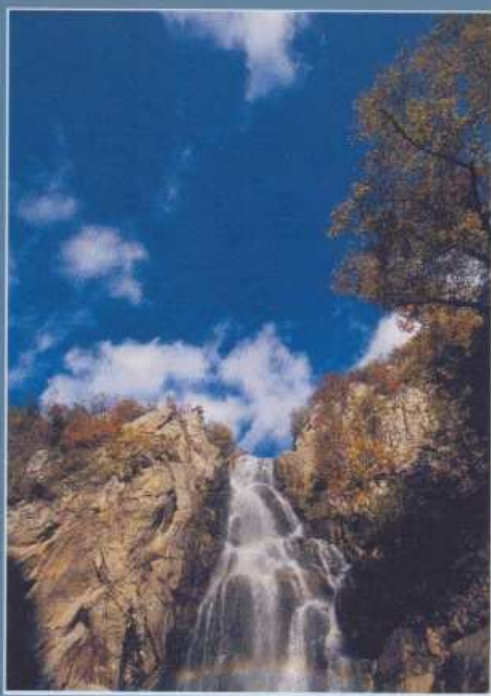


GREEK NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION



ParaDISIAC NESTI



*Itinerary through the
Territory of Paranesti*



Drama

PREFECTURAL ADMINISTRATION OF DRAMA



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PREFECTURAL ADMINISTRATION OF DRAMA





Paranesti: general profile

The small town of Paranesti is to be the starting-point for our exploration of the surrounding territory. Paranesti, built by the banks of the river Nestos (to which its name is due), at an altitude of 120 m.a.s.l. and at a distance of 30 kilometres from Drama, is the administrative and economic centre of a large in extension (c. 789 square kilometres) but considerably underpopulated municipality (0.47 inhabitants per square kilometre

according to the 2001 census). Paranesti is connected to Drama by road and railroad, as the town is a station on the Thessaloniki-Constantinople railway line. A train trip from Drama to Paranesti is indeed most pleasurable. The train moves through charming landscapes, which are only a prelude to the rhapsody of the so called "Thrakika Tempa" (or "Thracian canyon"), the gorgeous valley created by the meanders of the Nestos river just after Paranesti.



The first thing to be seen in Paranesti is the old building of the Railroad Station. It was erected towards the end of the 19th century by a French company and still expresses a long-abandoned sense of architectural fineness.

The people of the town are cordial and friendly. They are second and third generation refugees insisting to stay on their fathers' land and be involved in the primary sector of production. As a matter of fact, not many of them are exclusively occupied in agriculture, cultivating mainly tobacco, cereals and fodder crops. Most of them are stock-breeders (sheep, cattle, and goats). The agricultural and livestock products of Paranesti are highly reputed for their quality and conveyed mostly to big markets for sale. In an area, where forest coverage reaches up to 98%, it is natural that timber cutting is for the locals a profitable occupation. In the area there are three

forest worksites operating today, those of Lepidas, Stamna and Fraktos.

Apart from timber, the forests of Paranesti offer also plenty of grazing land, as well as great hunting opportunities, as they support big populations of excellent hunting fauna. Other sources of forestall wealth, expecting their rational exploitation, are the various aromatic herbs, such as mountain-tea (*Sideritis scardica*), oregano (*Origanum vulgare*) etc., and the many different edible kinds of wild mushrooms that are an interesting gastronomic challenge for demanding gourmets. To those who love fishing the waters of Nestos and its tributaries –with their big salmon trouts and the other kinds of fish– will offer real fun and excitement.

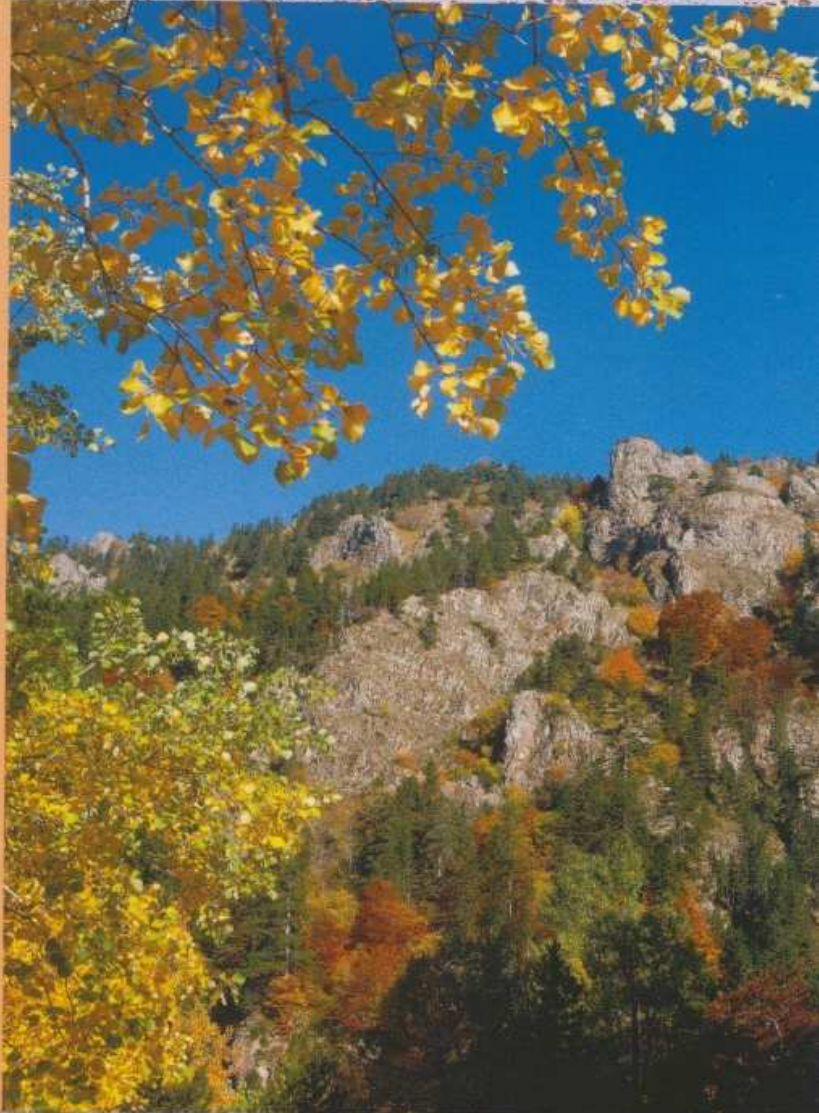
Paranesti, however, is also known for its great taverns. Traditional sweets and foodstuff (such as pies, sour frumenty [= trahanas] etc.) are also famous.





They are prepared and sold by local lady-clubs. Moreover, the two newly-built hotels of Paranesti offer perfect service and comfort to visitors.

Paranesti, then, will be the starting-point of our expeditions to the NW part of the Drama prefecture, which is occupied by the central bulk of the Rhodopes range. What makes Paranesti to be a really attractive destination is that the visitor is offered the opportunity to experience the greatness of a wholly unpredicted mountainous realm. Dense, untrodden forests of high trees are alternated with colourful meadows of untold beauty. The superb scenery is provided with sound and movement by a network of smaller and bigger streams that form here and there imposing waterfalls in their boisterous flow towards the river Nestos. We can form a basic idea of what we are going to see up there by visiting the "Paranesti





Museum of Natural History". It is a place organized with knowledge and skills, where, by observing the dioramas and the other exhibits, the visitor can form a fair idea of the Nestos and Rhodopes biotopes.

Our tour through the paradise of Paranești begins. The forest tracks and the mountain roads of the Rhodopes wait for adventurers well-equipped either for trail hiking or mountain biking, aboard either a trail bike or a 4x4 vehicle. Of course, the quest for adventure and discovery is not restricted to the "classical" ways. Long distance runners may be

challenged to exceed their limits by taking part in the yearly event of the "Virgin Forest Trail" (VFT), a 24-hour ultramarathon mountain race of 104 kilometres. Others may choose kayaking or rafting on the streams of the Nestos river or, alternatively, getting involved into a... "fight" with the huge dishes that are customarily served in the crowded taverns of Paranești!



