



MONUMENTAL ADVENTURES

at the greek unesco monuments



MOUNT ATHOS



► credits

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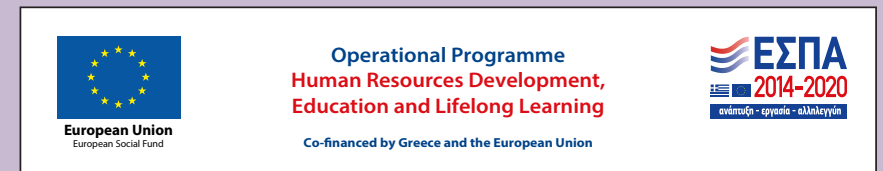


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Mount Athos

Ten steps to...



1

The architect Deinocrates proposed to Alexander the Great to carve a colossal statue on the slope of the biggest mountain of the peninsula.

The Macedonian king rejected the proposal, as he considered it arrogant.



2

Here the Persian king Xerxes built a large canal¹ in 480 BC to avoid his fleet to go around the peninsula.

...Mount Athos



3

Among the holy figures depicted in its monasteries there are the representations of 12 ancient Greek philosophers².



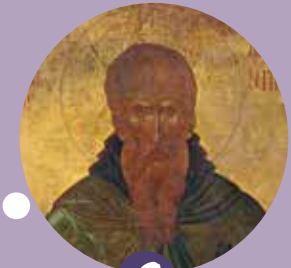
5

According to the myth, the highest mountain on the peninsula was named after the giant Athos, son of Uranus and Gaea³.



7

It is also called the “Garden of the Virgin Mary”⁵.



9

Great figures of Orthodox monasticism lived here, such as Saint Petros the Athonite, Saint Euthymios the Young, Saint Athanasios the Athonite and Saint John the Iberian.



4

A Greek printing house was established here since the mid 18th c., even before the establishment of the Greek State.

In the monastery of Megisti Lavra for a few years. A printing house operated again in Karyes after 1930.



6

In order to enter the monastic state, a *diamonitirion*⁴, is necessary, i.e. a special permit for entry and residence.



8

According to the *abaton*⁶, women are not allowed to enter and stay here.



10

It is the largest “inter orthodox” center in the world. Orthodox monks from all over the world live here today⁷.

Mount Athos...

The arc of orthodoxy



WHAT?

- Monastic state which currently includes 20 monasteries, is governed by a special status and is a self-governing part of the Greek state.

WHERE?

- Autonomous Monastic State of Mount Athos. Central Macedonia.

WHEN?

- 9th c.: the first hermits settle on the Athos peninsula.
- 963: establishment of the first monastery on Mount Athos, the Megisti Lavra.
- 10th c.: establishment of the great monasteries and emergence of Mount Athos as an important center of Orthodox monachism.
- 15th c. onwards: Mount Athos remains an important Orthodox center, despite the Ottoman occupation.

what do the numbers say:

100.000 sq.m.

AREA

of the frescos that adorn its monuments



15.000
MANUSCRIPTS

are kept in its monasteries

2.980
MONKS

Lived in the monasteries of the Mount Athos on the eve of the Greek Revolution in 1821



700
MONKS

in the monastery of Megisti Lavra in the 11th c.

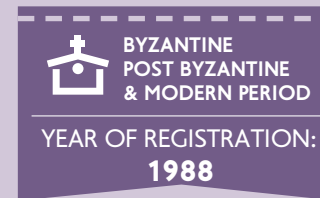
60 km.
LENGTH

of the peninsula of Athos and 7–10 km its width



...in the UNESCO List!

The monument was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List based on the following criteria:



critterion i

It uniquely combines natural beauty with artistic and architectural creation.

critterion V

It preserves examples of folk architecture and many agricultural and craft traditions.

critterion ii

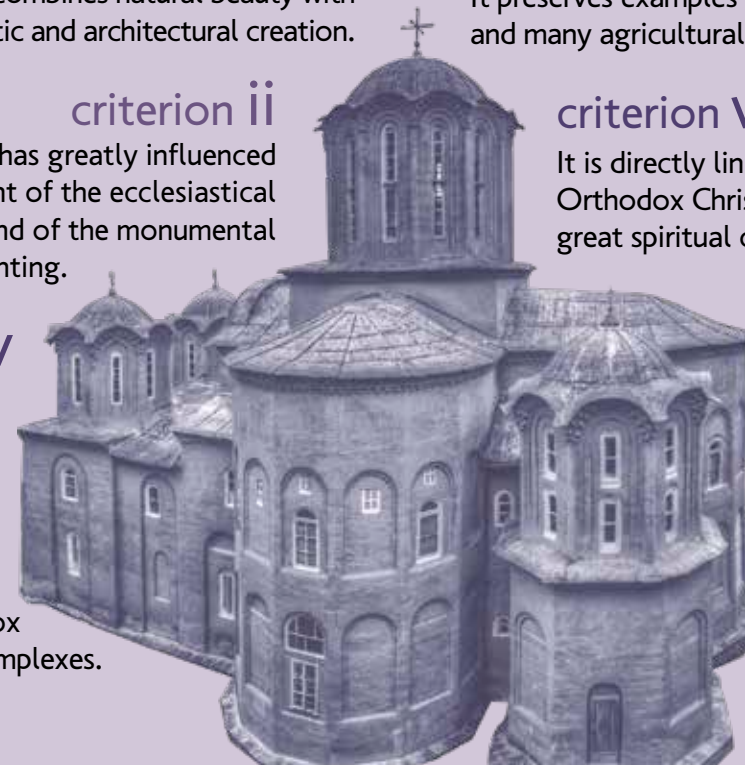
It has greatly influenced the development of the ecclesiastical architecture and of the monumental painting.

critterion Vi

It is directly linked to the history of Orthodox Christianity and has been a great spiritual center since the 10th c.

critterion iv

The monasteries of Athos made a decisive contribution to shaping the formal layout of Orthodox monastic complexes.



critterion vii

The outstanding preservation of Athos' natural resources is due to the continuation of applying traditional agricultural practices up to now.

