

THE GOOD VISITOR'S GUIDE for Greece's mountain areas





This guide was developed under the project “Guardians of Nature: Highlighting and restoring hiking paths in Western Mani – Taygetus Mountain” with the support of the Costas M. Lemos Foundation and the Points of Support program, implemented by the Greek Ecotourism Society.



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Κοινοφελές Ίδρυμα
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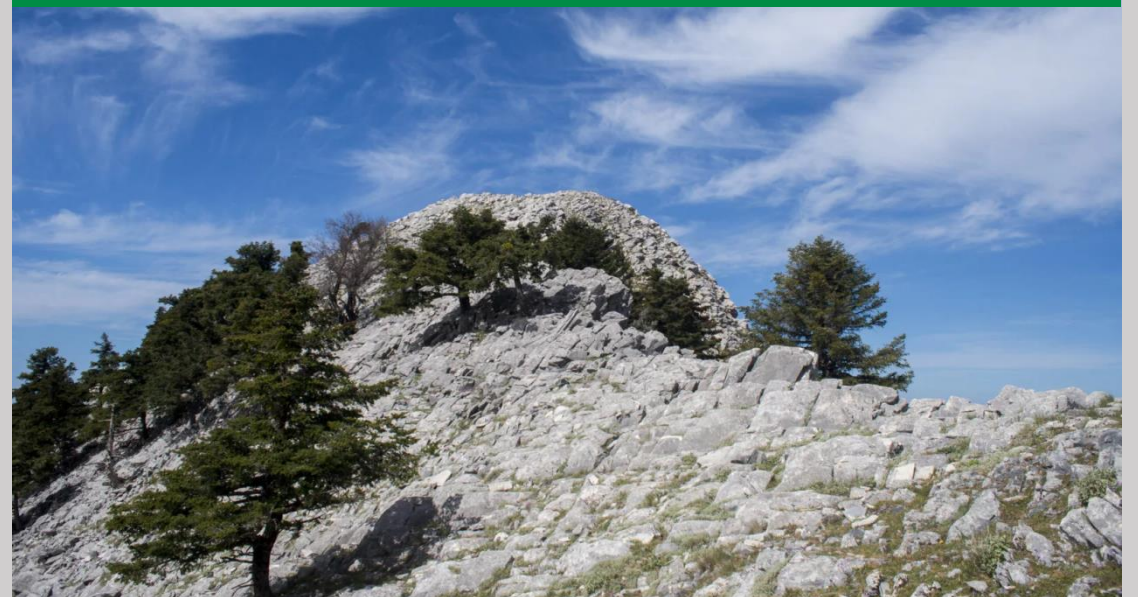
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What is ecotourism?

Ecotourism is a form of tourism that aims to protect and highlight the environment, both including natural and cultural aspects. It gives visitors the opportunity to experience and appreciate the nature and cultural heritage of an area, through activities such as hiking, wildlife watching, volunteering and education.

Ecotourism contributes to the preservation of biodiversity but also to the sustainable development of local communities as it empowers the participation of locals in the managing natural resources and creates jobs.

Ecotourism demands responsibility and respect from visitors who must abide by local regulations and codes of conduct.



Hiking on the Greek mountains

Hiking in the mountainous regions of Greece is one of the most exciting and enjoyable activities visitors can embark on. Greece has many mountain ranges with peaks that exceed 2000 meters, breathtaking gorges, forests that shade wondrous hiking paths and lakes that shimmer in the sun. Hiking in the mountains of Greece is an opportunity to get to know the nature, history and tradition of the area, enjoy the hospitality of the locals and enjoy the sense of adventure and surprises that the trails offer.

Rather than being just a casual visitor to a protected natural area, consider becoming an active citizen who contributes to protecting nature and the environment.



Before your hike...

- Make sure you have everything you need with you. When you want to walk on the mountain, consider that weather conditions can change suddenly.
- Find out about the natural value of the area before you visit. You may discover interesting facts that you had no idea about!
- Consider what time the sun sets to estimate the distance you want to hike.
- Find out in advance about the route you want to follow, e.g. from experienced mountain guides and hiking maps.
- Inform others before your excursion, such as the hotel reception or a friend.



Your backpack should include a first-aid kit, a flashlight, sun protection, water, snacks, a hat, sunglasses and a waterproof jacket



If you want to visit officially designated protected natural areas, check with the relevant Management Unit of the protected area to learn about any additional regulations or prohibited activities.

What to keep in mind...

