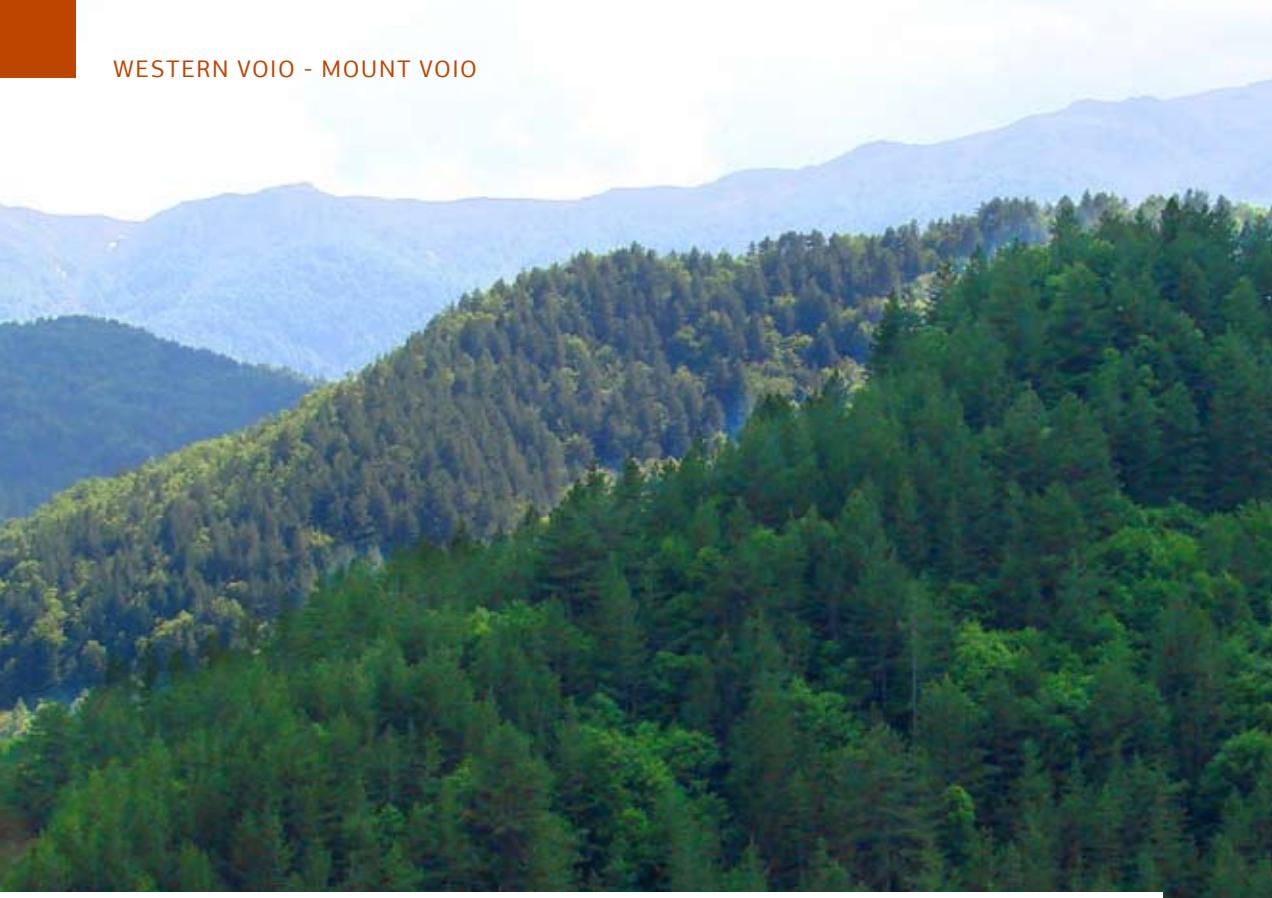
This mountain has a lot to share from the old and new history of our land. The ancient Voiotoi used to live here originally. In the bleak years of Turkish occupation, beyond it stood the region of the Albanians. When, in later years, the fascist delusion of grandeur was attempting to breach the gates of our nation, this is where the enemy's shells would reach and from where men and women would throw themselves into the fire of battle.

Lazaros Papaioannou



Chapel of Profitis Ilias

WESTERN VOIO - MOUNT VOIO

*Forests of the eastern side***Paliokrimini****and the Destroyed Village**

The upper area of Paliokrimini consists of a sub-alpine plateau at 1,700 meters, between the settlements of Polykastano in the east and Kypseli in the west. A bulge of the plateau along the ridge of Voio abruptly forms the 1,812 meter high crest. The mountain is lush with vegetation. On the eastern and milder side, forests of beech and chestnuts dominate the landscape. Conversely, on the western, steep and impressive gorge in the area of Tsouka, pines, beeches and an enormous, 300-meter high precipice compose an

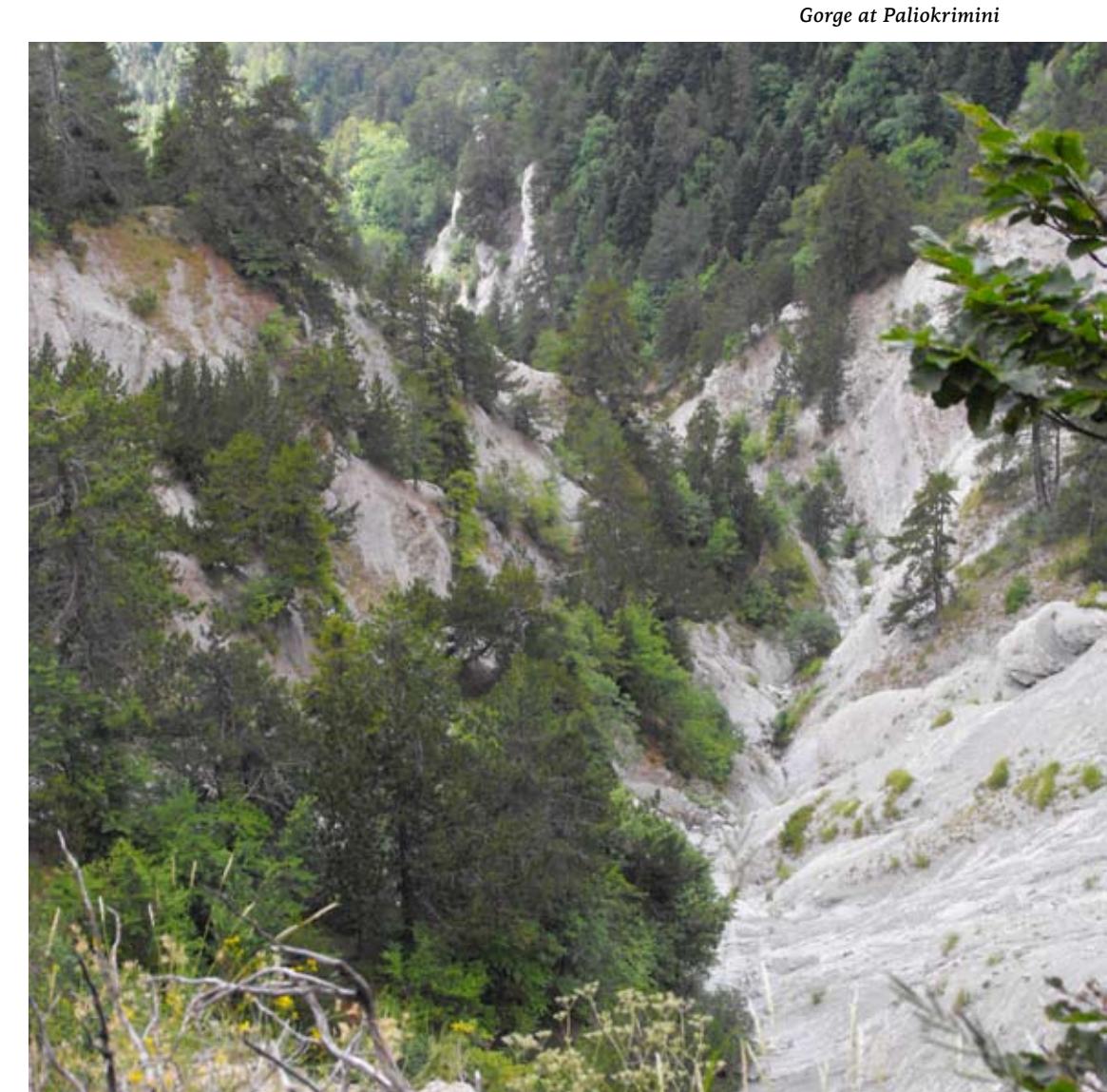
imposing scenery. The precipice is one of the biggest in Northern Pindos, perhaps exceeding that of Haros, which can be found further up. This beetling cliff is oriented to the northwest, and is not visible from Kypseli which is right underneath, or from Paliokrimini. It can only be seen from the villages of Grammos and is accessible if one leaves path E6 after the peak and goes downhill to the west, to the peak of Tsouka.

The sight of Paliokrimini is completely transformed, depending on whether it is

Access can only be achieved through the forest road that begins west of Polykastano, as well as through path E6, in the section Pentalofos – Nea Kotyli. The forest road continues to the south, just beneath the peak and comes to a beech forest with crystal clear springs. The undergrowth is also very rich in tea, orchis and mushrooms. It is no accident that this location was chosen by locals as the seat of the famous Mountain Feast.

Paliokrimini is named after the village which is hidden inside its lush northwest

slopes. Its location did not remain a secret for long and as a result it was raided by Turks and Albanians in the early 18th century. Thus, its name may be derived from the word Palio krymmeno (previously hidden). Remains of Palio hori can still be seen in a location known only to a few. When inhabitants were forced to abandon it, the sought refuge to the Monastery of what is now Skopje, as well as to Kastoria, Eratya, Aidonia and Vythos. Most of them, however, ended up in Tsotyli, a new location away from the high mountain and

*Gorge at Paliokrimini*

WESTERN VOIO - MOUNT VOIO

the gigantic rocks, in a landscape which is peaceful and tranquil, surrounded by a dense forest of oak trees where they built Krimini. In the area there are also Dryanova and Petritsi, as well as the 10th century

Monastery of Eisodia tis Theotokou, which had a glebe at the Paliomonastiro of Zoni, at the location Portes. Paliokrimmini is the birthplace of chieftain of the Macedonian struggle Athanasios Mproufas.

Grammos from Paliokrimini



Peak - Southern side



The cliff of Paliokrimini



Paliokrimini - Northern side

A young lad neither ate nor drank,
He talked to his weapons and tells them:
My proud rifle and cartridge belt,
You have saved me so many times, do
save me again now!
He did not finish his words
And the rebels started gathering like
leaves, like grass,
And they set out to conquer Paliokrimini.
(folk poem)

Ontria

A Rare Geomorphological Phenomenon

Ontria seems to have come straight out of a fairy tale. It is comprised of Megala Ontria (Big Ontria) to the south, and Mikra Ontria (Small Ontria) to the north. It used to be called Ontra or Lontria. It is the eastern extension of the main body of Voio. It begins abruptly from the col that is formed north of Paliorimini and concludes after 20 km, just before Argos Orestiko. The spot where the two mountain

chains connect used to be called Porta tis Pindou (Doorway of Pindos), as Voio forms an opening allowing entrance to its bosom.

The peaks of Ontria are Megali Ontra and Mikri Ontra, with an altitude of 1,589 and 1,530 meters respectively. Their form, with the triangular shape and multifaceted rocks, is very peculiar. Of course, every mountain is unique and cannot be repeated, Ontria, however, is

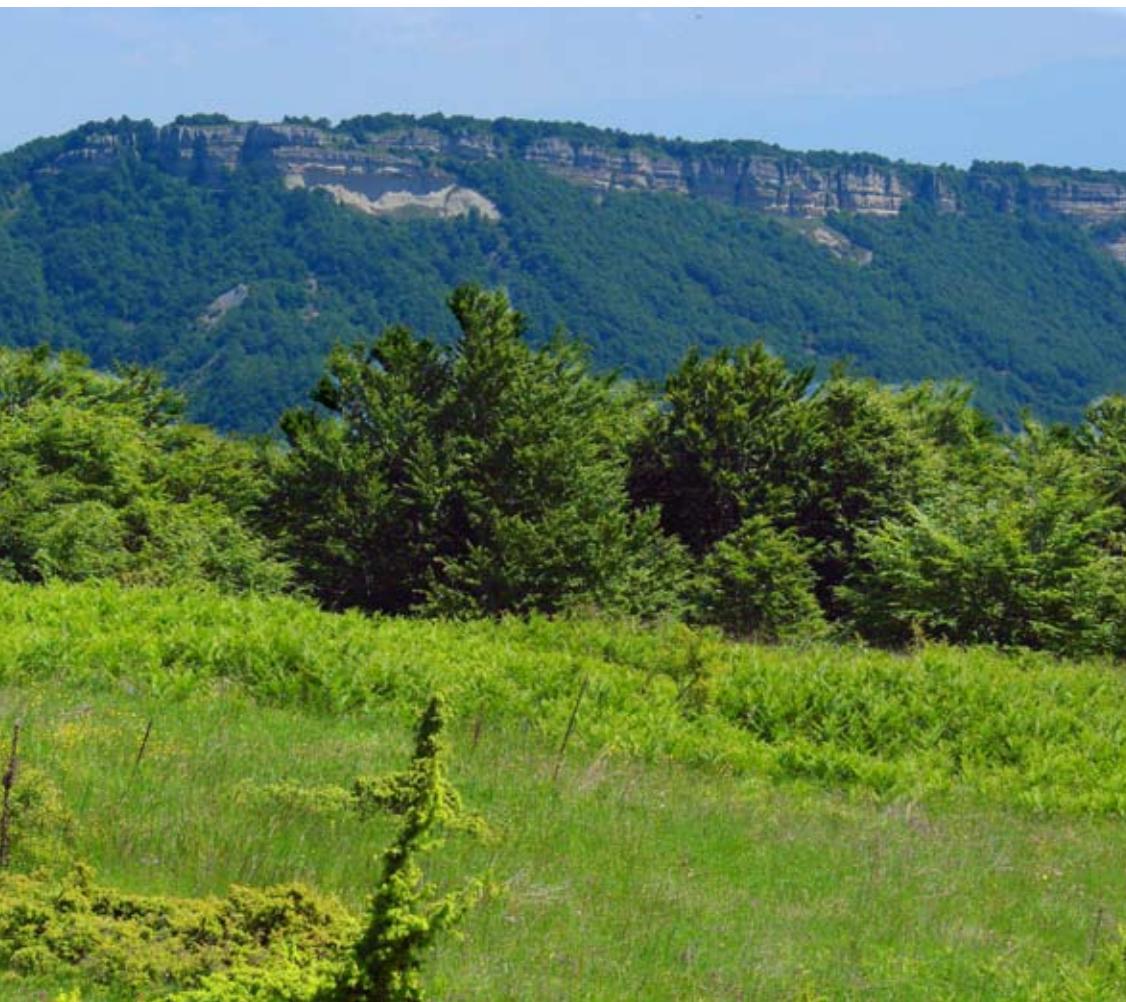
truly special. It consists of two enormous, forested, canted plateaus, perpendicular to all directions except to the east. The plateau of Megala Ontria has a diameter of 2.5 km, while the one of Mikra Ontria 1.7 km. Around them there are vertical rocks rising from 50 to 100 meters and then deep and steep gorges, allowing few accesses to the peak.

The limestone rocks that are found in the location create intense shapes. Some of the caves that have been recorded are Spilaio ton Neron (Cave of the Waters), Kleftotrypa (Hole of the Rebels), Spilia tou Nanou (Cave of the Dwarf), Spilia tou Kostaki (Cave of Kostakis),

Spilaio sti Vrysi tou Mprez (Cave at the Drinking Fountain of Mprez) and Spilia tou Ai-Mina (Cave of Saint Minas). The old legends for the Lakkoi (sink-holes) are impressive, as well as for the paths and the mysterious forests. There are also rare fossils in the area, all the way to Nostimo and Skalohori, as well as waterfalls at Mikra Ontria, near villages Lagka and Petropoulaki, similar to those of Skotomeno Nero at Vythos.

Most of the Kastanohoria of Voio are built on the slopes of Ontria. Near the peak of Orlia, at a high altitude, there used to be the village Gkotsi, which has now been destroyed. This is where Ntourvarostrata would pass, one of

Megala Ontria



Mikra Ontria



WESTERN VOIO - MOUNT VOIO

the well known, cobblestone but non-signalized paths that led to the mountain peaks. No road can access the heart of Ontria, and that is why it remains unscathed by the passage of time, closed to itself and surrounded by virgin forests.

The southern extension of Ontria is Klepsios, with the same orientation and altitude close to 1,300 meters. Gorges, mountainous valleys and cliffs compose a wild and harsh landscape from the side of the village of Dafni to the south, while the north side, with a view of

Polykastano, is covered by so dense forests that the mountain appears inaccessible. Just like Ontria, it consists of a peculiar plateau with vertical cliffs. Klepsios combines all the advantages of an impregnable spot, which is why it used to be a castle. To complete its fortification, a wall more than one meter thick had been built on the east side, remains of which can still be seen today. The old fort, due to the extended view, is likely to have been used for the passage of information through signals of fire that could be seen from peak to peak.

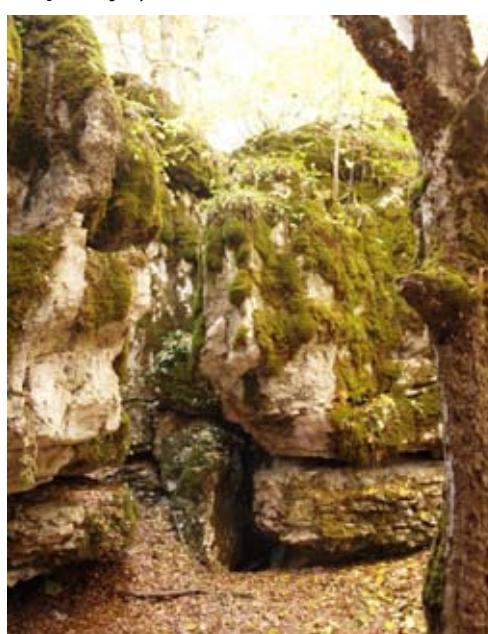
Peculiar rocks



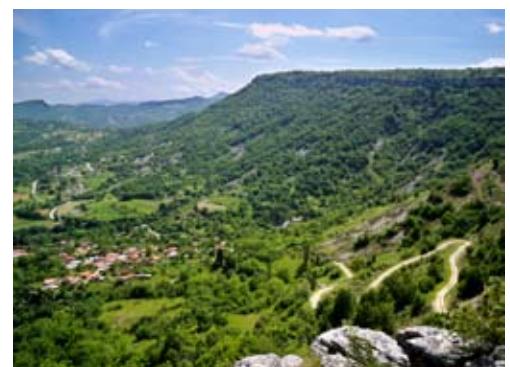
Ontria during winter



The crest of Ontria



The floor of Spilaiovarathro



The crest of Ontria



Klepsios and the village of Dafni

Taliaros

and its Role during the Civil War

Taliaros is the westernmost part of Voio, deep inside the gorges of North Pindos. Its main body begins at Eptahori and ends between Dotsiko and Kalloni, one of its branches, however, reaches south, beneath Vasilitsa and to the villages of Ziaka. It is a peculiarly oblong mountain, that appears to be the same in all its parts, with steep, round slopes, like a giant serpent squashed between the large mountain chains. Its width is small, its length, however, exceeds 20 km. Its peak is Thanasoulas, with an altitude of 1,547 meters. It connects Voio with Smolikas and further perplexes the

intricate geomorphology of the area. It runs parallel to the low part of the main body of Voio, south of Zoupaniotikos Ailias. Four crystal clear streams spring from Taliaros. From the east side run the streams Eptahoritiko and Kapsalia, with its medicinal springs at location Mpania Pentalofou or Loutra Katsika. Further down, Kapsalia form Paliomagero, the largest confluence of river Pramoritsa. From the west side begin the north springs of Venetikos and stream Zouzouliotiko, which discharges into Sarantaporos. Due to the vast forests of beeches, firs and pines, and due to its secluded

location, away from settlements and roads, it is a wildlife reserve for animals such as the bear, the wolf, the wild boar and the deer. These combined forests cover it almost in its entirety, offering a magical landscape, especially during the autumn, when the mountain can take more than ten different shades. When locals refer to a wild and densely forested land, they always compare it to Taliaros. Path E6 crosses Taliaros perpendicularly, and connects Pentalofos with the bridge of Zouzouli, but in many spots it has disappeared under the lush vegetation. There used to be

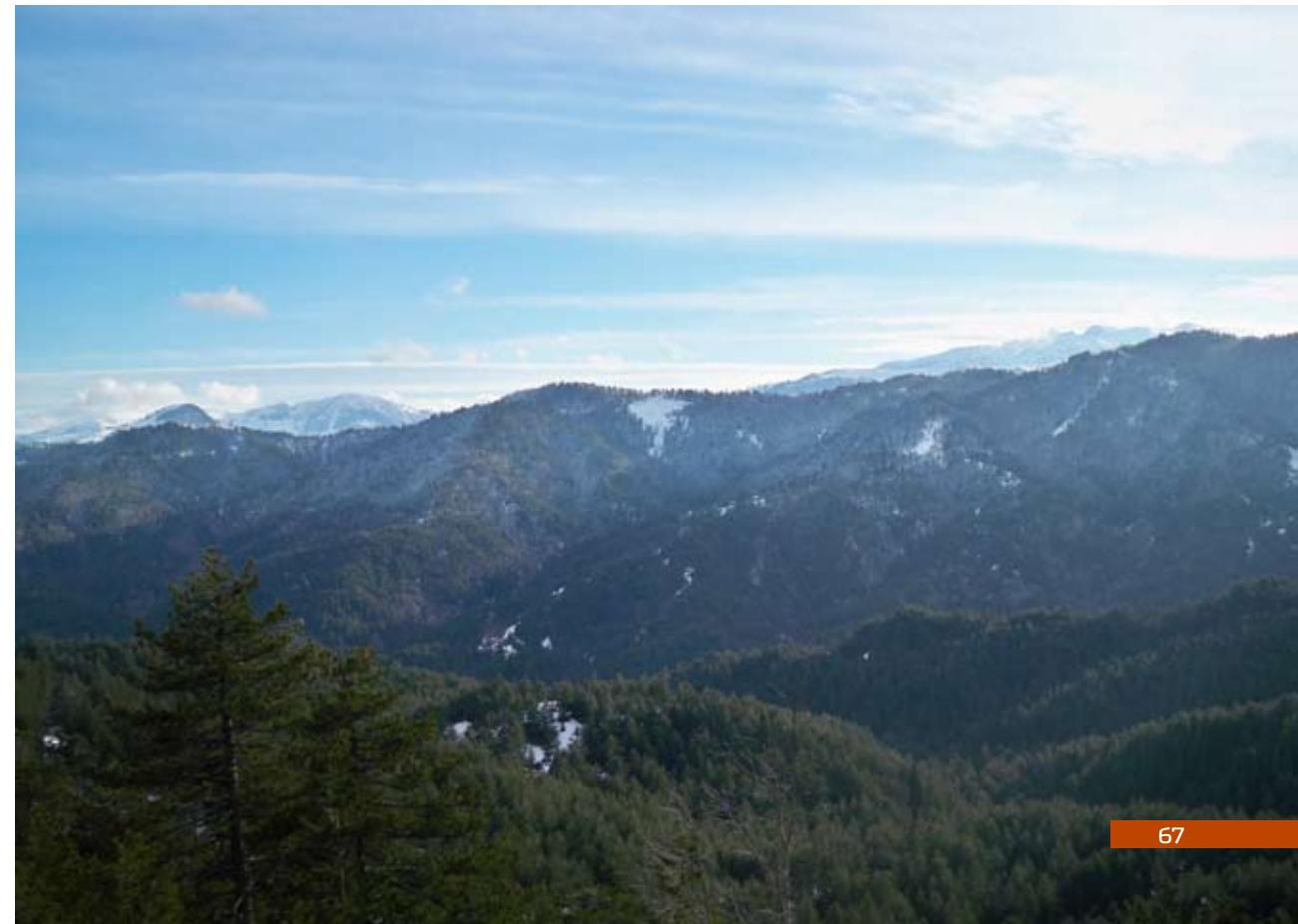
a very picturesque village here, Tseros, which was close to Dilofos, but it, too, was raided. Its inhabitants ended up in Dilofos and Krimini. At the foot of Taliaros, the Monastery of Agios Georgios (Saint George) is preserved as well as the temple of Koimiseos tis Theotokou (Dormition), two monuments of exquisite art. Today, visitors can easily access them and admire the wild western side of the mountain, through the new road that was opened to link Eptahori with Dotsiko.

The location of Taliaros has proven to be ideal as a resort, not only of wildlife but of whole

The peak of Taliaros – “Thanasoulas”



Taliaros during winter



WESTERN VOIO - MOUNT VOIO



armies. Here, as in Zoupaniotikos Ailias, the line of defense of the Democratic Army had been organized, during the bleak years of the Civil War, as these two mountains dominate the landscape of Voio, and are united to obstruct the way to Grammos. In the dense forests, an entire brigade of 600 men had camped, half of which were at the neck of Lykokremasma, which used to be the sole way of accessing Eptahori, and the other half at Dotsiko. Despite the strong fortifications, the defense did not last and on July 2nd 1948 Taliaros was abandoned following a fierce battle. It has remained an abandoned, wild and unknown



The vast pine forests of Taliaros

land ever since, almost virgin to any human activity, hiding well the dark memories of the tragic war. Signs from the ditches of artillery can still be seen, as well as the uprooted trees and the craters opened by bombshells. In September of '49 the highest grades of the Primary School of Pentalofos boarded military automobiles which took us to the location "Tria Alonia", beneath Taliaros. We watched the works of the construction of the public road, which would connect Pentalofos and Eptahori. There was a brief mention of the fierce battles that had taken place in the previous summer in those hills. The cracking of the machine guns

and the explosions of the shells were but a memory for us. We enjoyed the lovely scenery. The air reached us full of the aromas of the conifers' retina. We passed from the drinking fountain and quenched our thirst in our palms. It was a rejoice. The grandeur of nature and the absence of people made the presence of God all the more intense. To us, the children of war, this excursion meant something truly special.

**Excerpt from the book
W“A Village in the Civil War“**



Taliaros and Smolikas

The Peculiar Geology of Mount Voio

Rare Fossils

The area of Voio used to be part of the seabed of an ancient sea, Tethys. The process of transforming the seabed of an ancient sea into today's landscape lasted tens of millions of years. The recession of Tethys 20 million years ago left behind a level area covered in sand. As time passed, the hundreds of thousands of tons of sand were drifted away by streams, revealing a vast rocky area of bluestone. The clash of the tectonic plates of Africa and Eurasia gradually elevated the area, creating today's mountains. Not all types of bluestone present the same endurance needed for construction purposes, but the bluestone of Western Voio is highly durable, due to its high concentration in quartz, one of the sturdiest minerals on Earth. The peculiarity of the area lies in that it was not in great depths but near the shore, where it was natural for more sediments to be deposited from the ancient land nearby, as well as the remains of living organisms. Their long compression from new material deposited on them led to the formation of today's sedimentary strata. The intense presence of limestone in Ontria (also sedimentary area) resulted in their geological diversification from the rest of western Voio, the creation of harder strata and the formation of caves and catavothra. This entire geological process resulted in the presence of rare fossils in many areas, the most characteristic being the zone Skalohori-Nostimo-Asprokklisia, where



Rocks at Karaouli



Fossil at the peaks of mount Voio



Rock at Ailias

a Museum and a Park of the Fossilized Forest have been created, as this area was most probably just over the shore. Shells and fossils of marine organisms can be found scattered in many locations, such as Karaouli at Vythos.

The most impressive element of mount Voio is the number of its peaks, the characteristic grey color and the peculiar shape of its rocks, which is a result of its unique geological formations. The manner in which it was elevated led to the stratification of its minerals from southwest to the northeast, which is why the southwest slopes are particularly steep, while the northeast are milder. Thus, the mountain appears to be facing the south and the west, with its back to the north and east. The milder and more densely forested eastern slopes have facilitated settlement and the creation of today's villages. The large number of ferns that can be found in the area reveal the remains of a large ancient forest that used to cover the entire Voio.

The mountain's rocks probably also owe their peculiarity to more recent geological phenomena. One of the glaciers that



Rocks at Ontria

WESTERN VOIO - MOUNT VOIO

appeared in Europe several thousand years ago is likely to have reached Northern Pindos and have sculpted the mountain slopes leaving ridges and bulges that are still visible.

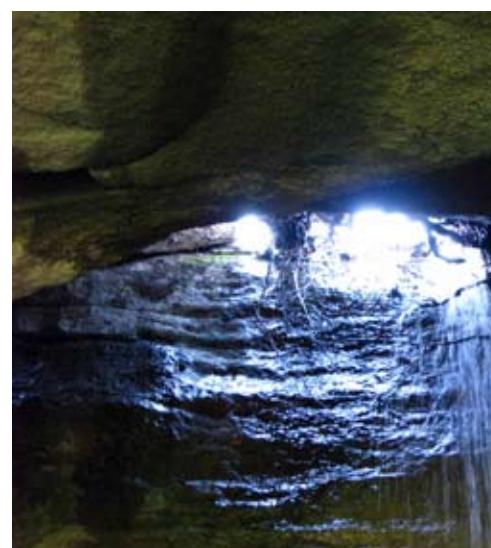
The cold medicinal springs of stream Kapsalia,

at the location Mpania of Pentalofos, are also a significant phenomenon, with extremely beneficial qualities, as well as the geothermal field that appears in Neapoli.

Rocks at Karaouli



Valley of Fteri at the plateau of Paliokrimini



Cave of Pentalofos



Cave of Pentalofos



Cave of Pentalofos

The Enormous Cliffs of Haros at Pyrgos Kotylis

In the northern part of Voio, which belongs to the Kastoria Region, we find Pyrgos Kotylis, the mountain's fourth highest peak, with an altitude of 1,768 meters. A series of impressive, vertical rocks is the southern extension of Pyrgos, a natural wonder right above the remains of Palia Kotyli. These are the enormous cliffs of Haros, or Spanoura, and its natural continuation towards Kypseli, rock Krithari tou Ntina, and Katabothra. The cliffs, with the characteristic grey shades of

the rocks of Voio, are 300 meters high and are truly breathtaking. Underneath, a slope covered in pines continues all the way to the village. The back side is also covered with dense forests of beech lower down, in the area of Nestorio. Their highest altitude is 1,627 meters.

The cliffs can be admired from below with a visit to Palia Kotyli. But the sight is most impressive from above, from the small plateau

Kotyli and the cliffs of Haros



The cliffs of Haros

they form. This is where the forest road leads, starting north of the neck of the national road Kastoria-Ioannina. In essence it is the northern continuation of the path Diashisi Voiou (Voio Crossing), which links Pentalofos with Nea Kotili along the mountain's crest. The area was thus named (Haros=Charon, in Greek mythology the aged boatman who ferried the souls of the dead across the river of Hades), because at a certain spot the narrow path that linked the area of Palia Kotyli and Nea Kotyli would freeze during the winter



The area of Pyrgos Kotylis

WESTERN VOIO - MOUNT VOIO

and passers would slip, falling to their death. Another version says that this terrible name was given due to another tragic incident. During the civil war, the three remaining soldiers of the Democratic Army that defended the hill refused to surrender and jumped from the cliff. In memory of this, a monument has been erected at the top of the cliff, with the inscription Honor and Glory

to the Eagles of the Democratic Army along with carved figures of three armed men with angelic wings. A few kilometers beneath the cliffs, at location Livadia, near Palia Kotili, the Park of National Reconciliation serves as a gate to Grammos, where the visitor can study the history and the nature of the area, while there are also available services of touring, accommodation and dining.

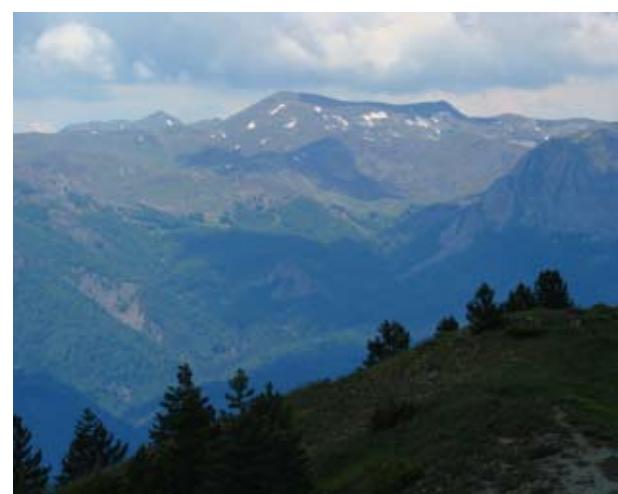
The cliffs of Haros



Kotyli and the cliffs of Haros



Mountaineers at the edge of the cliff



Grammos and the peak of the cliffs

Nature's Wonders

Footsteps and Human-like Rocks

In many areas of west Voio there are footsteps on the rock, such as that of the horse of Saint George after the forest of Pentalofos, and the footprint of saint Helias or Christ at the top of Karaouli, at Vythos. Huge human footsteps can also be seen at Hrysavgi, at the rock near the location of Kazanouli. As footprints there are particularly large, locals attribute them to giants that lived there thousands of years ago and would leap from rock to rock.

Also, rocks all over the mountain have a very peculiar shape and color. Many of them have been sculpted by the forces of the wind, water or an old glacier in such a way that they appear to have the forms of humans, animals or monsters, as if they were carved by the hand of a dexterous artisan.

The footprint of Christ at Karaouli



In Karaouli of Vythos, a little above the houses there is the Prosopo (Face) a rock at the center of the mountain that resembles the head of a monster. Also near Vythos, at the area of Skotomeno Nero, as we ascend from Kato Vathra to Ano Vathra, the heads of two monsters seem to protrude from the left. The first one can be seen even better from above; right over it there is the junction of the paths for Epano Vathra and Krymmeni Vathra.