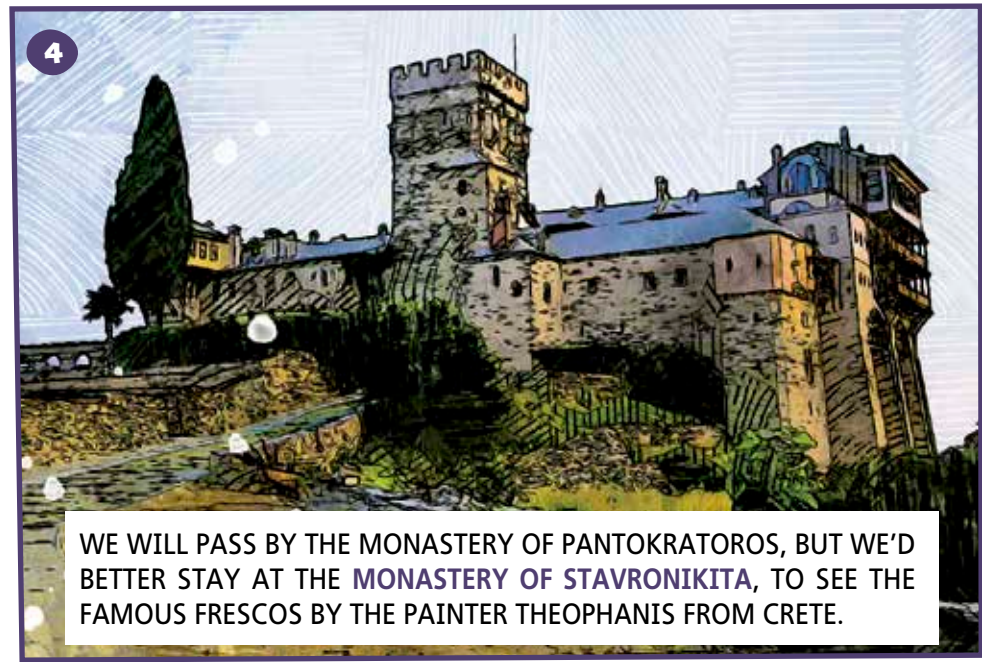
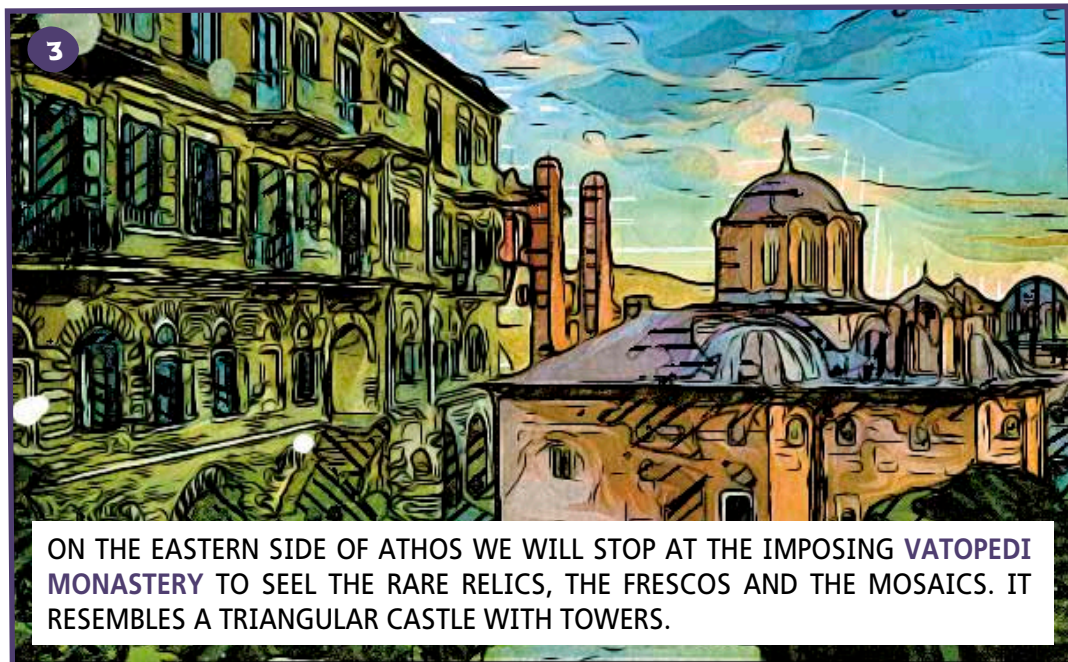
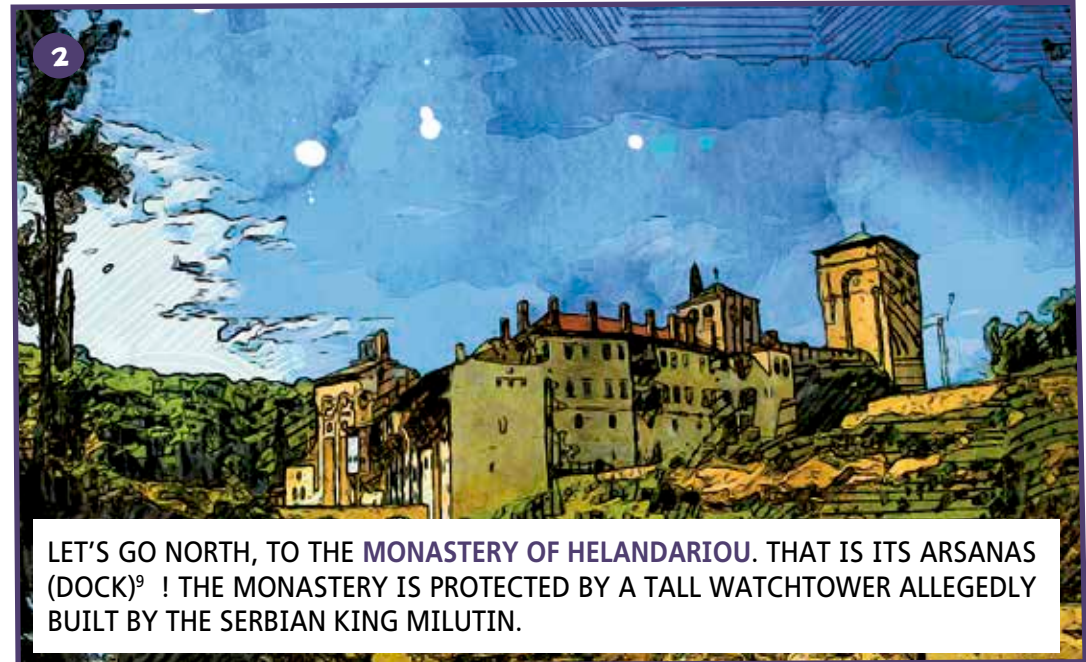


13 tons
WEIGHT

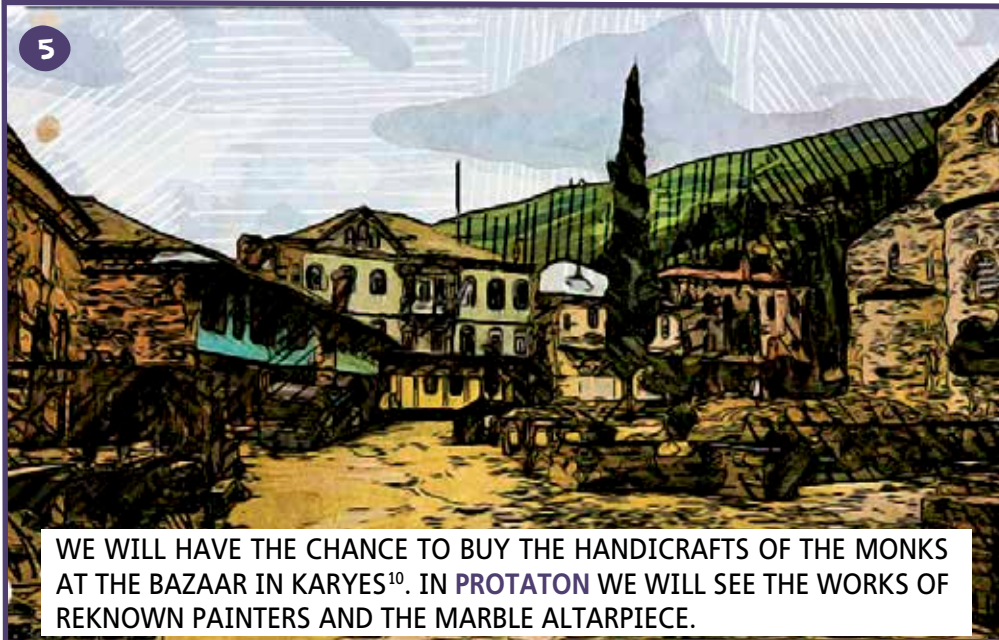
of the bell of the Panteleimon monastery, the second largest in the world