Historical outline

The first traces of human activity in the area of Paranesti come from Arkoudorema and date back to the Paleolithic Period (Old Stone Age). The area seems to have been inhabited uninterruptedly ever since. The Thracian phase of its history ends up with the coming of the Greeks and the incorporation of the area into the Macedonian Kingdom. The Macedonians were succeeded by the Romans and the Romans by the Byzantines. The castle ruins that still stand on the hilltops across the Nestos valley belong to this, if not to an earlier period. As a result of the Ottoman occupation the region was flooded by

Muslim colonists, who settled and lived on the mountains, where they left behind eloquent testimony of their long-term presence, such as their crowded graveyards. These people were mostly farmers and livestock breeders. In 1923, the Muslims moved to Turkey due to the population exchange agreement giving their place to Greek refugees from Asia Minor. These new inhabitants along with the Saracatsan nomad shepherds, who settled permanently in the area, were to become in hard times the guardians of the Greek national and cultural heritage.





First Discovery Excursion

(Ano Tholos - Prasinada - Hagia Varvara Waterfall - Potamakia - The "Dormition of the Virgin" country chapel)

The village of Ano Tholos is our first station in this first excursion. A landmark that helps us to keep on the right route is the old "Porsel" factory five kilometres NE of Paranesti. At this point we turn right and start ascending a newly asphalted road that leads to the old deserted village of Ano Tholos (altitude 320 m.a.s.l.). The village is built on a smooth slope looking westwards. Nobody lives permanently here anymore but a few livestock breeders. Cows walk around freely; only in the church

precinct they are not allowed. And yet, the traditional architecture of the stone-built two-storey houses is impressive. Some of these buildings as well as the hospitality of the remaining residents are the surviving signs of an older well-off society.

We return to the central artery. Almost one kilometre higher we cross the new metallic bridge over the Arkoudorema and pass by the junction with the road leading to the dam of Platanovrisi and the thermal springs of Thermia. Arkoudorema, this primeval vein of



history, is flowing now at our right hand. We are moving north-eastwards in a direction opposite to the stream flow. The asphalt provincial road we are on leads to the villages of Silli and Prasinada.

Prasinada, our second station, is nestled at an altitude of 680 m.a.s.l. Its distance from Paranesti is 19 kilometres. The last six, and perhaps the steepest of them, begin at the point where the road is bifurcated and the left asphalt branch goes up to Prasinada, while the right non-asphalt one continues eastwards. From this altitude the view is majestic, especially in the spring, when vegetation bursts into seasonal colour. The view becomes even more spectacular from the terraces of the holy monastery of the "Transfiguration of the Lord", which, as it is said, was erected at the site of a Byzantine monastery.

At Prasinada the asphalt provincial road ends. Drivers of conventional vehicles should know that the network of forest dirt roads leading from this point northwards (to the Stamna forest worksite) is only good for 4x4s.

We return to the previous junction and take the newly asphalted road driving again along the Arkoudorema, which flows a few metres lower in its winding bed accompanying us with swirling sounds. We head now towards the village of Dipotama. The route is fantastic: imposing cliff complexes impressively sculptured by ever-flowing waters border the road; these cliffs are either nude or dressed up with the varied colours of thick vegetation consisting of oak^[1], common maple^[2], hornbeam^[3] flowering (or manna) ash^[4] and dogwood^[5] trees.

^[1] *Quercus petraea*, *Q. cerris*, *Q. frainetto*, *Q. pubescens*

^[2] *Acer campestre*

^[3] *Carpinus orientalis*

^[4] *Fraxinus ornus*

^[5] *Cornus mas* or European cornel





After five kilometres, at a point where the valley becomes flat, there is a Forest Service sign, according to which the first waterfall of the area is 600 metres away. We park our car and walk as far as the bank of the stream, where the Forest Service has put up a kiosk. A small metallic bridge connects the two banks of the stream. We cross the bridge and walk a further 300 metres on an easy path flanked all the way by oak, wild cherry^[6], hop hornbeam^[7] and walnut^[8] trees. Ruins of houses, drystone walls and other remains of

old constructions, all covered by a green veil of grass, are to be seen along the trail way. As we approach our destination the path slopes down and reaches finally the beautiful waterfall of Hagia Varvara. It is not a very high one but is still impressive mainly thanks to the small turquoise lake in front of it, which is bordered by alder^[9] and willow^[10] trees. A real oasis!

Driving back to Paranesti we can take the same way we came from. However, if we love adventure and drive a 4x4, we can choose a much more exciting coming back route. We continue for 1.5 more kilometres towards Diporama and then turn right at the first junction, so directed by a... handwritten sign. We now move south-eastwards. We cross the Arkoudorema and drive uphill to the deserted village Potamakia. Our route is parallel to the stream of Ntalia (also known as "stream of Hagia Varvara"), whose



^[6] *Cerasus avium*

^[7] *Ostrya carpinifolia*

^[8] *Juglans regia*

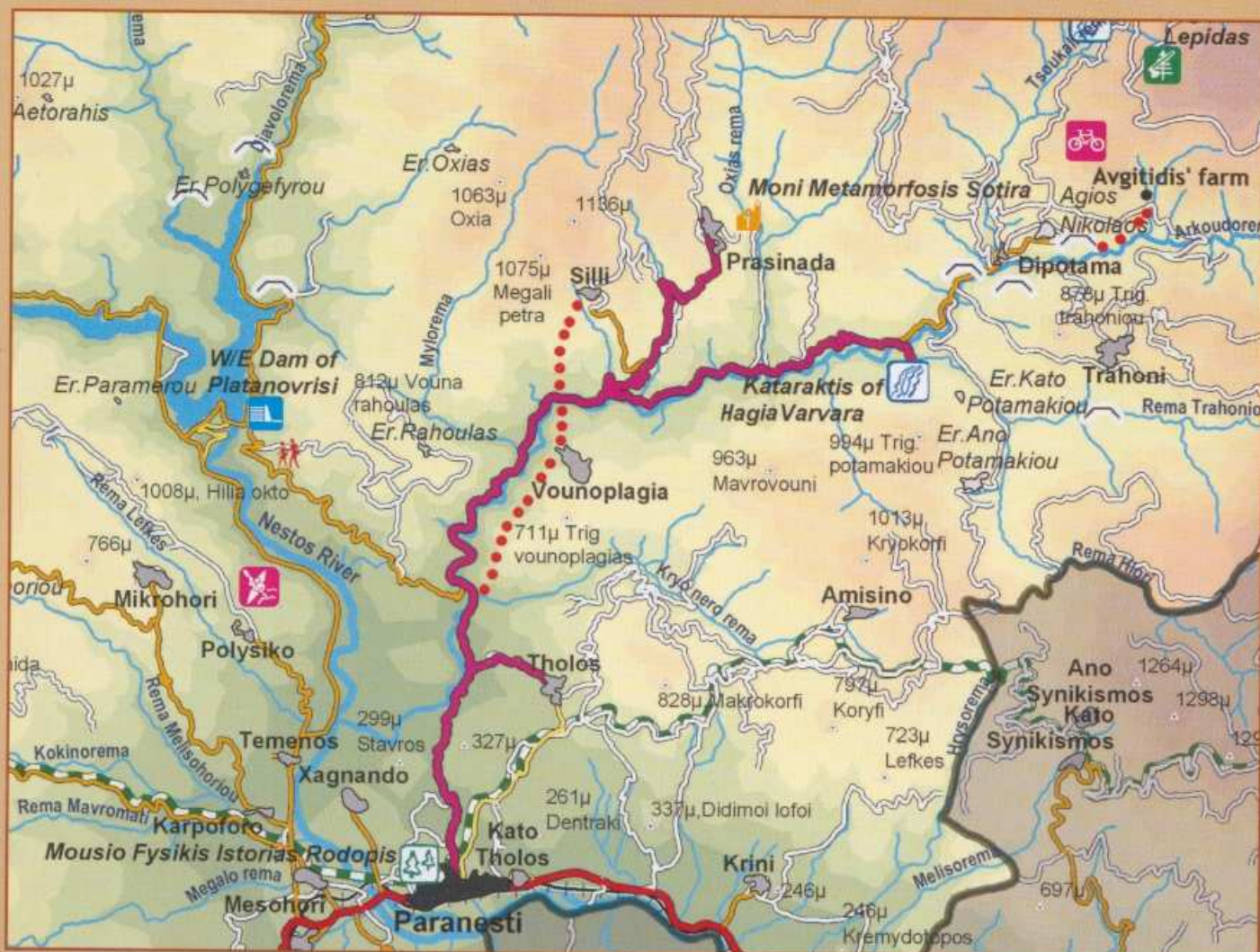
^[9] *Alnus glutinosa*

^[10] *Salix alba*, *S. cinerea*, *S. amplexicaulis*, *S. elaeagnos*



waters form the homonymous waterfall just before they join the waters of Arkoudorema. Keeping on the same direction, after five kilometres, we arrive at a countryside chapel devoted to the “Dormition of the Virgin”. Every year on the 15th of August a big celebration is held here by the old inhabitants of the region and their city-bred descendants. Having met here from the previous day, the celebrants enjoy with

tabor and kence music, while the goat meat, bean and potato meal is slowly prepared in big simmering pots all night long... From this point we continue our way westwards and, after driving for nineteen hard kilometres on a dirt road with no warning signs at all, we arrive at the eastern outskirts of Ano Tholos. We drive past the village and, after four more kilometres, we are back to Paranesti.