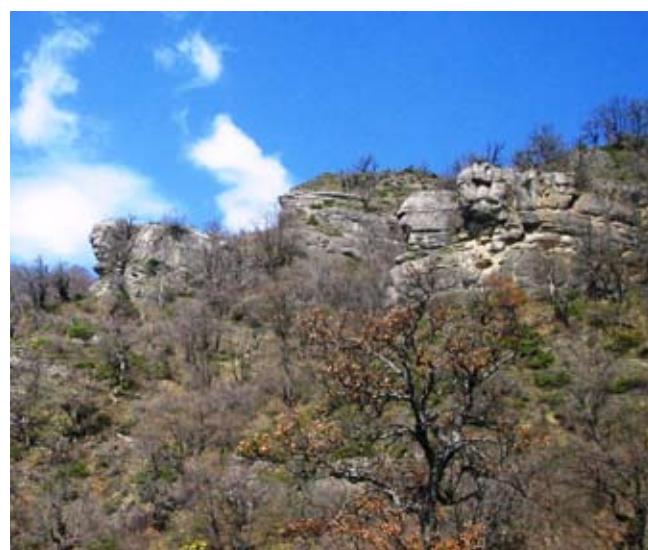
Looking at mount Donti (Tooth) of Pentalofos from Vythos, the lower rock, called Mikri Grantiska, resembles a snake, while the entire mountain, as seen from above, either from the peaks of Karaouli or of Rahis tou Avgerinou, resembles an eagle with open wings, while from the square of Pentalofos the formation truly resembles a tooth.



Stone reliefs at Karaouli



Footprints of the horst of Saint George



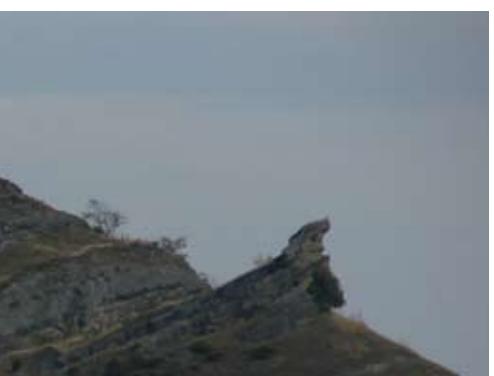
The monsters of Skotomeno Nero

Along the national road from Tsotyli to Pentalofos, a few meters after the turn of Agia Sotira, yet another monster face rises from the rocks exactly above the heads of the passers. In the same area, ascending the Skala tis Svolianis (Stairs of Svoliani), along the path To Taksidi tou Potamou Pramoritsa (The Journey of River Pramoritsa), if one closely examines the rocks on their right, they will spot an austere, gigantic human face half-protruding from the rocks.

Along the path Pentalofos-Dilofo, just before Profitis Ilias of Dilofo, at the peaks of mount Mpourgiannis, there is a series of steep cliffs that resemble dinosaurs and are called Teratomorfoi Vrahoi (Monster-like Rocks).

The enormous rocks with fossils are also quite impressive, located on the right of the road just before the Monastery of Agios Athanasios Zikovistis, after Damaskinia. They are placed in an array that gives an impression of boulders placed on purpose by giants. Such rocks can also be found elsewhere in Ontria.

Especially in Ontria, the steep rocks that take human forms are numerous. Northeast of Dragasia, at the dirt road ascending to location Akropoli, there is a huge rock along the rocky crest that resembles a large man,



To órthio φίδι της μικρής Γκραντίσκας

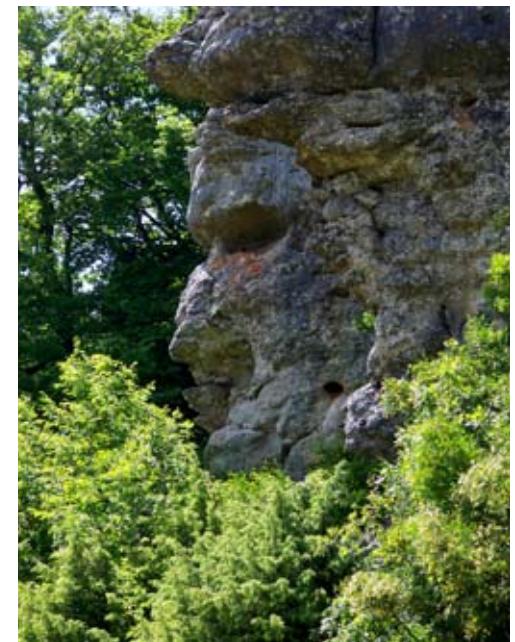
WESTERN VOIO - MOUNT VOIO

namely Hercules, who used to be worshipped here as a deity. The representation is so accurate that it leads to the conclusion that it could have been carved by a human hand. At Ontria of Zoni there are also the forms of two women and legend has it that at the years of slavery they escaped the hands of Albanians with the pretext that they would go and fill their goglets with water. When they realized there was no escape, they prayed to god and asked

him to turn them into marble on the spot with their goglets on their shoulders, rather than be dishonored in the hands of the conquerors.

All these strange phenomena, the endless mysterious forests, the wild fauna, the hidden paths and the old legends make Voio seem like a very special otherworldly place, nearer the realm of fantasy and of fairy tales.

Huge rocks at Ontria



The face of Hercules – side view



Monster at Agia Sotira



The Dinosaurs at Profitis Ilias of Dilofos



The face of Hercules at Ontria

River Pramoritsa

and its Waterfalls

Pramoritsa is the second (after Venetikos) biggest influent of Aliakmonas and one of Greece's most beautiful streams. The area's vast variety of geomorphic characteristics create a winding mountainous river of exquisite beauty. From the Monastery of Agia Triada until the villages of Tsotyli, it has carved the large sarsens creating a spectacular valley. For hundreds of years, its route from the heart of Voio down to the lowlands has erod-

ed the mountains to a great degree, creating steep river beds full of cliffs and dense forests. Its springs are located high in Ailias and Paliokrimini. The basin from which it gathers its water is large and complex. The streams that are deposited here are dozens and as a result, after it is united with Paliomagero, a rich and wide river is created. This large basin is also the reason of its behavior. It can be quite violent, especially after heavy rainfall

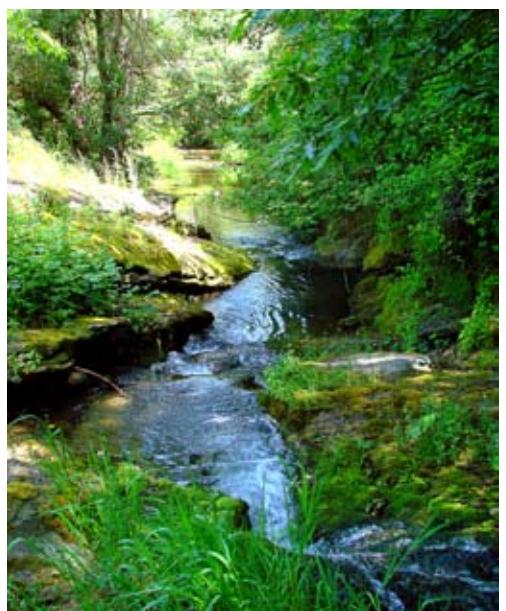
Pramoritsa at the area of Vouhorina



River Pramoritsa

or an abrupt meltdown of snow, as its small streams cannot withhold the volume of water that comes rushing down. Between the late summer and the early Autumn, many of them dry out and the river essentially disappears, but in the Summer and Spring it regains its vigor. This is the ideal period to admire its hidden treasures, the waterfalls.

The Neraidokatarraktis (Waterfall of Fairies) of Hrapa and the Trapezoidis Katarraktis (Trapezoid Waterfall) of Gagamita are very close to the forest road which intersects with the provincial road that connects Vythos with Avgerinos right after the new bridge of Pramoritsa. They were discovered only recently and are just 5 minutes from the forest road, following the signaled route. The waterfall of Gagamitas appears first, just before the drinking fountain bearing the same name. It is just 2 meters high, its width is big, however, as is the volume of its water. The vegetation and rocks around it create a scenery that can only be found in tropical rivers.

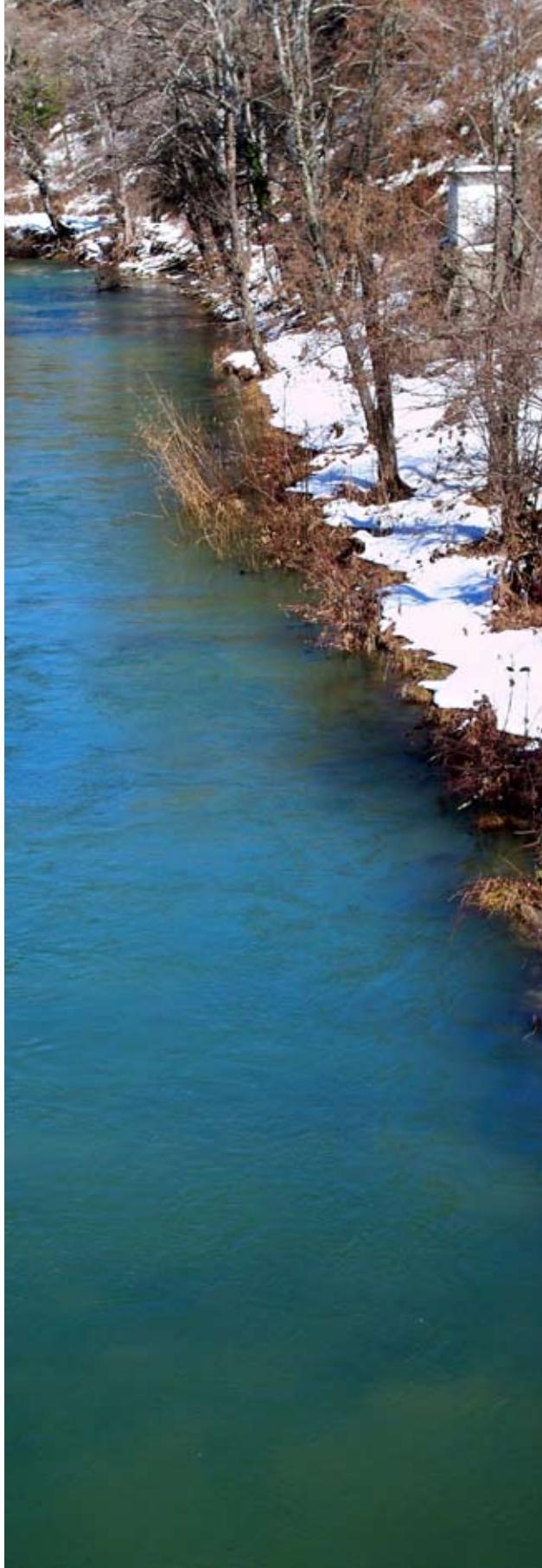


The lush vegetation around the river

WESTERN VOIO - MOUNT VOIO

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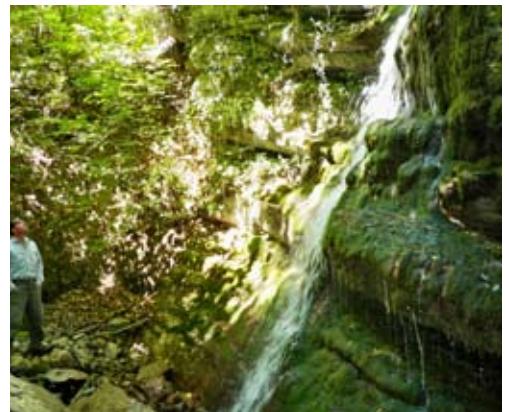


Following the lower continuation of the dirt road by the river and some kilometers further, we find the waterfalls of Hrapa, well hidden after the cemented road. The water falls almost vertically from a height of 8 meters, having carved around it a landscape straight out of a fairytale. The broader area, surrounded by beeches and firs, is called Kallogritsa. Here, one of the Palaiohoria of Vythos and Avgerinos used to be located, before it was raided. At about 30 meters past the river, if one leaves the road and walks uphill for about 10 minutes to the left, he comes across the touching sight of the ruins and the demolished houses.

Along the path The Journey of River Pramoritsa, other, smaller waterfalls can be seen. Initially, the route leads to the waterfall of the sluice of Agios Polykarpos at Vythos and then to the waterfalls of the river of Nteri at Pentalofos. Way lower, beyond the path and below the park of Vouhorina, there is the waterfall of the big sluice, which is visitable if one walks for 5 minutes along the cemented road by the national road, near the turn to villages Koryfi and Hrysavgi.



Waterfall at the bridge of Nteri



Waterfall of Hrapas



Gagamita waterfall

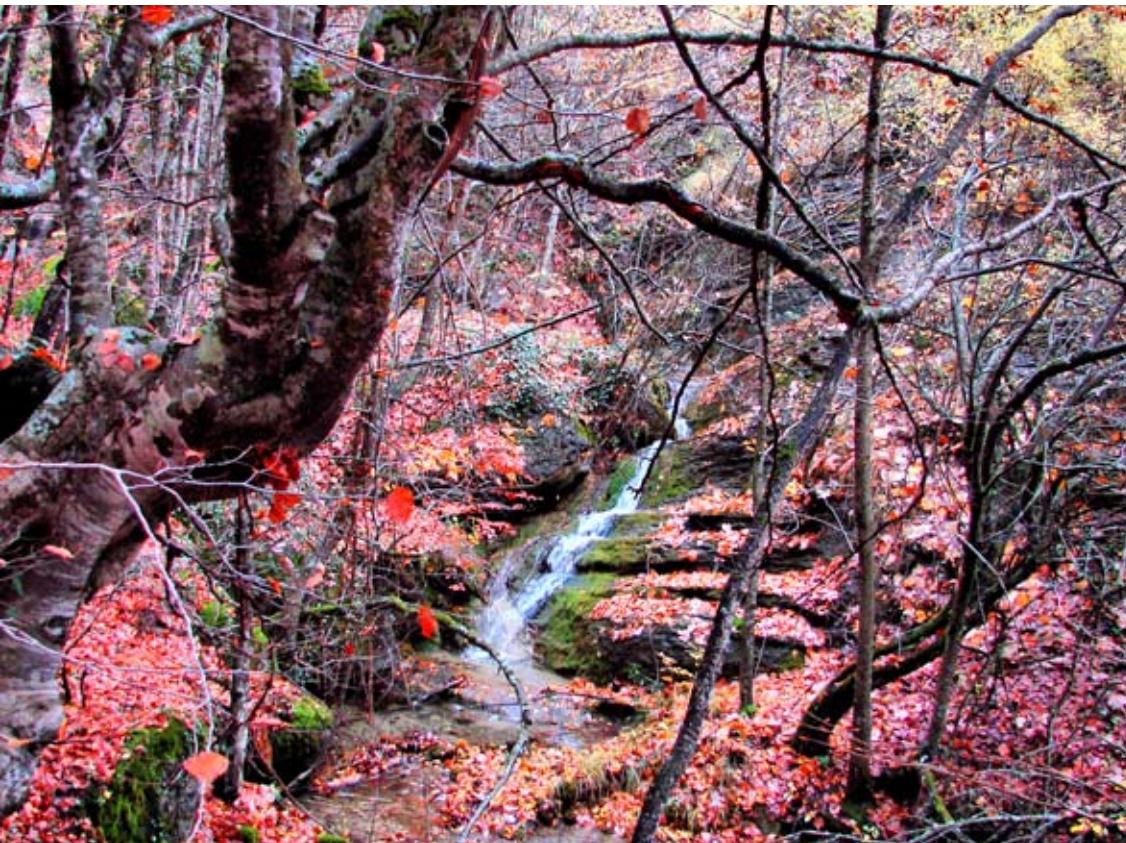
The Waterfalls of Skotomeno Nero

A Natural Monument

Behind Vythos, between Stroziavo and Sioupotista, there is a rare natural monument, Skotomeno Nero (Killed Water). The path that used to lead there had been forgotten for many years and has been recently rediscovered through the Pindos program by youngsters of the Ecological Movement of Kozani and painter Argyris Pafilis, who afterwards dedicated a painting to the area. Below there is the mixed forest of Sioupotista with many age-long chestnuts, the oldest of which can be found a little after the dirt road that leads to the area, at the beginning of the path, just

before the picturesque hut of Papazisis. The panicked inhabitants of Vythos sought refuge in this forest in July 1944, when the Germans arrived in the village to burn it down. After the end of the forest begins Mavriaha, or Mavri Rahi (Black Slope), which is thus called due to the dark shade of its cliffs. The slope grows continuously higher until it reaches 1,535 meters, just before the peak of Profitis Ilias. In a peculiar way, a stream flows perpendicularly to its rocks and forms a series of waterfalls, three of which are quite large and placed one above the other. This is Skotomeno Nero or

Forest of Sioupotista – Autumn



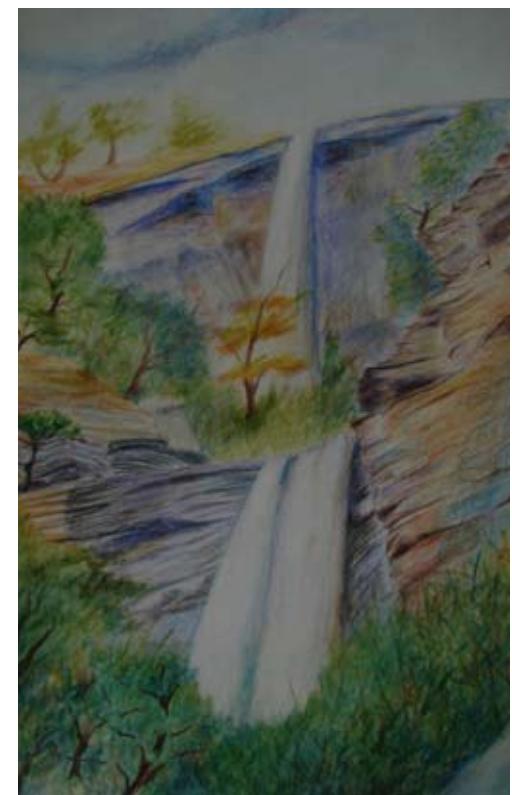
The hut of Papazisis at the forest of Sioupotista

Kremasi, whose memory remained alive only in the minds of the old inhabitants of Vythos and of shepherds. Today, the routes that lead there have been signaled and the path has been opened through the deep forest. As a result the waterfalls are now visitable and a landmark of not only the area, but of the entire Voio.

The first is Kato Vathra (Lower Pond), 20 meters high. Initially the water falls vertically and then begins an erratic route among the rocks. There are many who are not aware of the other waterfalls and refer to this waterfall alone as Skotomeno Nero. From here on, the next stop is further up, at Epano Vathra (Upper Pond), which can be accessed either via the smooth, perimetric path (around 40 min.) or a straight, steep path (10 min.). Epano Vathra is 30 meters high from which, remarkably, water falls perfectly vertically and unobstructed. It hovers in the air changing directions according to the direction of the wind. An enormous rocky roof enables visitors to stand exactly behind the waterfall, as well as right opposite, as the path safely reaches there, too. The last to reveal itself is Krymmeni Vathra (Hidden

Pond), which is thus called because it is not visible from anywhere. The water falls gradually in stairs, from a height of 10 meters. The landscape here, contrary to the other two waterfalls, is more serene and offers an opportunity for a dive to the more daring at heart.

In spring, as Easter approaches, the stream rushes joyfully through the valleys; during the summer though, it dries up, leaving only vertical rocks, an image quite impressive all the same. The residents of Vythos say that in the old times, when it rained and snowed more, the waterfalls had plenty of water. Although located in an area protected from the northern winds, they are reported to have frozen, due to the high altitude, which even reaches 1,200 meters. You should see it frozen during the winter, crystals reach all the way down,



"Skotomeno Nero" – by painter Argyris Pafilis

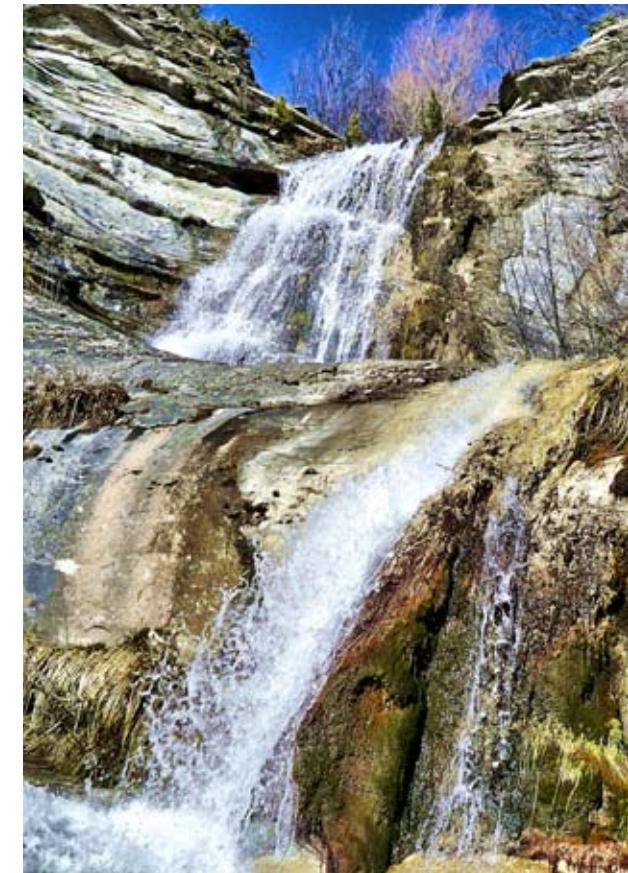
WESTERN VOIO - MOUNT VOIO

narrates the experienced lumberjack and connoisseur of the area Lefteris Gyftakis.

One reaches Skotomeno Nero by a 2-hour trek from Vythos, via the signaled path Vythos – Ailias. Alternatively, one can use a 4x4 car and follow for about 3.5 km the dirt road that begins from the provincial road that connects Vythos with the Monastery of Agia Triada, passing from the hut of Sakis, from where one can acquire fresh goat milk. The path leads exactly beneath the forest of Sioupotissa, from where it is a 30-minute ascend to the first waterfall. The area is accessed even more easily by the upper forest road which goes up Profitis Ilias and leads to the left, to the crest of Mavriaha. This way, one can reach the waterfalls from above and begin the ascend from the drinking fountain and reach his/her destination in just 20 minutes.



Epano Vathra



Krymmeni Vathra



Rock at Epano Vathra



Krymmeni Vathra as seen from above



Kato Vathra – from the side

The Artificial Lake of Vythos

A New Wetland

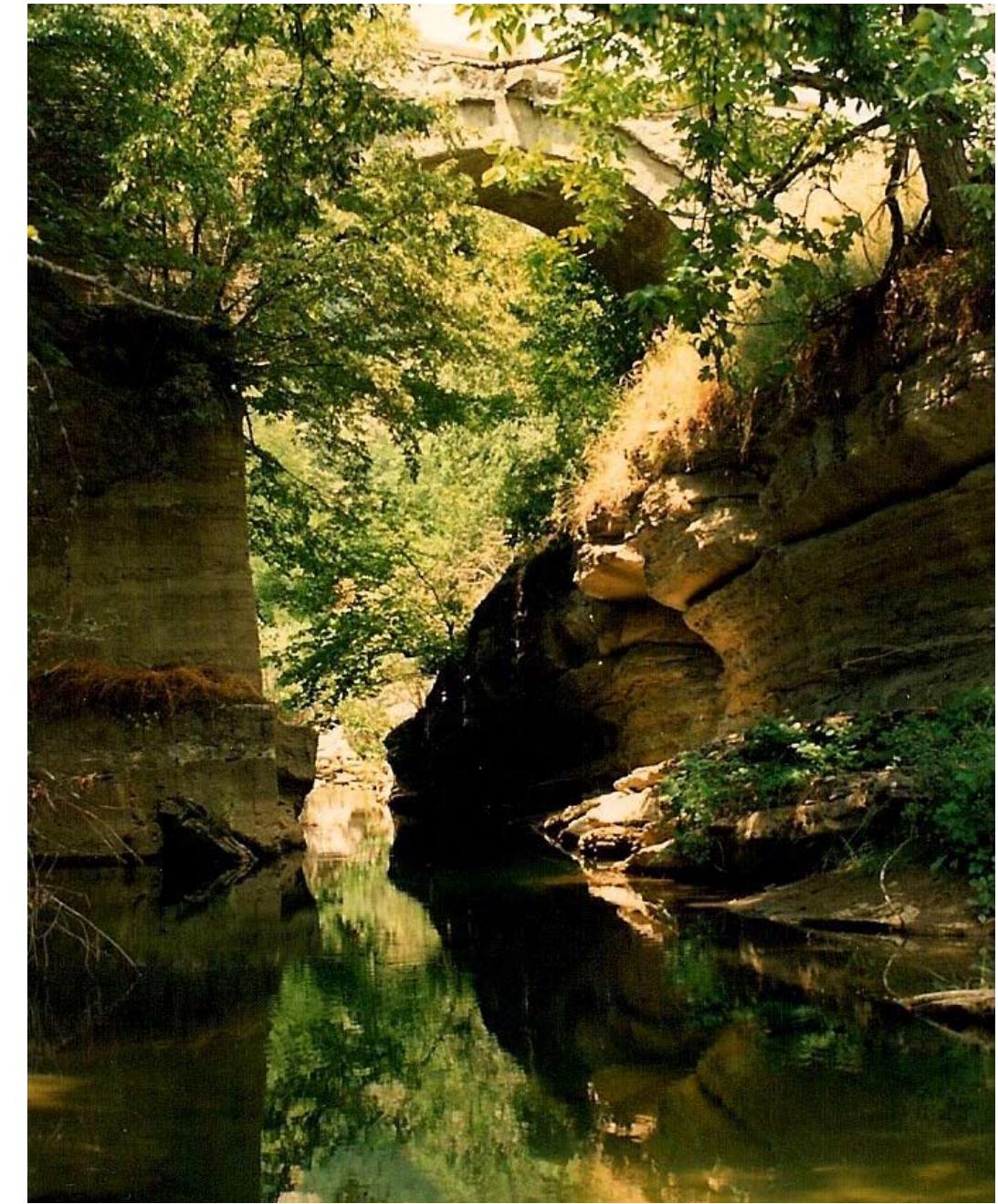
The flow of river Pramoritsa has been blocked by the dam bearing the same name, forming in 2008 the artificial lake of Vythos, which has become a rich biotope of fish and birds, enhancing the area with yet another spectacular landscape. Surrounded by mountains and at an altitude of 870 meters, its maximum depth is

50 meters, it covers an area of 75 acres and its perimeter is 5 kilometers. When the level drops, two islets emerge on the northwest side. Also, from the Eastern side the Wildlife Resort begins, which stretches all the way to the borders of the communities of Avegrinos and Agia Sotira.



The location that is currently covered by its waters was also beautiful. The inhabitants of Vythos used to have their fields and gardens there, which they willingly donated for the common good. Today, the lake supplies water to almost every settlement of the municipality of Voio.

Here, where the river would flow abruptly among the steep rocks, the now underwater bridge of Vythos can be found, Zntrougkogefyro, on the path that used to connect the village with Agia Sotira and Avgerinos.



Zntrougkogefyro

WESTERN VOIO - MOUNT VOIO

Today, the lake is the area's trademark. It attracts many excursionists, as well as fishermen, since it has been enriched with various types of fish, including the rainbow trout. It is visitable by car from the side of the dam and by the side of Vythos by car up to a point and then by a brief path, which is part of the large path

The Journey of River Pramoritsa and stretches 250 meters right next to the lake. This gives the opportunity for a walk by the crystal clear waters, the half-immersed mill of Karagiannis and the waterfall of Agios Polykarpos, in one of the most lovely locations of Voio. From above, one can admire the impressive scenery via the provincial road that leads from Vythos to the Monastery of Agia Triada and the path that connects Vythos with Avgerinos. Its northwest part penetrates the steep slopes resembling a fiord.



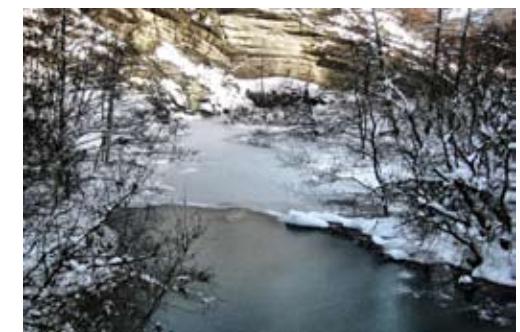
The artificial lake as seen from above



The artificial lake as seen from Vythos



The half-immersed mill of Karagiannis



Frozen part of the lake



The lake's fiord



The lake from the side of the wildlife reserve

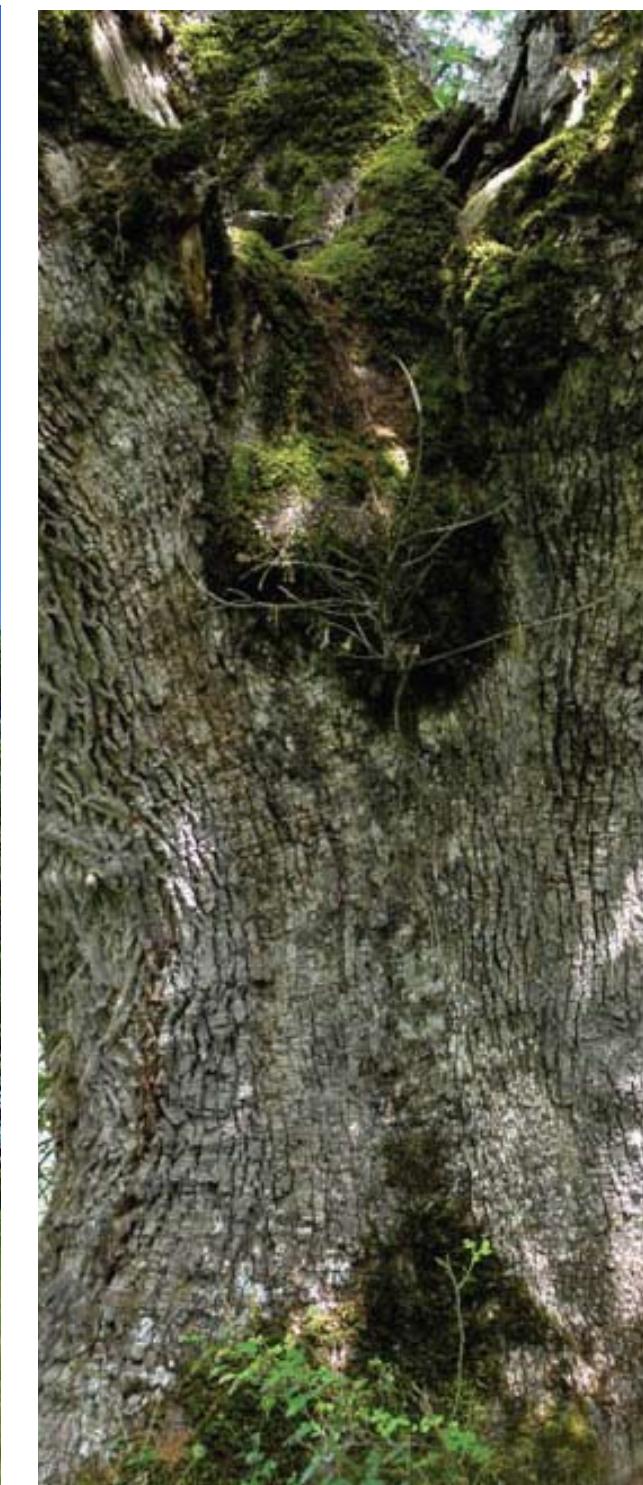
The Primeval Oak Trees

East of Vouharina, near the settlement's cemetery, one has the opportunity to come across a rare natural monument. Surrounded by legends, the primeval oak tree spreads its branches, Megalos Gerontas tis Vouhorinas (The Great Old Man of Vouhorina) as locals call it. Its circumference is 8.5 meters and despite its age remains robust, carrying the memories of centuries of local history. It is estimated to be more than 600 years old. It has been a silent witness of the Ottoman period, the artisans' journeys, the Macedonian struggle, the war of 1940, the dark period of the Civil War and then the decay of Voio with the emigration wave. It has also experienced the old, heavy winter of Pindos, the current dry summers, even thunderbolts. The legends speak of invaluable treasures hidden within it and of enormous snakes guarding them.

Another oak tree that may be of similar



The oak tree at Vouhorina



The oak tree at Hrysavgi

WESTERN VOIO - MOUNT VOIO



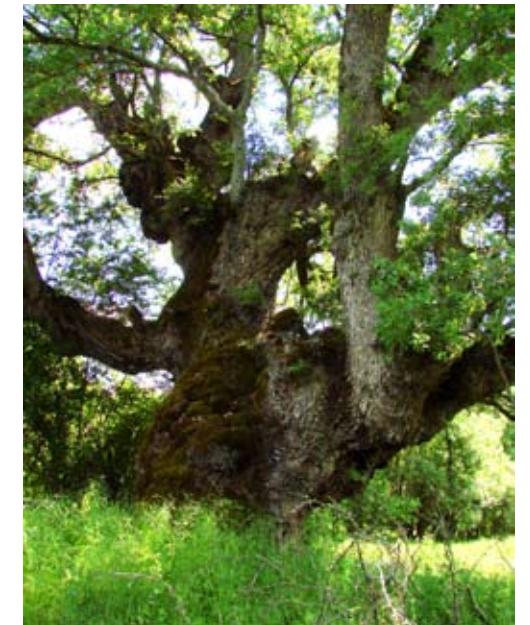
The chapel of Panagiopoula and the enormous oak



The oak tree at Morfi



The oak tree at Panagiopoula



The trunk of the oak tree at Vouhorina

age can be found along the path that connects Hrysavgi with Morfi, some 2 kilometers north of the settlement, adjacent to a field.

Younger primeval oaks can also be found in Profitis Ilias of Siatista, in Koryfi, at the chapel of Panagiotopoula between Vythos and Avgerinos, at the chapel just before Morfi, as well as in the parvis of Agios Dimitrios in Anthohori.

Similar colossal trees used to be found in Pentalofo, at locations Kokal and Ntranous tudentra. But they were sacrificed during the harsh winters of '47 and '48 for the inhabitants' increased needs in heating, their population having skyrocketed, as the army had trans-

ferred there every citizen of the surrounding 6 villages for safety reasons, during the persecution of the rebels.

It is quite possible for other primeval oak trees to be thriving in Voio, as the tree is dominant in the low slopes of the mountain in altitudes ranging from 600 to 1200 meters, forming vast forests. In fact, as almost all villages of the area are built in this zone, the species is so common that locals refer to an oak tree with the word for tree. A large part of the mountain's fauna also feeds on the abundance of its seeds.

The European Path E6

The European path E6 begins from the Scandinavian peninsula, and crossing Europe from north to south reaches the port of Igoumenitsa. From there, it ends at mount Feggari in Samothraki. Its total length is some 6,000 km. The last 1,000 km are within Greek territory, in areas that have been chosen for their natural beauty and for the existence of large and distinct paths.

The E paths have been made in 1990 by the Hellenic Federation of Mountaineering and Climbing, which also undertook the difficult task of placing signs with the assistance of local mountaineering clubs. In the process, poles, square signs on trees and paint on rocks were used. The colors of European paths are yellow and black. Many excursionists from Greece and the rest of Europe have crossed it either with 4x4 vehicles or with mountain bikes, as well as by air or mountaineering.