1. Aerophotography of the Koutloumousiou monastery.

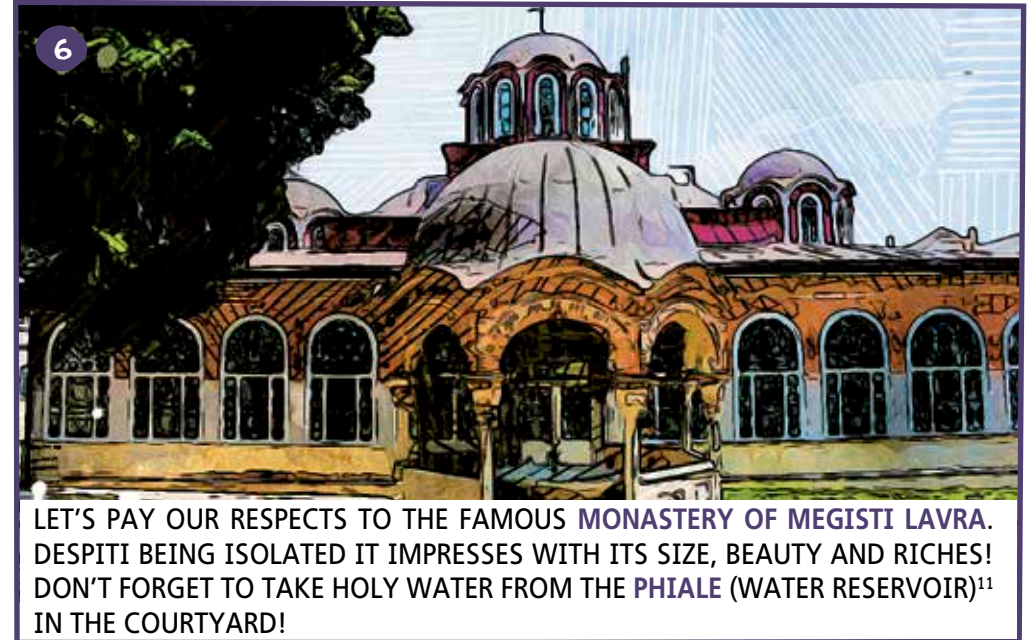
Walking around Mount Athos...



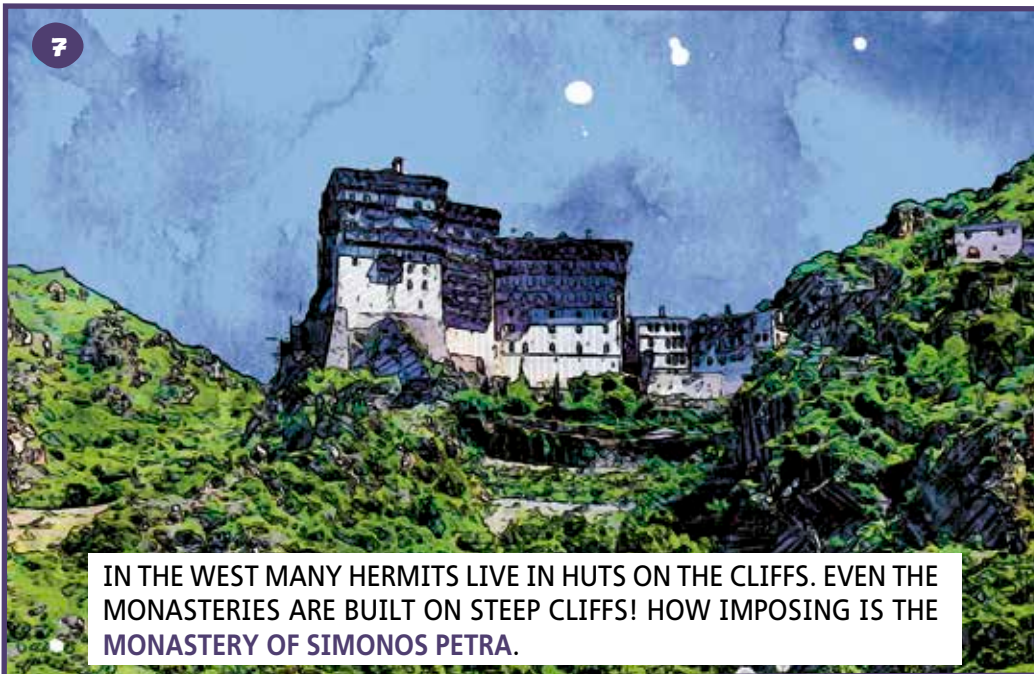
...with the traveler monk Vasili Barsky



WE WILL HAVE THE CHANCE TO BUY THE HANDICRAFTS OF THE MONKS AT THE BAZAAR IN KARYES¹⁰. IN PROTATON WE WILL SEE THE WORKS OF REKNOWN PAINTERS AND THE MARBLE ALTARPIECE.



LET'S PAY OUR RESPECTS TO THE FAMOUS MONASTERY OF MEGISTI LAVRA. DESPITI BEING ISOLATED IT IMPRESSES WITH ITS SIZE, BEAUTY AND RICHES! DON'T FORGET TO TAKE HOLY WATER FROM THE PHIALE (WATER RESERVOIR)¹¹ IN THE COURTYARD!



IN THE WEST MANY HERMITS LIVE IN HUTS ON THE CLIFFS. EVEN THE MONASTERIES ARE BUILT ON STEEP CLIFFS! HOW IMPOSING IS THE MONASTERY OF SIMONOS PETRA.



WITH GOD'S HELP AND YOUR COMPANY, I HAVE COMPLETED THE OBLATION! NOW I THINK I'LL SPEND THE WINTER AT ST. PANTELEIMONOS MONASTERY, WRITE ABOUT THIS TRIP AND SCETCH ALL THE WONDROUS THINGS THAT I SAW AND HEARD IN THIS HOLY LAND!

The environment...

«When you see this mountain from the sea, it gives the impression of an island, because there is only a narrow strip of land where the mountain begins, so that it is barely surrounded by the sea... Black clouds always loom over the mountain»

Vasili Gregorovits Barsky: *Ta ταξίδια του στο Άγιον Όρος 1725–1726, 1744–1745*, (P. Mylonas edit., N. Polyviou – N. Toutos– Y. Fousteris, E. Stergiopoulou, transl., Thessaloniki 2009), p. 129.

