

Monasteries FAITH DEVOTION MONASTICIS ORTHODOXY vist only for man singles and groups information

www.apostolos-tours.com email atu@apostolos-tours.com

Today on Mount Athos there are 20 monasteries, 17 of them are Greek: Megistis Lavras, Vatopediou (Greek Cyprian), Iviron, Koutloumousiou, Agiou Pavlou, Dionissiou, Xenofontos , Stavronikita, Gregoriou, Konstamonitou, Esfigmenou, Doheariou, Karakalou, Xiropotamou, Pantokratoros, Simonos Petras, Filotheou. One monastery is Russian (Agiou Panteleiminos), one is Serbian (Hilandar) and one is Bulgarian (Zografou). There are also 14 skites and many kellia, kalives and kathismata. Mount Athos is governed by the "Holy Community" a council of representatives from the 20 monasteries with the participation of the Greek State through its representative in Karyes, the capitol city. The executive organ of the "Holy Community" is the four-member "Holy Epistasia" headed by the "Protepistate". Responsibility for spiritual matters comes under the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, while matters of public order and safety come under the representative governor of the Greek state.

1 Monastery Megistis Lavras

It was built in 963 by St. Athanasius the Athonite, with the financial support of the emperors Nikephorus Phocas and Ioannis Tzimiskes. During the ten centuries of its existence, the monastery has always held the first place among the other monasteries of the Holy Mountain, partly because of its wealth, partly because of the heirlooms stored there (manuscripts, historic documents, chrysobulls, portable icons etc). monumental structure of the monastery is particularly noticed in its large buildings. The central church (Katholicon) with the two large chapels of the forty Martyrs and of St. Nicholas, occupies the center of the monastery. Within the enclosure, there is also the refectory, the kitchen, the library etc. In the four aisles, which surround the monastery, are the monks cells, the guest-house, chapels and others.

The monastery is inhabited by 50 monks whose daily occupations are divided among their monastic duties (mass, prayers etc.) and the hospitality to the many visitors from all the world.

The monastery remains open throughout the year from sunrise until sunset. During the winter months, it is extremely difficult to reach the monastery. The visitors who wish to study or take photographs of the monastery's works of art, must first contact the 10th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities as well as the monastery itself.

2 Monastery Vatopediou

The monastery was built during the second half of the 10th century, by three monks, Athanasius, Nicholas and Antonius from Adrinople, who were the pupils of St. Athanasius of Lavra. From then onwards several buildings have been constructed, but the most important ones, were those built during the Byzantine period, and on the 18th as well as the 19th century, when the monastery reached its highest peak. It is a large monumental monastery surrounded by a tall wall, with its buildings set on Triangle. Inside the spacious courtyard, there is the central church, the cross-formed refectory and several chapels. Inside the central church one can see the only existing mosaics in the Holy Mountain, while its frescoes, painted around 1312, are attributed to the painter Manuel Panselinos from Thessaloniki. About 50 monks live today in the monastery, where is applied an extensive construction project in order to restore the larger buildings. Apart from the frescoes and the masaics, the monastery has in its possession a large number of unique portable icons, manuscripts and religious objects.

It is open to all the world scientists, which, however, must first contact the monastery and the 10th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities.

3 Monastery Iviron

Third in precedence among the twenty monasteries of the Holy Mountain, the monastery was built in the end of the 10th century by the Georgian (Iberes) monks Ioannis and Euthymius in the place where there was before the monastery of Clement. The 16th century has been a period of prosperity for the monastery, and, as result, it has been decorated with splendid painting works (the Katholicon frescoes etc).

Built by the sea, the monastery is surrounded by four aisles, presenting a rectangular shape. In the center, one sees the central church, founded in the 10th century, as the two historically important chapels, of Panaghia Portaitissa and of John the Precursor. The largest part of the aisles has been rebuilt during the 19th century.

A numerous monastic community is in charge of the restoration of the ruined buildings surrounding the monastery and offers hospitality to scientists from all the world, who wish to study the historic heirlooms of the monastery.