E6 traverses almost the entire crest of mount Voio and reaches Pentalofos from Samarina



Mountaineers at the peak od Paliokrimini



Southern side of Zoupaniotikos Ailias



The landmark at the peak of Paliokrimini

via Taliaro and Zouzouli. The big path Pentalofos-Nea Kotili is part of the main body of E6 in its entirety, which continues downhill after Nea Kotili to Nestorio, to reach Kastoria and the Prespa lakes. In Pentalofos it divaricates, crossing the low hill chain of Voio along the path Vythos-Avgerinos.





The Bridge of Velanidia

The stone bridge of Velanidia can be found South of village Velanidia at location Mpistries, along the old road to Tsotyli, among oak forests. It connects the sides of a small stream of Aliakmonas. A dirt road just outside the village leads to it.

It is single-arched, 9 meters long, 3.5 meters wide and 5.6 meters high. The date of its construction is unknown. It is a bridge not well known to most people, even locals. It has undergone considerable wear during the years, as it is also used by vehicles, but it is still in good condition and can be saved, as it poses great architectural interest as far as its staticity is concerned. Apart from its arch, the rest of the bridge is composed of raw stones without binder. Local stone has been used, so it has a characteristic light red shade.



The lush vegetation of the area often covers it, making it inconspicuous.



The Bridge of Anthohori

The bridge of Anthohori is the longest stone bridge of Macedonia, stretching for some 49 meters, while its width is 2.7 meters. It consists of 4 arches, the largest of which is 9 meters high and 15 meters wide. The northern abutment is founded in a rocky and almost vertical slope. The bridge used to connect commercially Grevena with Tsotyli and was a passage for the stocks of Northern Pindos that wintered in Thessaly. Later, it used to be part of the old dirt road that connected the two cities, while the current asphalted road by-passes it right beside it. It is also called Gefyri Tsaknohorou (Bridge of Tsaknohori, as Anthohori used to be called), as well as Gefyri Pramoritsa.

The precise date of its construction is un-

known, but according to records it has been built before 1770. Legend has it that its construction was funded by a wealthy stock farmer. When he attempted to cross the river with his animals and family, a sudden gush drowned his only daughter. The tragic father considered this as a divine sign to punish him for his cupidity, as his property was enormous. At night he dreamed of an angel, who commanded him to build a bridge at the spot of the tragedy.

The river was repaired for the first time in 1937 and again in the 70s, when it was characterized as a Listed Monument. It is 2 km from Anthohori on the way that connects it with Klimataki and abandoned Parohthio.



The Bridges of Eptahori

The bridge of Eptahori connects the two neighborhoods of Village Anilio and Papalias, connecting the banks of Eptahoritiko stream, which debouches into the river Sarantaporos. Despite being quite central, no tradition or historical evidence is preserved concerning it. Even its date of construction is unknown, although it had definitely been constructed by 1900.

It is single-arched, 19 meters long, 2.2 meters wide and 5.5 meters high while its arch is 10 meters wide. It is masterfully built, with 4 iron components in its arch and carven stone.

Further up in the same stream, just outside the village, another single-arched stone bridge can be found in a location that is somewhat difficult to access, the bridge of Nakas, which is almost invisible in summer months, as it is covered in lush vegetation. In a mere 30 meter

distance there used to be a similar bridge named Gefyri tou Kiratzi (bridge of Kiratzis), which collapsed in 1973. They used to connect Eptahori with Pentalofos and their names are derived from the surnames of the villagers that used to operate mills right beside them.

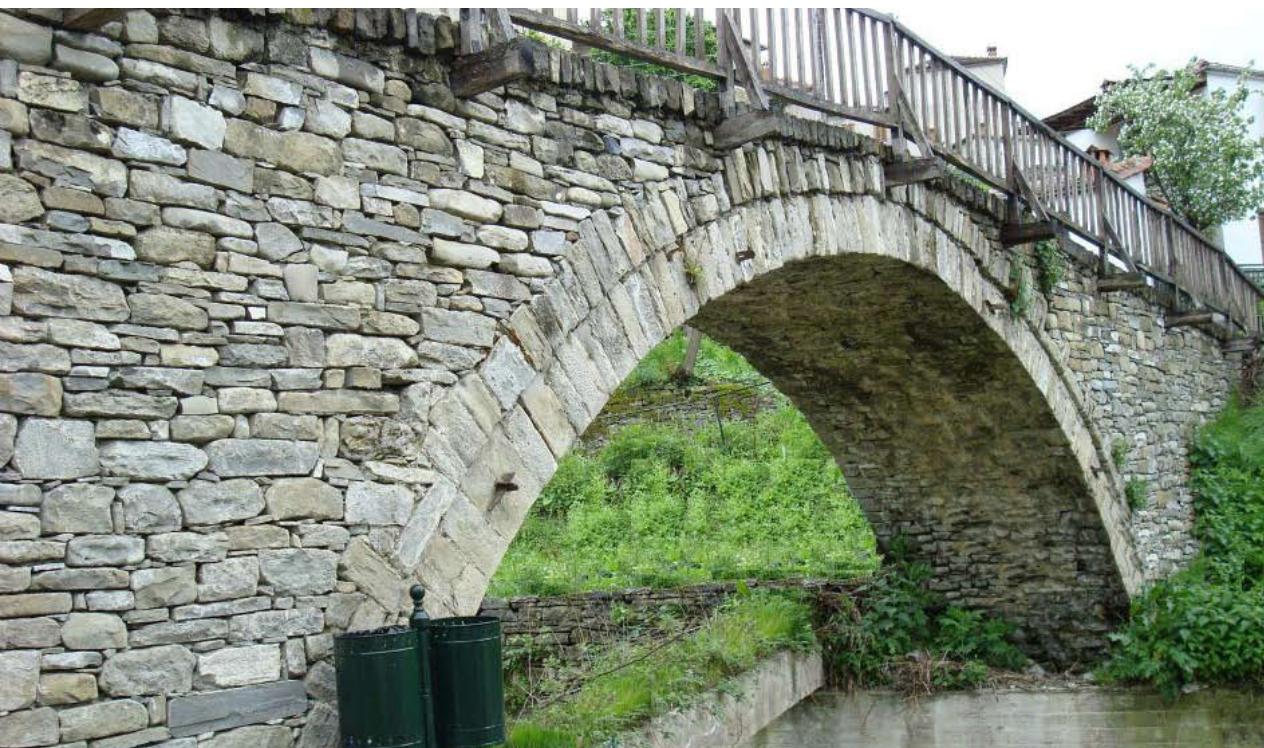


The Bridge of Kousioumplis

Behind Taliaros, in location Fraxos, in the first kilometers of the road connecting Eptahori with Zouzouli, on our right hand side we find the exquisite bridge of Kousioumplis. Stretching over stream Zouzouliotiko, it used to connect Zouzouli with Eptahori. This is also where a signaled, 45-minute trekking path leads, beginning from the square of Eptahori, offering the opportunity to admire the whole area as well as the bridge from above.

According to oral tradition, the bridge was built in the late 18th century or early 19th. Georgios Dimos, Tsiamohristos and the Galanis brothers worked for its construction, all of them artisans from Eptahori. Its total

length is 33 meters, and its width 2.4, while the length of its arch is 14 meters and its height 8. In kleidi, the middle stone of the arch that ensures the stability of the entire bridge, there is a carved head. It was reconstructed in the early 90s with funds from citizens of Eptahori. Its more recent damages have also been repaired recently, that had been caused by erosion, putting the entire construction in danger of collapse. There also used to be a watermill next to the bridge. An interesting architectural element is a small relieving window on its western side.



The Bridge of Zouzouli

The downhill dirt road after Zouzouli soon leads to the stone bridge bearing the same name and the watermill of Nakis, which are both Zouzouliotiko. This is where a signaled, 40-minute path also leads, beginning from the settlement's center. Furthermore, International path E6 passes over it on its way to Samarina from Pentalofos. The alternations of color and rock on the harsh landscape that surrounds the bridge captures the visitor's imagination, and this is no surprise, as the area is on the threshold between the colossal Smolikas and the foot of the diverse Voio, among forests and unspoiled by human activity.

The bridge was built in 1880 in location Kazania, to connect Zouzouli, Fourka and Samarina with Pentalofos, being the most

significant passage for merchants, travelers and livestock of Vlachs from Epirus to Western Macedonia. Tradition has it that its construction was funded by a mule driver from Fourka in memory of his brother who had drowned in the stream. Another version mentions that it was funded by a local squire because he was moved by the drowning of a young girl, when the troop of shepherds to which her family belonged attempted to cross the stream. The artisans that built it were from Kastaniani of Konitsa and were considered Epirus' finest. Manthos Dimitrios from Zouzouli witnessed its foundation and has confirmed the date of construction.

It is 25 meters long, 8 meters high and its arch stretches for 15 meters.



The Bridge of Koiladi

In the semi-mountainous zone, in the drainage basin of the confluence of Velos, we find village Koiladi. A few meters after its last houses, the banks of a stream that locals call Tsavaleriotiko, are connected by a single-arched stone bridge. In 1905, after several floods that had destroyed the wooden bridges until then, the Islamized residents of Valaades decided to erect one made of stone. The project was assigned to artisans from Polykastano, who constructed deep foundations on the two opposing rocks and asked of the inhabitants to sacrifice an animal there, to ensure the stability of the bridge. The residents first proposed a rooster and then a sheep, but the artisans declined both offers, as they had their eyes set on the Hodja's three-month old fatted calf that grazed nearby. Not wanting to reveal

their true intentions, they announced that the river itself would decide what sacrifice it really desired. So, they waited for a rainy day and hearkened the buzz of water in the gorge. The sound resembled the bellow of a calf and thus the residents were convinced that the calf had to be sacrificed. In half a month the construction of the bridge had been concluded and it proved to be quite durable in the passage of time. For its construction, asbestos from location Palikoulia of Polykastano was also used. Its length is 15 meters and it even serves vehicles, as it is part of the road leading to Anthousa. Its width is 2 meters and its height 6.5 meters. During the summer months, vegetation covers it to such a degree that it renders



The Bridge of Palia Kotili

In the north part of mount Voio, 2 kilometres of dirt road lead to the ruins of Palia Kotili, at an altitude of 1,200 meters. In the village, apart from the main church of Agios Giorgos, a small stone bridge is also well-preserved. The recent fire of Grammos, which made its way through here, luckily did not cause damage, unlike the abandoned houses to which it was the coup de grâce. The single-arched



bridge of Palia Kotili was constructed in the 19th century to serve the residents' everyday transport needs among the village's neighborhoods. It bridges the banks of the stream that descends from the Tower. It is a few meters behind the church and is not easily discernible, due to the lush vegetation. It has been observed that a bear occasionally nests near it



The Bridge of Krimini

The bridge of Krimini was built in 1802 on river Pramoritsa. It was constructed to connect Krimini with Louvri and Tsotyli, and continues to do so for over 210 years. The asphalted road goes over it and connects Tsotyli and Krimini 2 km before the village.

It is five-arched, but its last and smallest arch has been covered by the river's sedimentations and is not visible. Its big arch, at the center of which there was a stone with the inscribed date of its construction, was blasted on September 3rd 1947 and was since replaced with a cement slab.

Here, the river is mild and its width is significantly increased. Thus, the bridge stretches



for some 45 meters in length. Its width is 3.7 meters, a little larger than it used to, due to the cement slab that covered it. The length of its largest arch is 6.8 meters. The rest of the arches are progressively smaller as we approach the river banks.

The project was funded by Krimini's priest Papastergiros and his wife. Building a river was considered sacred in those times. This is why the village's teacher N. Moumos had taught his pupils to chant every night in gratitude on the church's narthex: ***God, forgive and rest the souls of priest Papastergiros and his wife.***



The Bridge of Maeri

The bridge is next to the road leading from Dasyllio (previously known as Maeri) to Kalloni. It connects the banks of the stream of Paliomageros, which descends from Taliaros and forms a deep valley. It served the inhabitants' needs of transport from Dilofo and Dasyllio to the area of Grevena.

The bridge is technically and aesthetically impressive and was constructed in 1910 in three months by master artisans Nikolaos Mpampalis and Pavlos Mountzios from Pentalofos. The plan was carried out for no charge by busheler Georgios Tzioufas from Dilofo and



funded by Nikolaos Tzamos, also from Dilofo, who, apart from his own share also undertook the collection to raise the remaining funds from the surrounding villages. The construction's total cost was 75 gold Turkish liras. The agreement that the artisans signed with the old Community of Maeri is still preserved.

The total length of the single-arched bridge is 18 meters, its height 7.5 and the width of its arch is 12.5 meters and its height 3 meters. Behind it there is a small artificial waterfall, making the landscape all the more picturesque

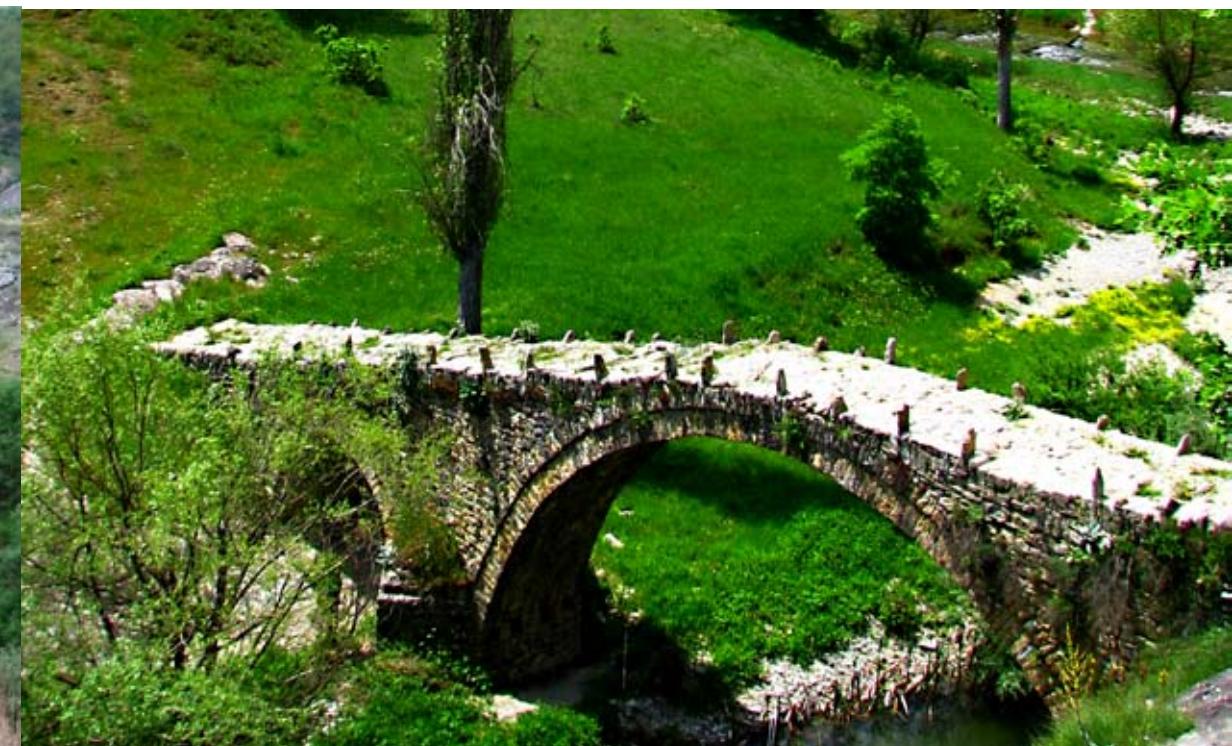
The Bridge of Svoliani

It is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful and impressive stone bridges in Greece, as far as staticity is concerned. It is only 1.5 km southeast of the settlement of Agia Sotira, on the upper flow of river Pramoritsa. It can be visited either beginning from the village's center or covering half the distance starting at the national road's big curve, further down. Walking downhill, 300 meters after the national road, visitors have the choice to abandon the path for a little, to the cliff on their right, where they have the opportunity to admire the view of the river and the valley from above.

The double-arched bridge was built in 1851, after a watermill had been constructed in

the same area. A quite large arch is founded on a high rock, giving the impression that the bridge is its natural continuation. Its maximum height reaches 8.5 meters and its length is 26 m. It used to connect Agia Sotira with Dilofo, Dasyllio, Hrysavgi and mount Tsouka, where locals used to have their vegetable gardens and trees.

Its entrance is connected with old cobblestone, which, along with new additions, continues all the way to the settlement. The landscape around the bridge is uniquely complemented by two towering poplars that appear to guard it. It is a station of the big path The Journey of River Pramoritsa, which descends from the area of Pentalofos.



The Bridge of Nteris

The double-arched bridge of Nteris is the first stone bridge that river Pramoritsa meets. It was constructed to connect Pentalofos with Agia Sotira and Tsotyli. Today, the bridge is a station of the great path The Journey of River Pramoritsa. It is visitable, either from Kato Pentalofos in 45 minutes, following the signs, or from the national road after the junction of Dilofos, where the cobblestone path leads to the river in just five minutes.

Unfortunately, the date of its construction is not known, neither are the names of the people who built it or funded it. It owes its name to a local from Pentalofos named Nteris, who operated a watermill nearby.

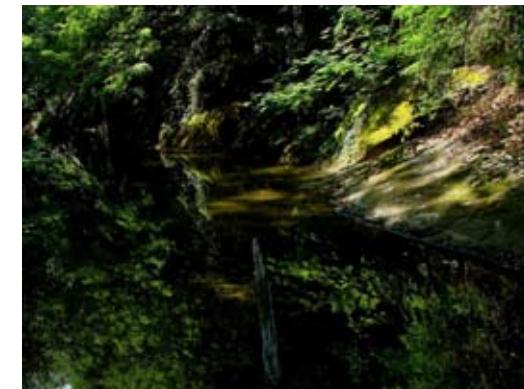
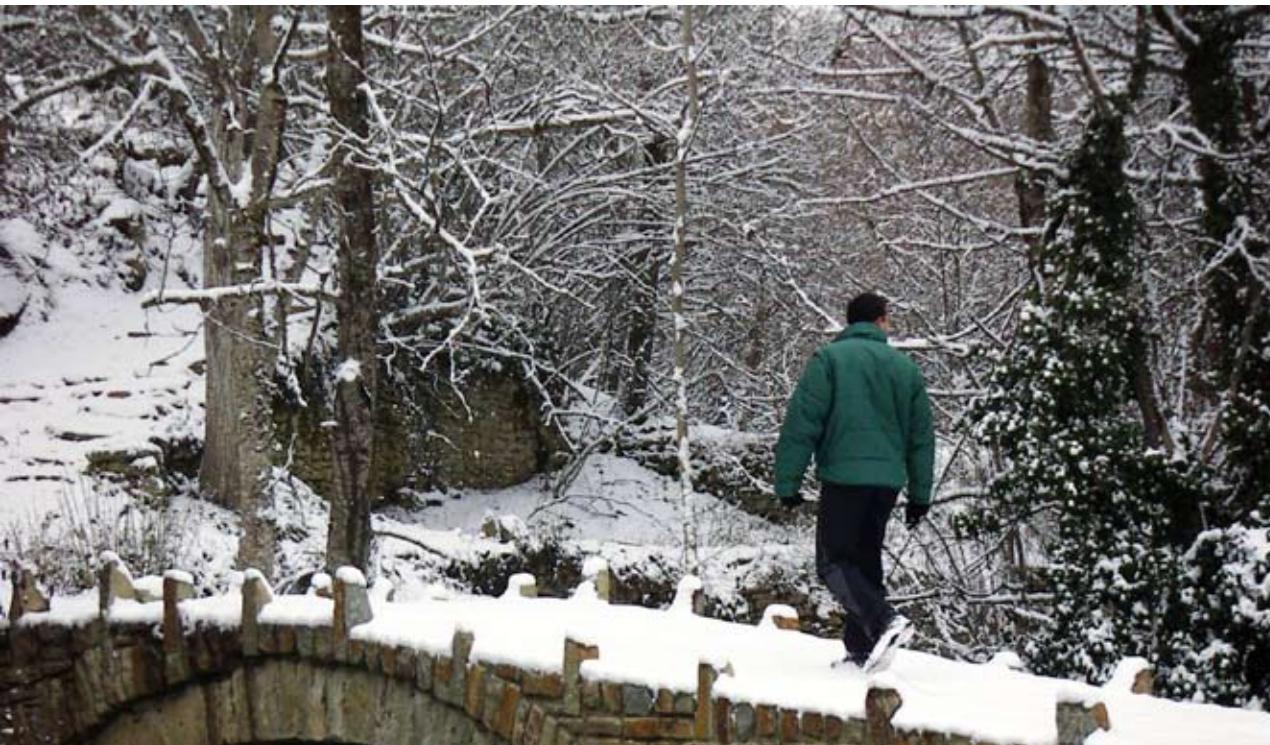


In the 60s, in one of the river's floods, the smallest arch was swept away but was restored in 2006 by the Community of Pentalofos. During the restoration project, the old cobblestone path that led there from both sides was discovered. A small area of recreation was also developed and now visitors can feast their eyes on the two small waterfalls that are further down, the one of the stream that descends from Pentalofos and the one of the sluice of Titoros, that used to feed the mill with water, in what is one of Voio's most exquisite spots.

Further down, after the chapel of Agia Varvara there is another stone bridge named Ge-

fyri tou Fylakti (Bridge of Fylakti). According to locals, it is a rare specimen of the architecture of the old artisans of Zoupani but was blown up by men of the Democratic Army during the

Civil War. Today, in this spot Pramoritsa can be crossed by a cemented bridge, which links the old road and the path. From the old bridge, only fragments of its foundations remain.



The Bridge of Tsoukaris

The bridge of Tsoukaris used to connect the settlement of Rodohori with Tsotyli and the abandoned village of Rokastro. It is still used today for the crossing of agricultural machinery on the other side of river Pramoritsa. A 2-kilometer rural road leads here from the square of Rodohori.

The construction of the bridge was funded by Dimitrios Tsoukaris, an artisan from Rodohori that had emigrated to Istanbul. According to the benefactor, the construction aimed to serve everyone, even the inhabitants of remote villages of Grevena. There are reports that, before the big market of Tsotyli opened, merchants would pass through the area with their animals for two days. The precise date of its construction is not known, but it is mentioned



in historical sources as early as 1890.

The bridge has 5 arches, two of which are barely discernible due to the vegetation and the sedimentations. The first arch, in which the date of construction used to be inscribed, collapsed in 1955 due to denudation in its base and was later replaced with a cement slab. The bridge's length is 40 meters. Of its 5 arches, the second is the largest reaching 12 meters in length and 7 in height, while its width is 3 meters. It is impressive but obscure from a distance, due to the lush vegetation.

The area is called Paliomonastiro, where there was probably a castle. Large blocks from its walls have been discovered, many of which were rolled downhill to the river by villagers to build the bridge.



The Bridge of Tsouka-Morfi

From Morfi one can visit the double-arched bridge of Tsouka on river Pramoritsa, built in an exquisite location. The bridge used to connect the settlements of Morfi, Koryfi, Hrysavgi and the now abandoned Tsouka. In the area of the mountain of Tsouka, residents of Morfi used to have their fields and grazing grounds. The bridge was also part of the "vlahostrata" (street of the Vlachs).

It is the oldest bridge in Voio. According to oral tradition, it was built by paid artisans and also voluntary contributions by the locals between 1720 and 1730. Funding was provided by taxation imposed by the local chieftains to the surrounding villages, as a

project of such scale could not be undertaken by one small village alone.

The bridge is quite similar in structure to that of Svoliani, which can be found a little further upstream. It has two arches, with one large on the Northern side which is impressively founded on a vertical rock and gives the bridge a slight inclination to the south. Its length is 27 meters and its maximum height 7.

It can be easily visited via the path connecting Morfi and Hrysavgi, either from the square of Morfi in 35 minutes, or the national road in just 25 minutes.



The Bridge of Hrysavgi



Beyond Morfi, Pramoritsa debouches into Palimagero, a stream rich in water that springs from Taliaros and passes quite near Hrysavgi. According to tradition, the single-arched bridge that is found here was built in 1854 and was founded by a thief, Nikolaos Zampros, from Polyneri of Grevena. The thief was notorious for his cruelty and had proven to be a real scourge for the villages of Voio and Grevena. During a pursuit by Turkish troops he failed to pass the flooded stream and asked of the villagers of Hrysavgi to hide him. When the Turks entered the village, the people of Hrysavgi denied everything. As a reward, the thief promised to fund the construction of the bridge and was possibly inspecting the project himself from the adjacent watermill. The master artisan was Nikolaos Anagnos-tis Tzioufas from Dilofos, who is said to have

been constructing even his tools himself. The breast walls were made by Eythimios Zioulas and Athanasios Poulios from Hrysavgi, although according to another version these two constructed the project in its entirety.

The bridge is impressive due to its height, which reaches up to 9 meters. It is founded on both sides on rocky slopes at a spot where Paliomagero narrows sufficiently. Its length is 25 meters, its width 3 meters and the length of its arch 14.2 meters. In 1984, the bridge underwent repairs.

It is located in a 10-minute downhill walk from the square of Hrysavgi on the path that connected the village with Morfi and Pentalofo. The surrounding landscape has been turned into a recreation area. Visitors can also feast their eyes on the picturesque wa-

termill, which was previously renovated. Behind the mill there is a large sluice, which creates an impressive waterfall.

The construction of the sluice was carried out on rocks and was considered one of the most difficult and demanding projects. The rocks were placed one close to the other, without a binder and the flow of the river was obstructed. The dam was hooked on pegs of hard wood,

which were inserted in holes that were opened in rocks 1 meter deep and 20 cm wide. A 45 degree angle forced the water to a specific direction, towards the mill. There projects of traditional architecture defy both time and the roughness of the natural elements and maintain an impressive endurance and a fairy-like charm.



The Small Bridge of Hrysavgi



In location Giofyria, just before the entrance to the settlement of Hrysavgi, we find the single-arched Mikro Gefyri tis Hrysavgis (Small Bridge of Hrysavgi). It is built on the stream which can be seen on maps as Vathia. It springs from the southern end of Voio which is located in the district of Grevena, near Kalloni. Further down it debouches into Paliomagero and then into Pramoritsa. The bridge used to connect the settlement of Hrysavgi with Koryfi and then Tsotyli. A part of it was covered by the newer bridge that is nearby. In this part was the plaque where the date of construction was inscribed, "July 1795", which has now been built into the new bridge, so as to be preserved. Under the date there is a stone relief with a cross and a rose. Two



The Bridge of Dotsiko

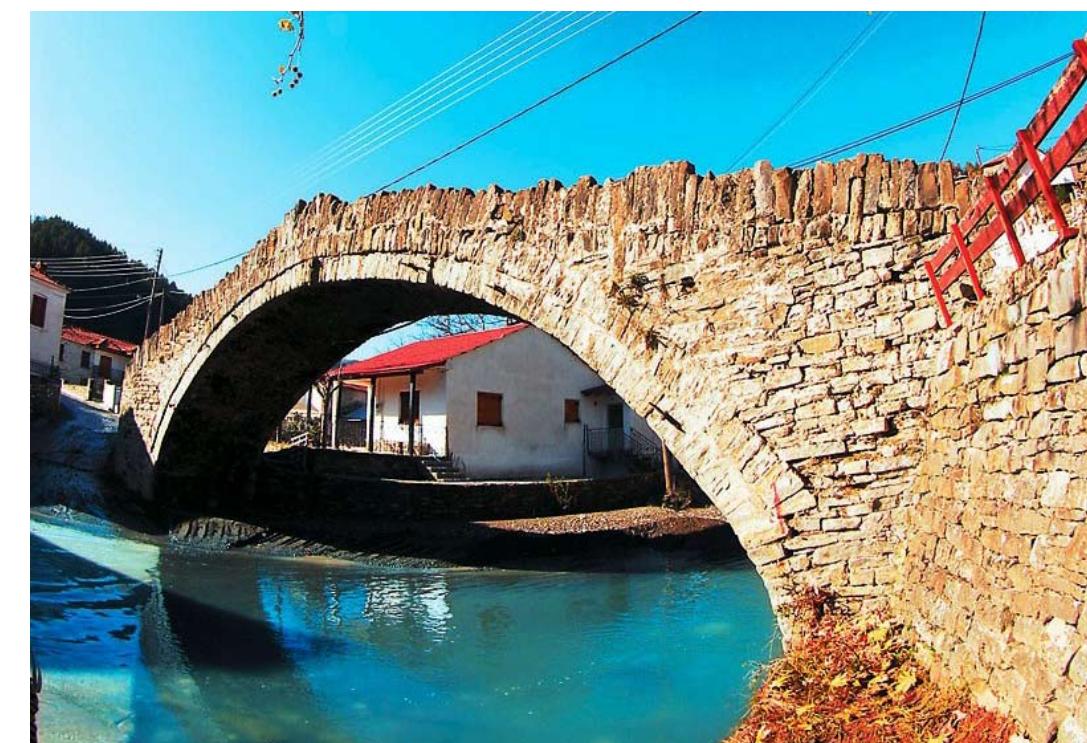


The picturesque village of Dotsiko is the most remote of Voio to the southwest, built at the end of Taliaro. Administratively it belongs to Grevena. It is separated by one of Venetikos' torrents, **Dotsikiotis**, which descends the slopes of mount Skourtza. Its two banks are linked by a single-arched stone bridge right in the center of the settlement. It is found at an 1,060-meter altitude, quite high compared to the rest of the bridges in the area Voio-Grevena.

Its construction is reported as 1804 by some,

and credited to artisans from Epirus, while others claim that local artisans from the village and nearby Kalloni were the actual builders in the 1870s.

Its total length is 24 meters, its height 4 and its width 2.4 meters. It has "arkades" and it is heavy and stable, allowing even automobiles to cross it. As it has been connecting the village's two districts for all these years, in 1990 it was declared a Listed Monument by the **Ministry of Culture**.



Petrogefyro

As we descend the stream of Pramoritsa, right after the bridge of Tsouka we find Petrogefyro. It is built on Lasporema, near its connection to the river. It used to connect the settlements of Morfi and Triada, as well as many Kastanohoria with Tsotyli.

The date of its construction has not been determined, but is estimated at around 1810. Legend has it that a widow from Morfi along with her orphans, Petros and Galano, set out in 1650 from Vienna to claim their deceased father's fortune. While crossing the stream, which was flooded at the time, Petros was drowned. His mother later funded the construction of the bridge and named it Petro-



gefyro (Bridge of Petros) in his honor. Another version has it that the bridge was really named after the son of a local from Dilofos, who returned from Constantinople. The fact that there are various versions of the legend show that there may actually be some historical basis.

The bridge consists of an arch slightly higher than the two on its side but almost identical in length. Its height is relatively small, around 4.5 meters, but its length is more than 30, as in this spot the river bed is quite wide.

Despite its elegant form, the bridge was not particularly durable as apart from its arches the rest was constructed with rough stones

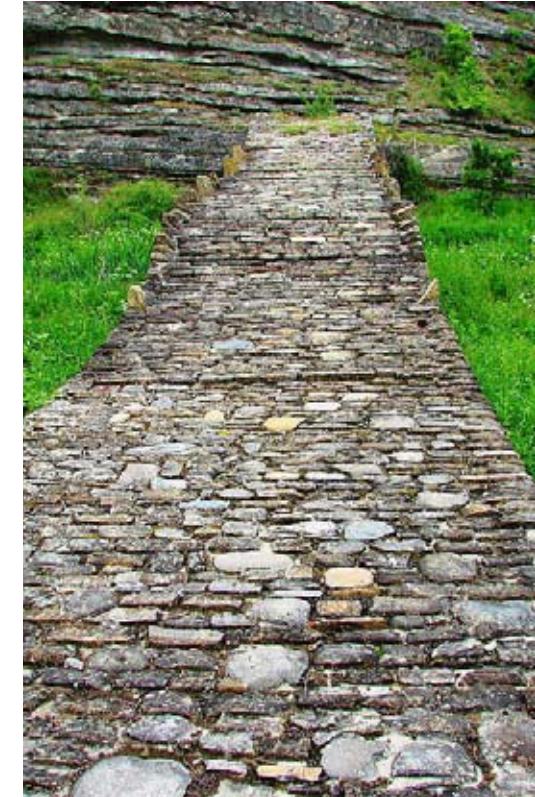
without a binder. Thus, time as well as gold-diggers caused considerable wear. It had to undergo repairs in 1965 and in 1994.

To visit the bridge one has to follow a 30' path either from Morfi or Triada. Just before the end of the route from Triada, there is an ideal spot

to view the bridge and the valley of Pramoritsa from above. Petrogefyro is also the last station of the great path The Journey of River Pramoritsa. In this spot, the river bed is actually quite smooth, so it is worth a visit.



Les rives de la rivière Pramoritsa



The Small Bridges of Vythos



In Vythos, three stone single-arched bridges are preserved, which can be found in the village's circumference and are stations of the great path The Journey of River Pramoritsa. The first and smallest is called Gefyri tis Lenos and it used to connect the upper and lower districts through the chestnut forest of Manouka. It bridges the stream right after Epano Vythos (Upper Vythos).

The second bridge is a little bigger and can be found in Kato Vythos (Lower Vythos), as we descend from the village's cemetery, or from the opposite side, from the houses that are built within the gulch. It connects the two sides of the stream of Karaouli, which often becomes precipitate during winter and spring. It is known as Gefyra tou Koukotsili (Small Bridge of Koukotsilis), named after the owner of the residence

nearby. It used to serve mainly the inhabitants of Epano Vythos in their transports to Pentalofos and the fields they preserved near the stream.