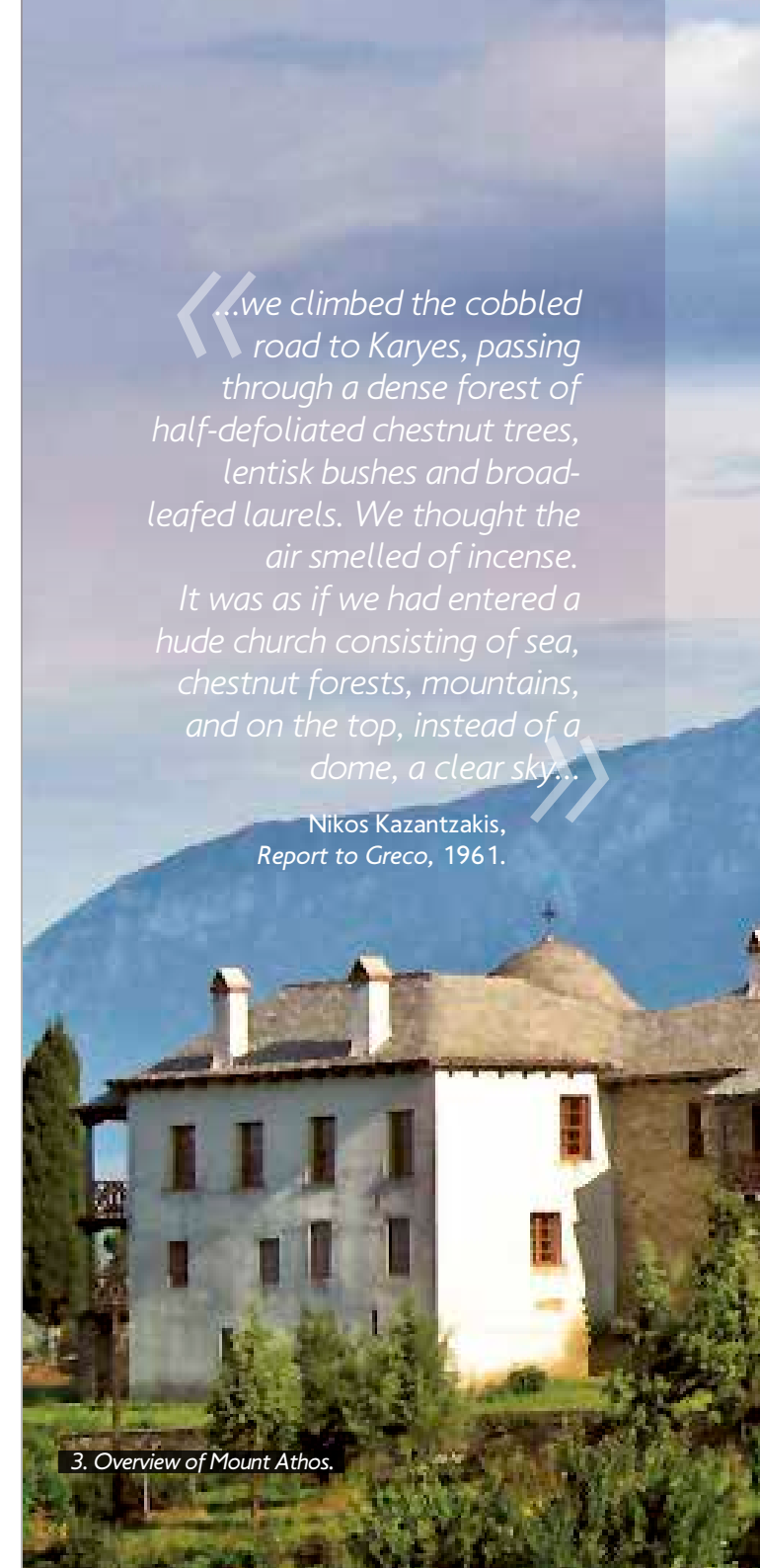
At the eastern end of Chalkidiki, the peninsula of Athos, is joined to the mainland by a narrow isthmus. The low strip of land ends in the southern part of the peninsula at the steep mountain Athos, which reaches a great height (2.033 m). The Athonite landscape remains intact, despite human intervention.



2. The monastery of Zografou in an old postcard of the beginning of the 20th c.

«...we climbed the cobbled road to Karyes, passing through a dense forest of half-defoliated chestnut trees, lentisk bushes and broad-leaved laurels. We thought the air smelled of incense. It was as if we had entered a huge church consisting of sea, chestnut forests, mountains, and on the top, instead of a dome, a clear sky...»

Nikos Kazantzakis,
Report to Greco, 1961.



3. Overview of Mount Athos.

...and the landscape

- Dense forests, ravines, gorges, torrents, a landscape of unique beauty with springs and steeped coastlines make up the diverse natural environment of Mount Athos that has remained intact throughout the centuries.
- Many ecosystems alternate in the 340 square kilometers of the Athos peninsula, creating a unique mosaic of vegetation and landscapes.

Green details

In this limited area of land grows rich flora and fauna. There have been recorded 1.500 species of plants and rare species of birds and mammals.

Mount Athos through time



4th c. BC

The ancient cities of the peninsula were subjugated to the Macedonian King Philip II.



800 AD

The first settlement of hermit monks on Mount Athos.



883 AD

The first privileges are granted to the monks of Athos by Emperor Vasileios I the Macedonian (867–886), with a *sigillium* (sealed document)¹².



960/963

Construction of the katholikon of the monastery of Megisti Lavra, the first congregational monastery of Mount Athos, by the Saint Athanasios the Athonite.



972

First *typicon* of Mount Athos¹³.



1045

The first official reference to Mount Athos in the second *typicon* of Emperor Constantine IX the Monomachos.



13os–14th c.

The monasteries prosper despite the looting and the raids by foreign invaders, such as Crusaders, Catalans, Serbians.



1383–1403

First Ottoman occupation of Mount Athos.



1424–1912

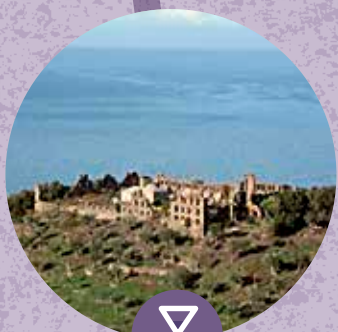
Second and prolonged Ottoman occupation of Mount Athos, which continues to be under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.





16th c.

Spectacular revival of the Athonite monasteries and an increase in the number of monks.



1749

The Athonite Academy was founded, one of Greece's most important educational institutions at the time, where theology, philosophy and logic is taught.



1821

Outbreak of the Greek Revolution in Karyes by the representative of the Filiki Etairia Emmanouil Papas¹⁴.



1919–1923

The Treaties of Neuilly (1919), Sevres (1920), and Lausanne (1923) recognized Greek sovereignty over Mount Athos



1912

Απελευθέρωση του Αγίου Όρους από το ελληνικό ναυτικό στις 2 Νοεμβρίου.



19th c.

Russia attempts constantly to put Mount Athos under its control.



1926

The Greek Government ratified the current Charter of Mount Athos, which formalizes the status of Self-Government.



1963

1,000-year anniversary of the establishment of the monastic state.



1988

Inclusion of the monument in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Historical figures through the ages

Mount Athos has known saints, scholars, artists, rulers, as well as conquerors and invaders.

The founders and the benefactors of the monasteries were often the Byzantine emperors themselves. Later this role was taken over by the Orthodox secular rulers and the senior hierarchs of the Orthodox clergy. Often the monks became the scholars and teachers of the nation, and many were canonized.

