



Mount Athos, known in Greek as Agio Oros (Holy Mountain), is a peninsula in Halkidiki, Northern Greece. This sacred area contains twenty monasteries including one Serbian, one Bulgarian and one Russian. Although the peninsula of Athos is part of Greece, it enjoys a certain autonomy. The region is administered by "Holy Community" under the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Istanbul. This administrative body is composed of representatives of the monasteries, and maintains an office at Karyes (Iera Epistasia), at which all visitors register upon arrival at Mount Athos.

Only men are permitted to enter Mount Athos. This rule, which is known as the "avaton", forbids access to Mount Athos by any female, and is strictly observed.

In accordance with the procedures established by the Greek Government, foreigners must obtain a written permit to visit Mount Athos from "HOLY EXECUTIVE BUREAU OF THE HOLY MOUNT ATHOS", (ΓΡΑΦΕΙΟ ΠΡΟΣΚΥΝΗΤΩΝ ΙΕΡΑΣ ΕΠΙΣΤΑΣΙΑΣ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΟΡΟΥΣ) located at 109 Egnatia Street, Agioritiki Estia Building, Thessaloniki, Greece. Personal appearance and passport is required in order to obtain this permit. The letter of recommendation from the U.S. Consulate is no longer required.

Note that the period from April to September is the peak season for visitors to Mount Athos and reservations should be made well six months in advance. Those who make reservations by phone, should fax a copy of their passport and the date intended to visit to the above office, and call two weeks before their visit to Mt. Athos to confirm the reservation. This office should be informed by phone on time, in case of cancellation of a reservation, otherwise, a negligence may cause negative reactions in case of re-application. Also, please note that groups of over 5 persons are not accepted. Greek-Americans of Orthodox faith should also call the tel. No. 2310-252575, besides the tel. No. for foreigners, 2310-252578. Their fax number is 2310-222424. Email: pilgrimsbureau@c-lab.gr

Generally, this office issues only ten permits a day for non-orthodox visitors (foreigners) and 100 for Greeks and orthodox visitors. These permits are valid for a four-day visit on specific dates. Extension of the four-day validity can be sought from Mt. Athos authorities in Karyes. Clergymen of the Orthodox faith do not need to make reservations in advance. However, clergymen should obtain in advance a written consent (Evlogia) from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople by either writing to: The Ecumenical Patriarchate, Fanari, Istanbul, Turkey, or calling (90)(1)525-5416, or a letter from the Highest Church Authority at their place of residence verifying that they are members of the clergy.

Permits are issued to adult male applicants over 18 years old. Young males under 18 may be allowed to visit the Holy Mountain if they are accompanied by their father. Young men who are accompanied by a guardian, or an adult group leader visiting Mount Athos for educational purposes will need written consent of their parents, verified by an official authority of their country.

Either at the Pilgrim Bureau in Thessaloniki or upon arrival at Ouranoupolis the port where boats depart for Mount Athos, visitors must obtain a visitation permit (“Diamonitirio”). This permit allows the visitor to visit and stay at the monasteries of his choice. Visitors should be in Ouranoupolis no later than 08:45 a.m. and to the dock of Ierissos no later than 7:20 a.m. and the dock of Nea Roda no later than 8:00 a.m. The boat leaves at 9:45 a.m. from Ouranoupolis. The holder of a permit may proceed to Mount Athos without any other formalities.

The Monasteries do not charge for their hospitality, but donations are accepted.

Because only ten permits a day are issued, it is advisable to contact the Office of Mt. Athos well in advance if you plan to visit between April and September. The American Consulate General cannot intervene in the event a permit is denied. The Office is open: Monday through Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The address is: 109 Egnatia Street, Agioritiki Estia Building, Thessaloniki, Greece, Tel. (+30-2310) 252578 for foreigners, and (+30-2310) 252575 for Greeks, Fax (+30-2310) 222424. Email: pilgrimsbureau@c-lab.gr

Mt. Athos visitors should be decently attired. In the event of misconduct, a permit can be withdrawn. Severe penalties are enforced against anyone who attempts to remove religious items from Mount Athos collections. While taking photographs is permitted, the use of video and movie cameras and/or tape recorders is strictly forbidden. Also, because hunting is strictly forbidden in Mount Athos, hunting dogs and rifles are strictly forbidden.

Following is information on bus and boat schedules and some useful telephone numbers: (Be sure to check timetables before departure because they are subject to change).

BUS TERMINAL TO OURANOUPOLIS: KTEL HALKIDIKI, 10th klm. Thessaloniki-Nea Moudania, Pylea, (behind PRAKTIKER), Tel. 2310-316555, 316575.

DEPARTURES BY BUS – DAILY: Thessaloniki-Ouranoupolis (148 klm, 3 hours). For timetables please call the KTEL above.

DEPARTURES FROM OURANOUPOLIS TO DAPHNE, MT. ATHOS, BY BOAT:

Ouranoupolis-Daphne: (2 hours) at 09:45 a.m.

Daphne-Ouranoupolis: (2 hours) at 12:00 noon.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

Administration-Mount Athos, Karyes	(23770) 23-314/23-230
Police Station at Karyes	(23770) 23-212
Police Station at Daphne	(23770) 23-222
Police Station at Vatopedi Monastery	(23770) 23-257
Aliens Police	(23770) 41-090
Health Center	(23770) 23-217

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