In Kato Vythos, in the next stream we find the largest of the three bridges, which used to serve the daily needs of transport of all inhabitants from and to Pentalofos. It is located in the village's entrance, a few meters from the drink-



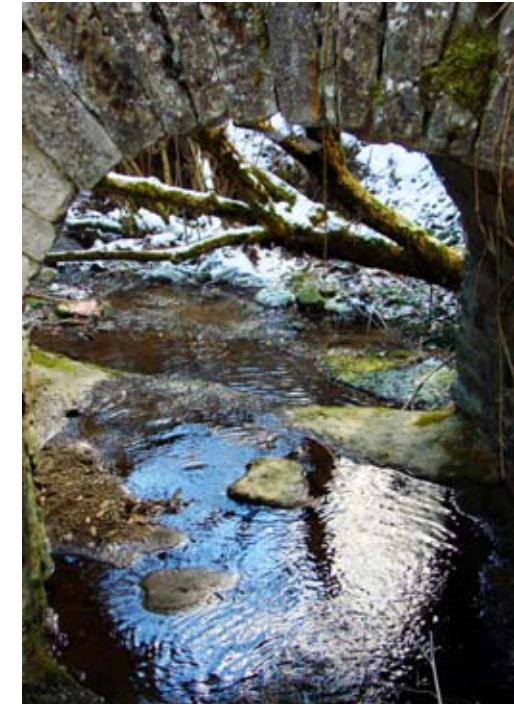
The small bridge of Koukotsilis as seen from above



The small bridge of Lenos

ing fountain "vrysi me ta dyo solnaria" or "vrysi Mpnnari". This is why it is called Gefyri Mpnnari or Gefyri Vythos (Bridge Mpnnari or Bridge Vythos). The river bed of the stream that descends from the chestnut forest of Sioutsi is wider, and as a result the bridge's arch is also larger. The cleaning and maintenance works that were carried out have effectively brought

out the beauty of this picturesque little bridge. The three bridges can be visited together, if one follows the circumferential route of Vythos that begins and ends in the central square. According to locals, there used to be other, even larger bridges inside the village, which were demolished, however, as the new roads were being constructed.



The small bridge of Vythos



The small bridge of Lenos and Karaouli



The bridge of Koukotsilis

The Monastery of Agia Triada of Voio

At the foot of Zoupaniotikos Ailias, in the area of Vythos known as Alonia, we find the Monastery of Agia Triada (Holy Trinity) or Aitriaditsa, as locals call it. It was built in its present location in 1792, quite close to the older Monastery of Taxiarches, Paliomonastiro, which was moved here from Fteri. Its literally hidden in lush forests of beech and chestnut, at an altitude of 1,030 meters. The main temple is the work of master artisan Georgios Koustas from Pentalofos. All walls are covered with beautiful murals which

were painted by artist Mihail in 1802, under the abbacy of Neofytos. It was adorned with stone reliefs by Miliros Zoupaniotis. Inside the temple above the narthex, the chapel of Saint Modestus is also incorporated.

Legend has it that prior Neofytos saw a peculiar vision, where someone indicated that he build a monastery in the specific spot. The following night the vision was repeated. The third time, the same person appeared and strictly advised that the project should begin immediately. In the next morning a

local shepherd appeared, claiming to have been seeing a strange glow emanating from a tree. In a tree hollow an icon of the Holy Trinity was found.

The temple was built with refined stone and is today a fine example of local architecture. It is famous for its impressive main temple of Athonic type. It is of Byzantine rhythm with three cupolas and a gilded wood-carved chancel screen. The entire construction that supports it is quite imposing, resembling a fortress. The monastery is capable

of accommodating 100 visitors and the day of its celebration is an important event for the entire area of Voio.

Its fame and fortune was great and its name well known across Western Macedonia, Epirus and Thessaly. Its contribution to the struggle for independence as well as to education is significant. There used to be 50 cells and secret lessons were offered during Ottoman rule. Today, the monastery is run by priest Serapheim from Anthousa, who is distinguished for his assiduity and devotion.

The icon of Agia Triada (Holy Trinity)



Paliomonastiro

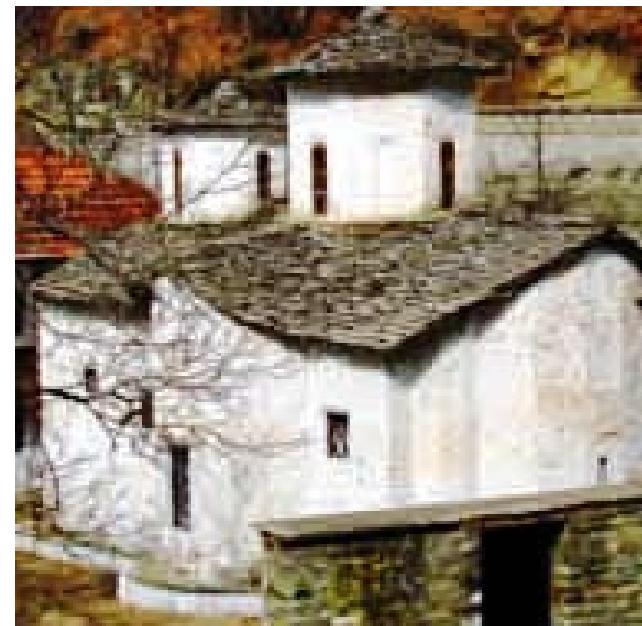


The Monastery of Agios Athanasios Zikovistis

It is one of Western Macedonia's oldest monasteries. It is built at an altitude of 1,000 meters between Damaskinia and Agios Ilias. Its name is derived from Kastanohori Spilios, which used to be called Zikovista.

The temple is single-spaced and there is one cupola supported by 4 big arches. It was founded in 1629 and renovated in 1747, while its murals were painted in 1785 by Mihail Mihail from Hiona and Dimitrios Mpompoutziotis from Eptahori. The project was founded by prior Ananias and

priest Iakovos. In 1979 the monastery was gentrified and its main temple was declared a Historical Listed Monument. The view that is offered from its parvis to the valley of Aliakmonas is nothing short of spectacular. The monastery's contribution to the struggle during Turkish rule is significant. A central Greek school used to operate here and the corps of chieftain Kapetan Litsas assembled here before starting the fight against the enemy that had previously set the monastery's cells on fire.



The Monastery of Agios Georgios Eptahoriou

On the north slope of Taliaro and 4 km from Eptahori, on the new road that connects it with Dotsiko, we find the monastery of Agios Georgios, almost 400 years old. The temple is three-aisled of Athonic type. Its entire interior is covered in murals of exquisite post-Byzantine art. They are most probably the work of artisans from Eptahori or Linotopi. The temple is surrounded by a series of auxiliary buildings.

Tradition has it that a priest that had lost his



The interior of the temple Eisodia tis Theotokou

wife and children and had undergone great ordeals decided to devote his life to God and offer his entire fortune for the construction of the monastery. He became a monk and the monastery's first prior.

Right above we find the small cemetery temple of Eisodia tis Theotokou, also covered with beautiful murals dating back to the 17th century. The way in which its stone roof was constructed is particularly impressive.

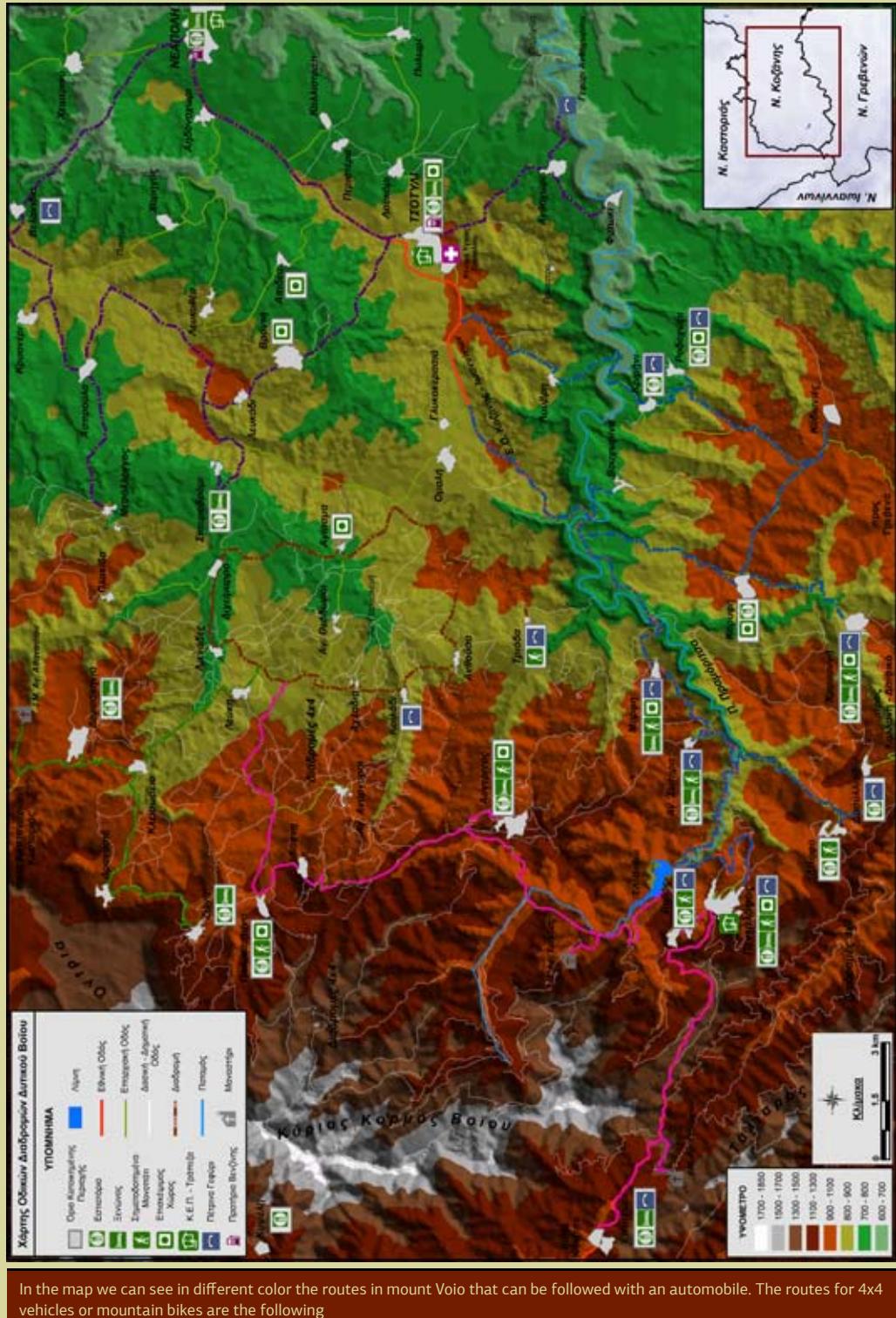
Routes in Voio



- Agia Varvara chapel - Pentalofos - Panoukla (the old road)
- National road to Eptahori - Fteri Zoupaniotikou Ailia.
- National road to Eptahori - Taliaros - Dilofo
- Dilofo - Ailias Dilofo
- Dasyllio - Agios Minas
- Vythos - Skotomeno Nero
- Monastery of Agia Triada - Skotomeno Nero - Voio peaks
- Regional road Avgerinos - Vythos - Voio peaks
- Regional road Avgerinos - Vythos - Agios Nikolaos
- Avgerinos - Agia Sotira - Morfi
- Polykastano - Paliokrimini
- Zoni - Nea Kotyli - Gkremos Harou
- Dragasia - Ontria
- Koiladi - Agioi Anargyroi
- Dafni - Agioi Anargyroi
- Hrysavgi - Trikorfo
- Hrysavgi - Tsouka - Dilofo
- Tsotyli - Rokastro - Parohthio
- Diheimarro - Damaskinia
- Triada - Lasporrema - Petrogefyro path

Route appropriate for a common bicycle are the following:

- Krimini - Rodohori - Agios Kosmas
- Agia Sotira - Morfi
- Avgerinos - Polykastano
- Agiasma - Diheimarro - Liknades - Koiladi - Anthousa - Agiasma
- Vythos - Agia Triada monastery - Pramoritsa river

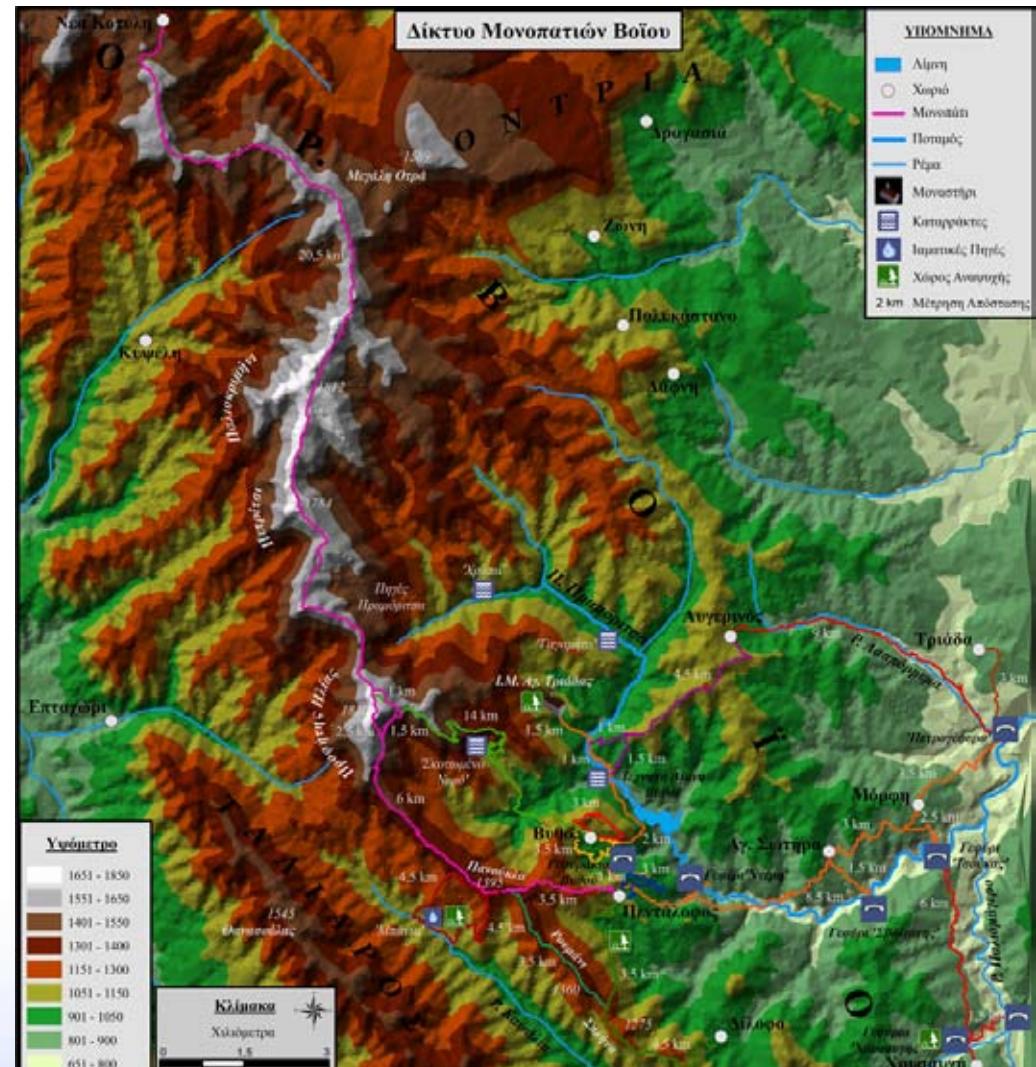


THE PATHS OF VOIO AND THE SETTLEMENTS THROUGH WHICH THEY PASS

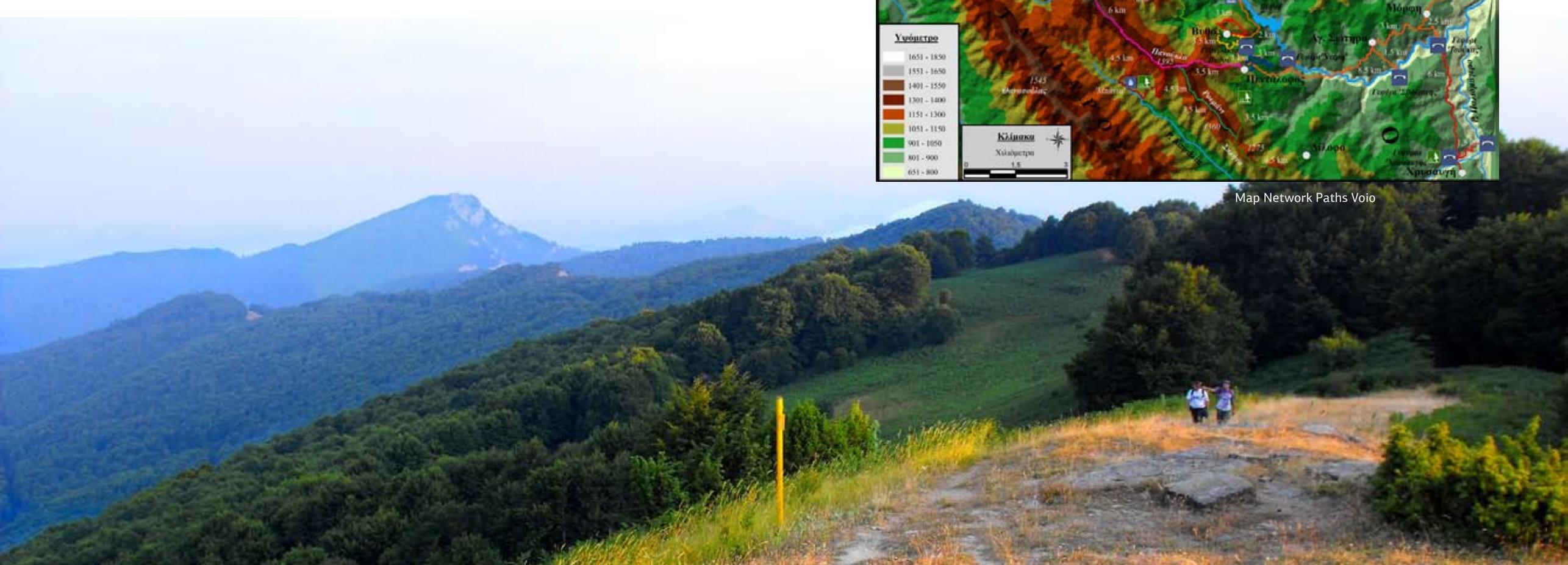
Voio Path Network

The paths of mount Voio are negotiable and of high ecological, historic and architectural interest. Some of them are ideal for environmental education activities, without overlooking purely mountaineering routes. These are paths that connect traditional settlements with each other or with wider areas, such as mountain peaks, viewpoints, locations of geological interest, hot springs, recreation areas, monasteries, chapels and stone bridges. With Pentalofos and Vythos as central settlements, paths begin and end from and to other villages of Voio such as Avgerinos, Nea Kotyli, Dilofo, Agia Sotira, Morfi, Triada and

Hrysavgi, while a visit to the Geological Park - Ecopark of Skalohori should not be missed. For the safety and convenience of trekkers, there are signs in the 120 km of the 14 routes, in many of which the old cobblestone is still preserved. They are divided into small trekking routes (for which no special equipment is required) and mountaineering routes of medium or great length. Depending on their difficulty level, they are divided into routes type A (easily accessible even by inexperienced trekkers), type B (of medium difficulty) and type C (of high difficulty, accessible only by experienced mountaineers).



Map Network Paths Voio





Pentalofos

Pentalofos, or Zoupani, as it used to be called, is Macedonia's largest village of artisans. The artisans from this area were so many and famous that all artisans from the entire area of Voio would often be called collectively **Zoupaniotes**. Their art is evident in churches and two-storey and three-storey residences in the village.

The village is listed as a Traditional Settlement and consists of more than 500 "fortress-houses". It is divided into two main districts, Kato (Lower) which is perched on the steep slope of Grantiska, and Ano (Up-

per) which is built next to the chestnut forest of Roumani. Right in the center we find the square with the village's shops, the famous Lontzia, for which a special traditional dance was created. It is a large village, structured amphitheatrically, with its altitude ranging between 950 and 1,110 meters. In the period of liberation from the Turks, its population reached some 2,500 inhabitants. Today, there are approximately 300 permanent inhabitants, however their number increases considerably during the summer.

Agios Ahilleios of Gkrantiska

The settlement's first core was created in 1427 and then Greek populations settled from other areas of Voio and Epirus. Ever since, it has remained in the spotlight of all significant moments of Greek history. In the period of Turkish rule, **Zoupani** was the most important center in northeast Pindos. In the years of Revolution, chieftain Pavlos Melas was active in the area, and the raids of Turks and Albanians spreading disaster finally burned down the village in 1829. In World War II, it was the base of the Greek army and the political and military seat of Western

Macedonia Resistance from June 1943 to the end of the Occupation. This is also where the women of Pindos would set out from, carrying ammunition uphill on the way to the front and carrying back the wounded.

This is the place of the conquerors' first defeat. Small villages like Pentalofos often determine world history. It was repeatedly bombed by the Italian aviation, as well as by mortar shells during the Civil War. Miraculously, it escaped destruction by the Germans in 1944, although there have been executions. Only the rebels' infrastructures were burned down, as well as the old school, which was truly a work of art.

The village's trademark is Grantiska and the temple of **Agios Ahilleios**. Grantiska is more than just a rock. Locals consider it sacred and it is a custom for couples, friends and whole families to pose in front of it for a photograph. From 1346 it started functioning as a castle, parts of which are still preserved. After all, the word **Grantiska** means small city-castle.

The temple of Agios Ahilleios was built in 1742 by artisans from Zoupani and adorned in 1774 by artists from **Hionades of Epirus**. The sanctuary had been painted earlier, in



Ano Pentalofos

MOUNT VOIO - ROUTES

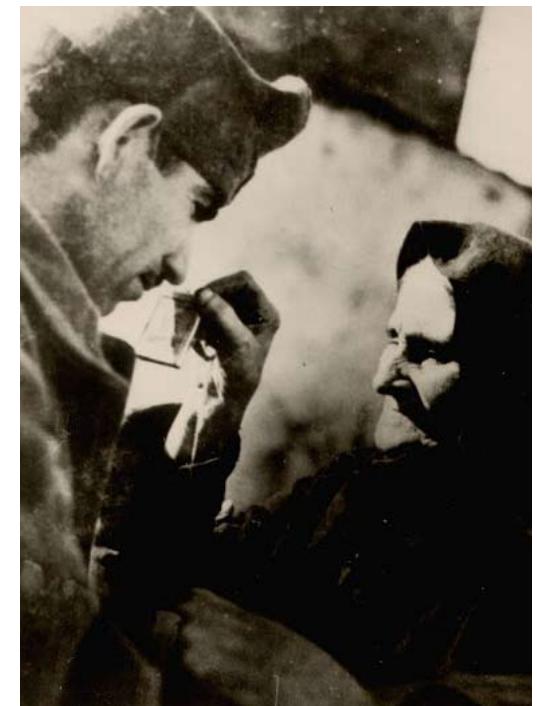
1744, by artists from Ioannina, who really went past themselves. This is a unique architectural monument and a masterpiece of the art of murals. Today, it has been declared a Listed Monument. It used to function as a church for the inhabitants of Vythos, too, when the two villages were considered one.

Locals were so respectful of the saint, that according to an old tradition, riders passing from outside the temple had to unmount,

otherwise the horses would freeze and not stir.

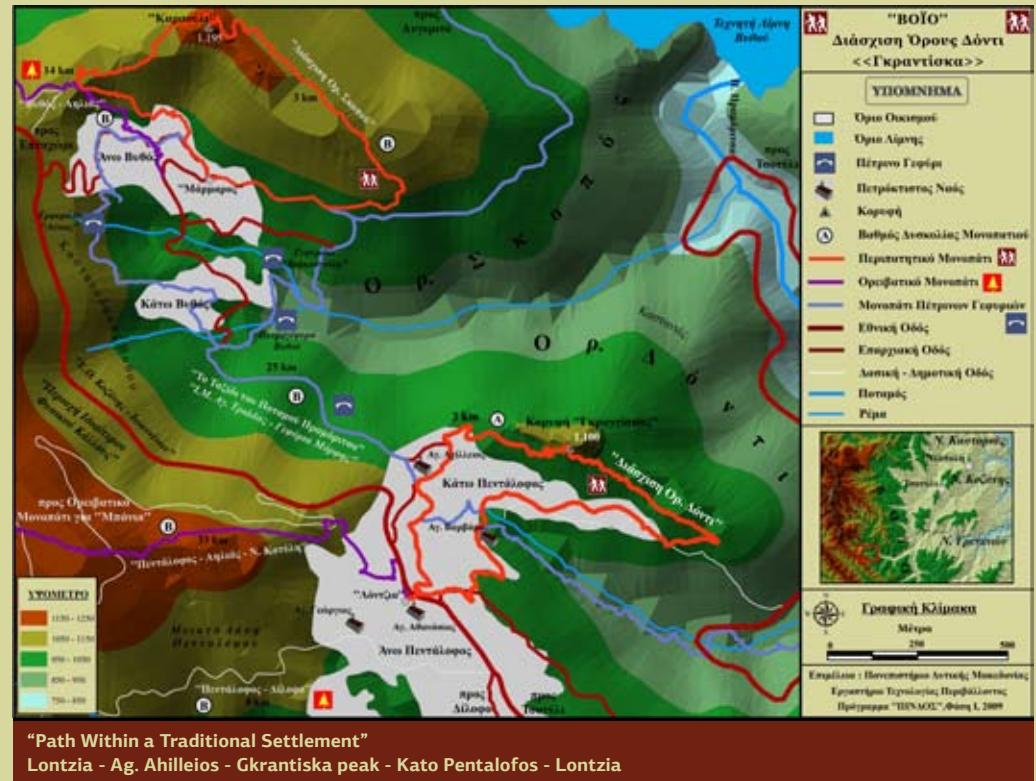
As we set out on our wanderings in the labyrinthine cobblestones of the settlement, a route passing from all its stone churches will be most interesting.

The highlights of the natural world surrounding Pentalofos is mount Profitis Ilias, Ailias o Zoupaniotikos, the dense chestnut forest of Roumani, the peak of Splina, the hot springs of Mpania and the pine forests of Panoukla.



Crossing Mount Danti

The path begins from the central square of Pentalofos, Vythos, the artificial lake, the peak of Profitis Ilias and the southern valley of Voio is spectacular. Then, the route follows the southern crest, enters the village's cobble-stone alleys, passes from the church of Agia Varvara, comes across large castle-houses, old drinking fountains and finally ascends back to Lontzia.



IDEAL PERIOD FOR A VISIT
October-May

DIFFICULTY LEVEL
A

ACTIVITY
Trekking

ALTITUDE
min: 970 meters (Kato Pentalofos),
max: meters (Gkantiska)

SIGNS
Trekkers

ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE
130 meters

ROUTE
Cyclical, One-Way

AVERAGE SLOPE
11%

ΑΠΟΣΤΑΣΗ
3 km

DRINKING WATER
Pentalofos square, Agios Ahilleios, Kato Pentalofos

MAXIMUM DURATION
1h 30'

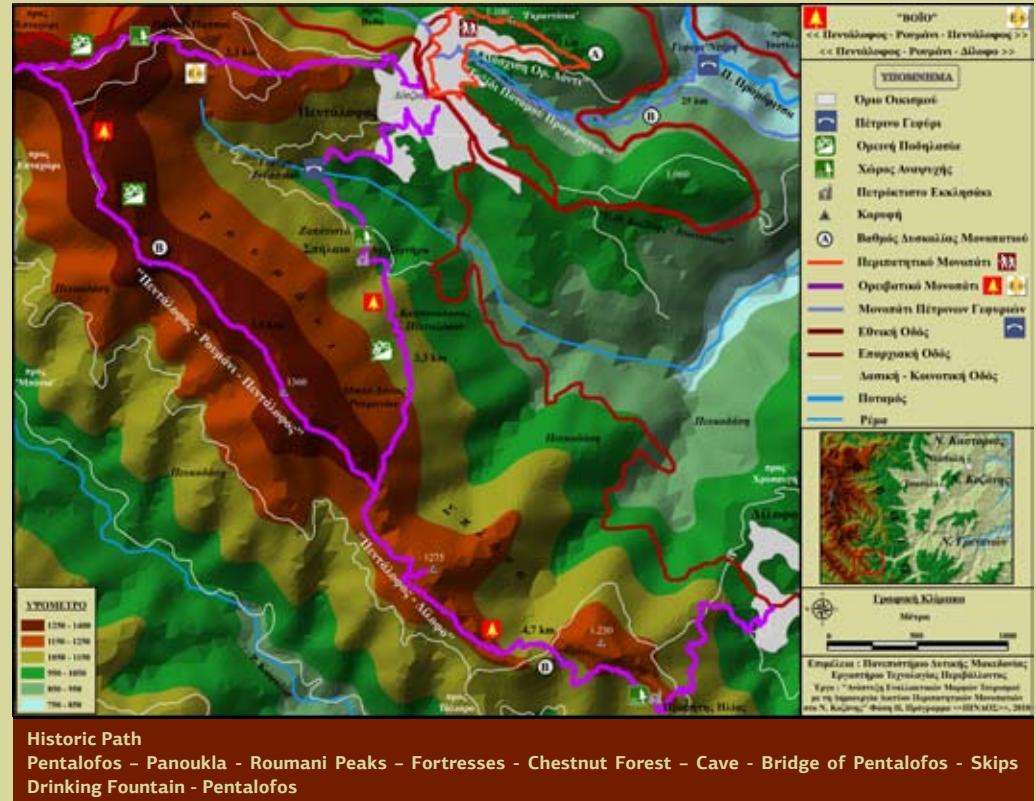
PATH EVACUATION
Kato Pentalofos

Crossing Roumani

This historic route begins from the square of Pentalofos, crossing the entire crest of **Roumani** and returns to the village after a cyclical route. The cross in the first post after the square is there to remind the story of the Italian shell that was dropped in this spot without exploding and causing casualties. Until the location **Panoukla**, where the Greek army and the women of Epirus would pass, we follow the route of the European path E6, which heads for Zoupaniotikos Alias and **Mpania**. Roumani is the lush mountain stretching to the southwest, right behind Pentalofos. Half of it is covered with pine trees and the rest with chestnuts, while there are spots where the two species coexist, creating a mixed forest and a place teeming with wildlife. The path, which largely moves along the crest, offers a spectacular view initially to Vythos and



Peak of Roumani

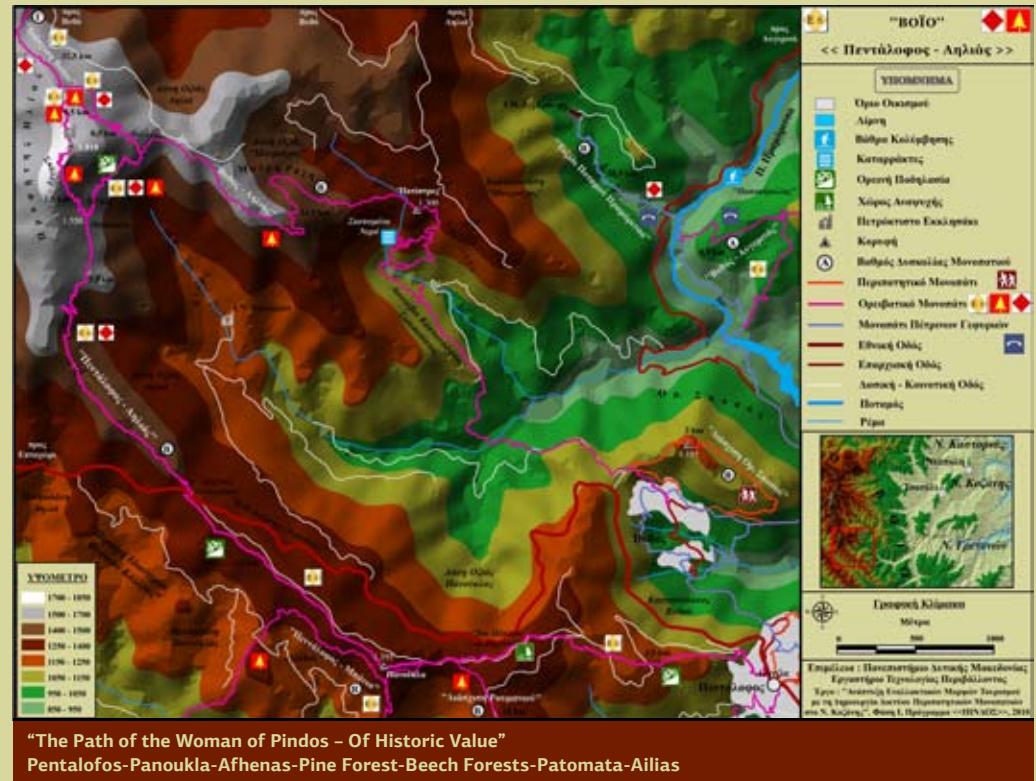
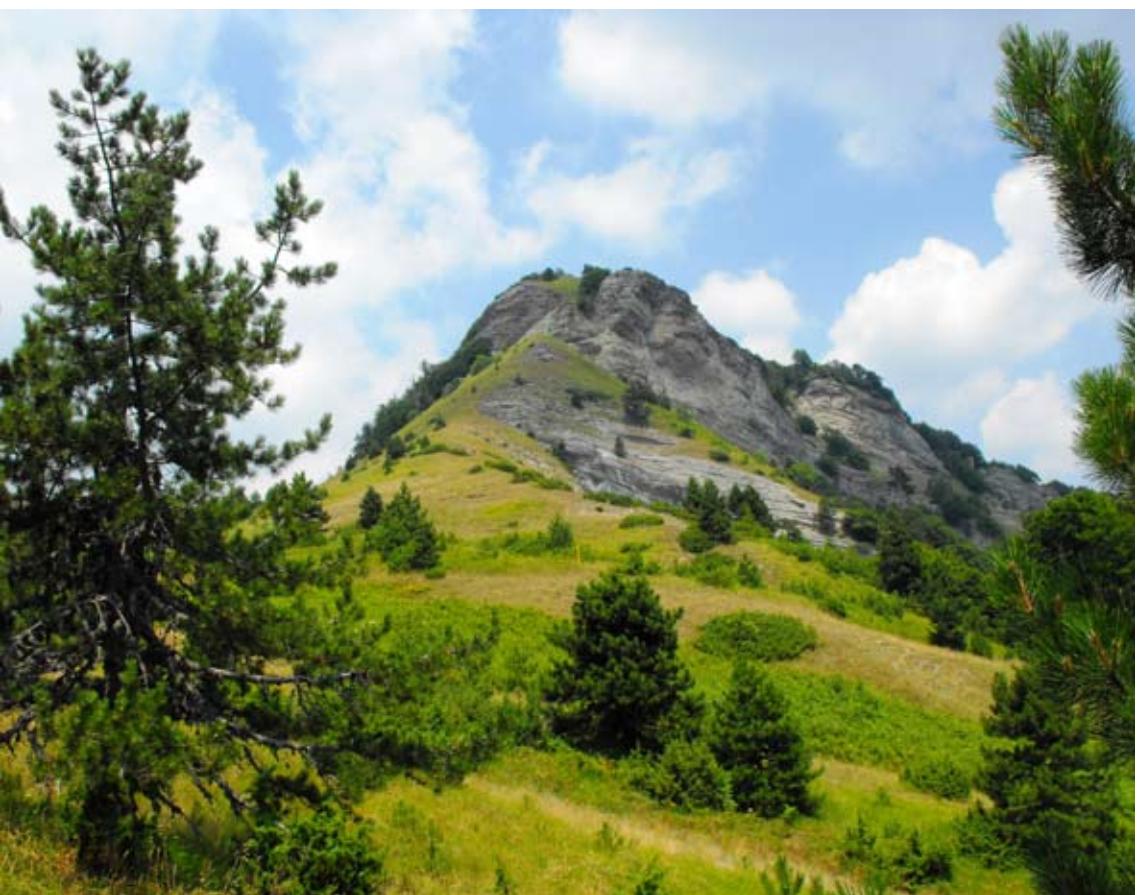


 IDEAL PERIOD FOR A VISIT	 DIFFICULTY
Ideal Period for a Visit	B
 ACTIVITY	 ALTITUDE
Mountaineering – Mountain Biking	min: 970 meters (pentalofo) max: 1100 meters (grantiska)
  SIGNS	 ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE
Fir, E6	130 μέτρα
  ROUTE	 AVERAGE SLOPE
Cyclical Two-Way	9%
 DISTANCE	 DRINKING WATER
10 km	Drinking fountain, Location Pappou to Pigadi, Agia Sotira Chapel, Zapatista, Drinking Fountain
 MAXIMUM DURATION	Megali Skips
3h	
 PATH EVACUATION	
	Forest road Pentalofo-Panoukla-National Road, Forest Road Panoukla-Roumani, Forest Road Taliaro-Dilofos, Forest Road Pentalofo-Zapatistas

Pentalofos Ailias

The signaled path from Pentalofos to **Afhenas**, also known as **Tampouri**, used to be the national road of the past, which connected Voio with the rest of the area of Kozani with Ioannina. After Afhenas it used to lead to Profitis Ilias and the white chapel which can be found along the route, we find the **Megali Skala** and **Mikri Skala**, (Big Staircase and Small Staircase), which are perched on the steep rocks to facilitate trekkers. From here, we also have the possibility to continue the route of the signaled European path E6 to Paliokrimini and Nea Kotyli and, eventually, Vythos. Through the Eastern side of the mountain, **Piso, or the Apo to Fylakio Plevra**, as locals call it, the mountaineering group can choose not to visit the two Skalas thus following a cyclical route around mount Ailias.