The monastery's feast is on August 15th - day of the dormition of the Virgin - (August 28th in the New diary) and is celebrated with particular splendour. Many pilgrims visit the monastery for the legendary miracles of the Panaghia Portaitissa

4 Monastery Hiliandariou

The history of the monastery begins in the 10th century but, after its ruin, the emperor Alexius III, in 1198 granted it to the Serbian rulers Stefan Nemanja and his son Rastko, who became monks (Symeon and Sava respectively) who proceeded to the construction of new buildings. During the 14th century, the monastery reached its highest peak, accumulating riches and heirlooms from imperial as well as private donations

One of the largest and richest in heirlooms monasteries of the Holy Mountain, Chelandar is the main spiritual center of the Serbs from the 12th century onwards. Besides the central church (Katholicon), honoured in the memory of the Presentation of the Virgin, there are many chapels, the refectory and the aisles with the monks' cells as well as the other auxiliary buildings (guest-house, library and others).

The present monastic community preserves close relations with the Serbian people as well as the Greek population of the Holy Mountain and its neighbouring area.

Apart from the abundance of frescoes (St. George's Tower, Katholicon, old and new Refectory etc), the monastery possesses one of the largest libraries of Slavonic and Greek manuscripts, as well as a large number of portable icons dated in the 12th century onwards.-----

5 Monastery Agios Dionisiou

It was built in the middle 14th century by the monk Dionysios of Koryssos in the Kastoria precinct, with the financial support of the emperor Alexius III Comnenos of Trapezous. In 1535 the monastery has been destroyed by fire. It was rebuilt and from then onwards its architecture and buildings remain unaltered. It is one of the most bold architectural structures, built on a rock, high above the sea. Although the inward space is rather limited, there is however not only the central church, but also several chapels, many of which are wall-painted. Inside the monastery there is also the defensive tower, built in 1520 and used periodically for the safe keeping of the monastery's library. The monastery is inhabited today by a new dynamic monastic community, which has undertaken the redecoration of the old buildings. The Katholicon frescoes dated in 1546 are the work of the painter Georges, one of the main representatives of the Cretan school in the middle 16th century. The Refectory's frescoes had been executed in two separate phases: in the middle 16th century and in 1603. The monastery possesses one of the most remarkable collections of works of art (mainly portable icons) as well as illuminated manuscripts.-----

6 Monastery Koutloumousiou

The monastery buildings are set in a rectangular shape with a rather vast courtyard, with the central church (Katholicon) in its center. The refectory is presently built a new (1995), while the central church, built in the 16th century, is covered with five domes and with a glass covered exonarthex.

The original monastery was built before the 12th century but in the 14th century, abbot Chariton of Imvros, receded to the enlargement of the monastery; during its lifetime vast destructions were caused either by fire or by fall of rocks

Apart from the Katholicon frescoes dated in the mid 16th century, the monastery possesses more than 600 manuscripts, many of which are illuminated, as well as important historic archive and a large number of old printed books.-----

7 Monastery Pandokratoros

The monastery is built by the sea, in the N.E. side of the peninsula and is dedicated to the Transfiguration of the Saviour. The Katholicon follows the athonite type and has frescoes of the 14th c. that were painted over in 1845. The monastery has 15 chapels, the most important of which is that of the Dormition of Virgin. Among the Kellia of the monastery, the most important are of the Ravdouchou, possibly of the 10th c. and the Dormition of the Virgin, named Axion Esti after the namesake icon. The Skete of Prophet Elias belongs also to the monastery. The monastery's founders were two byzantine officials, Alexios and Ioannis, who in mid 14th c. with the support of the emperor Ioannis 5th Paleologus, transformed their cell into a monastery. After the fall of the empire, the monastery is financially supported by rulers of eastern Europe. Two destructive fires took place in 1773 and recently in 1948. The monastery possesses a large collection of portable icons, ecclesiastical vessels and heirlooms, while in the library there are 350 manuscripts and over 3,500 books. The monastery is inhabited by a brotherhood of 25 monks.

The monastery is built by the sea, in the N.E. side of the peninsula and is dedicated to the Transfiguration of the Saviour. The Katholicon follows the athonite type and has frescoes of the 14th c. that were painted over in 1845. The monastery has 15 chapels, the most important of which is that of the Dormition of Virgin. Among the Kellia of the monastery, the most important are of the Ravdouchou, possibly of the 10th c. and the Dormition of the Virgin, named Axion Esti after the namesake icon. The Skete of Prophet Elias belongs also to the monastery. The monastery's founders were two byzantine officials, Alexios and Ioannis, who in mid 14th c. with the support of the emperor Ioannis 5th Paleologus, transformed their cell into a monastery. After the fall of the empire, the monastery is financially supported by rulers of eastern Europe. Two destructive fires took place in 1773 and recently in 1948. The monastery possesses a large collection of portable icons, ecclesiastical vessels and heirlooms, while in the library there are 350 manuscripts and over 3,500 books. The monastery is inhabited by a brotherhood of 25 monks.-----