Second Discovery Excursion

(Dipotama - Trachoni - Trachoni waterfall - Old Outpost Bridge - Avgitidis' farm)

From Paranesti we follow the way as far as the Hagia Varvara waterfall. After two kilometres we reach a road crossing. We take the right-hand branch leading to the village of Trachoni. The dirt road is uphill and winds through oak, hop hornbeam, cherry and walnut trees. Trachoni lies just past the ridge of the mountain we climb up. There are but few still-standing houses today, showing that the village had experienced better days

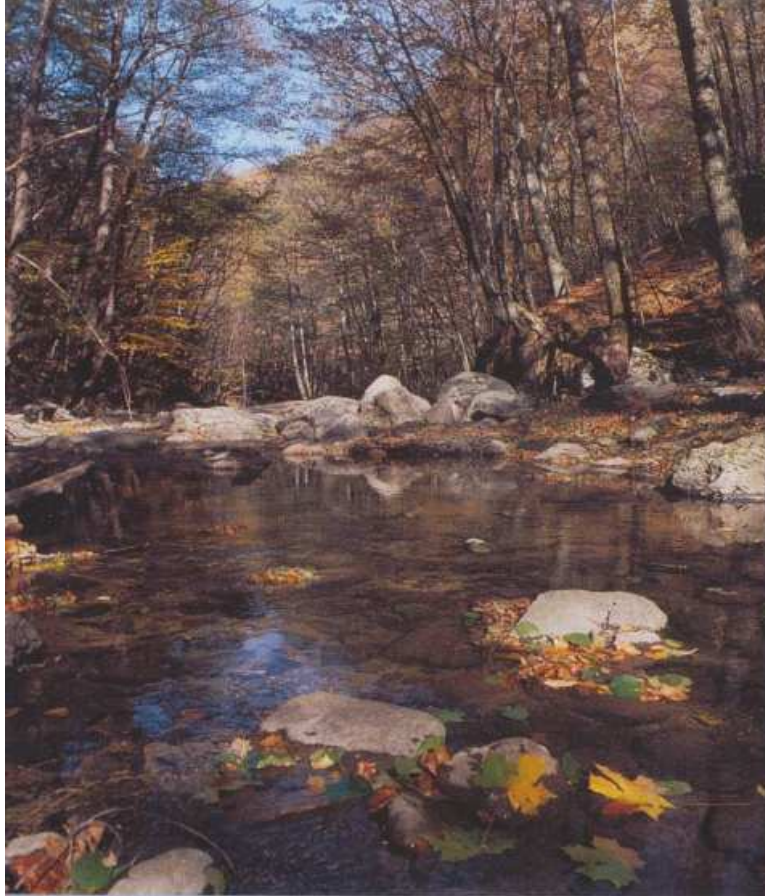
in the past. In 1940 Trachoni had a population of 540! An eastward path that begins from the outskirts of the village leads to one of the several stone-bridges of the area. The forest dirt road (SE-bound), after seven more kilometres, reaches as close as 300 metres from the monumental waterfall of Trachoni (also known as the "Livaditis waterfall"). To get there we will have to walk on a mild path flanked by beech^[11], lime^[12], ash and sycamore^[13] trees. The sight at the end of the trail

^[11] *Fagus sylvatica*

^[12] *Tilia cordata*, *T. platyphyllos*, *T. tomentosa*

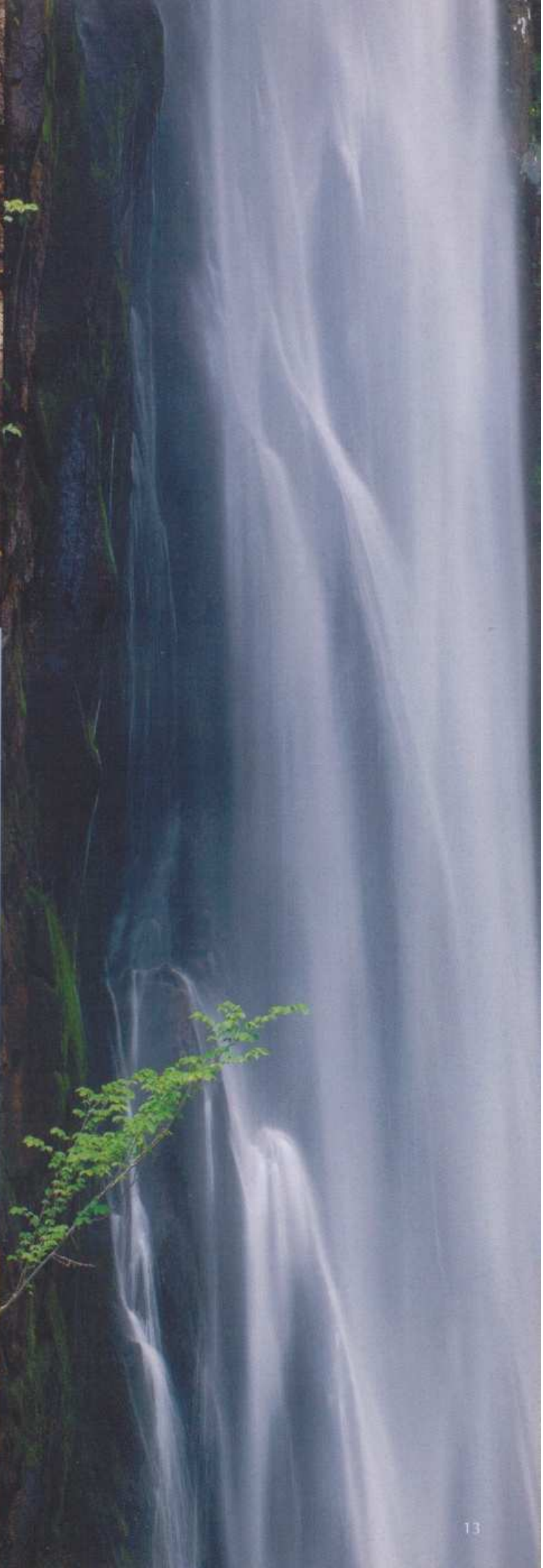
^[13] *Acer pseudoplatanus* and *A. platanoides* (=Norway maple)





is ample reward. The water, falling with a rumbling sound from a height of forty metres or so, fills us with awe and wonder just as any other imposing natural phenomenon. The landscaping of the surrounding spaces enables us to admire the waterfall from a spot and a distance that can be regarded as the ideal ones. During the high winter months, when the waters turn to ice, the waterfall becomes a huge crystal work of sculpture. It is, no doubt, one of the most beautiful landscapes of Drama!