(1,810 m.) the view is so panoramic, that the 4 highest mountains of Greece are visible simultaneously, Olympus, Smolikas, Grammos and **Kaimaktsalan**. Just before the peak of Profitis Ilias and the white chapel which can be found along the route, we find the **Megali Skala** and **Mikri Skala**, (Big Staircase and Small Staircase), which are perched on the steep rocks to facilitate trekkers. From here, we also have the possibility to continue the route of the signaled European path E6 to Paliokrimini and Nea Kotyli and, eventually, Vythos. Through the Eastern side of the mountain, **Piso, or the Apo to Fylakio Plevra**, as locals call it, the mountaineering group can choose not to visit the two Skalas thus following a cyclical route around mount Ailias.



IDEAL PERIOD OF VISIT
April-November

DIFFICULTY
B

ACTIVITY
Mountaineering-Mountain Biking (Apart from Peak of Ailias through Skala)

ALTITUDE
min: 1055 meters (Pentalofos),
max: 1810 meters (Peak of Ailias)

SIGNALLING
E6, Forest Inspection, Fir

ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE
755 meters

ROUTE
Cyclical (Only around the Peak), Two-Way

AVERAGE SLOPE
7,5%

MAXIMUM DISTANCE
12 km

DRINKING WATER
Pentalofos, Drinking Fountain, Location Pigadi tou Pappou

MAXIMUM DURATION
3h 30'

PATH EVACUATION
Forest Road of Pentalofos-Panoukla-National Road, National Road, Forest Road Ailias-Vythos

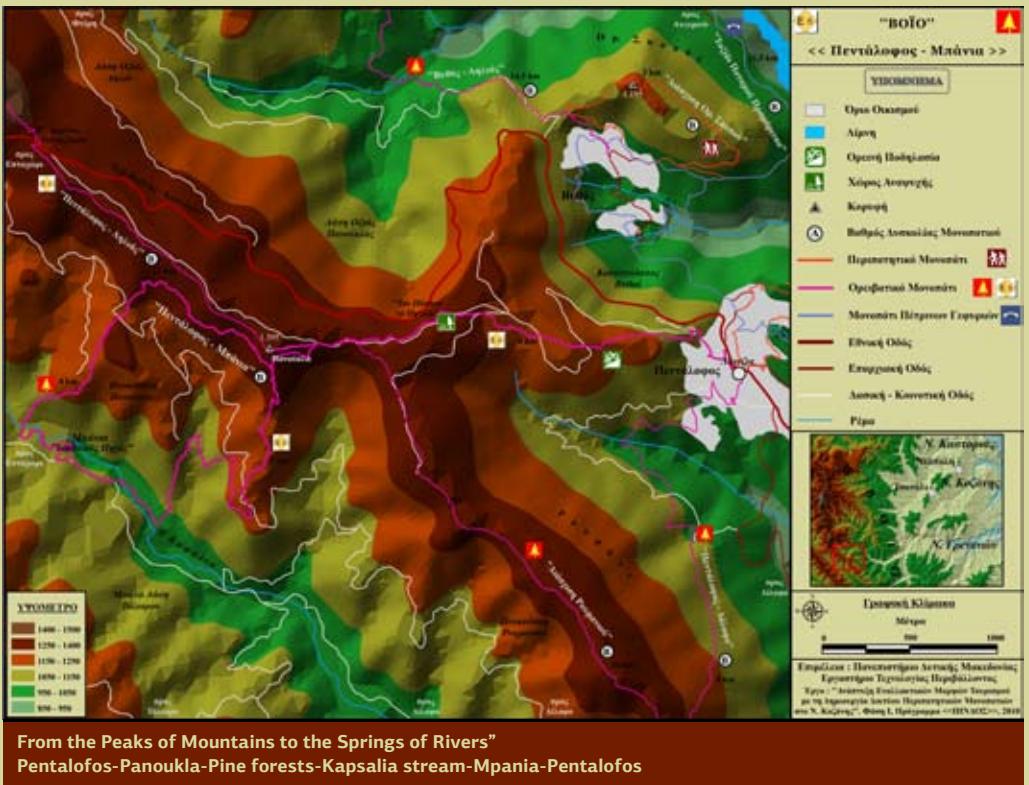
Pentalofos Mpania Pentalofos

The route to **Mpania**, the cold springs of Pentalofos, is a part of the E6 European path which leads westward to the stone bridge of Zouzouli and its historic settlement. It passes through the characterized as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with rich vegetation of beech forests in its beginnings and extended pine forests further down. A route from the mountain peaks follows, until the **Kapsalia** stream, the main confluent of the stream of Paliomagero and moves parallel to it for a considerable distance. There is also the opportunity to visit



the peak of Panoukla, where legend has it that Saint Athanasios stopped **the old woman Panoukla** (Plague) before she descended to Pentalofos. After several tests, the waters have been characterized as not only appropriate but of the highest quality. From Mpania and downwards, natural basins form that offer the opportunity for a dive. Alternatively, we can choose **Afhenas** Pentalofou as the beginning of our route instead of Pentalofos, in which case the difficulty level is considerably lower.

Peak of Panoukla



IDEAL PERIOD OF VISIT
March-November

DIFFICULTY
B

ACTIVITY
Mountaineering-Mountain Biking

ALTITUDE
min: 1.000 meters (Kapsalia Stream),
max: 1.395 meters (Panoukla Peak)

SIGNS
E6, Fir

ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE
395 METERS

ROUTE
Cyclical, Two-Way

AVERAGE SLOPE
8%

DISTANCE
16,5 km

DRINKING WATER
Pentalofos, Drinking Fountain, Location Pigadi tou Pappou, Kapsalia stream-Lappa drinking fountain

MAXIMUM DURATION
4h

PATH EVACUATION
Forest Road of Pentalofos-National Road of Panoukla, Upper Forest Road of Dilofos-National Road, Lower Forest Road of Dilofos-Mpania-National Road

Dilofo

Dilofo, old **Limpohovo**, is another famous village of artisans, built at an altitude of 960 meters in the forested slope **Mpourgiani**, at the southern end of Voio, near Taliaro. It is divided into two districts, the first east-oriented and the second west-oriented and right between them we find the central square and the temple Koimiseos tis Theotokou (Virgin Mary's Dormition), an exquisite work of art. Although Dilofo is a listed traditional settlement, it is the best preserved village of Voio, as far as architecture is concerned,



with its characteristic reddish stone. In the winter it is almost entirely abandoned. The few residents that remain have many stories to tell about the snow, the bears, and the lonely, tranquil nights in the beautiful scenery and the clean air of the mountains. 100 years ago it probably had more than 400 inhabitants. Most of them arrived here after the consecutive raids on Tseros, a village unlucky enough to have been on the path of Turks and Albanians to the South. Others came here from Epirus and the semi-

mountainous regions of Voio, seeking refuge. Locals are proud people and appreciate culture and craftsmanship, so they return in the summers and take care of the village, which becomes alive again, with more than 100 inhabitants.



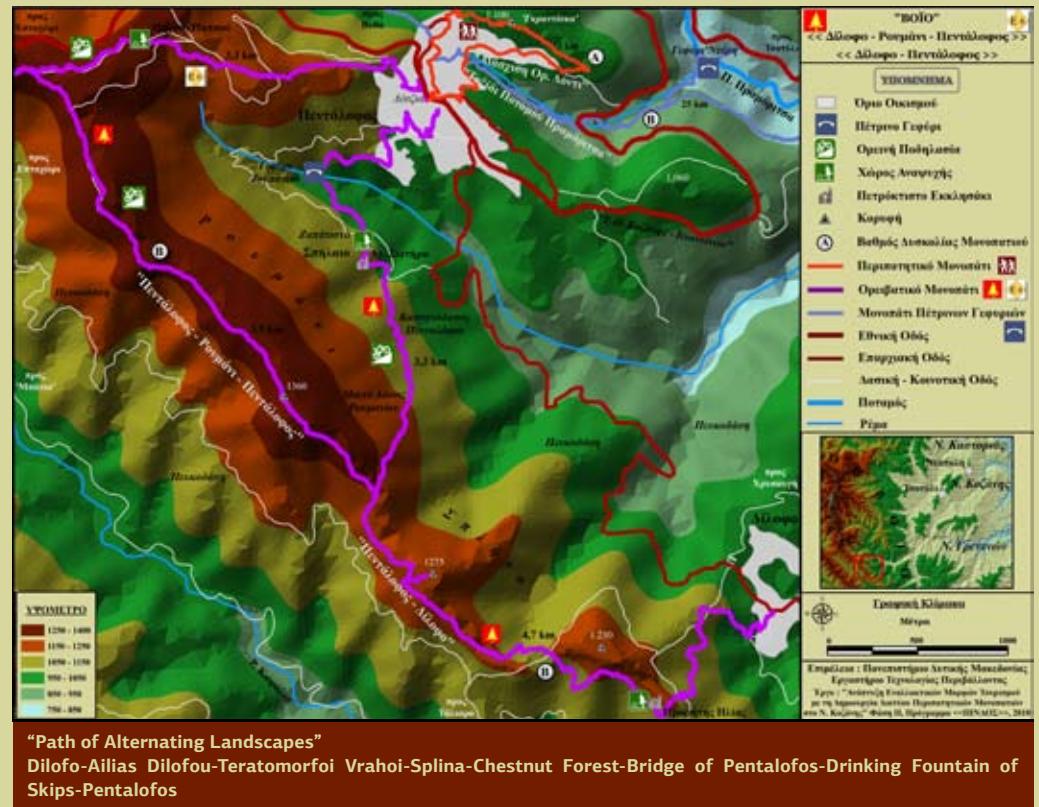
Dilofo Pentalofos

The path initially crosses the western part of Dilofo with the traditional residences and after passing through the pine forest on the old cobblestone, it meets the chapel of Profitis Ilias. From there, the route can reach (without signs) the chapel of Agios Minas, a special location where the two streams that form Paliomagero meet, and then through a beautiful route on a forest road end up at the stone bridge of Maeri, or through a different path to Dotsiko. The main route continues from Ailias Dilofou to Teratomorfoi Vrahoi at the peak of Splina at an altitude of 1,275 meters and a spectacular view from the location of the observation post to Taliaro,

Smolikas, Grammos and southern Voio. Then, it meets the Patimases tou Alogou tou Ai-Giorgi, the chestnut forest of Pentalofos, the stone chapel of Agia Sotira, the recreation area of Zapatista, the cave of Pentalofos, and the new stone bridge, from where one can visit the Skips drinking fountain. In its final part it crosses the entire Ano Pentalofos and ends up at the central square. The route can increase by 3.5 km if after Splina we approach Pentalofos through the crest of Roumani and ends up at the village through the E6 European path which descends from the area of Zoupaniotikos Ailias.



MOUNT VOIO - ROUTES



IDEAL PERIOD OF VISIT
April-November

DIFFICULTY
B

ACTIVITY
Mountaineering-Mountain Biking (Except Splina Peak)

ALTITUDE
min: 960 meters (Dilofo)
max: 1275 meters (Splina Peak)

SIGNS
Fir

ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE
315 meters

ROUTE
Linear, Two-Way

AVERAGE SLOPE
8%

DISTANCE
8 km

DRINKING WATER
Dilofo, Agia Sotira chapel, Zapatista, Megali Skips drinking fountain, Pentalofos

MAXIMUM DURATION
3h

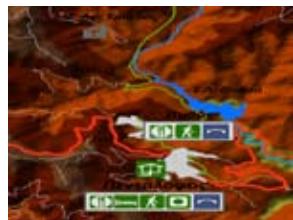
PATH EVACUATION
Forest Road of Dilofo-Profitis Ilias, Forest Road of Dilofo-Taliaro-National Road, Forest Road of Pentalofos-Zapatistas

MOUNT VOIO - ROUTES

Vythos

No other settlement in Voio is built in such a steep and mountainous spot as Vythos, the old **Ntolos**, which is located at an altitude of 1,025 meters, invisible from almost all angles. It is divided into two districts, which are quite remote, so much so that they appear as two different villages. Kato Vythos, just 1 km from Pentalofos, is located within a steep stream and surrounded by the lush vegetation of the chestnut forest of Sioutsi, where there is a pre-meal chestnut. Epano Vythos, on the other hand, is **perched** on the enormous rocks of Karaouli, which rise perpendicularly at a 200-meter height. Here, there is also the central square, **Marmaros**.

It is a large village, of some 200 houses, most of which are made of stone. Its population during the 40s exceeded 800 inhabitants. Today,



only 100 remain during the winter. The terrace cultivations that can be seen all around are also characteristic.

Some families used to live at Kato Vythos until 1900. The beauty of the location attracted populations from the destroyed **Paliohoria**, such as **Fteri**, **Kalogritsa**, **Zaltsi**, **Iskiontolo** and Paliokrimini and then from Kypseli, Filipaious, Souli and **Kerasovo** of Epirus. Later, during World War II and specifically in July 1944, the villagers' solidarity and their contribution to the struggle of national resistance, led the German authorities to the decision to set the whole village on fire. The decisive blow was given by the civil war.

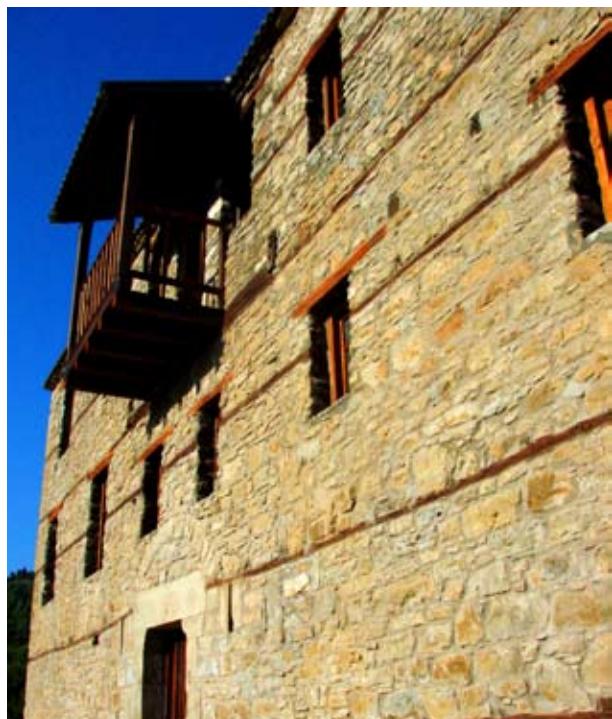
However, the grandeur of the nature that surrounds Vythos has remained untouched in the

View from the path



passage of time. Karaouli is impressive with its vertical rocks and the chestnut forest of Loggos right beneath it, the location of Agios Polykarpos with the small waterfalls from where one can access the artificial lake, and undoubtedly the natural wonder of **Sioupotista** with **Skotomeno Nero**, probably the loveliest image in the entire area of Voio. At Kato Vythos there are two more visitable chestnut forests, those of **Manouka** and Sioutsi, at the entrance of which the **Mpnaria** were built, two stone drinking fountains, not far from each other, with crystal clear water, that are true works of art, as well as the small bridge of Vythos.

The route is included in the long path entitled The Journey of River Pramoritsa, which begins from the Monastery of Agia Triada and ends up at the stone bridges of Morfi. The route is special in itself, inside and around Vythos, one of Voio's most impressive and representative villages. It can also be used for educational purposes, as it offers the opportunity for an encounter with the nature of Voio, its stone bridges and traditional residences, the terraces, the cobblestones and the old drinking fountains. It is also an ideal route for training inexperienced climbers. The path can begin from several locations, such as the central square of Vythos, the **Vrysi Me Ta Dyo Solnaria**, or **Kato Mpnari**, or the church of Agios Pantaleimonas. It offers a lovely cyclical route



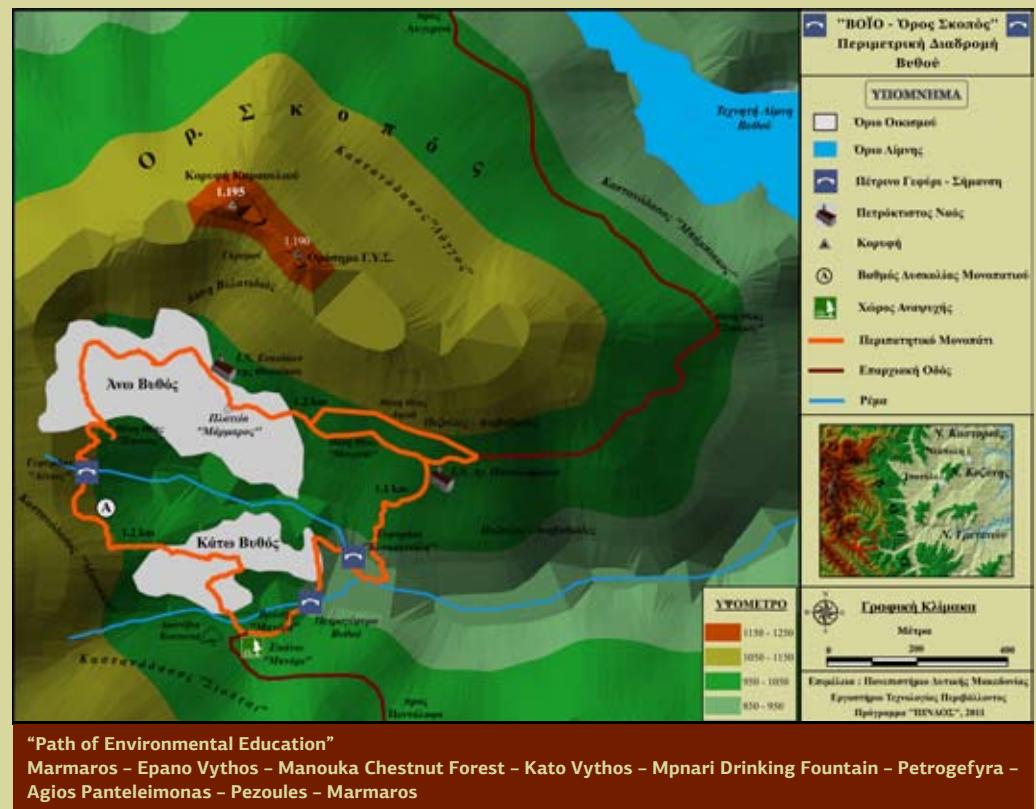
with small altitude differences, many observation spots, a visit to the chestnut forest of Manouka and the opportunity to observe locations that used to play a quite significant productive role in the domestic or economic

Chestnut forest of Manouka





View from the path



IDEAL PERIOD OF VISIT
All year round. Visitable by schools

DIFFICULTY LEVEL
A

ACTIVITY
Trekking – Mountain Biking

ALTITUDE
min: 940 meters (Koukotsili bridge)
max: 1080 meters (Epano Vythos)

SIGNS
Bridge

ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE
140 meters

ROUTE
Cyclical, Two-Way (only in the part Marmaros – Agios Panteleimonas – Mpnari)

AVERAGE SLOPE
7%

DISTANCE
3.5 km

DRINKING WATER
Square of Vythos, Mitraka Drinking Fountain, Vrisi Me Ta Dyo Solnaria, Epano Mpnari Drinking Fountain, Agios Panteleimonas

MAXIMUM DURATION
1h 15'

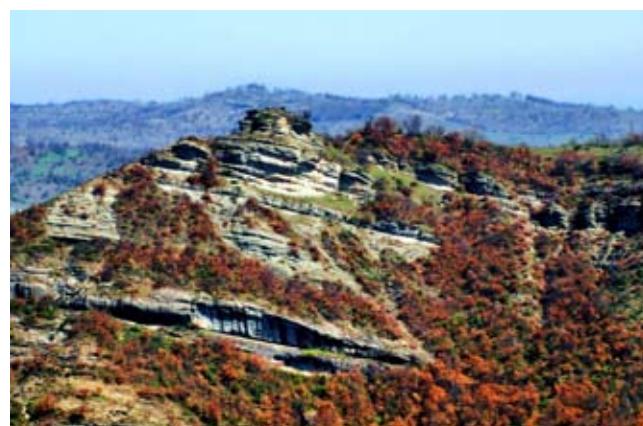
PATH EVACUATION
: Provincial Road Vythos-Pentalofos

Crossing Mount Skopos

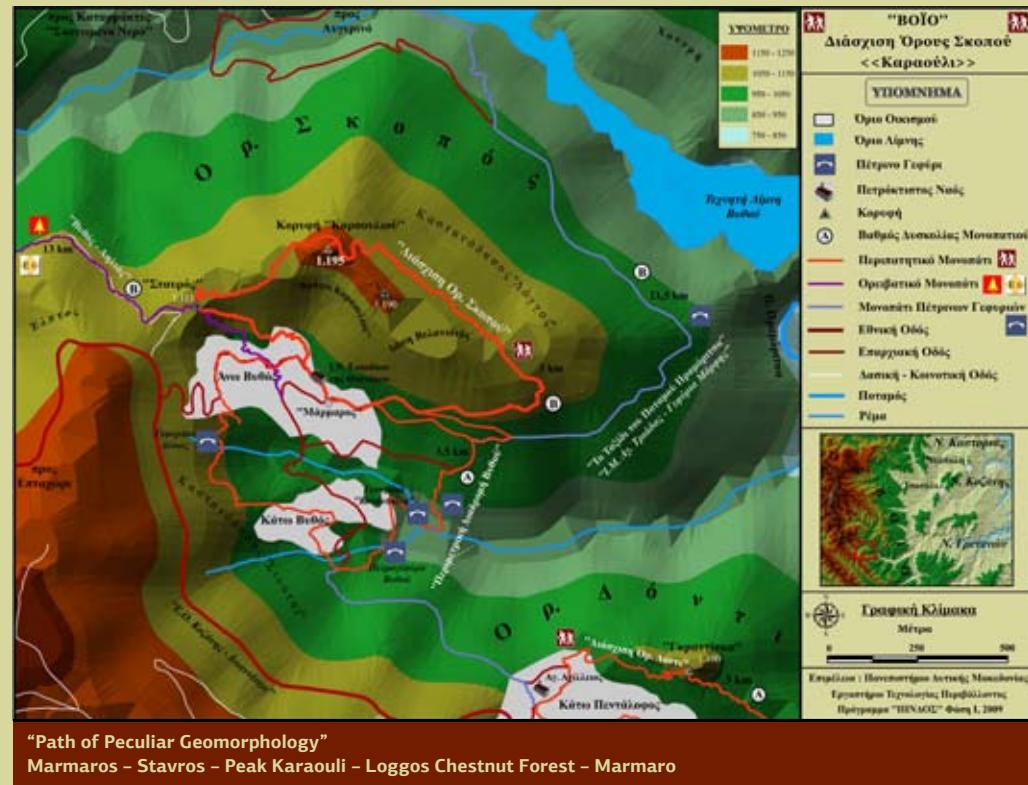
The path begins at **Marmaros** and ascends to the church of Eisodia tis Theotokou. Having crossed part of Epano Vythos, the first station is location Stavros, with scattered fossils of marine life and a spectacular view to the village and Southern Voio. The ascend continues to the impressive peak of mount Skopos or Karaouli, at an altitude of 1,195, crossing a chestnut forest.

The steep slopes of the mountain are lovely, forming a landscape of supreme beauty, so much so that they have been included in the program of Special Landscapes of the National Metsovio University. There is also a characteristic similarity between Karaouli and the rock where the famous Oia of the

caldera of Santorini is built. After the peak, which offers a view to all directions and where the **Footprint of Christ** or of **Prophet Elias** is carved, the route descends to the east and enters the dense, mysterious chestnut forest of **Loggos**. Just before that, there is the opportunity to visit the second highest peak of the mountain, Trigonometriko. From here, the steep angle of the rocks is visible, which at certain spots even becomes negative. Finally, following the old cobblestone, the path ends up back at the square, passing under the anthropomorphic stone, Prosopo. Karaouli resembles a miniature of a big mountain, and is thus ideal for a preparative route before the long treks of Voio.



The similarity in shape between the peak of Karaouli and the caldera of Santorini



IDEAL PERIOD FOR VISIT
All year round

DIFFICULTY
B

ACTIVITY
Trekking

ALTITUDE
min: 1025 meters (Marmaros Square)
max: 1195 meters (karaouli)

SIGNS
Trekkers

ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE
170meters

ROUTE
Cyclical,Two-Way

AVERAGE SLOPE
12%

DISTANCE
3 km

DRINKING WATER
Vythos Square

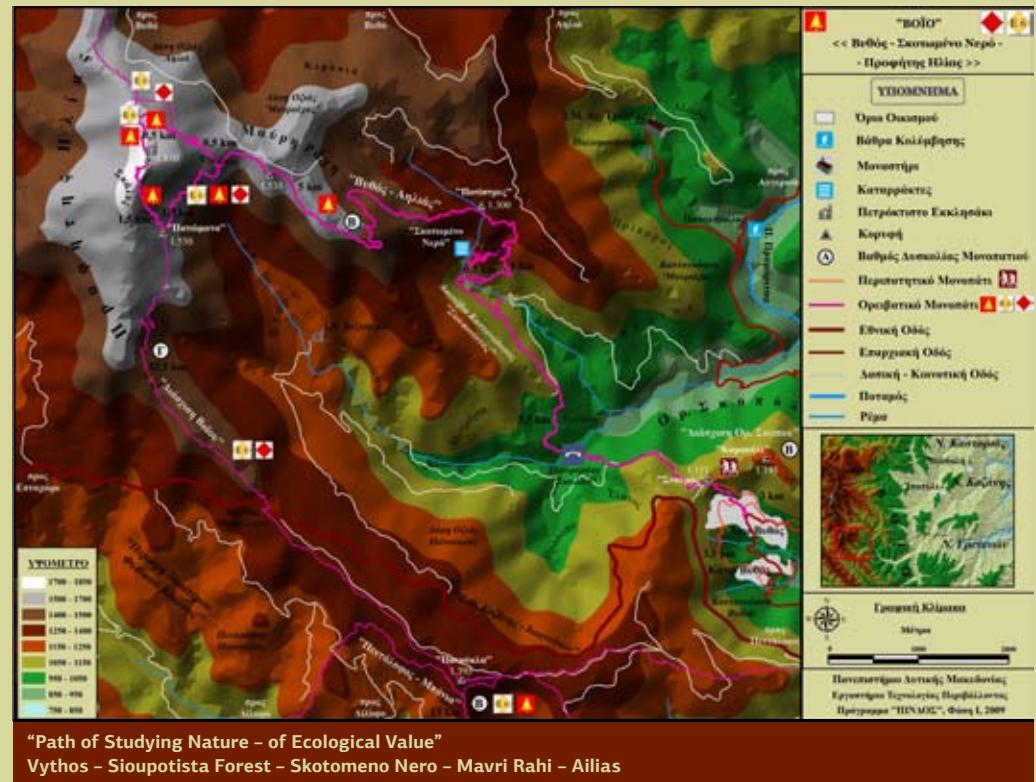
MAXIMUM DURATION
1h 30'

PATH EVACUATION: NATIONAL ROAD
Stavros Location

Vythos Skotomeno Nero Ailias

The mountaineering route begins from Vythos and ends up at Profitis Ilias, passing at its final part from the European path E6, which is easier and leads to the national road and then Pentalofos. The impressive waterfalls of Skotomeno Nero are also included in the route, where a difficult ascend (but much briefer than the perimetric) can approach directly from Kato Vathra the Epano and Krymmeni Vathra.

which facilitate the return either from the same path or through E6, which is easier and leads to the national road and then Pentalofos. The impressive waterfalls of Skotomeno Nero are also included in the route, where a difficult ascend (but much briefer than the perimetric) can approach directly from Kato Vathra the Epano and Krymmeni Vathra.



IDEAL PERIOD OF VISIT

For Skotomeno Nero November-May,
For Ailias April – November

ACTIVITY

Mountaineering – Mountain Biking (at Skotomeno Nero and around Ailias)

SIGNS

Fir, E6, Forest Inspection

DIFFICULTY LEVEL

B

ALTITUDE

min: 940 meters (Sioulist Bridge),
max: 1810 meters (Ailias Peak)

ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE

870 meters

AVERAGE SLOPE

10%

DRINKING FOUNTAIN

Vythos, Stavros Drinking Fountain, Kafkouli of Skotomeno Nero, Location Potistres of skotomeno nero

PATH EVACUATION

National Road, Dirt Road to Sioulist, Upper and Lower Forest Road of Skotomeno Nero, Forest Road of Ailias - Vythos

Epano Vythos

Avgerinos

Avgerinos, old **Konstantsiko**, is one of the most famous villages for its artisans and its chestnuts. It is built in the uppermost zone of settlements, at an altitude of 1,050 meters, discernible from afar, at an ideal location with rich chestnut forests and a spectacular view to the valley of Aliakmonas and Askio. Behind it, the mount of Profitis Ilias dominates the scenery. As it is the largest village, with more than 250 houses, it is divided into 4 districts,



Epano, Kato, Katidiko and **Gyftomahalas**.

In the present location there used to be a small settlement in the early 17th century and a church devoted to Saint Haralampus. In the early 18th century residents from the surrounding Palaiohoria that had been destroyed took refuge here, such as **Kalogritsa**, **Tserni**, **Zaltsi**, **Kontsiko**, **Mpatzi**, **Tsativi** and **Kalyvia**. Later, Vlachs settled here from other remote villages, which resulted in the

Rahi



settlement's rapid development and its rise to being a significant economic and cultural center. There used to be a Greek school here in operation as early as 1750.

The population of the village before the War of the 40s used to be 1,000. Their main pre-occupation was stock raising, cheese production, from which the famous mpatzios was produced, forestry, commerce, and of course artisanry. The preoccupations of today's residents are largely the same. The population today is approximately 150. However, in the summer the natural beauty and the old memories invite the scattered residents of Avgerinos back to their birthplace, the village becomes alive again and its population almost triples.

The old school operates as a museum and in the cultural center there are exhibitions of old photographs and traditional attires, such as the attire of Voio, **Kontousia**, as well as fustanellas from Macedonia.

In the center, the church of Koimiseos tis Theotokou (Dormition of Mother Mary) is dominant, with the exquisite chancel screen and the collection of rare ecclesiastical artifacts.

Just outside the village we also find the lovely churches of Agia Paraskevi and Agia Triada.





The Monastery of Agia Triada as seen from the path

Avgerinos-Vythos -Monastery of Agia Triada

The path reaches Vythos after 8.5 km and it offers wild alterations between dense forests and large clearings. It is a branch of E6 which continues to Argos Orestiko. This is an old route that the residents of Avgerinos used to follow in order to connect with Vythos, Pentalofos and the rest of Pindos. In many spots the old cobblestone is still preserved. The route reaches its maximum altitude at the conical peak of Rahi, which offers a panoramic view to all directions, continues to an ideal observation point to the artificial lake, reaches Agios Polikarplos and a

picturesque path right next to the lake, then to the lovely chestnut forest of Loggos and finally to Vythos, through the provincial road that comes from Avgerinos. Alternatively, through the oak forest, the path can continue its route to bridge Vakoufiko, then to basin Papakyrrilla at the springs of river Pramoritsa and end up after 6.8 km at the Monastery of Agia Triada. The route can also be cyclical, if combined with the path The Journey of River Pramoritsa and then approach Avgerinos from the upper route, or the opposite.