8 Monastery Xiropotamou

The monastery is in the middle of the athonite peninsula, on the way from Daphne to Karyes and is dedicated to the 40 Martyrs. The Katholicon was built in 1761 by the monk Caesarius Daponte and decorated with frescoes in 1783. The monastery has several chapels and a few kellia. The monastery was founded in the end of 10th c., possibly by the monk Pavlos Xeropotaminos, and prospered till the Frankish conquest, when it is attacked and sacked by pirates. In the late Byzantine period it is financially supported by the Paleologan dynasty as well as Serbian rulers. After the fall of

Byzantium, the turkish raids, and two destructive fires in 1507 and 1609, cause serious damages to the monastery.

The monastery owns a rich collection of heirlooms, the most outstanding of which, is the largest in the world piece of the Christ's Cross, as well as a small round steatite icon, known as the Pulcheria Disk.

The library contains about 400 manuscripts and 4,000 books. The monastery is inhabited by a brotherhood of 30 monks.

9 Monastery Zografou

The monastery is situated on a slope of the S.W. part of the peninsula and is dedicated to St George. The Katholikon was built in the beginning of the last century and follows the athonite type. The monastery has eight chapels inside and eight chapels outside of it. The monastery also owns two workshops in Karyes and the Kelliou of Transfiguration.

The monastery was founded, according to tradition, in the 10th c. by three brothers, Moses, Aaron and Ioannis from Achris. In the Late Byzantine period, the monastery is destroyed by Catalan pirates and rebuilt with the financial support of the Paleologan dynasty, as well as that of rulers of eastern Europe. Initially, the monastery was inhabited by Bulgarians, Greeks and Serbs. Since 1845 there are only Bulgarian monks.

Besides two miraculous icons of St George and other two of the Virgin of the Akathistos and the Virgin Epakouousa, the monastery owns and other heirlooms and ecclesiastical vessels. The library contains 126 greek and 388 slavic manuscripts, and over 8,000 books-----

10 Monastery Dochiariou

It is one of the most elegant and beautiful monasteries of the Holy Mountain, sited by the sea. One sees first the Refectoty (old and new) and ends at the uppermost point on a high tower which dominates the place. The Katholikon, which is equally high, has been built over the walls of the older church. The monastery was founded during the second half of the 10th century; its foundation is attributed to Euthymios, a pupil of Saint Athanasius of the Great Lavra, who had the service of the "Docheion" (vessel), which gave the name to the monastery. The Katholikon and the Refectory were built and decorated with frescoes in the mid 16th century (1568). The wall-paintings of the Refectory are dated in 1675 and in 1700 (the northern part). Apart from the 16th century frescoes in the Katholikon, there are also important frescoes of the 18th century in the exonarthex, which are excellent copy of the 14th century from other monuments. Equally remarkable is also the library of the monastery, where one can find, apart from the most important historic monuments, about 900 manuscripts. The monastery is inhabited by a very active group of monks who take care of its various needs -especially the hospitality to pilgrims and scholars.-----

11 Monastery Karakalou

The monastery is situated between the monasteries of Great Lavra and Iviron, on a slope by the sea and is dedicated to St Peter and St Paul. Inside the fortified enclosure, there is the Katholikon of athonite type, built in mid 16th c. and decorated with frescoes in the early 18th c. The monastery has 7 chapels, 4 Kellia in Karyes, and 14 Kellia in the forest to the S.W. of it. The monastery is mentioned in documents of 1018 and 1087. In the 13th c. the monastery is entirely ruined and rebuilt by the emperors Andronic II and Ioannis V Paleologos. Afterwards the monastery is attacked by Latins and pirates. In the 16th c. it is completely destroyed and rebuilt with the financial aid of rulers of Moldavia

and Vlachia. In the monastery, there are many portable icons, holy heirlooms and ecclesiastical vessels. The library contains 279 manuscripts and about 2,500 books.