FOREIGN CONQUERORS



Stefan Uros IV Dusan

Serbia's great ruler and first emperor conquered Mount Athos in 1345. He visited Mount Athos in 1347 with his wife Helen and son Uresis, breaking the abaton. They stayed there for eight months to protect themselves from the plague in the Balkans!



Sultan Murad II (1421-1444, 1446-1451)

extends his dominion to Mount Athos, when in 1424 a delegation of monks declares submission to the Turks. A few years later (1430) he also conquered Thessaloniki. The Byzantine Empire is shrinking!

FOUNDERS



The emperors Nikephoros II Phokas (963-969) and Ioannis I Tsimiskis (969-976)

were great sponsors
of the historic monastery of Megisti Lavra.



Mara Brankovic

The daughter of the Serbian king Georgios Brankovic (1427-1456) and the Byzantine noblewoman Irene Kantanouzeni, married the Ottoman sultan Murad II and emerged as one of the most important personalities in the Balkans during the 15th c. She offered significant donations, real estate and relics to the monasteries of Mount Athos.



**The ruler of Wallachia
Neagoe Basarab V
(1512–1521)**

was a prominent sponsor of the monasteries of Mount Athos, especially the monastery of Dionysiou.



**Patriarch of Constantinople
Jeremias I
(1522–1524, 1525–1546)**

is the prime example of a sponsor from the higher ranks of the orthodox clergy during the ottoman occupation. In 1541 he founded the monastery of Stavronikita, intending to establish a monastic institution equal to the other great monasteries of Mount Athos.

SAINTS OF MOUNT ATHOS



**Saint Athanasios
the Athonite
(c. 930–1001/1004)**

The emblematic figure of Athonite monasticism established the monastery of Megisti Lavra and is considered the founder of Athonite monasticism. He himself ensured the establishment of libraries and centers for translation on Mount Athos, as well as for copying manuscripts.

**Saint Gregory Palamas
(1296–1357)**

Born into an aristocratic family, with a rich literary output, he was one of the main exponents of the movement of hesychasm and one of the most spiritual figures of Mount Athos.

**Saint Maximus the Greek
(c. 1470–1556)**

The scholar saint from Vatopedi went down in history as the “enlightener of the Russians”.

DISTINGUISHED SCHOLARS

**The monk
from the monastery Iviron
Pachomios Roussanos
(1508–1553)**

is considered the most important theologian of the first half of the 16th c., and a distinguished manuscript copyist.

**The scholar monk
Caesarius Dapontes
(1713–1784)**

of the monastery Xeropotamou, emerged as the most important representative of the spiritual renaissance of Hellenism in the 18th century.



**Eugenios Voulgaris
(1716–1806)**

was a leading intellectual figure of the 18th c. In his work, he combined the Greek Orthodox tradition with the spiritual achievements of the European Enlightenment. From 1753 onwards, he successfully directed the Athonite Academy, where many of the great teachers of the Greek enlightenment studied, such as Iosipos Moisiodax, Athanasios the Parian, Kosmas the Aetolian and Rigas Ferraios.

A monument is born

TRAVELERS IN THE "ARK OF EASTERN CHRISTIANITY"

Since the 15th c. Mount Athos has been a popular destination for many travelers of different nationalities, ages and backgrounds.



4. Drawing of Vassily G. Barsky, Monastery of Saint Grigoriou, 18th c.

The unique habitat, the monasteries, the precious relics, as well as the daily life and activities of the monks, are reflected in the texts, drawings and photographs of the visitors, who were impressed by the spirituality of the monastic community, by the long tradition of Mount Athos art, as well as by the nature.

MAPS AND CHARTS



By the beginning of the 15th c. Mount Athos was already depicted along with other important areas of the Aegean in the pioneering cartographic manuscript work of the Florentine monk and geographer Cristoforo Buondelmonti.

PILGRIMS AND TRAVELERS TODAY

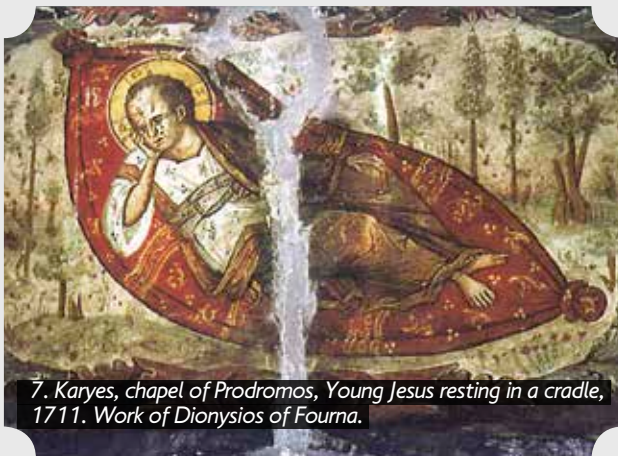
The spirituality of Mount Athos, its intact nature and magnificent monasteries attracts many visitors. Among them are many politicians, contemporary artists and intellectuals¹⁵.



6. Spyros Papoloukas, Karyes, Konak of monastery of Saint Dionysios, 1924.

THE PAINTING MANUAL OF AN ATHONITE MONK

The monk and iconographer Dionysios of Founa in Evrytania (1670–1746), wrote the *Interpretation of Painting Art*, a manual with instructions for painters and a brief presentation of the iconographic cycles of Byzantine iconography, as found in the monumental painting of Mount Athos, where he lived for many years. This is a unique and comprehensive work, which was even translated into Japanese!



7. Karyes, chapel of Prodhomos, Young Jesus resting in a cradle, 1711. Work of Dionysios of Founa.

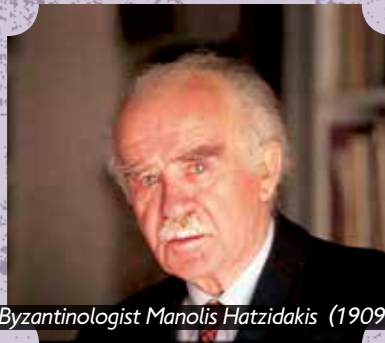
RESEARCH AND STUDIES

Since the end of the 19th c. Mount Athos has been the focus of research for the Byzantine Period.

The first studies on the history of Athonite monasticism and art were carried out by scholarly Athonite monks and then by great Byzantinologists and research institutions¹⁶.



8. Gerasimos Spyrmakis, abbot of the monastery of Esfigmenou (1862–1935).



9. The Byzantinologist Manolis Hatzidakis (1909–1998).

A BIG CONSTRUCTION SITE

The Ephorate of Antiquities of Chalkidiki and Mount Athos carries out long-term restoration and conservation work on Mount Athos's monuments which aim to preserve the Athonite state's historical and religious wealth.

An important body for the approval and implementation of projects on Mount Athos is also the Center for the Preservation of Athonite Heritage (Κε.Δ.Α.Κ.).