IDEAL PERIOD FOR VISIT
June

DIFFICULTY
A

ACTIVITY
Mountaineering

ALTITUDE
min: 870 meters (Agios Polykarplos),
max: 1.187 meters (Rahi Peak)

SIGNS
E6, Bridge

ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE
317 meters

ROUTE
Cyclical(in the second half), Two-Way

AVERAGE SLOPE
6%

DISTANCE
8,5 km

DRINKING WATER
Avgerinos, Monastery of Agia Triada, Agios Polykarplos, Vythos

MAXIMUM DURATION
2h 30'

PATH EVACUATION: NATIONAL ROAD
Dirt Road of Rahi – Avgerinos, Forest Road to the Artificial Lake of Vythos, Provincial Road of Vytos – Avgerinos

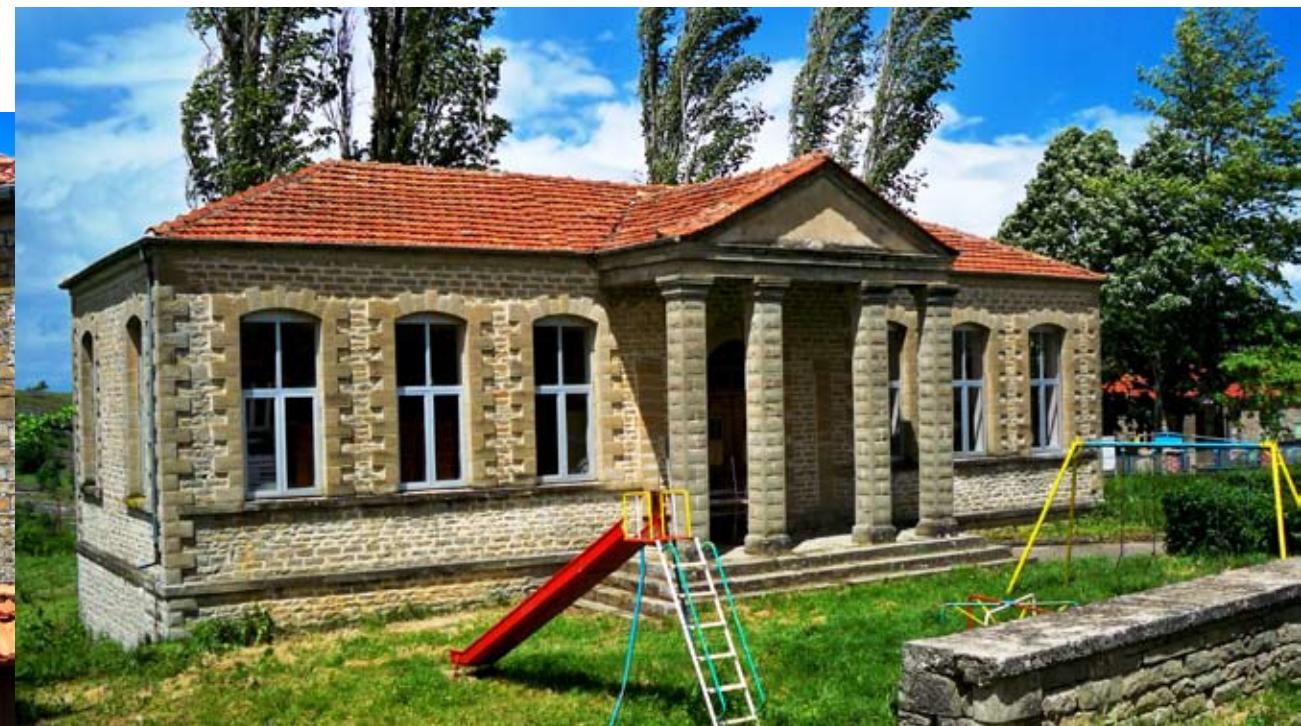
Hrysavgi

Hidden in the valley of the stream of Paliomageros, at an altitude of 830 meters, surrounded by dense forests and mountains, we find Hrysavgi, one of the most famous villages of artisans of Voio. From here on, the labyrinthine mountains obstruct the traveler's route, as the road does not continue to the south towards the villages of Grevena. It is divided into four districts and its 180 houses are made of stone almost in their entirety. Other impressive works made of stone include the two arched bridges, the four icon screens



of **Vraggas**, the two old churches, the school and the renovated watermill with its sluice. The population of Hrysavgi reached its maximum in 1940, with 347 residents. Today, there are no more than 40 permanent residents; and yet it is a very lively village, especially during the summer.

The precise date of its foundation is difficult to define. The settlement, with the name Moirali, was recorded in the Code of the Monastery of Zavorda in 1534. The first inhabitants initially settled in location Selio.



Around it there used to be other, scattered settlements, which were destroyed by raids of Turks and Albanians. Relics of these villages are still preserved in various locations, such as Argaleioi, where there were houses built inside the mountain and have been used since the period of Turkish rule. In these difficult times, some locals assassinated the local bey, to prevent him from spending the night with a newly-wed maiden of the village. The Turks

raided every single fortune of villagers as retaliation and used the money to built **Moirali Tzamisi** in Istanbul. Today, Haravgi is one of Voio's most beautiful settlements. Its trademark is the recently built park with the bridge and the waterfall of the mill's sluice. A lovely work of art of Vragga is also the stone gate at the entrance of the cemetery, which bears the carved phrase **Eternal City of the Future**.



Petsaniotiko Rema

Avgerinos – Morfi – Hrysavgi

It is an amazing route of crossing through stone bridges, which moves constantly next to the water, as does its twin path The Journey of River Pramoritsa. These two huge paths cross at Morfi. Under Triada it meets the small Petsaniotiko canyon and just after Hrysavgi an impressive primeval oak. It then follows a mostly descending route, crossing the valleys of streams and rivers through

impressive landscapes. It initially descends along Lasporrema, then passes to the Petsaniotiko torrent, meets river Pramoritsa twice, crosses the streams of Tsouka and finally Paliomagero. From the park of Hrysavgi the route increases by 1.5 km and 20' if the village is approached from the east entrance through the level trekking path which ends up at the small bridge at location Giofyri.



IDEAL PERIOD FOR VISIT
October – June

DIFFICULTY
B

ACTIVITY
Mountaineering (Crossing) – Mountain Biking

ALTITUDE
min: 680 meters (Petrogefyro),
max: 1,040 meters (Avgerinos)

SIGNS
Bridge

ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE
360 meters

ROUTE
Linear, Two-Way

AVERAGE SLOPE
5%

DISTANCE
22 km

DRINKING WATER
Avgerinos, Avgerinos Drinking Fountain, Morfi, Drinking Fountain of Morfi, Park of Hrysavgi, Zoodohos Pigi, Hrysavgi

MAXIMUM DURATION
7h'

PATH EVACUATION: NATIONAL ROAD
Dirt Road of Rahi – Avgerinos, Forest Road to the Artificial Lake of Vythos, Provincial Road of Vytos – Avgerinos

MOUNT VOIO - ROUTES

Morfi

Morfi, old *Mirasani*, is built at an altitude of 840 meters on a hill with an open horizon to the south and a panoramic view to Koryfi and Hrysavgi. Here, the extreme landscape of Voio is more level and the large mountain chains of the North give their place to the consecutive slopes that reach all the way to Tsotyli and Grevena. In the past, it used to be the crossroads of the road that descended from Kastanohoria and Grammos and thus this is the connection spot of the mountain-eering paths that start from Pentalofos and Avgerinos.

It is divided into four districts, but during the



winter there are only 20 residents. The landscape's tranquility and easy access helps in the population's boom during the summer to around 200 residents. It was founded in the early 17th century by settlers from Epirus and the rest of Voio. Kosmas from Aitoleia preached here and advised believers to hide in the forests in case of danger. Before the War of the 40s the village had 350 residents, but due to its contribution to the struggle of Resistance, the occupational forces set it on fire in July 1944. An old kiln has recently been renovated and is visitable. *The Old Café* near the square is also very picturesque.

The old Café



Agia Sotira

Right over river Pramoritsa and the old national road Kozani-Ioannina, on the slope of a small hill, at an altitude of 900 meters we find Agia Sotira, or **Svoliani**. Behind the dense trees a mystical land unfolds, with two-storey stone houses, cobblestones and few but warm-hearted people. As in most villages of the area, vegetation in Agia Sotira is lush, it continuously rises, multiplies wildlife and dominates against human presence, having covered terraces, paths and buildings.

Populations from lower zones as well as from Tseros used to find refuge here. The **Skala**

tis Svolianis, the winding stone cobblestone that connects Agia Sotira with Pentalofos, has a lot of stories to tell about the persecutions of Christians, the marches of Greek troops in World War II and the wanderings of artisans.

Today the village is still alive and reminiscent of older times when its population used to exceed 300 inhabitants. It has two lovely churches, the central one, which is devoted to Saint Constantine and Helen and the Cemetery Church of the Metamorphosis, which can be found in the settlement's entrance.

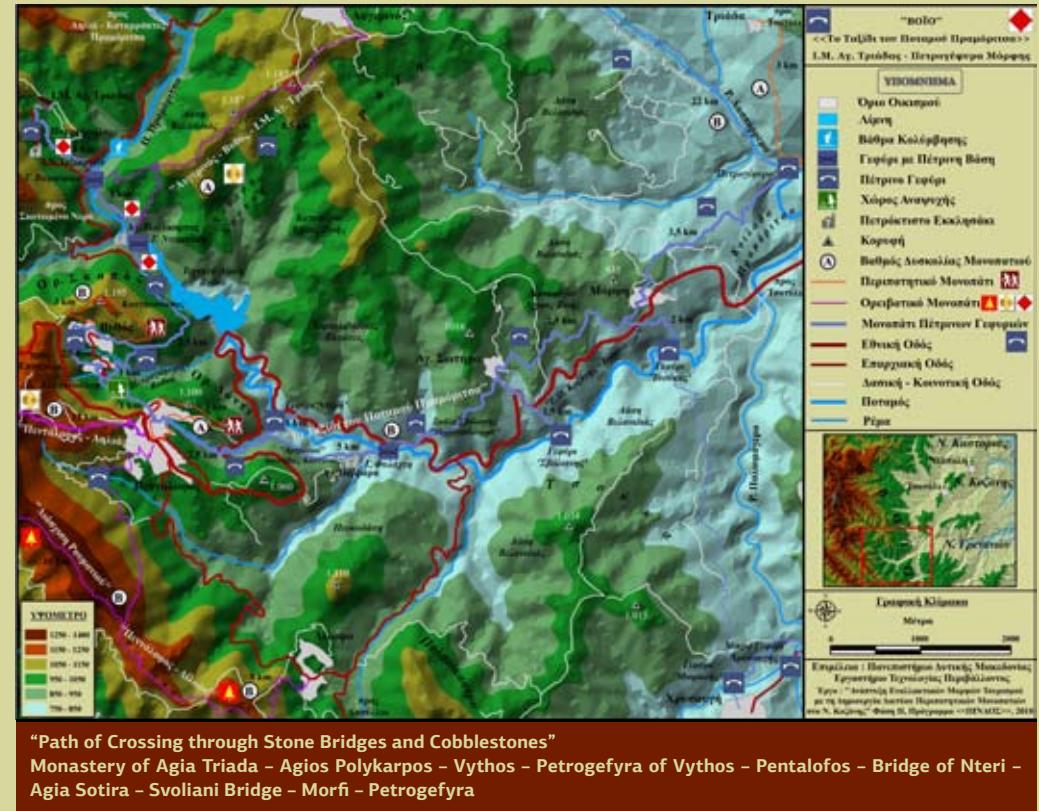




The Journey of River Pramoritsa

It is beyond doubt an impressive mountain-eering path, but the number of intermediate stations give it the opportunity to be divided into smaller trekking routes, such as the part **Vythos – Monastery of Agia Triada, Pentalofos – Nteri Bridge, National Road – Nteri Road, Pentalofos – Agia Sotira, Agia Sotira – Svoliani Bridge, Agia Sotira – Morfi, Morfi – Tsouka Bridge and Morfi – Petrogefyro**. The journey to the river however does not stop here, but continues uphill with the appropriate signs, towards the springs. There, we find the swimming basin of **Papakyrrila**, along the asphalted road that leads to Avgerinos and higher up at the waterfalls of

Gagamita and **Hrapa**, along the forest road that moves parallel to the water and reaches all the way up to the mountain's peaks. The path, in its entirety follows the descend of the river from the high mountains to the valleys of Voio, but it is offered for the opposite route as well. Before the settlement of Agia Sotira the route goes uphill to the famous Skala tis Svolianis, a stone, winding path that ascends the mountain. At this spot we also find **Miso Prosopo** (Half-Face), the enormous protrusion of a stone that bears a striking resemblance to a human head. The whole history of Voio can be traced in the large stretch of this route.



IDEAL PERIOD FOR VISIT
October – June

DIFFICULTY
B

ACTIVITY
Mountaineering – Mountain Biking (Except the Monastery and Skala Svolianis)

ALTITUDE
min: 680 meters (Petrogefyro)
max: 1080 meters (Epano Vythos)

SIGNS
Bridge, Forest Inspection

ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE
400 meters

ROUTE
Linear, Two Way

AVERAGE SLOPE
5

DISTANCE
28,5 km

DRINKING WATER
Monastery of Agia Triada, Agios Polykarpos, Drinking Fountain of Vythos Agioneri, Square of Vythos, Drinking Fountain of Vythos Mitraka, Drinking Fountains of Vythos Mpnarria, Agios Ahilleios, Kato Pentalofos, Skips Drinking Fountain, Agia Varvara Chapel, Agia Sotira, Morfi, Drinking Fountain of Morfi

MAXIMUM DURATION
9h 30'

PATH EVACUATION: NATIONAL ROAD

Evacuation of Path: Provincial Road of Vythos – Avgerinos, Forest Road to the artificial lake of Vythos, Provincial Road Vythos – Avgerinos, Vythos, Provincial Road Vythos – Pentalofos, Pentalofos, National Road, Forest Road to Pentalofos – Argaleioi, Old Road to Pentalofos, National Road, Agia Sotira, National Road, Morfi, Upper Rural Road of Morfi, National Road, Lower Rural Road of Morfi, Forest Road of Lasporrema – Triada

Triada

Triada, also known as **Petsiani**, can be found at an altitude of 840 meters on a slope of the impressive valley that is formed by Pramoritsa and the stream that descends from Avgerinos, known as Lasporrema or **Mpatziotikos Lakkos**. A little further up, the banks of the stream become steep on both sides, forming a small gorge. Opposite the village we find Morfi and Avgerinos; there is no road that reaches them directly, however. It is a secluded location which is made inaccessible and indiscernible by the deep valley and the lush vegetation. The tiny **Triada** with the lovely stone houses is divided into two districts. The first has the school as its landmark and the second the

square, where we also find the central square. The village is virtually abandoned. There are only four permanent residents. The main pre-occupations used to be agriculture and stock raising, until the emigration wave came and most residents left abroad. According to the 1905 census, there were 120 Vlach-speaking Greeks in the settlement. Oral traditions have it that in 1846 eight men came here and bought the land from the Turks. The village's name is possibly due to the fact that it was built in three different phases and appears to have no relation to the Monastery bearing the same name.

Triada – Petrogefyro – Pramoritsa

From the small square of Triada begins the path to **Petrogefyro**, the banks of river **Pramoritsa** and Lasporrema, also known as **Mpatziotikos Lakkos**, a lovely stream that flows continuously all year round. The route follows a mild, descending forest road among oak trees which turns into a path at the last 150 meters before the bridge. From there, it connects to the large path **The Journey of River Pramoritsa**, which comes from Morfi. 300 meters before the river, there is the opportunity for an amazing view to the Petrogefyro and the green valley that is formed by

Pramoritsa. A few meters further, Pramoritsa flows impressively parallel to the stream, its banks becoming very level and making a visit quite easy. In this area the river makes a big turn, widens and descends in serene tranquility. A little further below the end of the forest road that leads to the bridge, there is the area of confluence with Lasporrema in a location rich in waters. There is also the opportunity to continue the route uphill to Morfi, ascending from the old Pazarostrata (Road of the bazaar) where the old cobblestone is still preserved.



MOUNT VOIO – ROUTES



IDEAL PERIOD FOR VISIT
 November – June, Visitable by Schools

DIFFICULTY
 A

ACTIVITY
 Trekking

ALTITUDE
 min: 680 meters (Petrogefyro),
 max: 860 meters (Triada Square)

SIGNS
 Bridge

ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE
 180 meters

ROUTE
 linear, Two-Way

AVERAGE SLOPE
 6%

DISTANCE
 3 km

DRINKING WATER
 Triada Square Zoodohos Pigi, Hrysavgi

MAXIMUM DURATION
 1h'

PATH EVACUATION: NATIONAL ROAD
 Forest Road Triada—Lasporema

Nea Kotyli

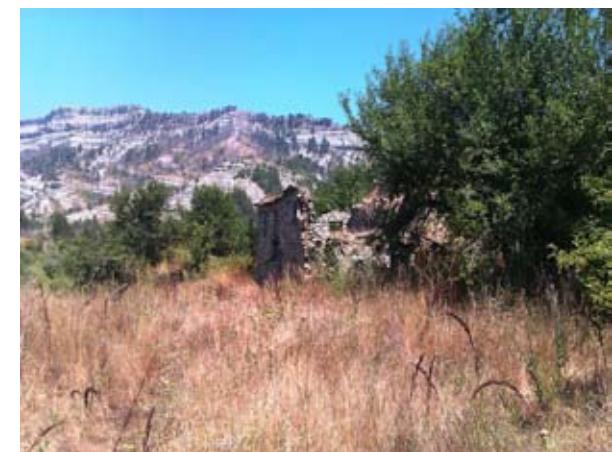
It was little after the civil war when the inhabitants of Palia (Old) Kotyli, also known as Koteltsi took the difficult decision to abandon their village. The settlement had suffered many disasters and casualties during the wars and was found secluded in a harsh location, thus unable to offer its people even the bare necessities to survive in the new era that was dawning. Some emigrated abroad, others moved to Kastoria but many

were those who decided to found Nea (New) Kotyli on the opposite slope.

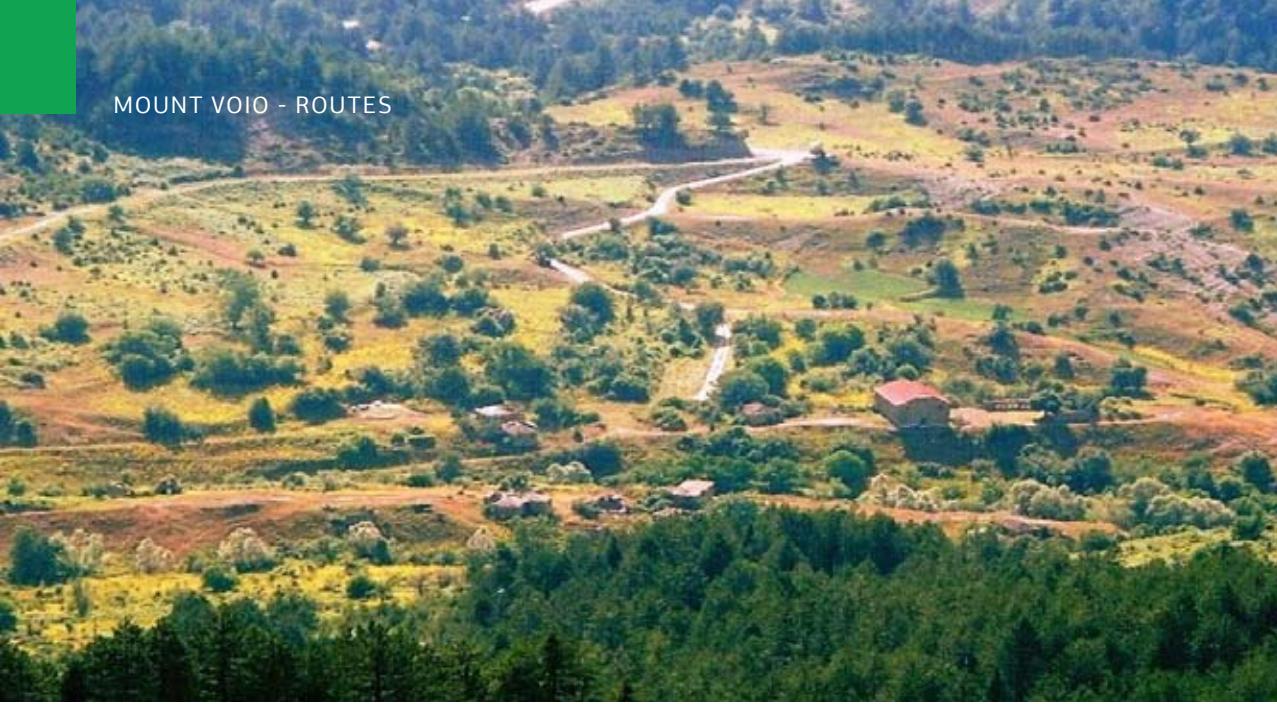
The new village, which was recognized as a settlement in 1951, was built northeast of Voio, exactly opposite Ontria, nearer to Nestorio than the old one, next to the national road that connects Kastoria with Ioannina. It is one of Greece's highest inhabited settlements, at an amazing 1,400 meter altitude. Here, roofs are made of iron



sheets and have a steep angle, to allow the great quantities of winter snow to flow freely. Today it has become of the most popular mountainous destinations of Western Macedonia. Locals return to the village once a year to honor st. George, next to the demolished houses of their families.



MOUNT VOIO - ROUTES



Kypseli as seen from the path

Crossing Voio

It is one of Greece's biggest and most impressive paths, following the main route of European path E6. It moves along the high crest of the main body of Voio, passing from its three highest peaks. The visit to the peak of Petritsi is not to be missed, due to its amazing morphology, leaving the main for just course a few meters. The course is very pleasant, rich in vegetation and full of alternating landscapes and spectacular views of the enormous mountains of Northern Pindos. Alternatively, one can make a detour of steep Ailias and the two Skalas and reduce the duration and difficulty, however the ascent to Profitis Ilias is an experience of a lifetime. It can even have as the beginning point Nea Kotyli or the plateau of Paliokrimini, following the direction either to Kotyli (11 km) or to Pentalofos (21.5 km). A forest road reaches all the way up there, as well as other paths from Polykastano. In

the case of beginning from Paliokrimini, the route becomes considerably easier, without having to spend the night, either. From there, one can even end up to Kypseli through non-signaled paths, passing from the peak of Tsouka and the great cliff of Paliokrimini. Starting from Afhenas of Pentalofos in the old national road, the Crossing of Voio can be concluded by an experienced mountaineering team without having to spend the night either, however this way the initial part of the path, from the square of Pentalofos, is not visitable, and it is equally impressive, while it also serves as a preparation for the difficult ascent that follows. In the final part of the route, in the neck of the national road right above Nea Kotyli, there is the opportunity to abandon E6 and continue straight ahead along the forest road on the crest of Voio and visit the cliffs of Haros and Pyrgos Kotylis.



IDEAL PERIOD FOR VISIT

April - November, You will be required to stay the night



DIFFICULTY

C



ACTIVITY

Mountaineering - Mountain Biking (Except Ailias Peak via Skala)



ALTITUDE

min: 1,055 meters (Pentalofos Square),
max: 1,812 meters (Paliokrimini)



SIGNS

E6, Forest Inspection, Fir



ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE

757 meters



ROUTE

linear, Two-Way



AVERAGE SLOPE

5%



DISTANCE

32,5 km



DRINKING WATER

Pentalofos, Pentalofos Drinking Fountain, Location Pappou to Pigadi, Nirikita (camping site outside the route), Paliokrimini (Camping Site) at the forest road below the plateau and to the right, Nea Kotyli



MAXIMUM DURATION

11h'



PATH EVACUATION: NATIONAL ROAD

Forest Road of Pentalofos - Panoukla - National Road, Forest Road of Ailias - Nirikitas - Vythos, Forest Road of Paliokrimini - Polikastano, Forest Road of Voio Peaks - Zoni, Forest Road of Voio Peaks - Nea Kotyli, National Road of Kastoria - Ioannina

Skalohori

At first glance, the area of Neapoli does not divulge its whole beauty and secrets. Deep valleys, lush forests and violent torrents surround it. This is the scenery where the secluded village Skalohori was founded in the late 17th century. It is built on the Eastern side of Ontria, at an altitude of 980 meters among fertile fields, green landscapes and rare fossils. This is where the large oak forest begins, which covers a great part of the semi-mountainous of Voio and which is discernible from the road just before the village.

The settlement is crossed by the provincial road that connects Neapoli with Argos Orestiko, to which it is closer. Below the road we find the renovated square with some of its stone buildings still preserved. The central church, built in 1843, is a work by artisans from Zoupani. In the winter there are around 50 permanent residents, but there are 200 listed citizens.

Skalohori went through a period of bloom, even founding a brotherhood in Istanbul. It played a significant role in World War II and in the civil War. It was burned twice by Germans in August 1943 and in July 1944. To rebuild the houses, materials were used from the remains of Palaiohori, which was



the initial settlement. In 1902, the survivors of a raid of Bulgarians in nearby Mpratmiri also settled here

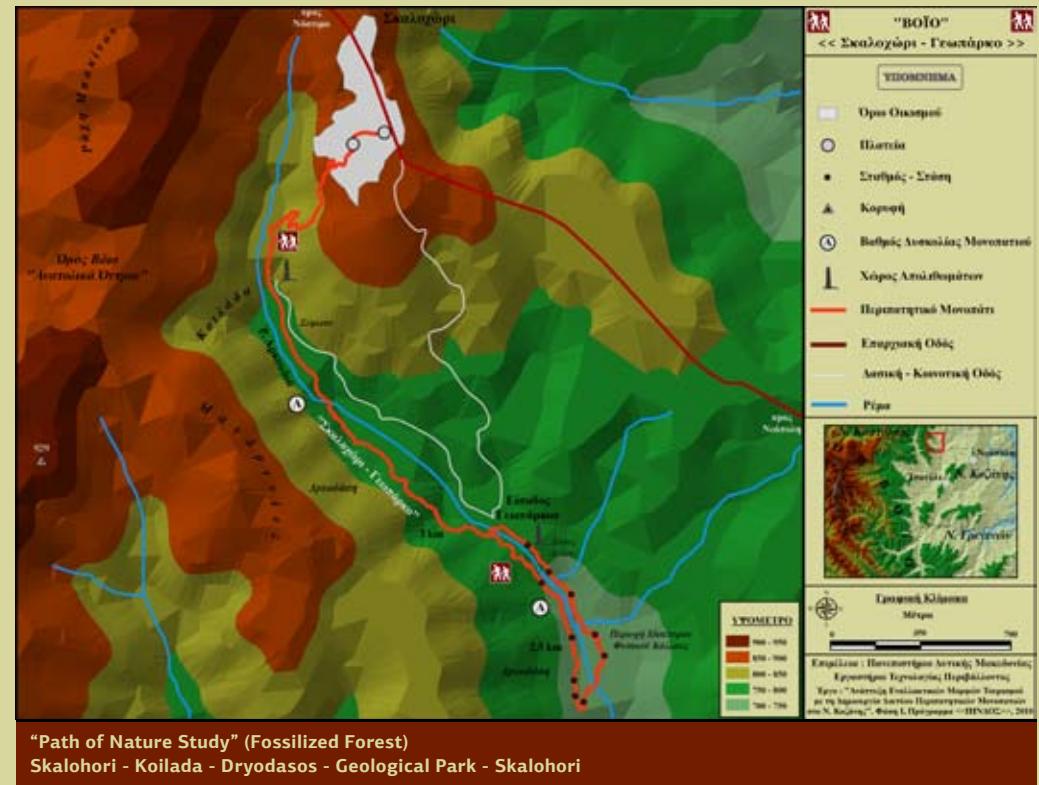




Skalohori - Geoparko - Skalohori

The route of Geoparko includes a tour to a lovely, easily accessible landscape with mild slopes and rich vegetation, around the stream **Arkoudia**. Its length until the return back to the starting point is some 2.5 km and the maximum duration of the visit is 50'. Along the path there are 10 **stations** where a journey to the geological history of Northern Greece unfolds, focusing on the area of Voio from the era when it was part of the seabed of the ancient sea of **Tethys**, until it took its current form. In the whole area of Eastern Ontria an abundance of fossils have been unearthed, mainly comprised of shells and tree trunks, many of which are on exhibition within the park. In every station there is a description of the most representative species

of flora, fauna and mushrooms that can be seen today in Voio and generally in Northern Pindos. There is drinking water in the center of the Park in the 4th and 6th station. In its final part the route crosses a lush oak forest with cyclamens in a lovely level area, which stretches for 500 meters. It is ideal for activities of environmental education and for research on the field, as it is supplementary to the neighboring Paleontological Museum of Nostimo as a natural exhibition area. Geoparko, apart from the road, can be accessed by a 50-minute long path, which begins from the settlement of Skalohori and crosses dense oak forests and an impressive valley. The route passes locations of scattered fossils full of wild flowers and mushrooms.



IDEAL PERIOD FOR VISIT
Whole Year Round, Visitable by schools

DIFFICULTY
A

ACTIVITY
Trekking

ALTITUDE
min: 720 meters (7th Station of Geoparko)
max: 890 meters (Skalohori)

SIGNS
Trekkers

ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE
170 meters

ROUTE
Cyclical(Within Geoparko)
Two-Way

AVERAGE SLOPE
3%

DISTANCE
8,5 km

DRINKING WATER
Skalohori, Geoparko

MAXIMUM DURATION
2h 30'

PATH EVACUATION: NATIONAL ROAD
Rural Road of Geoparko - Valley of Skalohori,
Entrance of Geoparko







Eastern Voio
Mount Askio

MOUNT ASKIO



Siniatsiko

A giant in the heart of Western Macedonia

Mount Askio, also known as **Siniatsiko**, can be found in the eastern side of Voio. Tall vegetation is characteristically absent; however, there are secluded pockets of forests, which are the typical natural habitat of local brown bears. There is a striking contrast between the bare and the forested areas. In the bare landscapes tall vegetation is totally absent, while where there are forests they are very dense and begin abruptly. This phenomenon is partly due to the local geological structure but also to the flocks

of grazing livestock which used to be large and quite numerous. The mountain's length is 40 km, starting south of the town of Kastoria and ending up outside Kozani. Its direction is from northwest to southeast, being a natural continuation of mount Vitsi and Varnountas. It is in the center of Western Macedonia, which is why the view from even the lowest peaks is sensational. It is one of Greece's wildest and hardest mountains, which is probably why there are so many monasteries built in it.

Siniatsiko

Siniatsko is the highest and most central area, with an altitude of 2,111 meters, designated in its largest part as a **Natura 2000** area. The sheer volume of the base and the peak is truly grandiose. There is not just one, but a series of peaks that exceed 2,000 meters, the highest being the second to the south, although they all appear to be of equal height from below. When Siniatsko is snowy, its appearance becomes even more imposing. Other high peaks include **Skakos** (1,824 m.), **Pyrgos** (1,517 m.) Makrygiani (1,542 m.), **Magoula** (1,621 m.) and **Skarpa** (1,624 m.). In its Northern part, which is lush with oak forests, we find the winter resorts of the Skiing and Mountaineering Club of Ptolemaida and of the Mountaineering Club of Eordaia. The limestone rocks have created impressive unexplored caves in the area of Eratya. A peculiar landscape is also at the alpine plateau of 1,900 meters which is formed in the west side under the peak, where there is also a small catavothron.



Eastern Siniatsiko

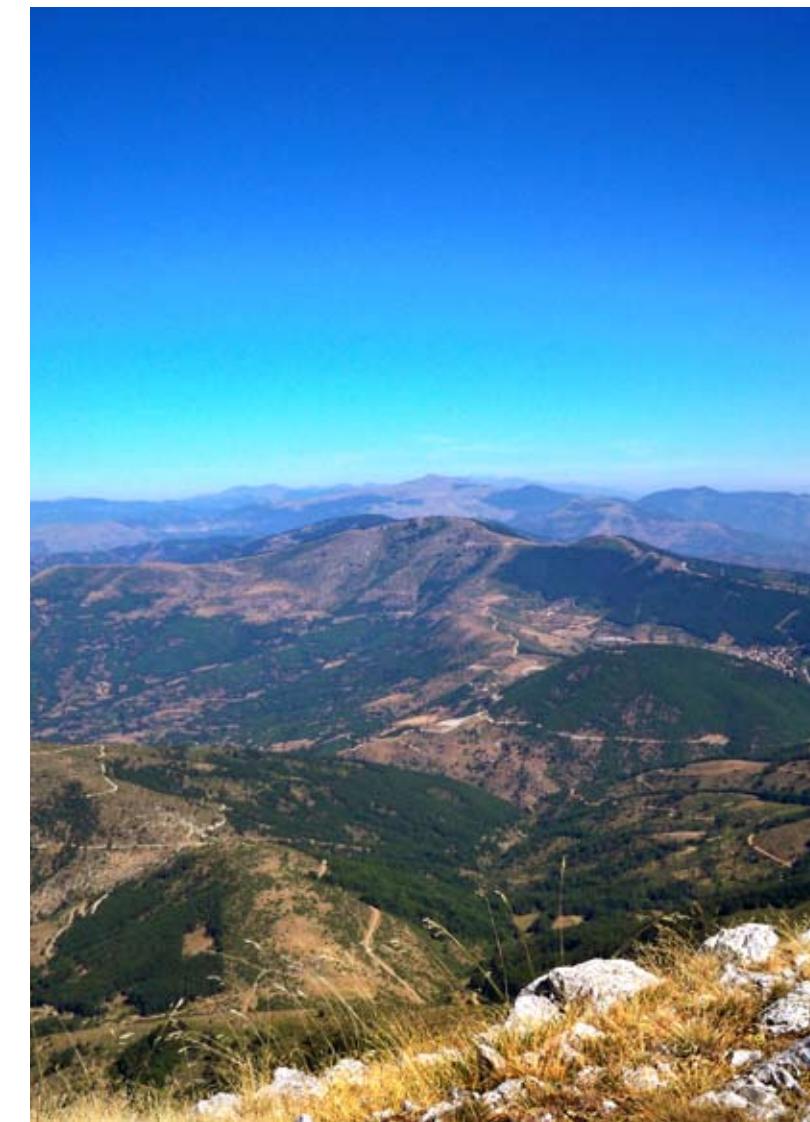
Velia

The southern continuation of Siniatsiko to Siatista is mount **Velia**. Here, the absence of tall vegetation is total. The mountain is located between Siatista and Galatini and its highest peak is 1,763 meters. Other important peaks include **Pyrgos** (1,688 m.), with an impressive, cone-like shape, and **Trani Rahi** (1,505 m.). The area where it connects with mount Vourinos, Fardykampos, is the only valley crossing between Macedonia and Epirus, which resulted in many historic battles being fought there, in recent years as well as in antiquity. In this location we also find a quite large cave, which is visible from Egnatia road.



Mouriki

The northern extension of Siniatsiko is **Mouriki**. Geologically, the two mountains differ in the composition of their rocks and thus do not share a common origin. Mouriki could be characterized as a completely separate mountain, as it consists purely of schist, and is more similar to Vitsi, which is located in the north. The landscape here changes dramatically. The slopes are more level, with the eastern being lush with forests of beech and oak. It connects to



Mouriki as seen from Siniatsiko

Siniatsiko with the area of Vlasi, forming its namesake plateau. Its highest peak reaches 1,701 meters, while the lower ones include **Petra Markou** (1,655 m.), **Akonia** (1,468 m.), **Kastro Zota** (1,413 m.) and **Gkoufa** (1,285 m.). Waters that emerge from natural springs among mosses and rocks, form natural water reservoirs, while small waterfalls carve the rocks, shaping them in forms that only nature can create.

The Bridge of Pelekanos

In the small valley of Pelekanos, the torrent of Aliakmonas called **Tou Fasouli i Gourna** was an obstruction to the locals' transports. In order to enable its members to cross it safely, the community of Pelekanos assigned to artisan Nikos Karamalis the construction of a bridge in 1935. The bridge was built 2 km south of the village, following a downhill dirt road after the square.