12 Monastery Filotheou

Two hours and a half from Karyes lies the monastery of Filotheou. It is built 300 meters above the sea level. It was built by St. Filotheos Before 972. At the beginning it was called Fteris monastery. Later on, Nikiforos Votanates (1078-1081) added new buildings and offered many treasures to the monastery. Georgian Leontios Sovereign and his son Alexander renovated the monastery in 1492. In 1871 the monastery was all burned down except the main temple, the altar and the library, but the monks rebuilt it. In the main temple they are wall-paintings which date from 1752 and its name was given in honor of Christ's Annunciation. In the monastery they are many treasures, some of them are: The arm of St. John Chrysostomos, the miraculous icon of Glykofilousa e.t.c. To the Filotheou monastery belong 14 cells.-----

13 Monastery Simonos Petras

The seven-stored monastery of Simonopetra is the most bold construction of the peninsula, and is dedicated to the birth of Christ. The name comes from the founder of the monastery, Hosios Simon, who lived in Athos in the mid 14th c. The Katholicon was built after the last fire and has no frescoes. The monastery has 15 chapels and 5 Kellia in Karyes. At the end of 16th c. the monastery is burnt down, rebuilt and reburnt in the beginning of the 17th c. This long period of decline is interrupted by short periods of prosperity. At the end of the last century, the monastery is one more time burnt, and rebuilt with funds from Russia. Among the monastery's heirlooms, the most important is a piece of Saviour's Cross, holy reliquaries and others. The library, after the last fire, possesses only a few modern manuscripts and books. The monastery is inhabited by a brotherhood of 60 monks.-----

14 Monastery Agios Pavlou

It is situated in the west foot of Athos, 20 min from the sea and is dedicated in the Presentation of Christ to the temple. The monastery was destroyed many times by various causes, and its buildings belong to different periods. The Katholicon was built shortly before the mid 10th c. The monastery has 12 chapels, the most important of which is that of St George, with frescoes of the Cretan School (1555). The monastery also possesses the Nea Skete and the Skete of St Demetrius. The monastery is mentioned for the first time, in the mid 10th c., mostly its founder Pavlos Xeropotaminos, and then in 1259. After the Catalan raids, it is degraded into a kellion, only to become a monastery again in the 3rd quarter of the 14th c. In the 15th c. it is financially supported by Serbian rulers and after the fall of Byzantium, by rulers of eastern Europe. Among the monastery's possessions, are counted portable icons, heirlooms, holy relics and liturgical vessels. The library contains 494 manuscripts and about 12,500 books. The monastery is inhabited by a brotherhood of 30 monks.-----

15 Monastery Xenofondos

It is built by the sea, between the monasteries of Docheiariou and St Panteleimonos, and is dedicated to St George. The Katholicon is built in the early 18th c. and has no frescoes. In the old Katholicon, there are remarkable frescoes of the Cretan painter Antonius (1544) as well as the wooden-curved templum of the 17th c. The monastery possesses 14 chapels, 8 of which are inside the monastery. The monastery is mentioned for the first time in the last quarter of the 11th c. Its period of prosperity is interrupted by the fall of Constantinople. Afterwards, the monastery is alternatively destroyed and rebuilt with the financial aid from the rulers of eastern Europe. Among the heirlooms of the monastery, the most prized are the two mosaic icons with the Transfiguration of Christ, ecclesiastical vessels and others. In the library there are 300 manuscripts, various

documents and over 4,000 books. The monastery is inhabited by a brotherhood of 35 monks.-----

16 Monastery Osiou Grigoriou

The monastery is built by the sea, in the S.W. side of the peninsula, between the monasteries of Dionysiou and Simonopetra and is dedicated to St Nicholas. The Katholicon is built and painted after the mid 18th c. The monastery has 10 chapels and 4 kellia in Karyes. The monastery is built during the 14th c. Afterwards, there is very little information of it. The Russian pilgrim Barsky (18th c.) reports that the monastery was restarted in 1500, is the smallest of the monasteries, and almost all the heirlooms and the documents were lost in the fire of 1761. The monastery is finally

rebuilt with the financial aid of the princes of Moldavia and Valachia. Inside the Katholicon are kept many heirlooms and portable icons, the most outstanding of which are those of St Nicholas, of Virgin Galaktotropousa and of Virgin Pantanassa. In the library there are 297 manuscripts, about 4,000 books and many documents. The monastery is inhabited by a brotherhood of 70 monks.-----

