

WALK 6 PROFITIS ILIAS

The chapel of Profitis Ilias [Prophet Elijah] is a hidden gem, a leisurely half hour or so from Megalo Papingo.

From the centre of Megalo Papingo take the path that runs under the terrace of Koulis' cafe and past the gift shop on the left. This is the path to Klithonia [Κλειδωνιά]. Note the three beautiful old doorways each with a cobbled ramp; there is also a very 'pregnant' wall! watch this space... A kalderimi takes you out of the village, and morphs into a good track which takes you past the chapel of Agios Athanasios, sheltering under a huge holly oak. Athanasius was a Christian scholar and bishop in the 4th century; he had a chequered career, being exiled five times in its 45 year duration!

Continue on this broad highway past fields and beehives, keeping on the level for about ten minutes. There are some red arrows which vaguely point the way. Keep to the lower path. The track ends helpfully at a vehicle turning spot on the edge of a steep, small valley, and the path continues down, across the stream bed and up again the other side, following remnants of an old kalderimi buttressed by walls on the steep valley side. The rock here is flysch, and the going quite rough and crumbly.

As the path pops out again into open country there is a well-marked path divide. The right hand track leads to Ano Klithonia; take the left signed 'Προφήτης Ηλίας'. Immediately the atmosphere changes, and the slight path winds gently through sunny glades and open woodland, turning to the south. After about 5 minutes there is another path divide; the left fork was marked with ribbons and other cheerful paraphernalia. This is the path to take. Go steeply up the hillock in front of you; there are some wooden steps in places.

The chapel is located on the top of this rounded knoll in a small clearing in the woodland. It is very beautiful and peaceful [unless you catch the saint's day celebration on July 20th] birds and butterflies dart around through the trees. You can peep through the trees at Lapatos.

Profitis Ilias is the prophet Elijah, well-known in both Old and New Testament times for his battle to keep the faith against the rival worship of Baal [remember the soggy bonfire?] and for his glorious exit from this world in a whirlwind. Both Jesus and John the Baptist were likened to Elijah: a mighty prophet.

Descent is easiest back the way you have come; however it is possible [though not recommended] to descend directly down the south face of the hill to the Papingo road, and continue on to the other chapels described in the Three Chapels walk. It a very steep route, and you swing down tarzan-like from tree to tree, trying to avoid brambles and cliff edges as you go. If you are successful in this you arrive at a track just above and parallel to the road, and turn eastwards to find Agia Paraskevi.

Returning the way you have come will give you a delightful route with ever-expanding views as the trees open up and the Towers and Astraka fill your horizon.



WALK 6. PROFITIS ILIAS & WALK 7. THREE CHAPELS