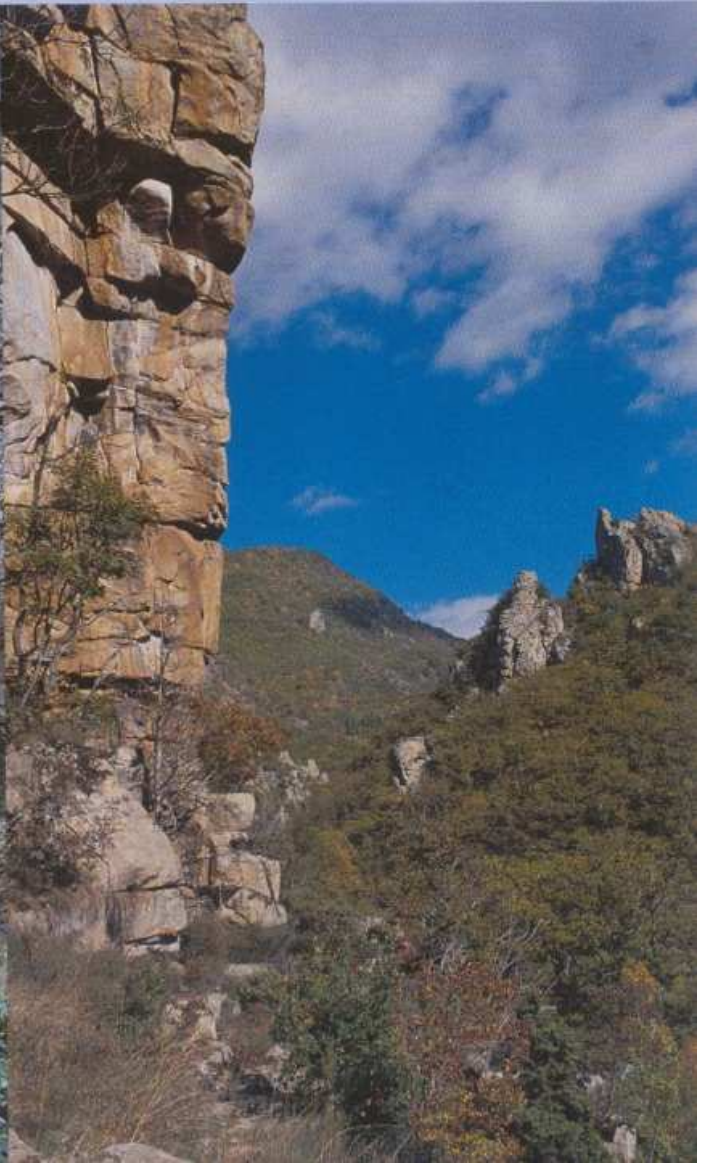
If we drive a 4x4 vehicle, we are allowed the option of an adventurous return. From Trachoni we drive downhill. Soon afterwards we turn right taking a windy road which we follow straight down to the

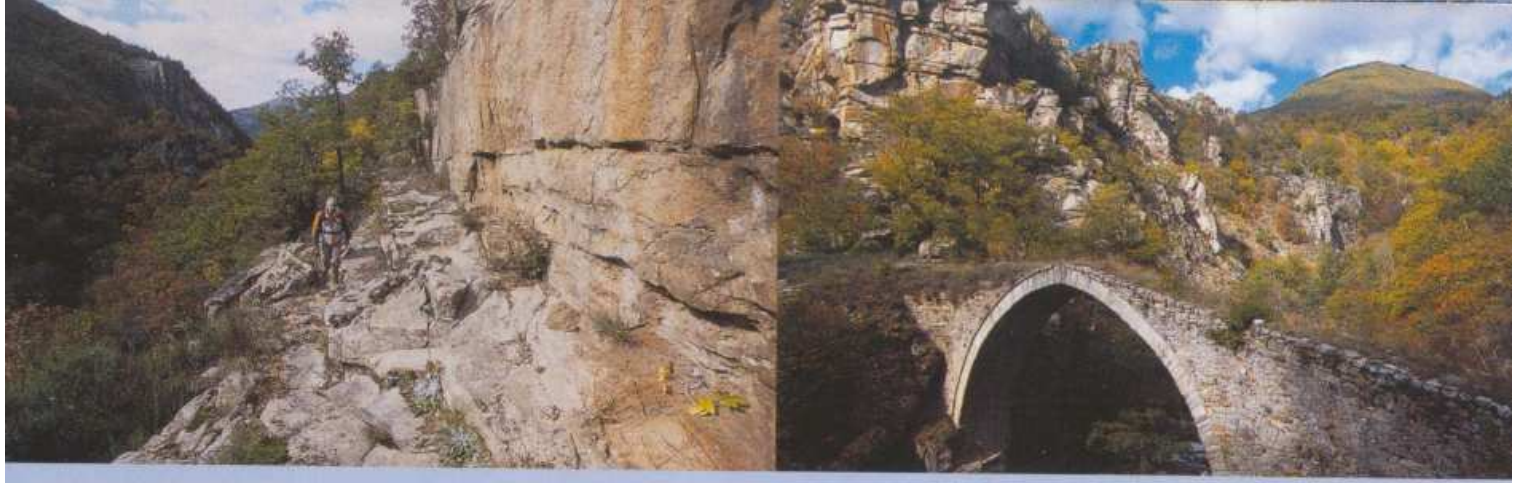




Arkoudorema. A few hundred metres away from the stream there is an one-vaulted stone-bridge, regarded to be the biggest of the sort in the whole of Eastern Macedonia. The bridge is surrounded by alder and willow trees that border the stream all along its route. Then, we cross the Arkoudorema passing over a cement level crossing and arrive at the confluence point of the Tsoukali and Arkoudorema streams. The ruins we see here (at an altitude 640 m.a.s.l.) belong to

houses of Dipotama, a village now deserted. We drive uphill along the main road, heading, as a sign informs drivers, towards the forest of Lepidas and the homonymous waterfall. We pass through the village of Hagios Nikolaos and then take a right at the first junction towards the Avgitidis' animal farm. We can stop here for a while to see the animals –of which the semi-wild boars are the most impressive– and have a friendly chat over a coffee with the farm owner and





his wife in an atmosphere of relaxing intimacy.

On our way back, some 300 metres away from the Avgitidis' farm, we stop again. We leave our car and walk along a path. We soon reach a Forest Service kiosk. From here the view over the Arkoudorema valley is superb. We walk 700 metres more. The route descends smoothly along rocky formations, authentic works of natural sculpture. In the next fifteen minutes we cross a passage, that seems to have been dug in