17 Monastery Esfigmenou

The monastery is built by the sea and surrounded by a rectangular wall which forms a rather spacious courtyard. In the middle one sees the Katholicon and around, the wings with the monks' cells, the guest-house and the refectory, which is a semi-detached building in the west wing, west of the Katholicon. There was always a monastery in existence with this name in the 10th century and apparently flourishing during the byzantine period. It has been pillaged by pirates many times, but again considerable power after the 18th century. The Katholicon was built in 1810 in the place of an older church that had been demolished, while the frescoes were made by the Galatista painters in 1811 and 1818. The monastery's oldest building is the refectory with its frescoes of 16th-17th centuries. Apart from the Katholicon and the refectory, the monastery possesses an excellent collection of Byzantine and postbyzantine icons, among which the most remarkable is the mosaic icon of Christ. In the library one can see many rare manuscripts, among which the manuscript no 14 is set out for its remarkable decoration. The monastery is inhabited by a large number of energetic monks who follow strictly the Athonite monastic tradition.-----

18 Monastery Agios Pandleimonos The monastery is built in a bay near the Xenophontos monastery, from the side of Siggitikos and is dedicated to its namesake Saint. It gives the impression of a small city with its many-storied buildings and the churches' tall cupolas. The Katholicon is built in the early 19th c. and its frescoes are typical of the Russian art. The monastery has 15 chapels and 5 kellia, 2 of them at Karyes. The monastery also owns the Chromitsa metochion, the Bogoroditsa (or the Carpenter's) Skete, the Nea Thebais or Gournoskete and Paleomonastiro. In the 13th c. the monastery is burnt and rebuilt with the financial support of the emperor Andronicus II Paleologus and Serbian rulers. The monastery knows alternatively periods of prosperity and great misery. The monks are Greek and Russian, which outnumber the first after 1497. In the 18th c. the monastery is again in Greek hands, only to fall back to the Russians in 1875. In the monastery there are many portable icons, heirlooms and liturgical vestments. The library contains 1320 Greek and 600 Slavic manuscripts and over 20,000 Greek and Russian books. The monastery is inhabited by a brotherhood of 40 monks.-----

19 Monastery Konstamonitou

The Konstamonitou monastery is built in a forest, 200 meters above the sea level, 50 minutes walk from the coast. According to tradition it was founded by Great Konstantine and it was integrated by his son Konstantinos. Another tradition states that the monastery was built by a hermit who was born in Castamona of Paflagonia. According to the historical sources, it was built in the 11th century. At the beginning of the 14th

century it was burned by the Catalans but it was soon rebuilt. In 1351, emperor Ioannis Paleologos the first defined the monastery's land. In 1360, princess Anne the Philanthropist of Serbia and George Vrancovits gave many donations to the monastery. Later on it was burned but it was renovated in 1433, by Serbia's commander in chief Radits who became a monk there with the name Romanos. In the 16th century the monastery became cenobetic. In 1820, with a donation from the wife of Ali

Pasha, Basiliki, it was built another part of the monastery. In 1870, the main temple and a wing were rebuilt by contributions from Russia. Today, there are 5 chapels in the monastery. The library contains 110 manuscripts. The treasure collection contains wood from the Holy Cross, the miraculous icons of Odigitria and Antiphonitria, several documents etc-----

20 Holy Skites of Mount Athos

THE NEASKITI

Nea Skiti it is built near the sea. It was founded in 1760 and belongs to the monastery of St. Paul. It consists of 37 cells (kellia) and huts (kalives). Today in Nea Skiti lives 60 monks and they follow the idiorhythmic system. The Kiriako it was built in 1757 and celebrates its feast day on the 25th of March (Annunciation of the Virgin). The library of Kiriako contains 20 hand-written codes, 200 hand-written books, 500 prints, relics of saints, etc.-----

21 SKITI AGIA ANNA Five hours away from the monastery of Megisti Lavra and one hour away from Saint Paul's monastery, lies the Skiti of Agia Anna. Agia Anna is the oldest and largest Skiti in Mount Athos (Agion Oros). It was founded in the 16th century and today consists of 50 cells (kellia) and huts (kalives), occupied by 85 monks. Agia Anna's Kiriako (main temple) is named in honor of St. Anne and was built by Patriarch Dionysius Vardalis in 1666. The library contains 200 manuscripts, 3 codes made of parchment, 700 prints and many icons. The Skiti belongs to Megisti Lavra monastery. AUFSTIEG Ob von der Skite Agia Anna aus, dem Arsanas der Karoulia oder der Skite Kafsokalywia; immer ist der Weg sehr schön und steil. Sehr steil! 2033 m steigt der Athos aus dem Meer. Naturgenuss pur beim Wandern durch heiße Hohlwege und schattige Wälder. Viele Pflanzen sind ausschließlich auf dem Athos zu finden. Eine geruhige Rast am Athoskreuz auf 800 m Höhe ist angebracht, um Aussicht und Erholung zu genießen. Immer nach oben – der Weg ist nicht zu verfehlen. Wir kommen an der Panagia-Kapelle auf 1500 m vorbei. Eine letzte Anstrengung. Dann sitzen wir oben auf dem Gipfel des Heiligen Berges der Orthodoxie vor Kreuz und Kapelle Metamorphosis Sotiros und bewundern im Nachmittagslicht den Schatten des Berges, der sich weit hinaus auf das Meer erstreckt.-----