- Dress appropriately for hiking (long and light clothes), wear closed shoes (hiking boots or sports shoes).
- Protect yourself from the sun. On the mountain, even if we don't realise it, the sun burns without warning!
- Do not stray away from the marked paths, unless you are near an inhabited area.
- Always keep children under your supervision to avoid accidents.
- Do not light fires or camp outdoors.
- Note that overnight parking of motorhomes is only permitted in designated areas.



Leave your car and walk as much as you can. The mountain will easily reveal its beauty and secrets if you interact with nature by foot rather than from behind your car window.

What to keep in mind...

- Maintain the defined speed limit within protected areas and the wider area. This will also help reduce unintentional animal deaths due to speed (roadkills).
- Always take any trash with you after your ride.
- If you notice a fire, inform the Fire Department immediately.
- Notify the region's Management Unit if you notice that someone is hunting illegally or there is a fire risk or there is illicit activity taking place.
- If you notice damage or lack of markings on an official path, inform the Management Unit.



What NOT to do...

POLLUTION

- Pick up any trash you find on your walk and place it in the nearest bin.
- Avoid using detergents, soap or other chemicals that pollute or threaten the sensitive ecosystems of the protected area, especially when stopping at springs, streams or rivers.
- Do not remove plants, rocks or anything else from nature. Leave them in place for others to enjoy, or for you to enjoy when you come back!
- Remember that you are in the habitat of birds and other animals! Avoid loud music, shouting, making loud noises and general disturbance. Nature has its own unique soundscape. Enjoy it!



Take nothing but trash! That's all you need to take with you when you leave a natural spot. Be sure not to disturb the mountain in any way.



What NOT to do...

RESPECT

- Do not disturb. Respect the privacy and tranquility of others.
- Do not drive wheeled vehicles off-road and forest roads.
- Do not ride motorcycles on the trails.
- Slow down on rural roads and give priority and space to walkers, cyclists, and herds of farm animals.



Your discreet presence in nature will reward you with the serenity of the landscape and gratifying encounters with the area's birds and animals!



What NOT to do...

FAUNA

- Do not disturb the birds and wild animals, do not feed them. Do not disturb their nests, parents may abandon their young.
- If you are a hunter, note that hunting is permitted in accordance with current legislation outlining relevant general and specific hunting provisions, that you should be aware of.
- If you come across a wounded or dead animal, inform the Management Unit or the Forestry Department.
- If you have your pet, such as a dog with you, ensure that it does not cause danger or discomfort to other animals and people.
- If you encounter a large animal, do not move towards it, because it may feel threatened.



You may come across animal farming areas, fenced-off or not, with herding dogs. Don't go near them! Their job is to guard the herd and they may show aggression. Retreat slowly and find another route.



Greece's mountain flora

The fauna found in Greece's mountainous areas is diverse and includes species from various animal families, such as invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, mammals and birds. Some of these species are endemic to mountainous areas, meaning they can only be found in specific areas in Greece.

The wellbeing of fauna found in these regions is very much influenced by the climate, altitude, soil and vegetation of each region, as well as by human activity.

Maintaining the biodiversity and ecosystem equilibrium requires protecting nature and avoid overexploitation, pollution, deforestation and the spread of alien or invasive species.



Flora and related threats...

The mountainous regions of Greece are also known for their rich flora, which includes many endemic plants, i.e. species found only in certain geographical areas and nowhere else in the world. The decrease in forested areas in the country, from 45% in 1830 to 18% today, represents one of the most important threats to ecosystems in mountainous regions.

Overall, the flora in these regions faces several threats due to human activity, such as deforestation, soil degradation and water pollution, which can have significant negative consequences for the diversity of flora.

Climate change

Climate change represents an important threat for the flora of Greece's mountainous regions. Rising temperatures and changing climate conditions lead to displacement and loss of biodiversity.

But there are efforts to preserve biodiversity, such as the creation of protected areas, enhanced public information and steps to raise awareness, as well as an increase in research programs to understand and preserve mountain flora.

More about biodiversity

The geographical location, rich nature, very diverse landscapes, and climate types of the country have contributed to the emergence of a wide variety of ecosystems, from the semi-desert palm forests of Vai in Crete to the birch, pine and spruce forests on the northern borders of the country.

You can learn more about protected areas in Greece, including biodiversity and ecosystems, through the website of Greece's Natural Environment & Climate Change Agency of the Ministry of the Environment ([OFYPEKA](#)).