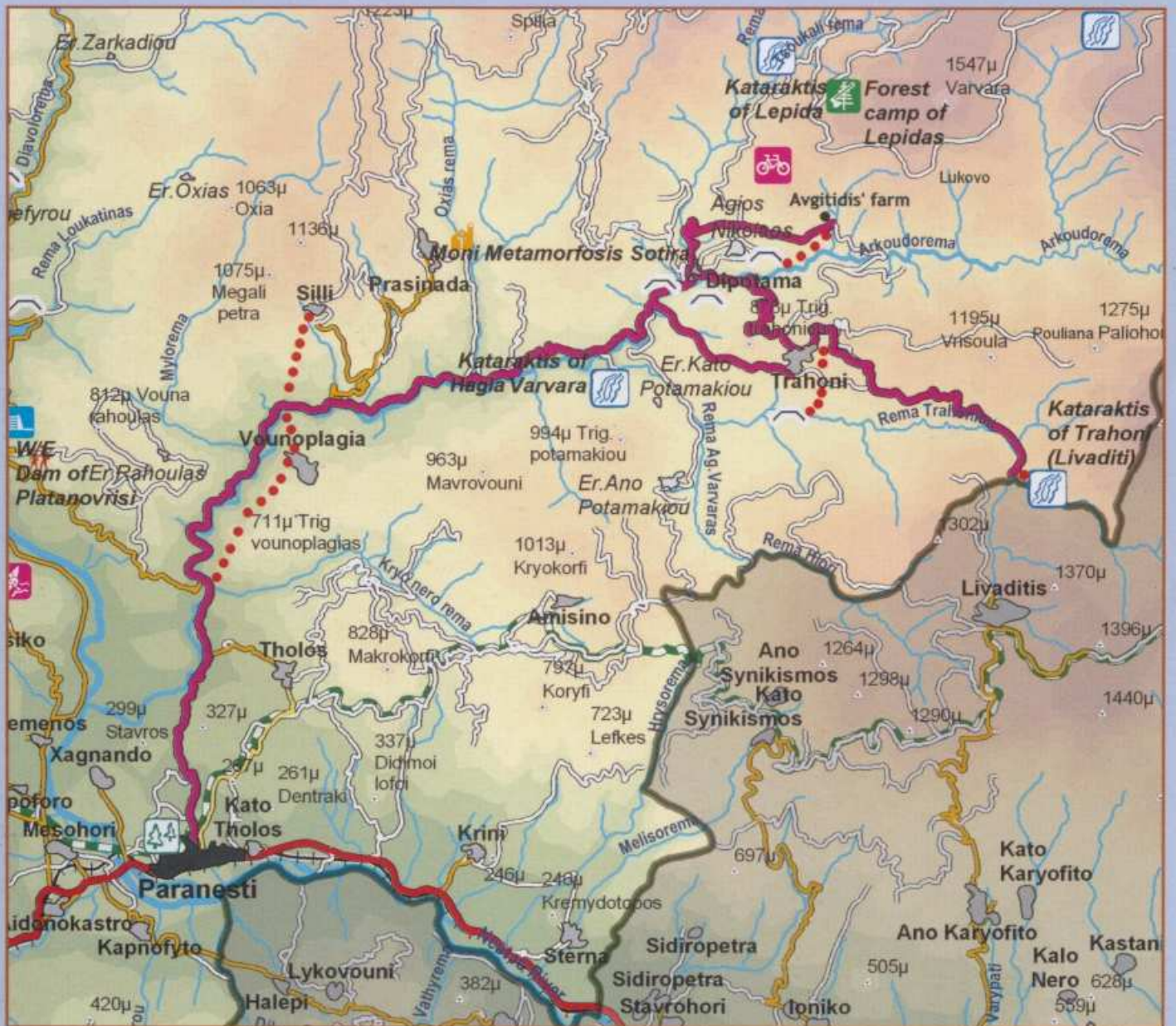
the rock, and a little lower one of the most beautiful stone-bridges of the area appears in front of our eyes. It is the Old Outpost Bridge; it is one-vaulted, like all the rest, but excels all others for the solidity and quality of its masonry. The waters of the Arkoudorema flow under the bridge forming small ponds among sleek rocks. In the past this stone-bridge, among others, used to link the villages of Trachoni and Dipotama.

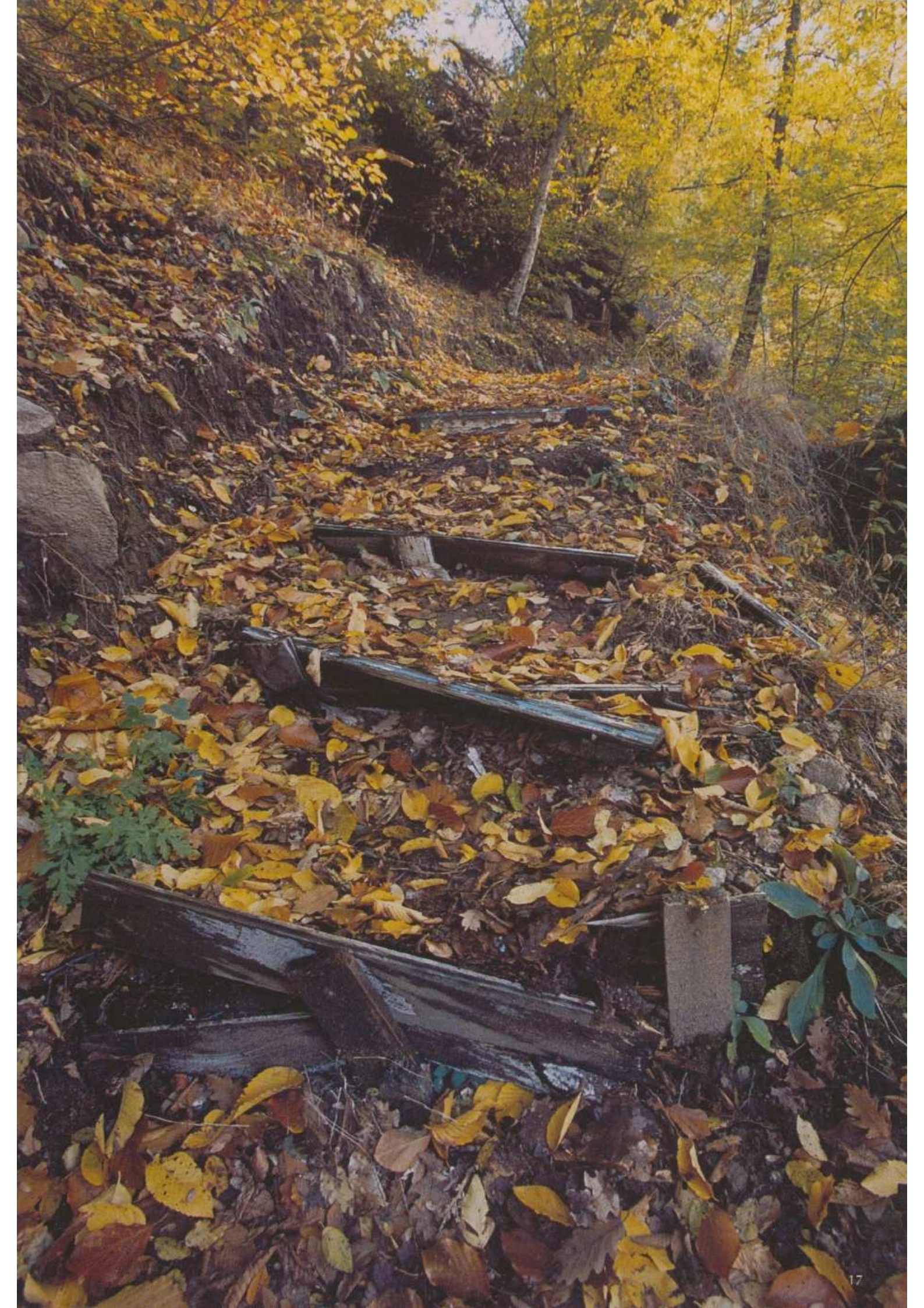




We return to our car and drive back to the confluence spot of the Arkoudorema and Tsoukali

streams. Paranesti is at the end of the familiar roadway.







Third Discovery Excursion

(Lepidas Waterfall - Waterfall of Skotino Rema - Megalo Livadi)

Setting out from Paranesti we drive along the familiar roadway to Dipotama. A fairly passable forest road heading north-eastwards brings us, four kilometres past Dipotama, to the starting-point of a pathway that leads to the Lepidas waterfall. The pathway, beautifully landscaped, descends zigzagging through beech and oak trees, while the lower parts of it are flanked by field maple^[14], wych elm^[15] and lime trees, which offer,

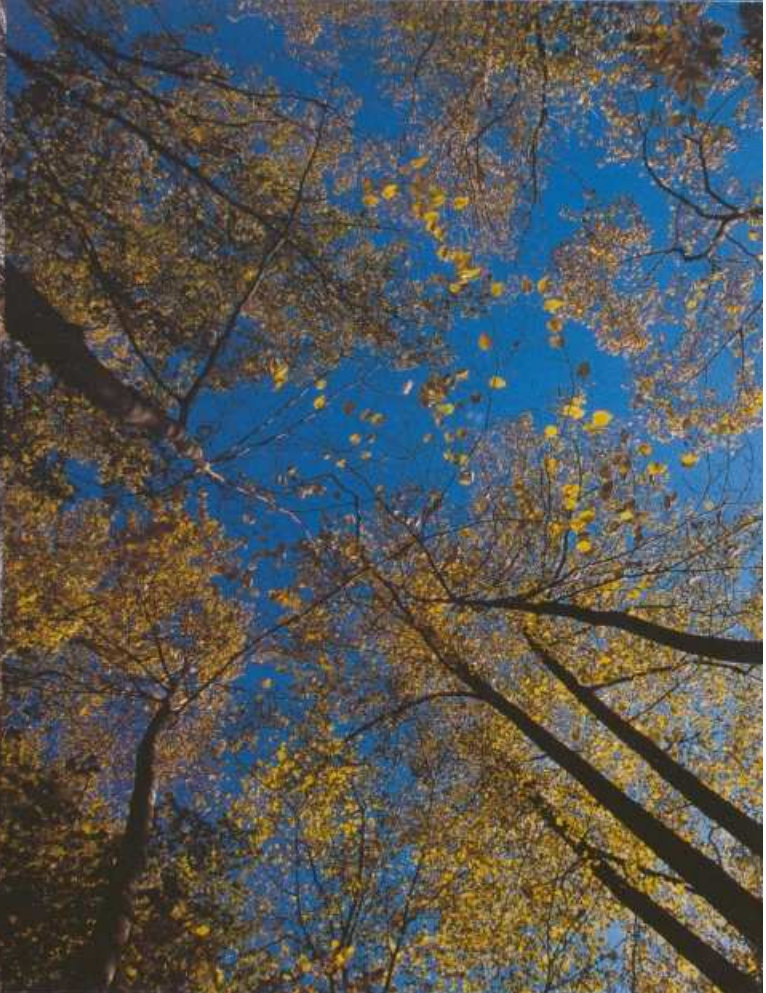
according to season, shadow, scent or colour. It is a great pathway but not so much so as the magnificent spectacle of the Lepidas waterfall, whose roaring waters betray its presence long before it is seen. The waters, falling over a stepped precipice of at least thirty metres, create most impressive effects. The whole is a breathtaking experience of nature in moments of great inspiration!