22 MIKRI AGIA ANNA Mikri Agia Anna is an Hermitage place, established in the 16th century. Today consists 7 huts. Here was staid the famous writer of hymns Gerasimos Mikragiannanitis. Mikri Agia Anna belongs to Megisti Lavra monastery-----

23 SKITI AGIAS TRIADOS – KAFSOKALIVIA

Three hours away from the monastery of Megisti Lavra and 100m above the sea level, lies the Skiti of Kafsokalivia. The Skite's main temple (Kiriako) was built in 1745 and is named in honor of the Holy Trinity. The library contains 23 codes and few hundred prints. There are 35 cells and huts occupied by 35 monks and it belongs to Megisti Lavra monastery.-----

24 SKITI TIMIOU PRODROMOU (RUMANIAN) This Rumanian cenobetic Skite, until 1854, it was a Greek cell. In 1856 it become Skite and occupied by Moldavian monks. The main temple it was built in 1857 and it is named in honor of St. John Prodromos. All the paintings are made by Rumanian painters in 1863. Today lives there 25 Rumanian monks. The Kiriako consists saint's relics and icons. One of them is the Panagia

Aheropeetos. The library consists 5000 print books -most of them in Rumanian language- and 130 manuscripts. Near the

Skite, in a place called Vigla, lies the cave of Agios Athanasios. The Skite belongs to Megisti Lavra monastery.-----

25 SKITI AGIOU DIMITRIOU The Skite of Saint Dimitrios, lies in a forest, one hour away of Vatopedi monastery. It was established in the 18th century. There are 15 cells and an equal number of monks. It belongs to Vatopedi monastery.-----

26 SKITI AGIOU ANDREA Agiou Andrea Russian Skite lies 500m away from Karies. It is also called Seragi (from the Sei-rai=paradise for the Russians). It is built in the position of an old monastery which was called "monastery of Xistri or Xestrou". Until the 17th century it was cell with the name "Agios Antonios". In this cell come in the middle of 17th century, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Konstantinoupolis, Agios Athanasios Patellaros and became a monk. In 1763 another Ecumenical Patriarch, Seraphim B', comes in the cell. In 1768, he demolished the cell and built a new one in honor of Antonios the Grate and Apostol Andrew. He also built a temple in honor of Apostol Andrew which it was a miniature of the Grate, Agias Sofia's temple in Konstantinoupolis. Today we can see only the ruins of this temple. In 1841, the Russian monks, Vissarion and Varsanoufios come in the cell. It was become a coenobitic Skite on 1849. The main temple of St. Andrews Skite was founded in 1842 by Russian monks and is the largest in Balkans (60m long by 33m wide and 29m height. The library was destroyed by fire in 1958. The early days of the 20th century, it was home for 800 Russian monks. The last monk of the old -Russian- brotherhood, Father Sampson, died in 1971. After 20 years of desolation, a new -Greek- brotherhood comes in 1992. The Dikeos Father Efrem and many young monks come in 2001. It belongs to Vatopedi monastery.-----

27 SKITE AGIOU DIMITRIOU (LAKKOSKITI) Lakkoskiti was built in the 18th century 280m above sea level. It belongs to Agiou Pavlou monastery. On the beginning it was occupied by Serbian and later by Moldavian monks. Today there are 20 cells with a big number of Romanian monks. The main temple was built in 1899 and it is named in honor of St. Dimitrios.-----

28 SKITE BOGORODITSA The skite of Bogoroditsa lies 700m above sea level in monastery Pantokratoros territory but it belongs to St. Panteleimonos monastery. It becomes a Skite in 1818. The main temple celebrates its feast day on the Assumption of the Virgin. On the east part of the skite lies the chapel of St. John of Rilla. Today is occupied by Bulgarians monks.-----

29 SKITE OF ANNUNCIATION OF THE VIRGIN It was founded in 1766 by the priest and monk Sylvester and by the monks Efrem and Agapios. It consists of 26 huts occupied by 10 monks. The main temple was built in 1766 and there we can see 100 icons. There are also the relics of St. Charalampos and St. Modestos. The library contains 360 hand-written codes and 500 prints. The Skite celebrates its feast day on the 25th of March (Annunciation of the Virgin).-----