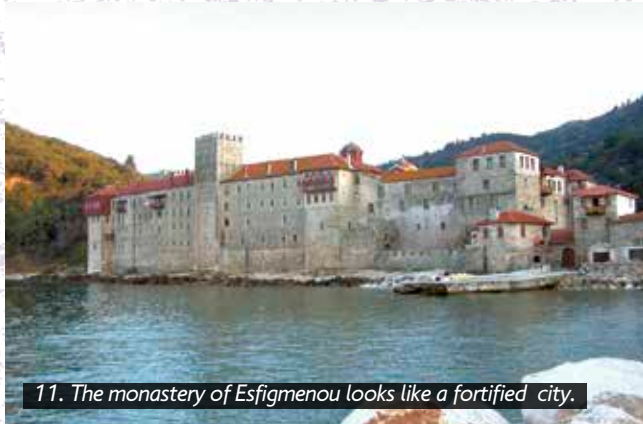
10. Restoration works on the walls of the monastery of Simonos Petras.

A unique monument...

Journey through time

In the unadulterated natural environment of Mount Athos, the only autonomous monastic state of the Orthodox East has survived unchanged for more than 1,000 years¹⁷.

On Mount Athos, there are 20 communal monasteries¹⁸, sketes¹⁹ and other monastic secondary buildings (cells, huts, hermitages, retreats). The establishment of another monastery is prohibited. The head of each monastery is the abbot, elected for life by all the monks.



11. The monastery of Esfigmenou looks like a fortified city.



12. The imposing monastery of Panteleimonos.



13. Xenofontos Monastery.

The monasteries near the sea have their own small docks with appropriate buildings to cover their needs (*arsanas*)²⁰.

*Holy Athos...
the great and wondrous
place of virtue*

Philotheos Kokkinos,
Antirrheticus to Gregory 12, 1355 AD



In many engravings there is an effort to present the monasteries on both sides of Mount Athos, with the result that Mount Athos can be seen like two separate mountains.

Paper icons

Popular souvenirs for pilgrims in the 18th c. were the printed religious engravings of monasteries and saints.

...with timeless radiance ★ 1

feeding on wild herbs, using their body hair, head hair, knee-high beard and the leaves of the trees as a cover

From the Biography of a saint

The silent world of Athos

The monasteries of Mount Athos follow the communal type of life where shelter, work, food and prayer are common. But even nowadays many monks live the life of a hermit, on the steep rocks.

The day's work is separated into three eight hours. Each is devoted respectively to prayer, work and rest²¹.



On the inaccessible southern part of the Athos peninsula, the scarce food is transported over the cliff with the help of a chain.



14. The simantron calls the monks to the church.



15. The "similar to a fire of bliss, to a fragrant light" prayer is the monk's primary task.



The monks create handiworks, handmade projects for sale, to earn their living.



The monks' nutrition is simple but tasty and healthy. It includes mostly legumes and vegetables. Meat is never consumed, only fish and seafood during celebrations, Sundays and major holidays.

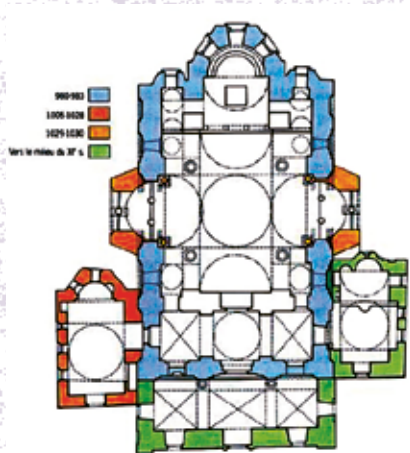
Ministries

Every day the monks undertake the *ministries* (chores)²², the necessary tasks to satisfy the practical needs of the monasteries.

A unique monument...

“The unconquerable acropolis of orthodoxy”

The monasteries of Athos determined the formal layout of the Orthodox monastic complexes. In the middle of the courtyard of each monastery is the central church, the *katholikon*, built in the “Athonite triple-nave type”²³, with two side niches, the *choroe*, for the cantors to stand. Mount Athos's glamour led to this type's prevalence in Orthodox monasteries.



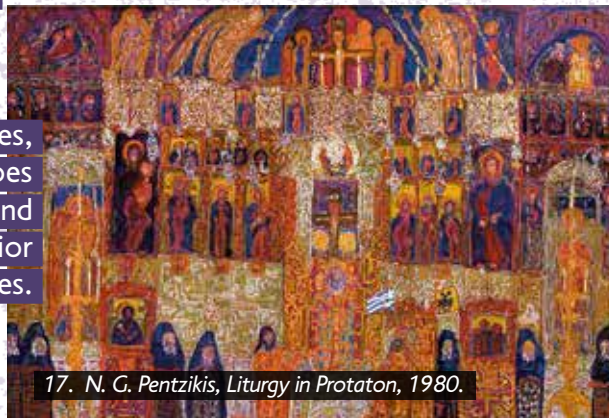
Layout of the katholikon of the Iviron monastery.



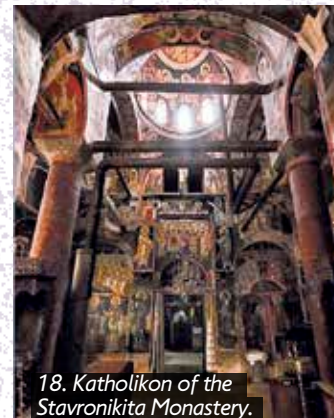
16. Katholikon of the Koutloumousiou Monastery.

Many katholika are painted red and the domes are covered with lead sheets (lead-covered).

Wood-carved altarpieces, marble fixtures and frescoes give a sense of luxury and transcendence in the interior of the churches.



17. N. G. Pentzikis, *Liturgy in Protaton*, 1980.



18. Katholikon of the Stavronikita Monastery.

I saw in the Monastery of the Russians alive the dreamy liturgy (mass) of our enslaved Saint Sophia church... What a divine abode is the church of this Monastery! The entire iconostasis is a huge piece of gold, from end to end, and from bottom to top. Its walls are an integral museum of the most outstanding hagiographies.

Christos Christovasilis, Mount Athos, 1896.



The art installation “THE END”, by the prominent contemporary artist Nikos Alexiou (1960–2011), Greece's representative at the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007, is inspired by the mosaic floor of the Monastery of Iviron.

...with timeless radiance ★ 2

Monumental painting

Spurred by a natural love of wildlife and strange adventures, I visited Mount Athos last year... I didn't expect to find art so perfect in the churches of the monasteries.

From what I had read about Byzantine art, I thought this art was less worthy of attention than the Italian Renaissance.

But from the few pieces I present here, anyone can determine that there are paintings of the rarest perfection in Athos

Fotis Kontoglou,
The Art of Athos, 1923.

The excellent byzantine and postbyzantine frescoes of the monasteries of Mount Athos are a timeless reference point for the byzantine painting. Scenes from the life and miracles of Christ, the life of the Virgin Mary, and portraits and martyrdoms of saints impress with their rich subject matter and quality of workmanship.

Many Greek painters of the early 20th century look for the authentic character of Greek art and reevaluate Byzantine art²⁴. Their trips to Mount Athos played a key role in their acquaintance with Byzantium.



Great iconographic cycles, such as the Praises and the Revelation, are depicted in the works of Mount Athos.