Driving along the same dirt road for another

^[14] *Acer campestre* or Common maple

^[15] *Ulmus glabra*





kilometre and after a further 300 hundred metres walk we reach a second waterfall, much smaller than the previous one but pretty spectacular nonetheless. The access to this waterfall –which is formed by the waters of the same stream that also forms the Lepidas waterfall (Tsoukali rema)– is harder, because the path ends at shattered rocky screes^[16] very dangerous to descend.

Three kilometres away from the second waterfall there is the forest worksite of Lepidas, which is the operational centre for all forest activities in the area. From up here the view is panoramic. We see the

villages of Silli and Prasinada overhanging the snaking valley of the Arkoudorema, while at the distance the northern slopes of the Falakron and Pangeon masses can also be seen.

From the forest worksite we head towards the Megalo Livadi or Great Meadow (also known by its older name of “Ulu Yaila”). In order to get there we have two options: a) either to continue on the same road so far taken and, driving northwards, enter the Megalo Livadi, b) or return to the junction, a few hundred metres before the forest worksite, and take the right hand fork heading due SSE. The route is

^[16] Loose rock debris covering a slope.





parallel to that of the Arkoudorema valley and passes through an ever changing landscape. The beech forests are succeeded by mixed broadleaf ones that give way to verdant meadows, where the species of the yellow Rhodopean lily^[17] and the *Viola ganiatsasii* are endemic. Then we enter again mixed beech and pine forests and, after having covered fourteen kilometres from the Lepidas forest worksite, we see the first (Norway) spruce^[18] trees distinguished by their hanging down branches and conical form.

At this point, approximately two kilometres before we enter the Megalo Livadi, we hear from the depths of the ravine falling water's sound. The sound comes from the waterfall of the Kampas stream (also referred to as the waterfall of "Skotino Rema"). This waterfall decorates a typically middle-European landscape with huge trees, such as spruce, fir^[19] and

^[17] *Lilium rhodopaeum*

^[18] *Picea abies*

^[19] *Abies borisii-regis* or King Boris fir or Macedonian fir





beech trees. Its waters have wonderfully sculptured the rock over which they flow. There is no track leading to the waterfall and access to it is quite difficult.

As soon as we enter the Megalo Livadi (alt. 1400 m.a.s.l.) we feel as if we were in a corner of Paradise. Especially during the late spring or early summer (May to June) the beauty of landscape is beyond description. A burst of vegetation, colours, sounds and scents. Wild flowers of all kinds (among them some rare ones, such as keyflowers^[20], meadow rues^[21], sundews^[22] and bog cottons^[23]) create a mosaic of colour isles on a vivid green background, which looks like a thick long hair carpet. Rows of forest-pine^[24] trees form the horizon line and the sky seems to touch their peaks... A crystal clear stream (that of Kampas) with totally flat banks snakes quietly through the meadow. Big and small herd animals fill up the summer scenery

making the Megalo Livadi a real alternative of an ideal pastoral scene, like those described by the Greek poet Theocritus in his "Idylls".

Three kilometres NW from the point at which we enter the Megalo Livadi the road leads through pine forests to an enclosed active peat (or sphagnum) bog. This is a shallow depression of soft, water-saturated ground with a spongy, acidic substrate composed mainly of sphagnum moss and peat, and in which water-tolerant shrubs, herbs and trees usually grow^[25]. The peat strata accumulated in the bog through millenniums are for the scientists a tank of information concerning the development of vegetation. This is why peat bogs are recognized by the European Union as Priority Ecotopes for Protection under E.U. Directive 92/43.