30 SKITE OF PROPHET ELIAS It was founded in 1759 by the Russian monk Paisio Velitchkofsky. The katholikon (main temple) was bouilt in 1903. It is dedicated to the Prophet Elijah, Saint Alexandra and the Apostle Andrew. There are also three chapels in the skete, Saint Metropahnes and the Saints Theopatores the Saint Nicholas and the Annunciation. The skete is also home the miraculous icon of the the Weeping Mother of God (Dakrirooussa) and the Lactating Mother of God (Galaktotrofoussa) as well as invaluable objects of worship. The skete also has quite a rich library. Some other

treasures of the Skite are a holy-bread box, crosses, e.t.c. It belongs to Pantokratoros monastery is inhabited by 12 Greek monks and is ceonobitic.

31 KATOUNAKIA Katounakia is a hermit's area and it lies between Mikri Agia Anna Skite and Karoulia. There are 22 hermitages with 35 monks. Here is the cell of the famous painters of holy icons, Danieleon. It belongs to Megisti Lavra monastery.-----



32 KAROULIA Karoulia is the main area of the hermits and belongs to Megisti Lavra monastery. The hermits live in huts (12 huts built in 17th century) and caves. The name of the area comes from the pulley (karouli in Greek) which the hermits use to hang the basket where the passing monks, pilgrims or fishermen put some water and a piece of bread. In Karoulia live today 10 hermits.-----

33 History According to the tradition, Virgin Mary was sailing accompanied by St John the Evangelist from Joppa to Cyprus to visit Lazarus. When the ship was blown to Athos peninsula, it was forced to anchor close to the present monastery of Iviron. The Virgin walked ashore and overwhelmed by the wonderful and wild natural beauty of the mountain, she blessed it and asked her Son for it to be her garden. A voice was heard saying "Let this place be your inheritance and your garden, a paradise and a haven of salvation for those seeking to be saved". From that moment the mountain was consecrated as the garden of the Virgin Mary or Mother of God (Perivoli tis Panagias) and was out of bounds to all other women.

Historical documents on ancient Mount Athos history are very few. We are sure that monks were already there since the 4th century. That period both Christians and pagans were living there. After the Islamic conquest of Egypt in the 7th century, many monks from the Egyptian desert tried to find another place and some of them came to the Athos peninsula. . In 866, John Kolovos built the first monastic center, the Great Vigla. This monastery was consolidated by royal golden bulls (decrees). Since then, Mount Athos became the land of monastic life.

In 958 AD, the monk Athanasios the Athonite arrived on Mount Athos from the Monastery of Xerolimne in Asia Minor. In 962, the big central church of the "Protaton" in Karies is built. In the next year, with the support of the Emperor Nicephoros Focas, the monastery of Great Lavra was founded, the largest and most prominent of the 20 monasteries existing today.

The first organization of the monastic way of life becomes true with the charter (Typikon) of St Athanasios, which resulted to the interference of the state through John Tsimiskis who gave the Charter (Typikon) that is still in force today. Initially there were only individual monasteries but later on they were organized into a monastic state.

From Byzantium the Orthodox faith spread to the Balkans and monks from these lands arrived on Mount Athos to establish monasteries. Georgian monks founded the monastery of Iviron (976), Serbs the monastery of Chilandari (1197) and Bulgarians the monastery of Zografou (1270).

The first two centuries of this period, more than 180 monasteries were founded with over 20.000 monks. Later on, most of them were destroyed by the Crusades and the Pirates.

Even the emperors themselves built monasteries. The Balkan Christian Kings also took notice of Mount Athos .The Russians founded and supported monasteries. Russia, under

the governance of the Tsar, provided great economic aid to the St Panteleimonos monastery.

Mount Athos was autonomous. This right was initially granted to it by Nikiforos Fokas and John Tsimiskis and was preserved down to the era of the Turkish domination. The inhabitants of Mount Athos submitted to the Turkish rule and they The Athoniada college was founded in 1748, a philosophic and theological school for the whole of Greece, initially run by Neofytos Kafsokalivitis and then by Evgenios Voulgaris (1753). were therefore treated favorably.

In 1821 it was taken by the Turks and the revolution of Chalkidiki was drowned in blood. Then the Turks left a guard that the monasteries had to support. The occupation of Mount Athos by the Turks lasted until 1830.