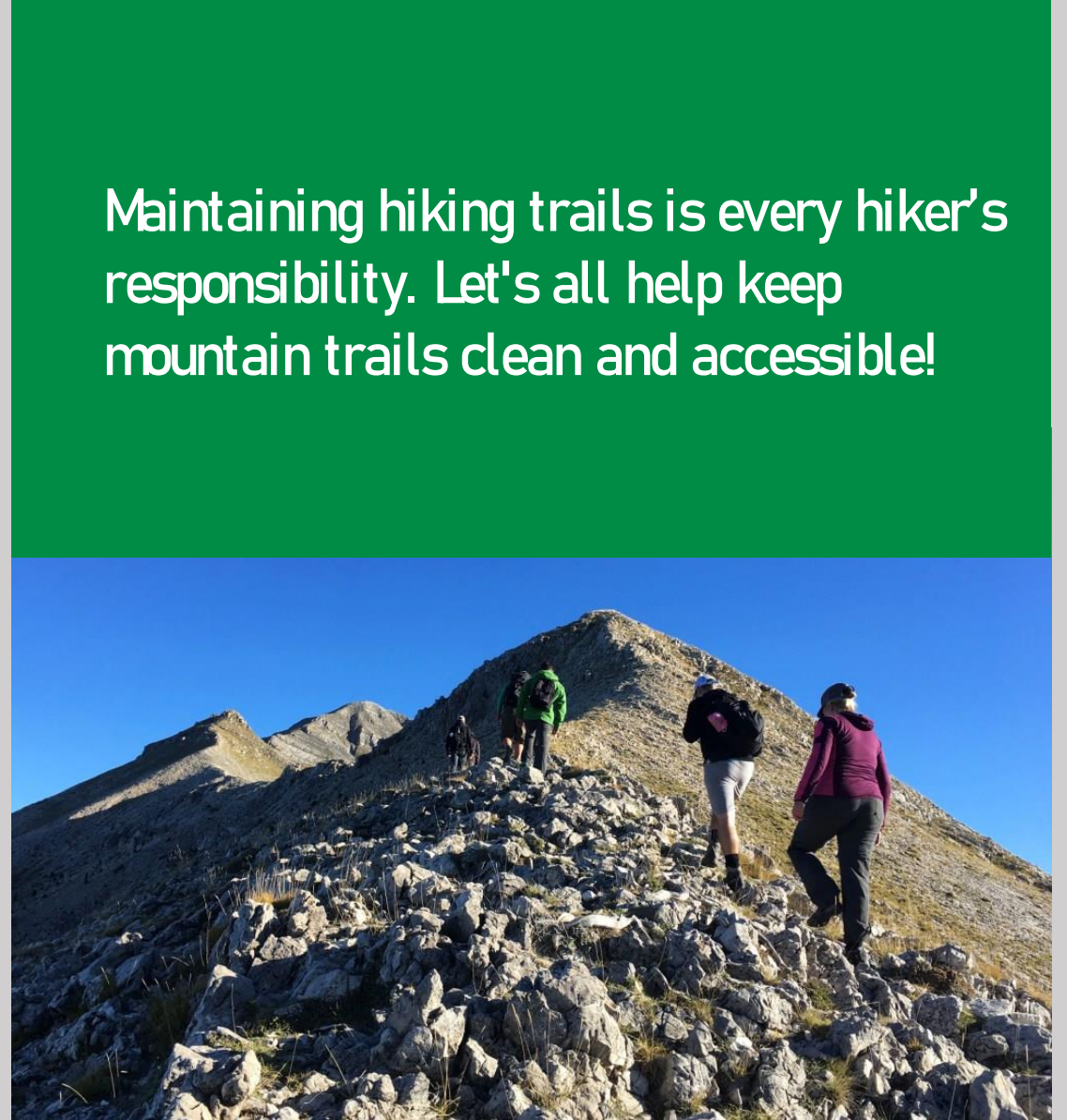
Hiking paths in the mountains

Trail maintenance is important for exploring and enjoying Greece's mountains. While hundreds of thousands of kilometers worth of trails crisscross these mountains, most of these are not well maintained and are not that accessible to visitors.

The paths need proper clearing of vegetation and even of garbage thrown by careless visitors.

Removing overgrowth from the paths is often done using mechanised equipment. On the other hand, removing trash from the hiking paths is an activity that we can all participate in.

Maintaining hiking trails is every hiker's responsibility. Let's all help keep mountain trails clean and accessible!



Become a “Guardian of Nature”!

The Greek Ecotourism Society carried out a symbolic trail cleaning project in Western Mani, on Mount Taygetus, with the support of the Costas M. Lemos Foundation under the Points of Support program.

Through the action “Guardians of Nature: Highlighting and restoring hiking paths in Western Mani – Taygetus Mountain” we cleaned 7 km of a hiking path that starts from Kardamili and runs parallel to the Vyros gorge. We first restored the path using mechanical equipment, removing the vegetation that had covered it, and in a second phase we removed trash from the most accessible part of the path, with the support of volunteers from local organisations.