From the peat bog we continue southwards,

^[20] *Dactylorhiza cordigera*

^[21] *Thalictrum aquilegifolium*

^[22] *Drosera rotundifolia*

^[23] *Eriophorum latifolium*

^[24] *Pinus sylvestris*

^[25] Cf. www.apsu.edu/wet/whatis.html

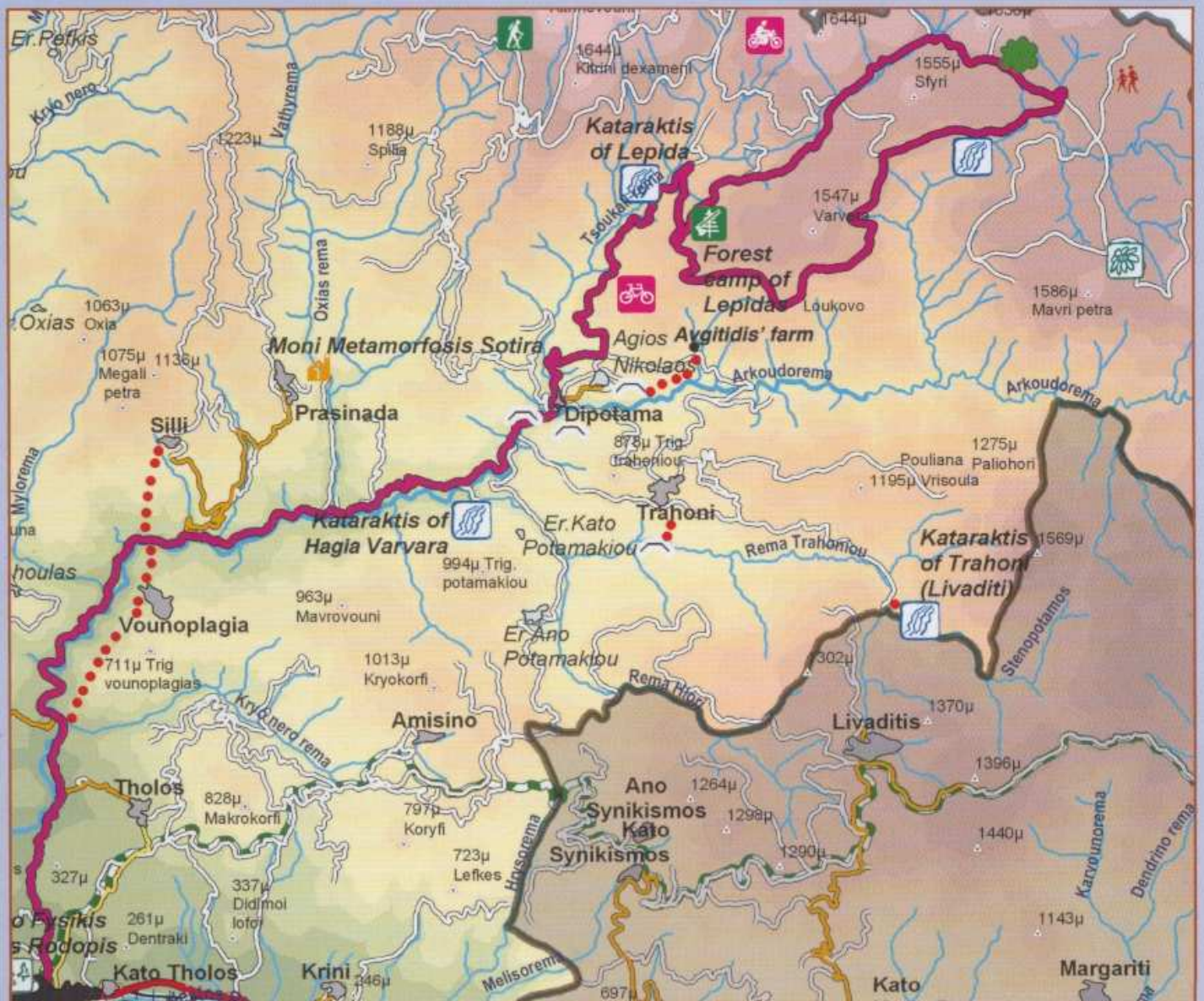


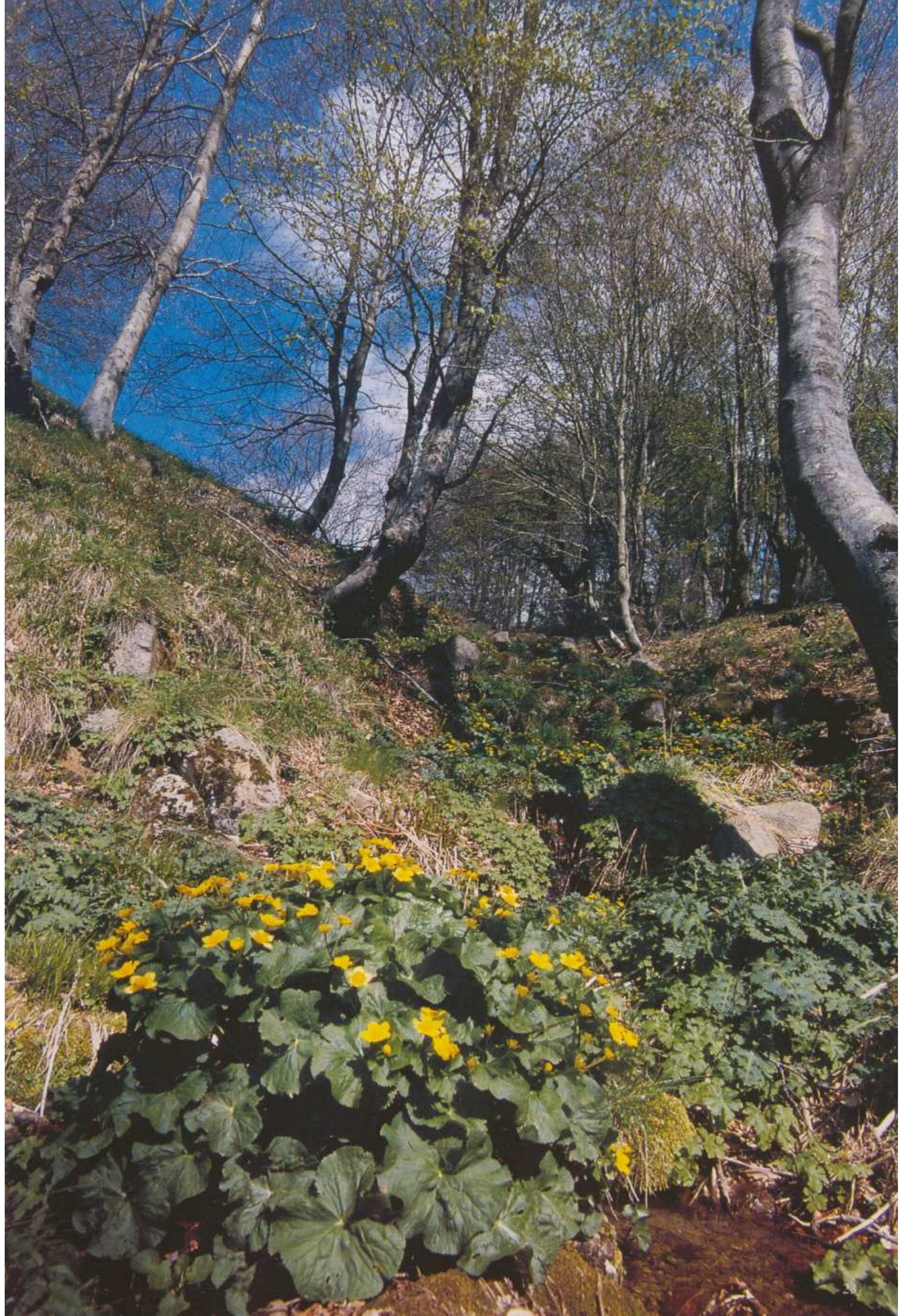


past the local animal pens and several water-springs, and return (two kilometres later) to the Lepidas worksite having thus completed a circular route.

For returning to Paranesti we can take an alternative route. Four kilometres past the peat bog we turn right and drive westwards through the

Stamna (or Bartakova) forestall complex. From there we can head either to Prasinada (due S) or to the asphalt provincial road (due W) twenty five kilometres away. In either case it is a long and difficult drive, as there are no warning signs at all. The route, however, is interesting as it runs through varying landscapes.







Fourth Discovery Excursion

(Hydroelectric Dam of Thisavros - Perivlepto - Skete of St Ann, - Tichota)

From Paranesti we take the road to Drama. Two kilometres later a metallic tablet reads: “Hydroelectric Dam of Thisavros, 22 kilometres”. The good asphalt road runs by the riverbank through woody slopes covered by oak, ash, hornbeam and hop hornbeam trees. Heading northwards, we soon pass under the crest of the Platanobrisi dam and then, after having passed

through a tunnel and over a metallic bridge, we arrive at the biggest dam in the Balkans.

The dam of Thisavros is a rip-rap dam with a total volume of 11 million cubic metres and a height of 175 metres. The maximum useful storage capacity of its water reservoir is 565 million cubic metres. The catchment basin of the river Nestos at the site of Thisavros is 3,698 square kilometres in normal flow





conditions and 4,263 square kilometres in flood conditions. The underground plant is built on the right bank of the river, 400 metres under the ground surface. There are three generating units, 100 mw each, and the yearly output is 440 gigawatt-hours (a gigawatt being 1 billion watts) ^[26].

Impressive though the technical characteristics of the dam may be they are not comparable to the impression made by the water reservoir of the dam. Indeed, the lake that has been formed behind the dam by the trapped waters of Nestos extends for several kilometres along its old bed, which looks from aloft as if it were the bed of a major navigable river. At some points the waters of Nestos get deep into the valleys of its tributaries, while elsewhere they let thickly wooded tongs of land penetrate them creating a sort of small fiords. Despite the criticism justly exercised by the ecologists the spectacle offered by the Nestos lakes is undoubtedly superb.

As we return, we can visit, if we so like, one or more of the mountain villages of the Paranesti

municipality, which are Polysykon (inhabited by only a few people), Melissochori (built at an altitude of 700 m.a.s.l.), Mikrochori (altitude 530 m.a.s.l.), Perivlepton or Tichota. All of those villages are today only occasionally inhabited by livestock breeders. However, they are all linked with the national road network with good asphalt roads.

If we choose to follow a route passing through the rich forestall complexes of the area, we will head towards Perivlepton, where we arrive helped by the existing road signs seven kilometres after we left the national artery. At an altitude of 660 m.a.s.l. we see stone-built half-ruined houses with ramshackle tile-roofs. Nature reconquers gradually what the humans do not need anymore.