In 1926, Mount Athos became a self-governing part of the Greek State in accordance with the constitutional decree of Lozanne (1924). According to it, depends on the Patriarchate of Constantinople and is supervised by Greece.

34 MONASTERIES

Mount Athos, comprises today monastic foundations which can be divided into six categories; monasteries, skites, cells, huts, seats and hermitages. The number of the monasteries- which cannot be increased or decreased-is twenty. Seventeen of them are Greek (Megistis Lavras, Vatopediou, Iviron, Dionysiou, Koutloumoussiou, Pantokratoros, Xiropotamou, Dohiarou, Karakalou , Phitotheou, Simonos Petras, Agiou Pavlou, Stavronikita, Xenofontos, Grigoriou, Esfigmenou, Constamonitou), one is Russian (Saint Panteleimona), one is Serbian (Helandariou) and one is Bulgarian(Zografou).The number of the other monastic foundations is subject to changes. Today the monks are about 1650.Usually the monasteries are surrounded by four-story buildings where the monks' cells are placed into different sections. Externally the buildings have balconies which are called aplotaries. In the monasteries each monk has a small rectangular room with very few things in it. Each monastery acts as a separate patriarchal basilica. All the monks acquire the Greek citizenship when they become novices or when they become monks, without any further procedures in Mount Athos. Besides the twenty monasteries, there are also fourteen skites, huts, seats and hermitages. At Karies-the capital of Mount Athos -, an Ecclesiastical School operates for the novices and monks who wish to be educated. Today the population of Mount Athos consists of Greek, Russian, Serbian, Bulgarian and Romanian monks. Each monastery is surrounded by a strong wall which in the earlier days was fairly competent enough to provide safe residency. On the walls there are towers with battlement loopholes which made fighting with the pirates more effective. Most of the temples have wall paintings and they are rebuilt in a special architectural form which is called Agioritikos. The monasteries are all cenobetics. In the cenobetics everything is common. Building, work, food and prayer. The legislative authority is conducted by the senate which comprises eminent monks. The administrative authority is conducted by the abbot who is the lifelong master and the spiritual father of the monastery. He is elected by the monks who are in the monastery's service for at least six years.

THE SKITES

The Skites are groups of monks' houses which have been founded in a monastery's area. The founding is done by a Monastery's Act and is ratified by a decree from the Patriarchate. The number of the monks has been defined by the Act of Founding. The regulation of the interior operations of the Skite is approved by the monastery. The Skites are peculiars or cenobitics.The peculiars are a gathering of huts around a main temple which is called "Kyriaco". Each cell has its own very small temple. Anyway, all the monks on Sundays and holidays, have their divine services in the Kyriako, while during the rest of the days they have their services in their cells. The head of a skite is called Dikeos and he is elected by the older monks of the cells for a period of one year. He takes care of matters such as caring for the hospitality of the pilgrims as well as for the performance of the divine services in the Kyriako. He also represents the skite wherever it's needed. At the cenobitic skites the Dikeos who is

called Abbot, heads and leads the skite until his death and his election is approved by the monastery. Their buildings are like those of the monasteries but they can never become monasteries. Today there are 14 skites in total.

THE CELLS (KELLIA) The Cells of Agion Oros are foundations with one temple and a building which consists of cells and auxiliary rooms. Head of the cell is the Old-Man and the rest are his attendants. The number of the monks cannot be more than nine. They support themselves, by cultivating a small piece of land, painting and sculpturing the wood to form icons, making mortars and worry-beads.

THE HUTS (TA KALIVIA) The huts are small and isolated residences for two or three monks which have been granted to them for life by the monastery to which the territory belongs. The monks in the huts support themselves with their handiwork.

THE SEATS (TA KATHISMATA) The seats are small huts with only one monk. The monastery grants the seat to the monk. He lives for life there and he takes from the monastery only the absolutely essential food which is called coumbana.

THE HERMITAGES

The hermitages are small seats. They are at deserted and sacred places, sometimes on rocks and inaccessible summits and sometimes in caves and clefts of rocks where the monks establish their inaccessible refuges. They live there on fasts, wakefulness and endless prayers, studying the Testaments and the phenomenon of death. All the establishments at Athos operate according to the Byzantine twenty-four hour system and according to the Julian calendar. When the sun sets, the time in Athos is 12:00 during all seasons with the exception of the Iviron monastery where the time is 12:00 when the sun rises.