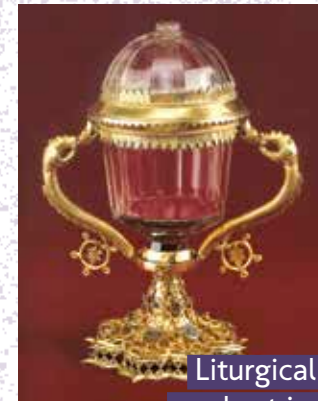
A unique monument...

An “ark of living presence”

Mount Athos is a priceless treasury of works of art and ecclesiastical relics. Here are the world's largest collections of Greek manuscripts and portable icons, as well as Greek, Ottoman, Russian and Romanian documents.

Accordingly, the Athonite collections of metalwork, often extremely valuable, as well as engravings, woodcarvings and ceramics from Kutahya, are the largest in Greece.

There are also important collections of ecclesiastical fabrics, anthivola²⁵, paper icons, coins, marble sculptures, old photographic plates and Greek books published at the dawn of typography. In many monasteries, the antique objects of daily use are exhibited in organized folklore museums.



Liturgical vessels of exceptional art are kept in the Athonite monasteries.



22. Priceless manuscripts and precious icons are part of the extensive collections of the monasteries of Mount Athos.

The Cincture of the Theotokos is the most precious relic of the Vatopedi Monastery.



Holy and sacred relics

Miraculous icons of the Virgin Mary

In the “Garden of the Virgin Mary”, where Theotokos is venerated, there is a great number of icons, which according to tradition are miraculous, that were found in a remarkable way or protect the monasteries, such as the Panagia Portaitissa in the Iviron Monastery.

The monasteries of Mount Athos also house numerous holy relics and other sacred “relics”, objects associated with the holy persons of the Church²⁶. In times of need, the monks of Mount Athos traveled with the holy relics to other countries to obtain donations for their monasteries (*beggary*).

...with timeless radiance

Celebrating 1000 years

*Magdalene, Magdalene,
great star of desire.
You brought me as believer
to a monastery, to kiss
the relic of your honorable
hand and my lips felt
its still-radiating warmth!*

Angelos Sikelianos, "Magdalene",
Lyric Life, Vol. D, 1967.

In 1963 the one-thousandth anniversary of Mount Athos was celebrated with glorious ceremonies, which began in Constantinople and continued in Thessaloniki and Athens.

On April 17th, the warship *Aspis* carried the revered icon of the Virgin Mary, "Axion Esti" from Protaton to Piraeus²⁷. The icon, which was being taken out of Mount Athos for the first time, was warmly welcomed by a large number of people.

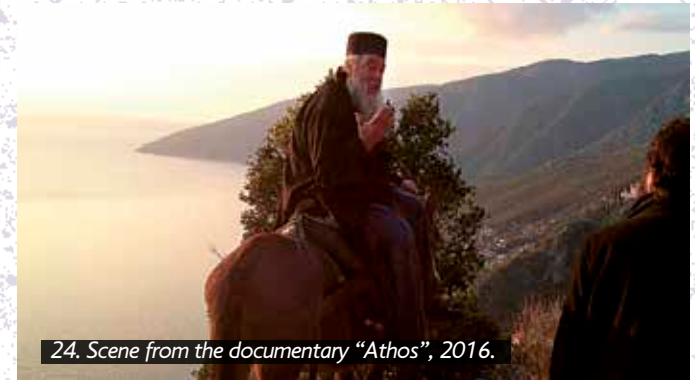
The celebrations ended at the Monastery of Megisti Lavra (23–24 June), where, for the first time in centuries, the Ecumenical Patriarch met with the patriarchs of Jerusalem and other Balkan countries, such as Romania, Serbia and Bulgaria.



23. Exhibition Hall.



23. The procession of the "Axion Esti" icon in Athens, 1963.



24. Scene from the documentary "Athos", 2016.

"The treasures of Mount Athos"

In 1997 in Thessaloniki, the then designated European Capital of Culture for the year, an exhibition of decisive importance took place, in which 1500 precious treasures from Mount Athos were presented to the public for the first time.

Many documentaries about Mount Athos focus on the daily life of the monks, who live in seclusion, praying, attending church and doing the necessary tasks to support themselves. In 2016, the documentary "Athos" by Peter Berdehle and Andreas Martin was released, recounting the daily life of the monks of Mount Athos and revealing unknown but important facets of Europe's most preserved and organized monastic community.

Revealing documentaries

Monumental dialogues



GREECE



Meteora

The largest monastic community in Greece after Mount Athos is scattered on steep cliffs near Kalambaka in Thessaly.



GREECE

Monasteries on Ioannina Island

On the small island of Lake Pamvotida in Ioannina, seven monasteries became important centers of monasticism in the 16th century. The monastery of Saint Nikolaos of Philanthropenoi or Spanos stands out, where frescoes by the famous painter Fraggos Katelanos are preserved.

EGYPT



Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai

One of the most important and oldest Orthodox monasteries. It was founded by Emperor Justinian at the foot of Mount Sinai in the 6th AD. The strongly fortified monastery houses one of the world's most important libraries, as well as extended collections of icons and manuscripts.

CHINA



Mount Wutai

One of the four sacred Buddhist mountains of China. The "mountain with five peaks" is 3061 m. high, upon which 41 Buddhist monasteries and temples have been built from the 1st c. AD to the early 20th century, outstanding monuments of Buddhist architecture and art.

A message today...

“Citizens of the desert”

The peninsula of Mount Athos preserves an outstanding landscape of natural beauty, with a harmonious balance between man and nature. Here one can seek inner peace in intact landscapes of rare beauty, which combine the imposing and precipitous with the serene and tame.

Maintaining the balance of the natural and man-made environment for centuries is no accident. The Athonite monks approach the landscape with respect and love, recognizing that it provides them, apart from the natural goods, the necessary serenity required for their daily spiritual practice. The coexistence of the monks with nature is today a model for the conservation, throughout the planet, of ecosystems that are affected by intense human activity and climate change.



25. Mount Athos landscape. The Iviron Monastery.

...for a better tomorrow!

Goals 2030 >



15 LIFE ON LAND >

Life on land. We promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and forests, combat desertification, and reverse soil and biodiversity degradation.

1. Canal: an artificial channel that connects seas. The opening of the great canal, 2 km long, in the isthmus of the Athos peninsula is described by Herodotus and confirmed by modern research. Xerxes built it to avoid the dangerous circumnavigation of Athos, where the Persian fleet under General Mardonius had been defeated in 493 BC.

2. Pythagoras, Socrates, Homer, Aristotle, Sibylla, Plato, Plutarch and other ancient Greek personalities are depicted in the frescoes of the Food Hall of the Monastery of Megisti Lavra, which are attributed to the great Cretan painter Theophanes and date post-1535. Depictions of ancient Greeks are also found in other Athonite monasteries and the Balkan area and are connected with the foreshadowing of the coming of Christ by the ancient philosophers.

3. According to mythology, the pyramid-shaped mountain was formed during the fierce conflict between the Giants and the Olympian gods when the Giant Athos threw a huge rock from Thrace to the god Poseidon.

4. When the time specified in the permit expires, and the visitor does not leave, he is deported by the Mount Athos authorities.

5. According to tradition, the Virgin Mary and the evangelist Ioannis were forced due to rough seas to disembark where the Monastery of Iviron is today. There the Virgin Mary asked the Lord to grant her the whole area, as it was beautiful. Thus, the peninsula became the “garden of the Virgin Mary”.