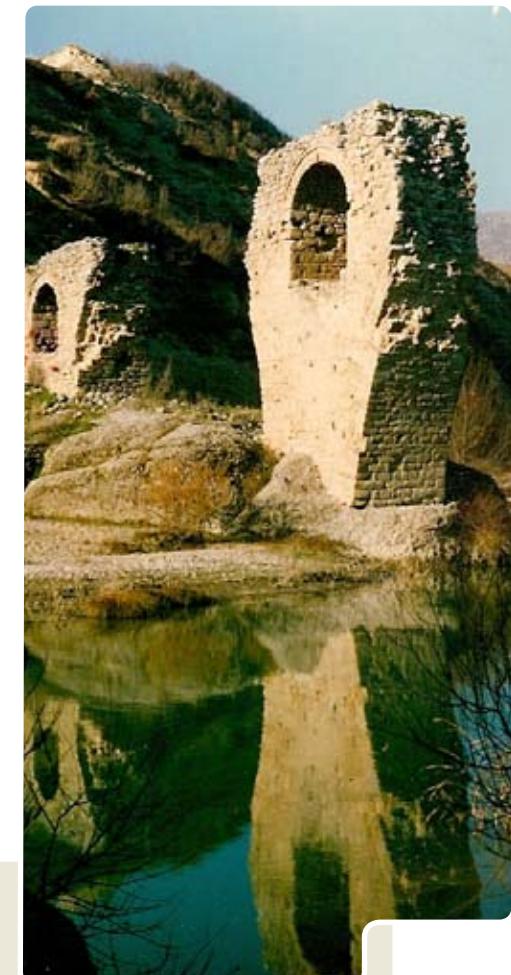


It is single-arched, 18.5 meters long, 3.1 meters wide and 4.4 meters high, while the length of its arch is 7.5 meters. There is cobblestone on it, while under its arch we find stalactites that have been formed from the mortar's lime. It is the most recent bridge of this type in western Macedonia and the only old bridge that is preserved today in Eastern Voio, on the foot of mount Askio.

The Remains of the Bridge of Pasa

As we move from Siatista to Grevena via the old national road, a few kilometers after the crossroad of **Mpara** and before village Kokkinia, the remains of another large bridge are visible to the left, an accessible dirt road and a peculiar rock right next to the river which still enhances the exquisite landscape to this day. There, at the banks of Aliakmonas, Greece's largest river, there used to be Macedonia's biggest stone bridge. It was a marvelous work of traditional architecture and the only bridge built on the river's main stream. The bridge was built in 1806 and was funded by a pasha, to thank God for saving one of his women that had fallen into the deep waters. The bridge was dynamited by the English army in April 14, 1941, to prevent the Ger-

mans from crossing it. Eventually, the German army found another way to cross, from a spot where the river was milder. The bridge, however, had been destroyed for ever. Pouqueville mentions it in his book **Journey to Western Macedonia**. He writes that it used to have five arches, each of different length. According to oral tradition, there was a bell under its big arch as crossing it was quite dangerous, due to its height. Even brides had to unmount their horses before crossing it. Its total length was some 100 meters and its height 15 meters.



The Monastery Koimiseos tis Theotokou of Mikrokastro

The monastery Koimiseos tis Theotokou at Mikrokastro is Voio's largest and the center of intellectual and social activity of the Metropolis of Sismani and Siatista.

Its history begins in the early 19th century. It initially functioned as a pilgrimage temple, but later with the addition of further edifices was turned into a monastery. During Turkish rule, it paid the teachers of surrounding villages and served as a place of resort for the persecuted, the poor and the miserable.

The monastery's main temple is covered in

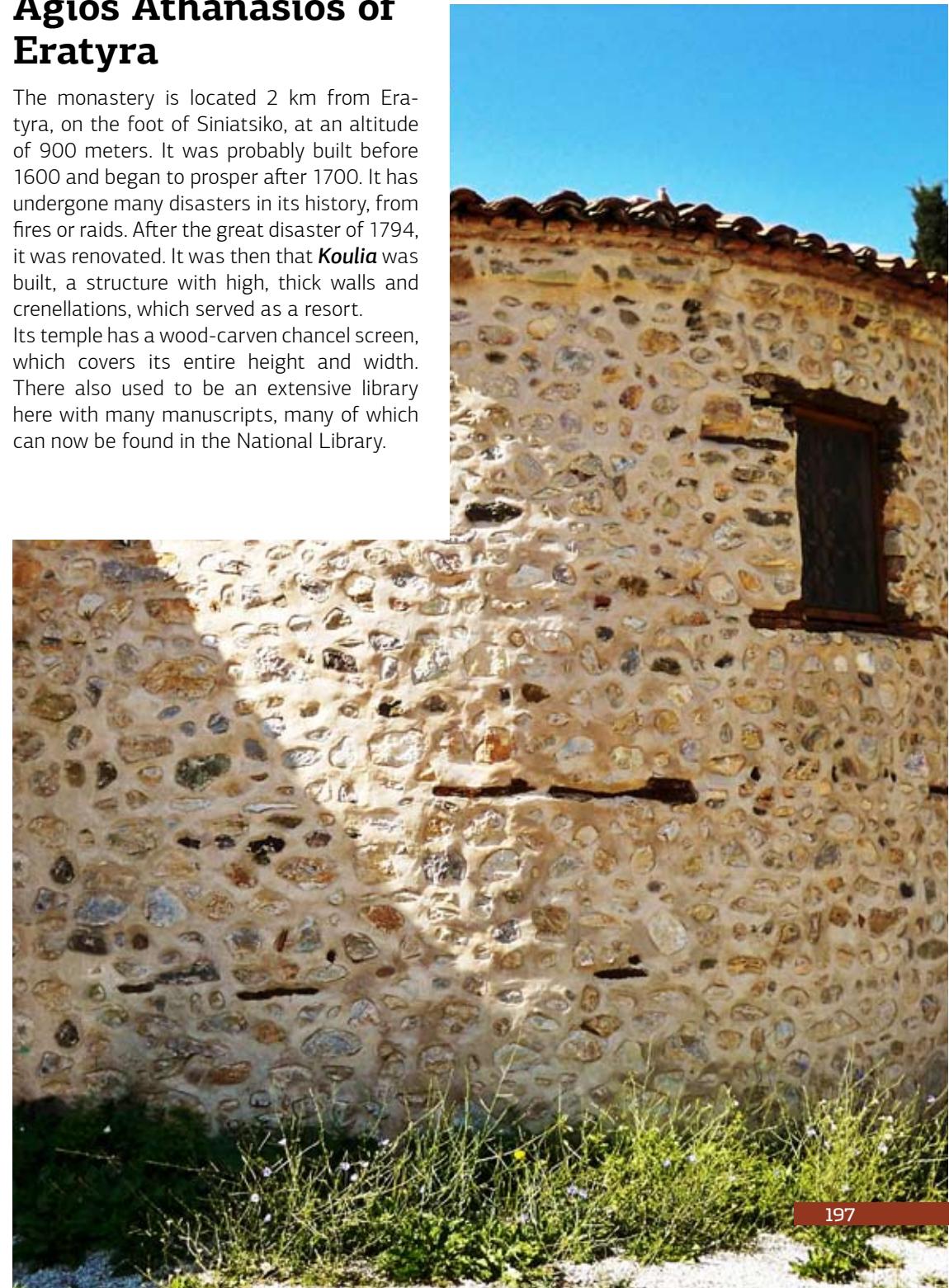
murals of Byzantine art. Its greatest treasure is the protecting icon of *Panagia Eleousa* (Eleousa Mother Mary) which is mentioned as early as the 15th century.

The monastery became a female convent in 1993. The new sisterhood, consisting of 20 nuns, has an organized common life and works in the intellectual improvement of the area. On the day of the celebration of the monastery, crowds gather to observe the peculiar custom of *Kavalarides* (horsemen) of Siatista.



The Monastery of Agios Athanasios of Eratyra

The monastery is located 2 km from Eratyra, on the foot of Siniatsiko, at an altitude of 900 meters. It was probably built before 1600 and began to prosper after 1700. It has undergone many disasters in its history, from fires or raids. After the great disaster of 1794, it was renovated. It was then that *Koulia* was built, a structure with high, thick walls and crenellations, which served as a resort. Its temple has a wood-carved chancel screen, which covers its entire height and width. There also used to be an extensive library here with many manuscripts, many of which can now be found in the National Library.

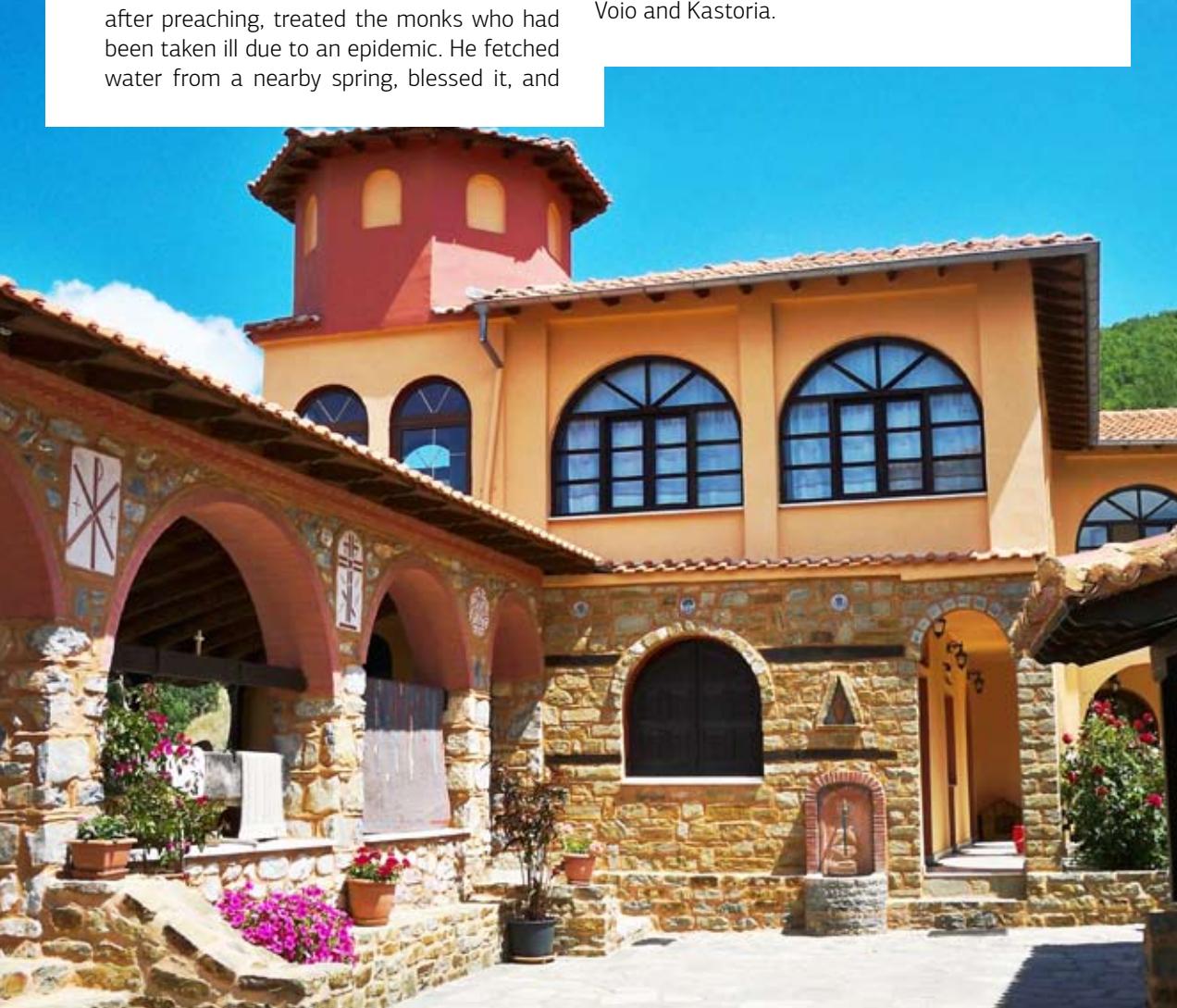


The Monastery of Metamorfosi tou Sotiros in Dryovouno

The prospering male monastery is located a few kilometers above Dryovouno, at a secluded area. Its foundation goes back to 1592, while the murals were completed in 1652, by painter Nikolaos from Linotopi while the narthex in particular is the work of Argyris Krimiotis. Kosmas Aitolos arrived here and, after preaching, treated the monks who had been taken ill due to an epidemic. He fetched water from a nearby spring, blessed it, and

gave it to the monks to drink, who were then cured. This water has been considered holy ever since and a chapel devoted to saint Kosmas has been constructed at the spring.

At wartime, the monastery offered valuable services to the local population. It served as storage for ammunition and as base for various chieftains. This is where Dimitrios Feraios, **Kapetan Vardas** and Pavlos Melas resorted to. In 1943 it was set on fire by Italians along with its historic records. Its renovation began in 1996, the prime mover being Archbishop Stefanos Rinos with the personal efforts of monks and believers. The parvis offers a sense of tranquility and a spectacular view to Voio and Kastoria.

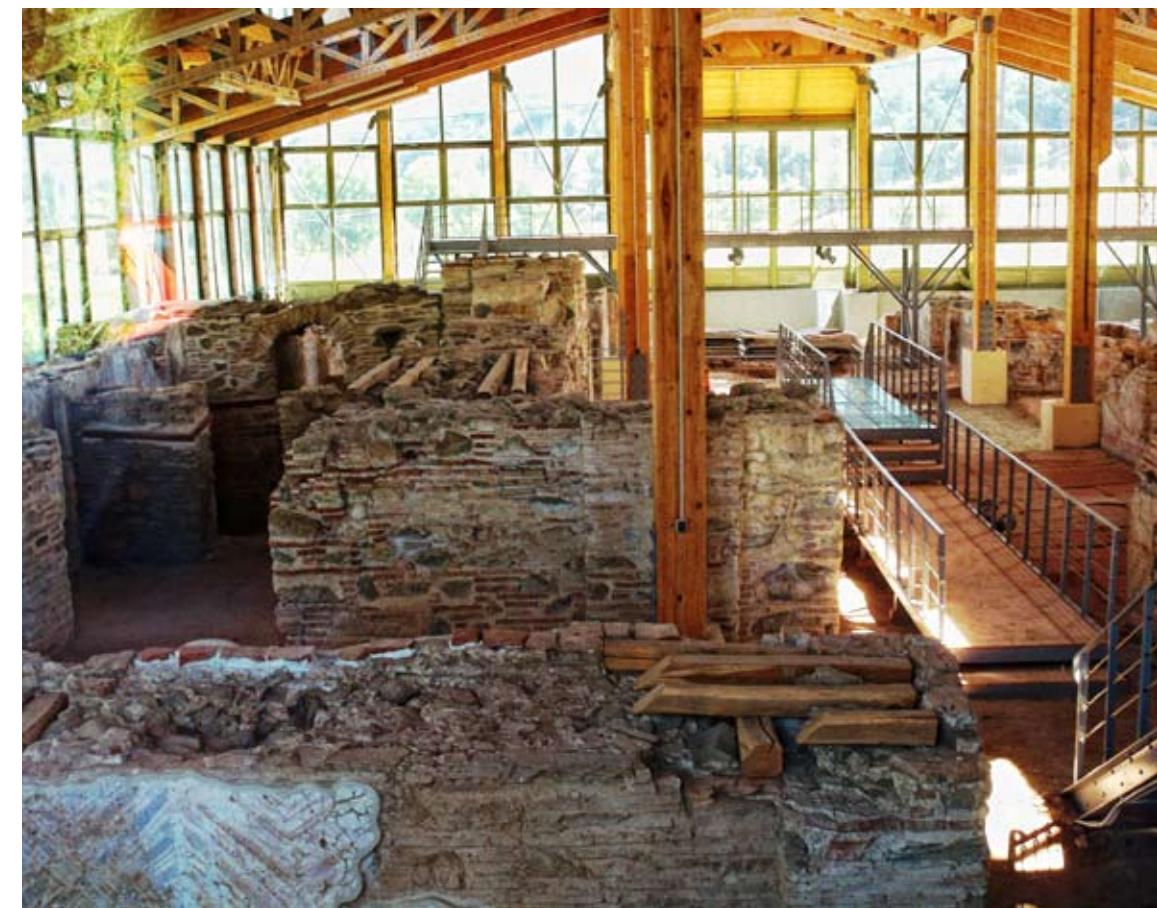


The Monastery of Koimiseos tis Theotokou in Sisani

The female monastery is located on the opposite side of the banks of river Myrihos, just 2 km from Sisani, in an area that does not make it easily discernible. The date of its foundation is not known with certainty, as it is connected to the ancient seat of Voio, **Sisanionpoli**, as it is exactly next to it. It was probably built on the ruins of an older temple and then evolved into a monastery. The erection of the newer temple was probably in 1762. It is located in the south part of the entire complex and is semi-underground.

It has a wooden roof and is generally austere,

with a low height and no windows. Its chancel screen is simple and painted with elements from the plant and animal kingdoms. Its icons were painted by Georgios Emmanouil from Eratyra and funded by priest Theophanis. In its entrance is encased a marble Roman plaque of years 146 and 147 A.C., where names of young athletes are inscribed.



The Monastery of Agia Paraskevi of Domavisti

The monastery is perched at an altitude of 950 meters on the foot of Siniatsiko, near Namata. It was founded in the early 14th century. The first temple was probably destroyed and in its position another one was built in the early 1500, which is preserved to this day. It is Voio's oldest monastery and place of worship for the inhabitants of Namata and Pelekano.

The murals are probably works of artists from Linotopi and are dated in the early 1600. In the same period the gilded wood-carved chancel screen was constructed, the work of artisans from Epirus.

During its life, the monastery has met with disaster many times. Only in the period



1800-1840 it was burned and raided by the Turks 4 times, while in 1875, after the raid, all its monks were slaughtered. The monastery's ordeals do not end here, as in November 27, 1944 the German troops raided, robbed and burned it, but, miraculously the temple was not burned, only the supporting buildings. With efforts from Metropolitan Antonios and help from benefactor Mihail Gkanas from Namata, it was restored in 2001.

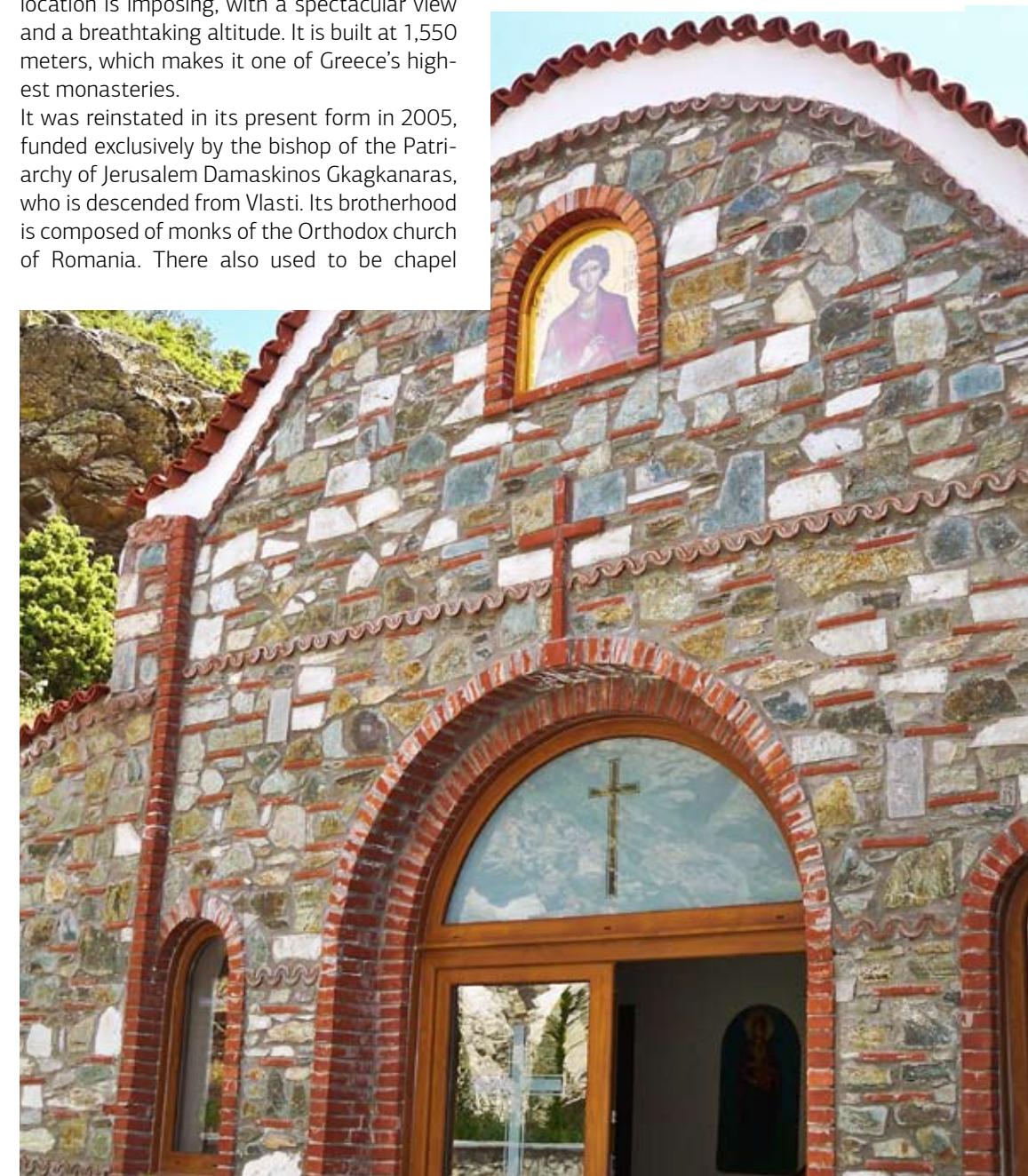
The Monastery of Agios Panteleimonas in Vlasti

Just over Vlasti, on a slope of Mouriki, we find the monastery of Agios Panteleimonas. Its location is imposing, with a spectacular view and a breathtaking altitude. It is built at 1,550 meters, which makes it one of Greece's highest monasteries.

It was reinstated in its present form in 2005, funded exclusively by the bishop of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem Damaskinos Gkagkanaras, who is descended from Vlasti. Its brotherhood is composed of monks of the Orthodox church of Romania. There also used to be chapel

here, from 1848.

During its celebration there is a great feast and the entire Vlasti is in excitement. Early in the morning, villagers set out on foot or on horseback to ascend the slope. The celebration climaxes in the afternoon, when there is dancing in the valleys.



Routes



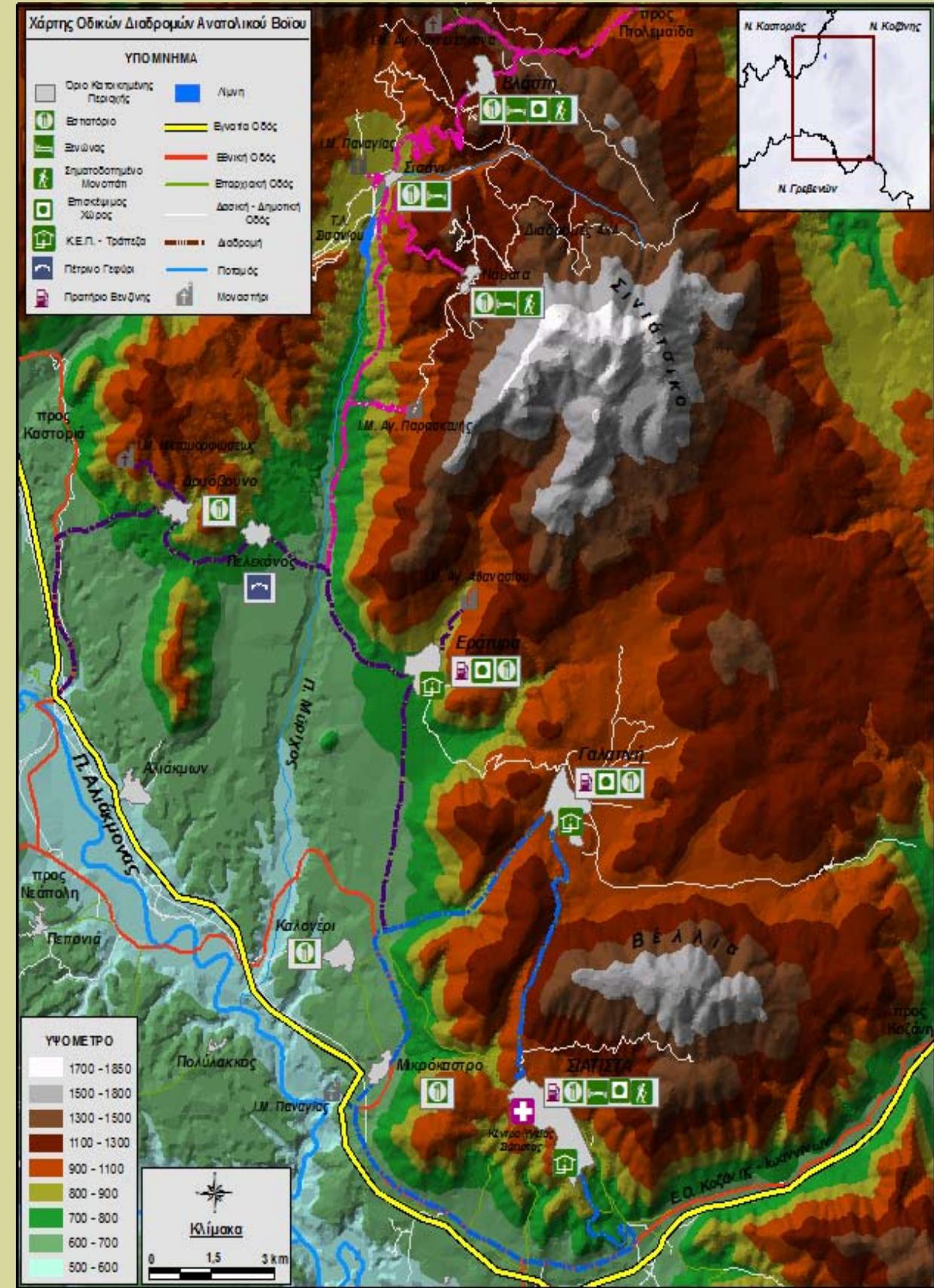
In the map we see with different color the routes in mount Askio with a city car. The following are routes that require a 4x4 vehicle or a mountain bike:

- Vlasti – Siniatsiko
- Provincial Road Vlasti - Ptolemaida Yfanti
- Namata - O.L.E. Resort - Vlasti
- Afhenas of Vlasti - H.O.O.P. Resort - Siniatsiko
- Emporio - Mouriki
- Namata - Kioski
- Namata - Profitis Ilias of Namata

- Pelekanos - Stone Bridge
- Milohori - Krasata - Mouriki
- Galatini - Siniatsiko
- Eratyra - Siniatsiko
- National Road Kozani - Grevena - Banks of Aliakmonas

The routes for a common bike are:

- Intersection of Kaloneri - Eratyra - Sisani
- Sisani - Pelekanos
- Afhenas of Vlasti - Kleisoura

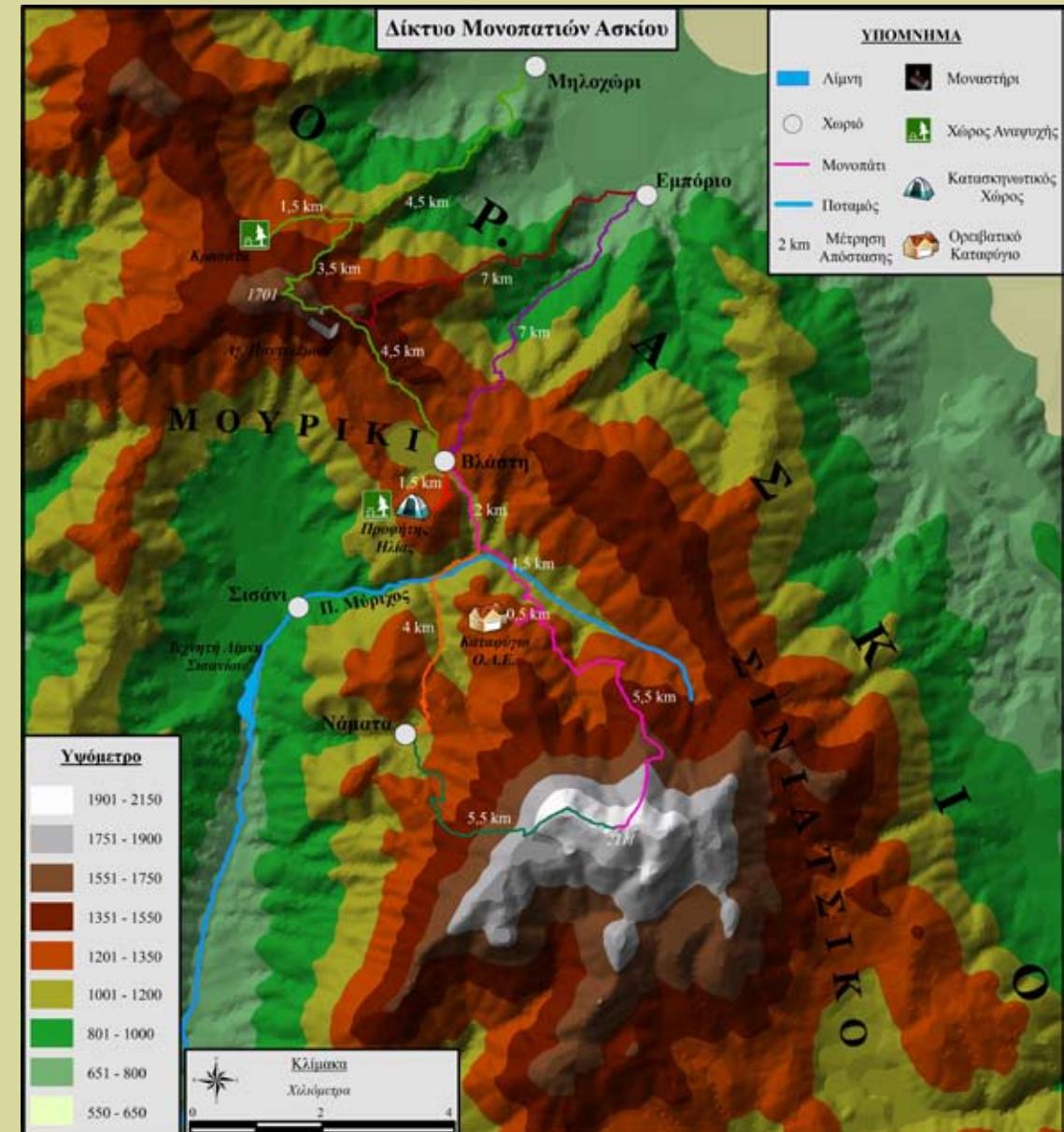


The Paths of Askio and the Settlements through which they pass

Askio Paths Network

The paths of Askio mainly target the conquering of the imposing peaks. Their character is strictly mountaineering, with a variety in difficulty and accessibility, as they were opened mainly by mountaineers to access the heart of the large mountains.

The central settlement here is Vlasti, while the network is completed by the route of the kavalaries of Siatista. In the 8 routes of total length of 65 km, there are signs, in order for them to be used with convenience and safety. They are divided into trekking and medium-length mountaineering paths. Depending on their difficulty level they are categorized as B (Medium difficulty), C (High difficulty, accessed only by experienced mountaineers) and D (Path of extreme difficulty).



MOUNT ASKIO - ROUTES



Siatista during winter

Siatista

Siatista, the capital of Voio with a population of 5,500, is a lovely town built at an altitude of 920 meters in the slopes of **Grivas** of mount Velia, and resembles a castle encased within the secluded hills. It is divided into the districts of **Hora**, the northern part of the town that is a designated traditional settlement and **Geraneia**. The landmark is the central square **Tria Pigadia**, and the kiosk of the municipal enterprise of tourism.

It was settled in the early 15th century by inhabitants from surrounding villages who resorted to the mountains to escape the oppression from Ottomans. Later, it was also

settled by people from Epirus, Moshopoli, Thessaly, Peloponnesus and the whole area of Voio. Its location and its people turned it into a significant commercial center for the entire Balkan Peninsula. It was in the early 16th century when the first developments took place that turned this small village into a robust agricultural and stock raising center. In the 18th and 19th centuries the town appears to enjoy enormous prosperity, based on trading of several of its products, such as **wine and leather**. An intense trading activity had already been developed by locals towards Ioannina, which progressively

expanded to the north, in Venice, Budapest, Vienna and Moscow. The contact of the residents of Siatista with the culture of free Europe resulted in their intellectual and social development and the rise of their living conditions. In this period of blooming Siatista was the only town in the entire Macedonia that had a complete network of water supply and sewage. From the first look, Siatista gives the impression of something special, compared to common towns; and that's its mansions. These residences were not a simple solution for an accommodation need, but were character-

ized by an architectural style that is unique in popular Macedonian architecture. Some thirty mansions are still preserved today, which, though bearing the scars of time, never cease to express in a most pronounced way the desires of their first owners, the open social life, the competition in demonstrating wealth, but above all elegance, good taste and a love for art. Wealth gave artisans the opportunity and the means to express themselves to the full of their ability. These imposing mansions, built by artisans from Epirus and Voio and



Interior of Mansion

Siatista – Manousis' Mansion



surrounded by cobblestones, belonged to rich merchants and wine producers of the 18th and 19th century. They are two-storey stone residences with thick, high walls which encircle the yards and crenellations, which can be seen in various spots to enhance defense against Turks and Albanians. The interior is characterized by comfortable and richly ornamented spaces and a core in which their structure is centered. From here, two staircases begin. The right one leads to the first

floor and the winter quarters and the left to the second and the summer quarters. In the ground floor we find the Katogi, where the barrels of wine were kept and the Poustavi, the wine press. The walls are ornamented with colorful patterns. The roof has wooden reliefs. The glasses of the windows are also often painted. In the slab-paved yards there is a kiln, a kitchen, warehouses, stables, a barn, a well and a kiosk. Finally, there are gardens with flowers, pots and vines that ca-

ress the house's external walls. The mansions of Poulko and Nerantzopoulou are prominent and they are also visitable, as well as those of Kanatsoulis, Manousis, Poukidis, kyra-Sanouko, Tsotsios, Tziouras and Maliogkas.