6. At times, however, various women have violated the sacred law of the monastic state. The abaton has also been violated when monks sheltered women and children during warfare, such as during the War of Independence in 1821 and World War II.

7. On Mount Athos great monasteries have been established since the Byzantine period where Iberian monks (Iviron monastery), Russians (Panteleimon monastery), Serbs (Helandariou monastery), Bulgarians (Zografou monastery), etc., were settled.

8. The guide is inspired by the monk and traveler Vasil Grigorovich-Barsky from Kiev, who visited Mount Athos twice (1725–1716 and 1744–1745), becoming one of the most important sources about the Athonite state. His remarkable work meticulously depicts the monasteries, their relics, nature and the monks' daily life.

9. About *arsanas* (dock), see also page 18 and note 20.

10. Karyes: the only settlement on Mount Athos. This is where the bazaar was held, where the monks sold their handicrafts. Today there is also the settlement of Daphne.

11. *Phiale*, a circular building in the courtyard of a church or monastery, holds the marble water tank for the ceremony of the consecration of water.

12. The imperial decree sealed by the emperor himself (*sigillium*) from 883 AD is the oldest preserved document of Mount Athos.

13. *Typicon* (standing regulations) of Mount Athos. The first *typicon* is the famous “Tragus” written on goat skin. It was signed by emperor Ioannis I

Tsimiskis (969–976) and is the earliest historical text of the Athonite monastic community. The emperors renewed the *typicon* over the centuries, reflecting the changes in the functioning of the monastic community.

14. Priest Emmanouil Pappas (1772–1821) came from a noble family in Serres and was a pioneer in the battles for the liberation of Chalkidiki.

15. Writers such as Alexandros Papadiamantis, who first visited it in 1872 “on pilgrimage”, Nikos Kazantzakis and Angelos Sikelianos in 1914, Zacharias Papantoniou in 1923, Vassilis Vassilikos in 1953, Georgios Theotokas in 1961, Elias Venezis in 1963 and I.M. Panagiotopoulos in 1966, etc. Also, important Greek painters such as Theophilos (1870–1934), Theodoros Rallis (1850–1909), Spyros Papaloukas (1892–1957), George Gounaropoulos (1889–1977), Nikos Gabriel Pentzikis (1908–1993), Nikos Fotakis (1904–1959) etc. depicted the monuments and landscapes of Athos in their work. Mount Athos has often been at the forefront of the work of foreign writers, artists and intellectuals, such as Patrick Leigh Fermor (1915).

16. The Byzantinologists Gabriel Millet (1867–1953), Andreas Xygopoulos (1891–1979), Manolis Hadjidakis (1909–1998), and Pavlos Mylonas (1915–2005) contributed substantially to the study of the monumental art of Mount Athos. The series “Archives de l'Athos” by Collège de France aims to publish Greek documents up to 1500. The National Research Foundation is developing a research project to publish the post-Byzantine documents of the Athonite archives. The work of the Mount Athos Center, founded in 2000 by the Municipality of Thessaloniki and the Holy Community of Mount Athos, is important for promoting and studying the Athonite cultural heritage. At the same time, historians, palaeographers, architects and researchers of various nationalities study the monuments, art and relics of Mount Athos. International conferences, lectures, exhibitions and valuable publications, often under the care of the Mount Athos monasteries themselves, promote the unique cultural heritage of Mount Athos.

17. The autonomous monastic state of Mount Athos is a self-governing part of the Greek State, according to the Charter of Mount Athos of 1924, which was ratified by the Legislative Decree in 1926. The civil governor of Mount Athos is under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is based in Karyes, the largest settlement and administrative center of Athos. It is spiritually under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

18. The monasteries are imposing building complexes for communal life, with a massive courtyard. In the center of the courtyard are the main churches –“katholika”, large food halls, chapels, but also the chaplaincy, sacristy, libraries, multi-story cells, kitchens, utilitarian buildings and small auxiliary buildings such as workhouses and workshops. The 20 monasteries of Mount Athos are, in order of hierarchy, as follows: 1) Megisti Lavra, 2) Vatopedi, 3) Iviron, 4) Helandariou, 5) Dionysiou, 6) Koutloumousiou, 7) Pantokratoros, 8) Xeropotamou, 9) Zografou, 10) Docheiariou, 11) Karakalou, 12) Filotheou, 13) Simonos Petras, 14) Agiou Pavlou, 15) Stavronikita, 16) Xenophontos, 17) Grigoriou, 18) Esfigmenou, 19) Agiou Panteleimonos and 20) Kastamonitou.

19. The 12 Sketes are organized small monastic communities, four of which are *communal* and function as closed monastic enclosures, while eight are *irregular* consisting of settlements of many huts with a common church, the *kyriakon*. The strictest expression of Athonite monasticism is the life of a hermit, where the monks live in rudimentary huts in an austere ascetic lifestyle.

20. *Arsanas* is a dock complex that includes the boathouse (entrance for ships), small living quarters and storerooms, protected by a fortified tower.

21. The byzantine count of time still applies on Mount Athos, so that the day, i.e. hour 0:00, begins every day at sunset. The 24-hour day begins shortly after midnight. Lunch is served at about 8 a.m., after the Divine Liturgy, and dinner is served at about 6 p.m., after Vespers! Similarly, the time is calculated 13 days back, according to the old (Julian) calendar.

22. A monk may perform more than one ministry. It is estimated that there are at least 60 ministries, such as *porter* or *doorkeeper*, the person responsible for the accommodation of guests, the *dining room attendant*, the person responsible for organizing meals in the refectory, the cook, the postman, the fisherman, the shepherd, the orchard keeper, the tailor, etc.

23. Variant of the particularly widespread byzantine architectural “cross-in-square-type”, with the extra feature of two side niches, the *choroe*, i.e., the side niches where the cantors stood. Thus, the layout of the church presents a total of three niches (the central Sacred Apse included). It appears as early as the 10th century with the foundation of the first Athonite monasteries and has since then prevailed in almost all the monasteries of Athos.

24. Greek artists born in the early years of the 20th c., who experienced the Balkan Wars, World War I and the Asia Minor Catastrophe felt the need for national self-assertion by redefining the identity of Greek culture. This search was expressed by the turn to the study of ancient Greek art, the discovery of Byzantine art and of popular culture. They turned to that tradition to maintain their authenticity, their “Greek spirit”, by combining or rejecting elements from contemporary European art.

25. The *anthivolon* (pl. *anthivola*) is a perforated drawing used to copy/transfer a design (for a picture, fresco, mural, etc.). Painters would put it on the surface to be painted. Then they would sprinkle charcoal dust all over it, so that the print of the drawing would be left through the perforations on the surface to be painted.

26. For instance, 1,500 relics of saints are kept in the Vatopedi monastery. The relics, i.e., the objects associated with the holy persons of the Church, such as the Cinture of the Virgin Mary, parts of the Holy Wood and the Crown of Christ, etc., are also honored with veneration.

27. The icon “Axion Esti” in the church of Protaton is the focus of the honor attributed to the Virgin Mary by the Athonites. According to tradition, the archangel Gabriel first sang the angelic hymn “Axion Estin” before the miraculous icon in the 10th century.

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