This is where the Manouseios Library is in operation, with over 6,000 volumes, as well as an Ecclesiastical Museum in the metropolitan temple of Agios Dimitrios, a Botanical Museum with a Palaeontological Collection and a Folk-

lore Museum, while several wine cellars are also visitable as is the traditional residence of Tsotsios-Nteros, with a private folklore collection. In the town, 26 post-byzantine churches are preserved, such as the impressive temple of Agia Paraskevi in the square of Geraneia, which dates back to 1677. Another old but lovely church is that of Profitis Ilias, right between the two districts, which was built in 1701 and renovated in 1740.

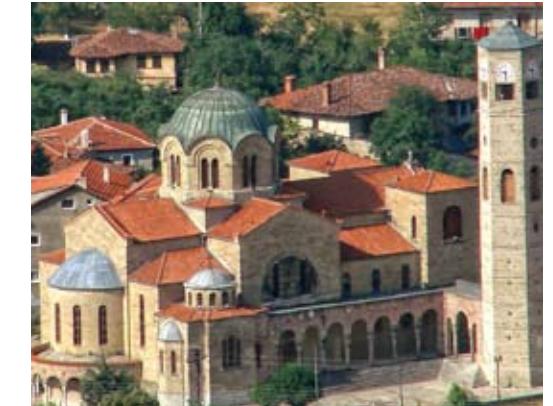


Mansions and stone cobblestones of the city



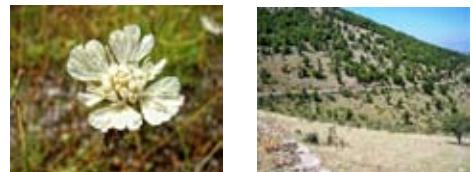
Agia Paraskevi

Agios Dimitrios



Mikroastro

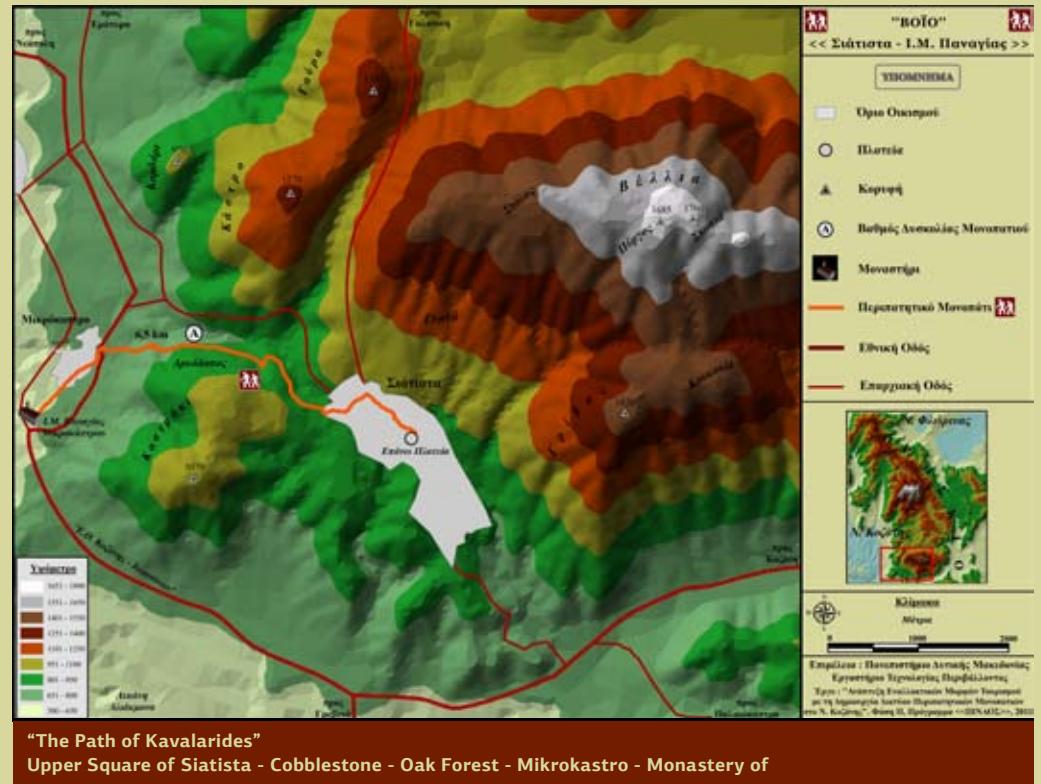
Mikroastro, old *Tsiarousino*, or *Kerasohori*, is a big village with a population of 500 inhabitants, which has strong bonds with Siatista from the past. It is built high, at an altitude of 650 meters, on the foot of slope *Kastraki*, right next to the vertical axis of Egnatia Road that crosses the low part of Voio and leads to Kastoria. Its inhabitants are mainly preoccupied with agriculture and their houses are well-taken care of, with beautiful yards. A big central road crosses it and it is where all its activity is concentrated. It



Siatista Monastery of Panagia Mikroastrou “The Path of Kavalarides”

To *Monopati ton Kavalaridon* (Path of the Horsemen) also known as *O Petrinos Dromos* (The Stone Road), is the remarkable for its size cobblestone that used to connect Siatista with Voio, Epirus, and the Balkans. It was obviously a very busy road in the past, which justifies its large width. Actually, beneath it we can also discern another similar cobblestone, which might suggest that these two paths used to serve so large transport needs that the one was used as an ascent to Siatista and the other as descent, in order to avoid congestion with the carts. This is also the site where the **Battle of Siatista** took place in November 1912. Today, the path continues to be used by the many horsemen of Siatista, to honor in the traditional way the custom of

bring the icon of Mother Mary to the Monastery on August 15th. There are even characteristic scratches from the animals' petals on the stones. Apart from that, it is a most pleasant trekking path for regular trekkers and quite busy too, as in its most part it is slightly downhill and ideally constructed so as not to be tiresome. Of course, the opposite direction from Mikroastro to Siatista is more demanding, due to the big difference in altitude, turning it into a path of medium difficulty. Starting points can be the Monastery of Panagia, the North Entrance or the center of Siatista. It is a good chance to wander the streets of the beautiful town and become acquainted with the peculiar surroundings, which, when snowy, offer a most memorable sight.



IDEAL PERIOD FOR VISIT
September - May, Visitable by schools

DIFFICULTY
A

ACTIVITY
Trekking - Mountain Biking

ALTITUDE
min: 640 meters (Monastery Panagia),
max: 990 meters (Upper Siatista)

SIGNS
Trekkers

ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE
350 meters

ROUTE
Linear, Two-Way

AVERAGE SLOPE
6%

DISTANCE
6,5 km

DRINKING WATER
Siatista, Mikroastro, Monastery Panagia

MAXIMUM DURATION
2h

PATH EVACUATION: NATIONAL ROAD
Provincial Road of Siatista - Eratyra, National Road



Vlasti

Vlasti, old Mplatsi, birthplace of benefactors and chieftains of the Revolution such as Ioannis Farmakis, is one of Greece's largest and most famous Vlahohoria (Villages of Vlachs). It is built at an altitude of 1,180 meters, on the plateau that Mouriki and Siniatsiko form, in the center of Western Macedonia. It is oriented to the West towards Voio, which is why it used to be part of the Voio province. In the

surrounding landscape, alpine valleys alternate with beech, oak and fir forests, with the peak of Siniatsiko hovering imposingly over the village.

Due to its mountainous soil and the rich grasslands, locals have been mainly preoccupied with stock raising and have had the largest flocks in the area. In parallel, other occupations have been developed around stock



raising, such as cheese production, textiles and wool, as well as commerce. The economic bloom that the settlement experienced during the 19th century is reflected in the fact that it had 3 schools, 3 churches, a library, a town hall and stone mansions. This prosperity begins to wane with the turmoil of the Macedonian Struggle and World War I. In World War II the village was burned down by Germans and was virtually abandoned during the Civil War.

Today, the permanent residents do not exceed 100 during the winter, as Vlasti is one of Greece's coldest places. However, locals are proud of their descent and maintain their bonds with the land, so once the weather improves the village becomes alive again, and the population rises to 500. Then Tranos Horos (Big Dance) is held, to honor religious faith and the reunion of the Vlachs. The dance is led by the most elderly, as a token of respect, and the rest follow. The village's central square is lovely and well-organized with taverns, cafeterias and shops with local products. In the wider area there are many well-equipped guest houses and moun-



tain resorts.

Moreover, for more than 10 years the Giortes Gis (Earth Feasts) are held, an alternative choice for recreation. It is not just a music festival, but a celebration of music, culture and nature. In mid-July, Vlasti is teeming with life. Musicians from all over the Balkans, visitors, campers, ecological organizations and sellers of handmade artifacts give a different color to the mountainous village. The campers are based in the recreation

MOUNT ASKIO - ROUTES

area of Profitis Ilias. During the day, there are also a series of activities, such as excursions to neighboring villages, climbs to the peaks of Siniatsiko and Mouriki, theatrical performances, painting and photography exhibitions, ecological games, as well as seminars and discussions on music and nature preservation. The driving force for these activities are the residents of Vlasti and the Association of Environmental Research and Awareness OIKOTPIA. The local administration has been supporting the events for years now, both economically and technically.

The celebrations last 4 days and attract young men and women from all over Greece. There is music, food, and the relaxation that only an encounter with nature can provide. In the bazaar, only producers of biological products can participate, or companies that produce traditional local products, handcraftsmen and alternative disc labels. The celebrations have been established as a proposal for a different perception of our relationship with nature, different nationalities, music, free time and nutrition.



Recreation Area of Profitis Ilias

The path begins at the central square of Vlasti, crossing large part of the village to the southwest. Its final station is the recreation area of Profitis Ilias at a hill lush with beeches. The path particularly serves the campers that are already there and wish to continue

downhill to Vlasti. It is a lovely route that can continue until the asphalt that descends to Vlasti, thus completing a cyclical route. It is the best way to admire the village from above and become acquainted with the surrounding landscapes.



View from the path



IDEAL PERIOD FOR VISIT
 April - November, Visitable by schools

DIFFICULTY
 B

ACTIVITY
 Trekking

ALTITUDE
 min: ,171 meters (Vlasti),
 max: 1,331 meters (Profitis Ilias)

SIGNS
 Trekkers

ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE
 160 meters

ROUTE
 Cyclical, (Via the asphalted road), Two-way

AVERAGE SLOPE
 11%

DISTANCE
 1,5 km

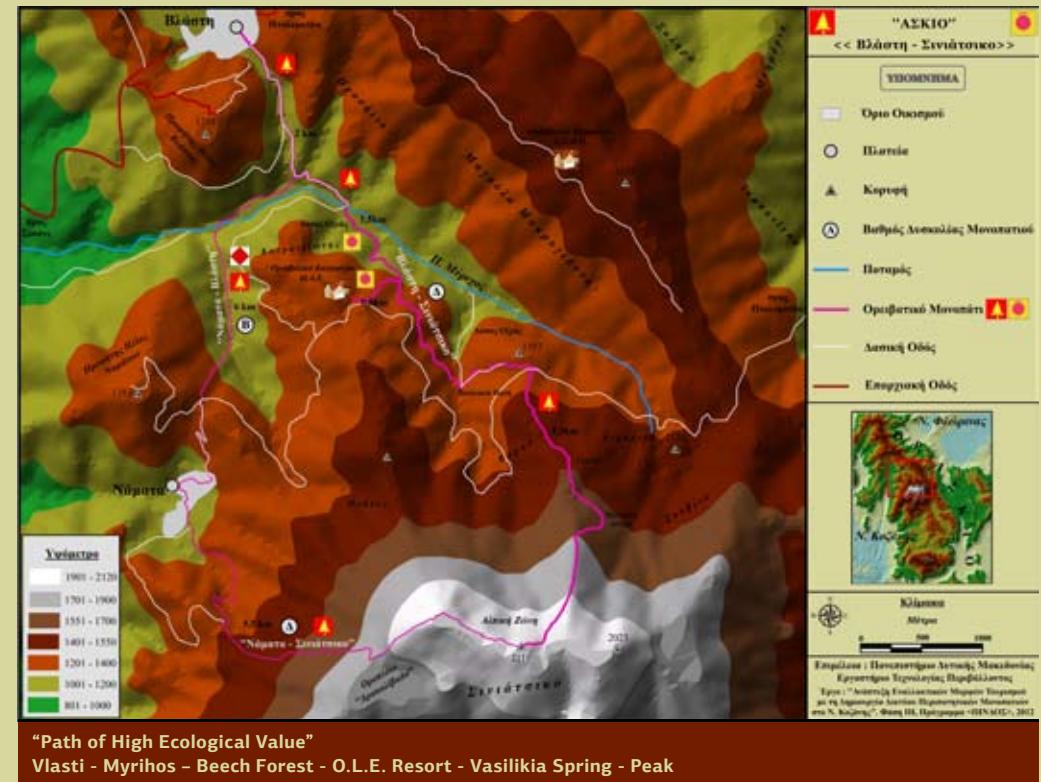
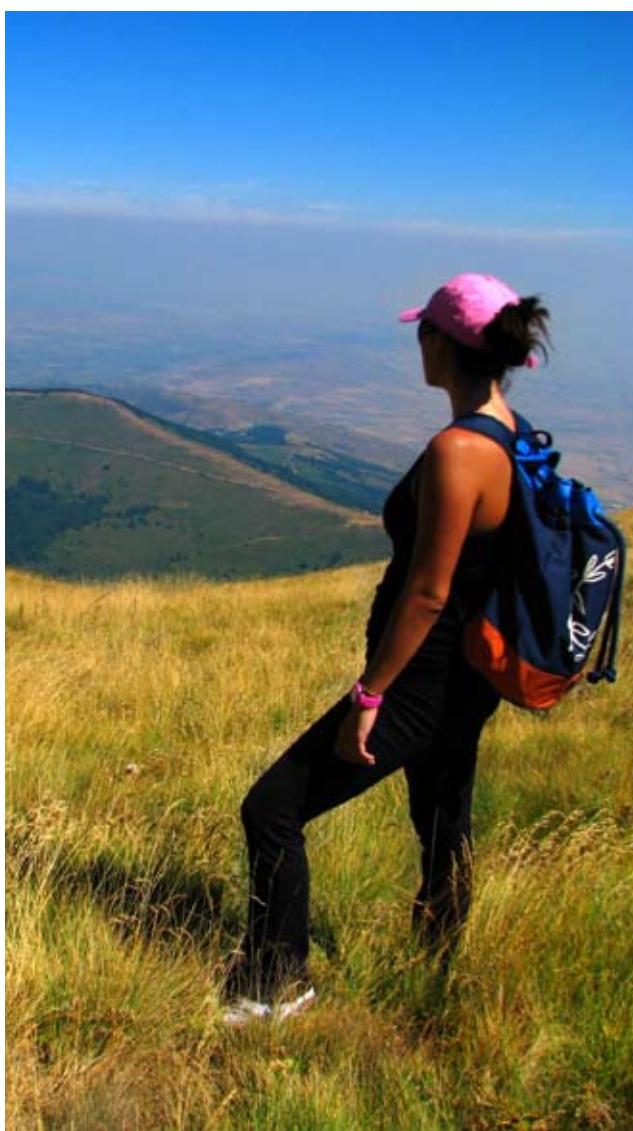
DRINKING WATER
 Vlasti, Profitis Ilias

MAXIMUM DURATION
 30'

PATH EVACUATION: NATIONAL ROAD
 Path Evacuation: Profitis Ilias

Vlasti Siniatsiko Peak

The path begins from the square of Vlasti and passes through protected areas of high ecological value. Before the start of the steep ascent to the impressively barren landscape of the eastern side of Siniatsiko, we cross the beech forest which ends up at **Spring Vasilikia**, a place with abundant water of the highest quality. The mountaineering group can choose before the end of the forest to ascend to the resort of the Mountaineering Club of Eordaia (O.L.E.), which is in the middle of the total distance. The group can take a break there, or even spend the night, so as to gather its strength for the difficult ascent that ensues. The alpine zone of Siniatsiko, which begins from quite low, is a protected area and it is almost certain that there will be sightings of birds of prey which nest in the barren rocks of the mountains. The view from the peak to the rest of western Macedonia and the mountain chain of Pindos is quite special, due to the location of Askio. The path is also visited by experienced mountaineers when Siniatsiko is covered with snow, such an expedition, however, demands special equipment and a well-organized mountaineering group. The return can be either via the same route or via Namata, or even more briefly, via the winter resorts O.L.E. and H.O.O.P., which mountaineers can reach easily, as they are visible from every spot of the eastern part of Siniatsiko.



IDEAL PERIOD FOR VISIT
May-October

DIFFICULTY
D

ACTIVITY
Mountaineering

ALTITUDE
min: 1,031 meters (Myrihos),
max: 2,111 meters (Siniatsiko Peak)

SIGNS
Fir, Circle

ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE
1,080 meters

ROUTE
Cyclical, (Via the Resorts), Two-way

AVERAGE SLOPE
15%

DISTANCE
10 km

DRINKING WATER
Vlasti, O.L.E. Resort, Vasilikia Spring

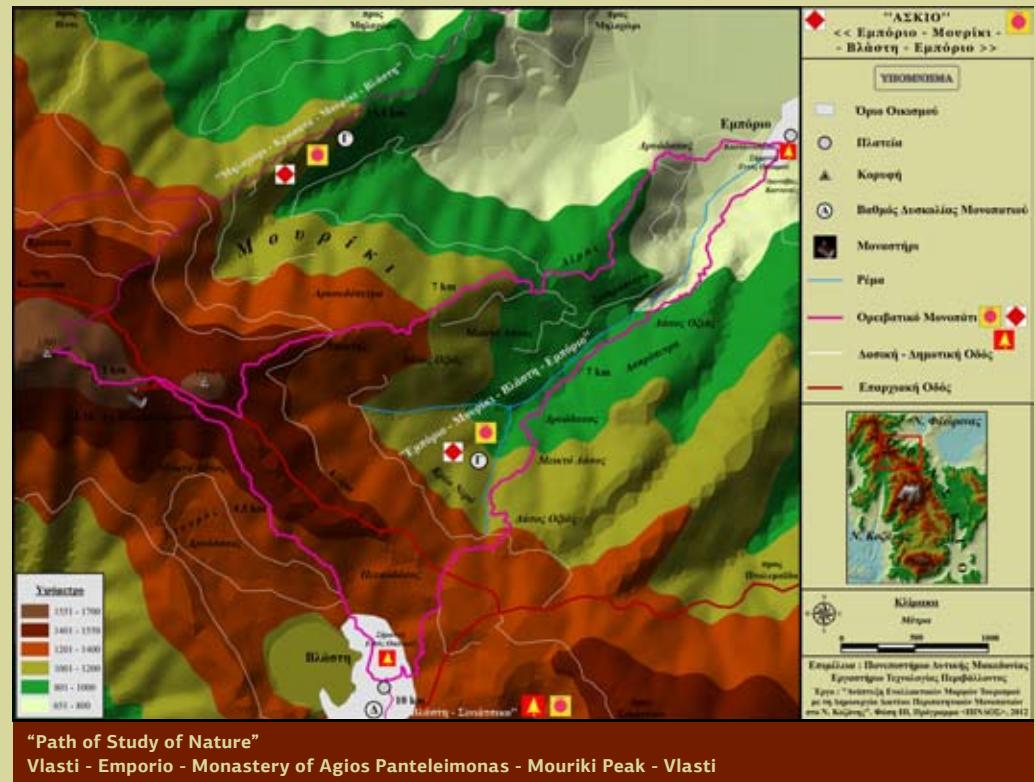
DURATION
4h

PATH EVACUATION: NATIONAL ROAD
Dirt Road of Vlasti - of Myrihos Valley, O.L.E. Resort, Forest Road of Vlasti - Siniatsiko, Forest Road of O.L.E. Resort - Provincial Road to Ptolemaida

Vlasti - Emporio - Mouriki - Vlasti

The round of Mouriki is a large, cyclical route, which consists of 3 smaller paths: **the part Vlasti_Emporio, the path Emporio-Mouriki Peak and the path Vlasti-Mouriki Peak.**

It offers many observation spots and is ideal for studying nature and observing the succession of vegetation as the altitude changes. When the mountaineering group has completed the route, they will have passed from a series of clearings, sub-alpine zones, and 5 different kinds of forests (oaks, chestnuts, beeches, pines and mixed). Conquering the top is very rewarding, with a spectacular view to Siniatsiko, Vlasti, Sisani, Vitsi, Varnounta and northern Pindos. It is also of historical value, as the part Vlasti-Emporio used to connect Epirus with Voio with the villages of the valley of Eordaia. The path is accessible, but quite demanding, as far as the fitness of the trekkers is concerned. The route can also be followed in the opposite direction



IDEAL PERIOD FOR VISIT
April - November

DIFFICULTY
C

ACTIVITY
Mountaineering, Mountain Biking (Only in Vlasti - Emporio)

ALTITUDE
min: 701 meters (Emporio)
max: 1,701 meters (Mouriki Peak)

SIGNS
Fir (within settlements), Circle, Forest Inspection

ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE
1,000 meters

ROUTE
Cyclical, Two-way

AVERAGE SLOPE
14%

DISTANCE
20,5 km

DRINKING WATER
Vlasti, Pigi, Emporio, Drinking Fountain, Monastery of Agios Panteleimonas

DURATION
6h 30'

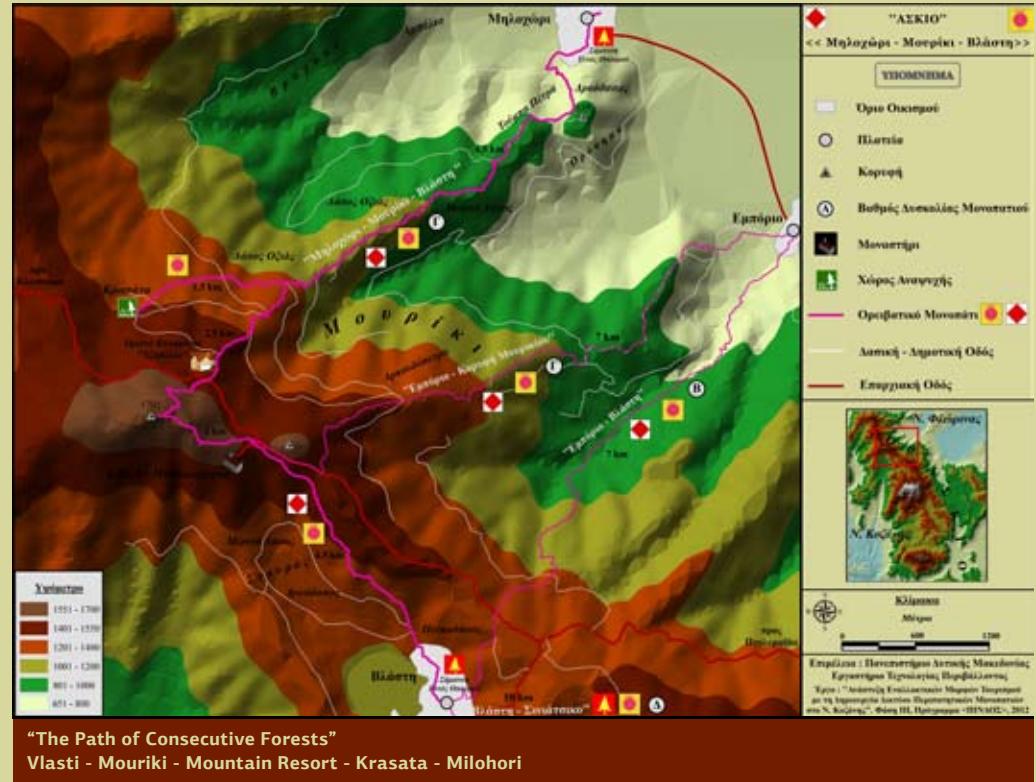
PATH EVACUATION: NATIONAL ROAD
Provincial Road Vlasti - Kleisoura, Forest Road of Mouriki - Provincial Road to Ptolemaida, Consecutive encounters with the Forest Road of Emporio-Mouriki, Dirt Road of Emporio-Aqueduct, Consecutive Encounters with the Dirt Road Emporio-Mouriki, Forest Road Yfanti - Provincial Road to Vlasti, Provincial Road of Vlasti-Kleisoura, Dirt Road of Vlasti

Vlasti - Milohori

The route can have as a starting point any of the two villages, but is more demanding if started from Milohori, due to its low altitude. It is the path with the highest altitude difference in the entire network. There is a possibility of briefly changing the steep slope and rest at the recreation area of *Krasata*, to which a forest



*View from the peak
of Mouriki*



 IDEAL PERIOD FOR VISIT	April-November	 DIFFICULTY	C
 ACTIVITY	Mountaineering	 ALTITUDE	min: 681 meters (Milohori), max: 701 meters (Mouriki Peak)
 SIGNS	Trekkers	 ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE	1,020 meters
 ROUTE	Fir (within settlements), Circle, Forest Inspection	 AVERAGE SLOPE	11%
 DISTANCE	15.5 km	 DRINKING WATER	Vlasti, Monastery of Agios Panteleimonas, Resort, Krasata
 MAXIMUM DURATION	6h	 PATH EVACUATION: NATIONAL ROAD	Dirt Road of Vlasti, Provincial Road of Vlasti-Kleisoura, Tzavella Resort, Krasata, Consecutive Encounters with Forest Road of Milohori - Mouriki, Dirt Road of Milohori, Mouriki

Namata

Namata, also known as **Pipilista**, is the only village built on the steep mountain Siniatsiko. It is located between Sisani and Eratyra, but at a much highest altitude which reaches 1,130. The area is of exquisite beauty and has abundant water, which explains its name (namata=springs). It is surrounded by beech forests and grazing lands.

The small village is divided into two picturesque districts. It is characteristic that the



square is in its entrance, not its center. Its houses are mostly made of stone and built in many levels. Many of them have been restored and have impeccably attended gardens. The residents are officially 180, very few of them stay here however, when winter comes.

It was built during the 17th century by refugees from Moshopoli, Fourka, Zerma, Pyrgianni and Tsiouragiaka, who had been persecuted by the Turks. In the years of World



War II, it had more than 500 residents, but in the 70s, due to the general immigration wave, it was abandoned almost entirely. Namata are famous for its green tea, which is of supreme quality. Also, when it snows, the landscape takes on a harsh and yet sublime beauty, while in the summer a spectacular sunset can be seen, a rare sight for a mountainous area.

Namata - Vlasti

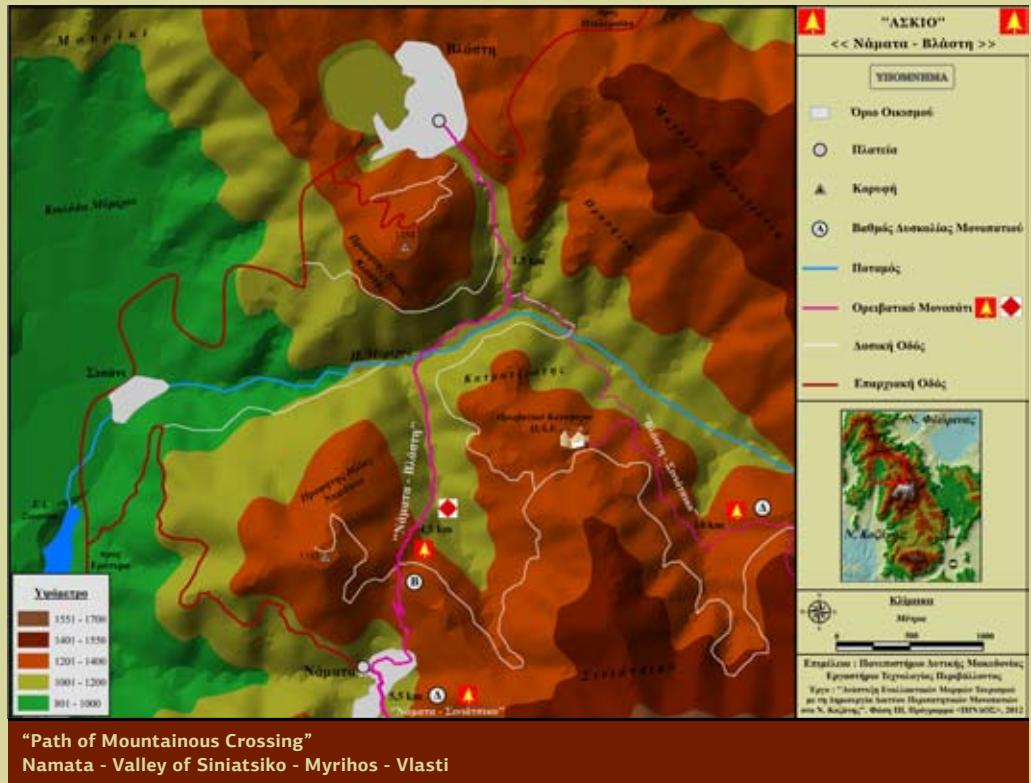
This is a historic path that used to connect the two villages, crossing the upper valley of river Myrihos and connecting the areas of Siniatsiko with those of Mouriki. For its most part, it is quite negotiable, except for the steep part above the river, which the mountaineering group will have to pass in order to reach the opposite side. Right before the entrance to the settlements, the path turns into a dirt road. Apart from the interesting trek in the green landscape, there is also the chance to discover the two mountainous villages.



Namata as seen from the path



Valley of Myrihos



IDEAL PERIOD FOR VISIT

April - November

DIFFICULTY

B

ACTIVITY

Mountaineering

ALTITUDE

min: 1,030 meters (Myrihos)
max: ,270 meters (Afenas Namaton)

SIGNS

Fir, Forest Inspection

ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE

1,030 meters

ROUTE

Linear, Two-Way

AVERAGE SLOPE

7,5%

DISTANCE

6 km

DRINKING WATER

Vlasti, Namata

MAXIMUM DURATION

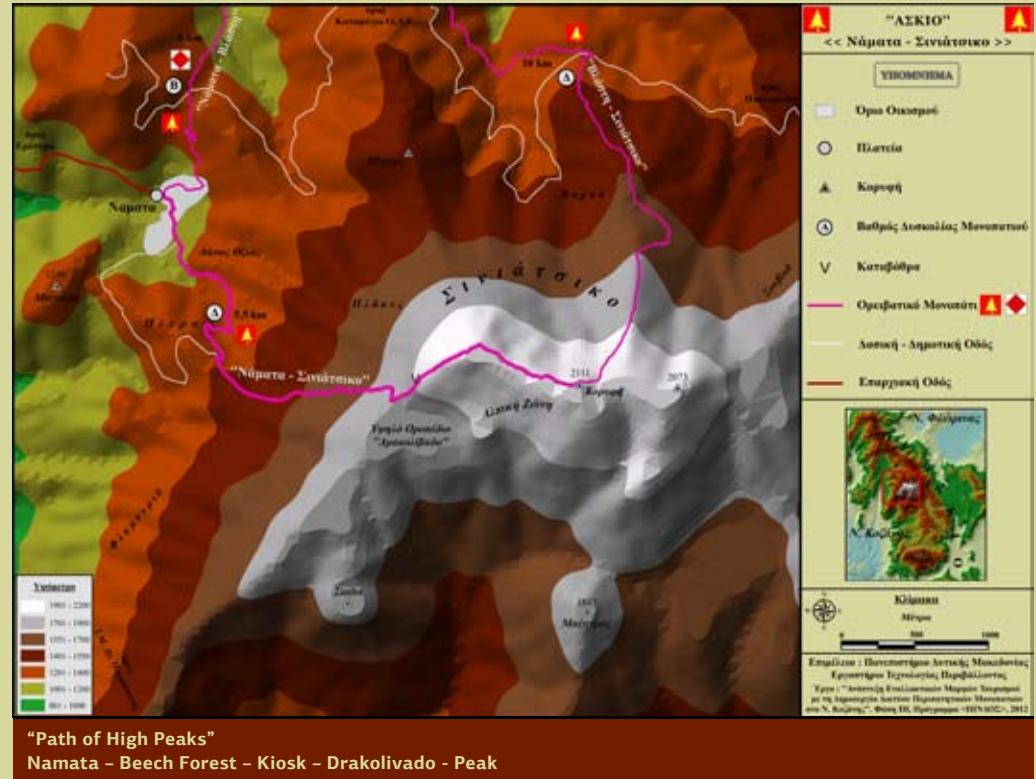
1h 45'

PATH EVACUATION: NATIONAL ROAD

Dirt road of Namata - O.L.E. Resort, Dirt road of Vlasti - Siniatsiko

Namata Siniatsiko Peak

The path from Namata to the peak of Siniatsiko, although small in length, is characterized as one of high difficulty, due to the steep slopes, the high altitude difference and the difficult access. The same route is also part of the Alpine Marathon, which is held every summer with participants from all over Greece. It crosses many observation points, several beech forest, an alpine plateau and a catavethron. Conquering the peak requires passing from all the high peaks of the alpine zone which are more to the north.



 IDEAL PERIOD FOR VISIT	May-October	 DIFFICULTY	D
 ACTIVITY	Mountaineering	 ALTITUDE	min: 1,131 meters (Namata), max: 2,111 meters (Siniatsiko Peak)
 SIGNS	Fir	 ALTITUDE DIFFERENCE	1,131 meters
 ROUTE	linear, Two-Way	 AVERAGE SLOPE	18%
 DISTANCE	5,5 km	 DRINKING WATER	Namata, Kiosk
 MAXIMUM DURATION	3h'	 PATH EVACUATION: NATIONAL ROAD	Upper Dirt Road of Namata, Kiosk

Combining Paths of Askio

The network is thus designed to offer the choice of combining different routes. There are 3 alternative cyclical routes of combined paths.

Ascending the peak of Siniatsiko can be accomplished either from Vlasti or Namata. In this way, the return from there can be cyclical, combining three different paths of total

length of 21 km. Night accommodation is not required, but an ample supply of drinking water. It is recommended only for experienced mountaineers, due to its high level of difficulty.

The other 2 combining routes are in Mouriki. From Milohori, it is possible to ascend the peak of the mountain and from there com-

plete the route via the path **Mouriki Peak - Emporio** or the opposite. The total length reaches 15 km. Alternatively, from the peak we can follow the route to Vlasti and from there return via the path **Vlasti-Emporio**, or the opposite. Thus, the length of the route is increased, approaching 20 km.



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Les organismes d'exécution



PREFECTURE
OF WESTERN MACEDONIA
PREFECTURE OF KOZANI



UNIVERSITY
OF WESTERN MACEDONIA



ENVIRONMENT CENTRE REGION OF
WESTERN MACEDONIA

Collaboration:



ECOLOGICAL MOVEMENT
OF KOZANI



Project: development of alternative forms of tourism
by creating a network of hiking trails in the region of Kozani