If we drive a 4x4 vehicle we can drive from Perivlepton to Tichota by using the forest road network. On the way we may stop at the skete of St Ann, a small monastery in the middle of nowhere. The elder monk who built the monastery rested in piece a few years ago and a new monk from the Mount Athos

^[26] <http://www.tee.gr/online/epikaira/1998/2030/pg114c.htm>





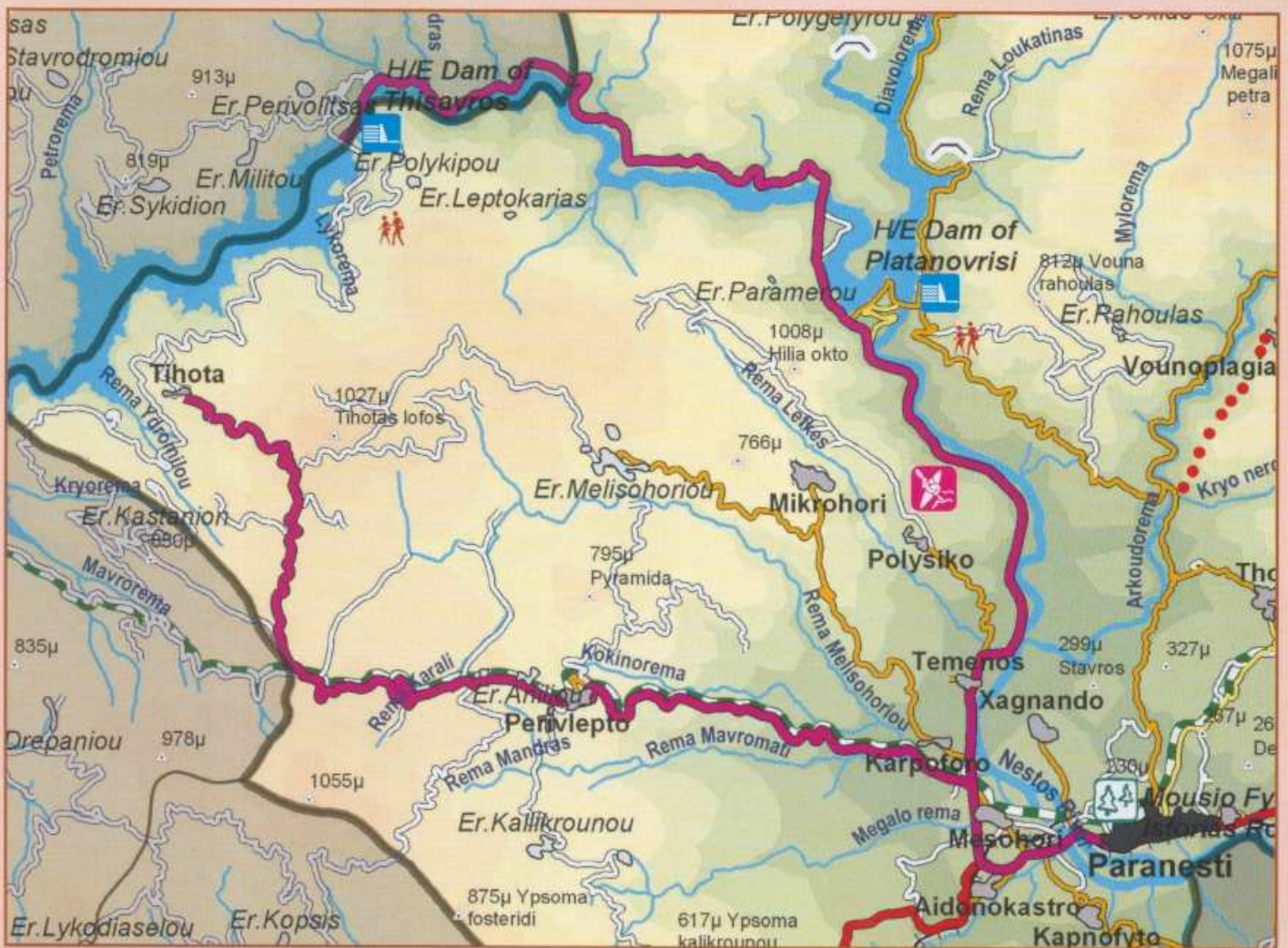
carries on here predecessor's ascesis. At times he returns to the Holy Mountain. When he is not there to welcome us himself, the huge but extremely friendly dog of the monastery welcomes us joyfully instead of his master.

Continuing our way we take the right fork of the road, which after five kilometres leads through thick oak forests to the site of the old village of Tichota (altitude 680 m.a.s.l.). The houses bear testimony to a glorious past. One of them, truly lordly, standing lofty at the outskirts of the village, under a towering cherry

tree, overlooks the Nestos lake and the ridges of Falakron. A little higher, on a smooth slope, the Muslim cemetery with its big scale and large number of graves shows that the village was inhabited for many generations. In the spring, among the graves, the orchids... give a recital. In the summer the village acquires a "permanent" population consisting of one and only stock-breeder and his animals.

We return to Paranesti to top off with... a good feast the exciting experiences of the day.







Fifth Discovery Excursion

(Virgin Forest of Fraktos - Achladorema waterfalls - Achladochori)

Setting out from Paranesti we head northwards towards the old "Porsel" factory. After one kilometre we cross the bridge of the Arkoudorema and we take the road to Platanovrisi and the Thermal Springs of Thermia. On our way we have the chance to admire the lake that has been created by the waters of the Diavolorema (Devil's stream) behind the dam of Platanovrisi. The waters of this lake have covered once wooded slopes and human constructions. Treetops still emerging from the

water remind us of how the landscape was before the construction of the dams.

We pass by the old forest worksite of Zarkadia and drive alongside the Diavolorema. After seven kilometres we arrive at the bridge of Farasinos, a firm modern construction, though considerably inferior from an aesthetic point of view to the old one-vaulted stone-built bridges, which have been fully incorporated in their environment.

The asphalt road continues for four more



kilometres as far as Thermia, known for their sulphurous thermal springs. From here we enter a dirt road. We drive for six kilometres and arrive at a road crossing called "Zeta" (or "Zent") crossing point. From Zeta the left fork leads to the Forest of Elatia (Karadere). We take the right one, newly maintained, heading towards the Forest of Fraktos. From this point onwards the landscape starts changing. The oak forests gradually give their way to black pine ones, which spread as far as the site of "Afchenas", thirteen kilometres away from the "Zeta" crossing. Looking southwards from this excellent vantage point, we see the contours of mountain ridges in successive waves reaching as far as the edge of the horizon. This excursion, had it been done during the late spring or early summertime, is richly rewarding. The air is full of sweet scents of blossoming wild strawberries^[27], honeysuckles^[28] and wild roses^[29]. Early in the morning, on this road, mountain partridges look for food beside the trees, while a little lower in the ravine roe deer graze peacefully ready to run away in no time at any disturbing sound...

We have already entered the most mythical corner of this territory, the area of Fraktos, and come just a few kilometres away from the famous "Virgin Forest". This forest is not simply the only virgin one in Greece but also "one of the most important relic forest ecosystems in Europe"^[30]. Its surface is 5.892 square



kilometres. It was proclaimed a "Nature Monument" quite late, only in 1980, thanks to its immense phytogeographical and ecological uniqueness. This means that the Virgin Forest is an area of absolute protection, in which any human activity but scientific research (and that only under certain conditions) is strictly prohibited.

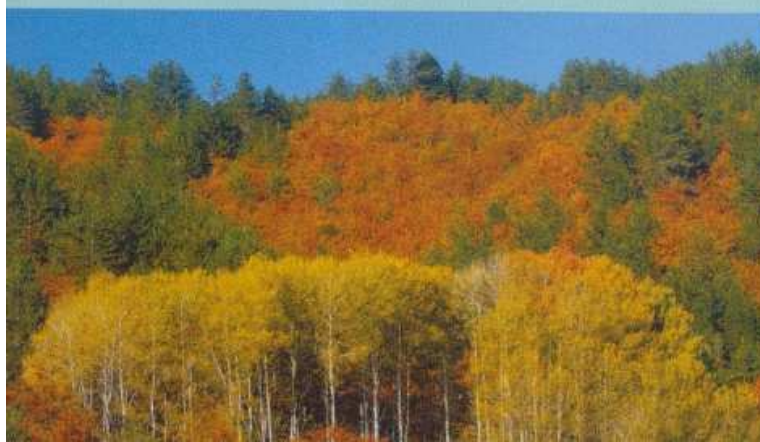
Since access to the Fraktos Forest –not, of course, within the limits of the Virgin Forest– is controlled, a visit-permission needs to be obtained by the Drama

^[27] *Fragaria vesca*

^[28] *Lonicera xylosteum*, *L. etrusca*

^[29] *Rosa pendulina*, *R. pimpinellifolia*

^[30] <http://www.bornat.org/501031.htm>



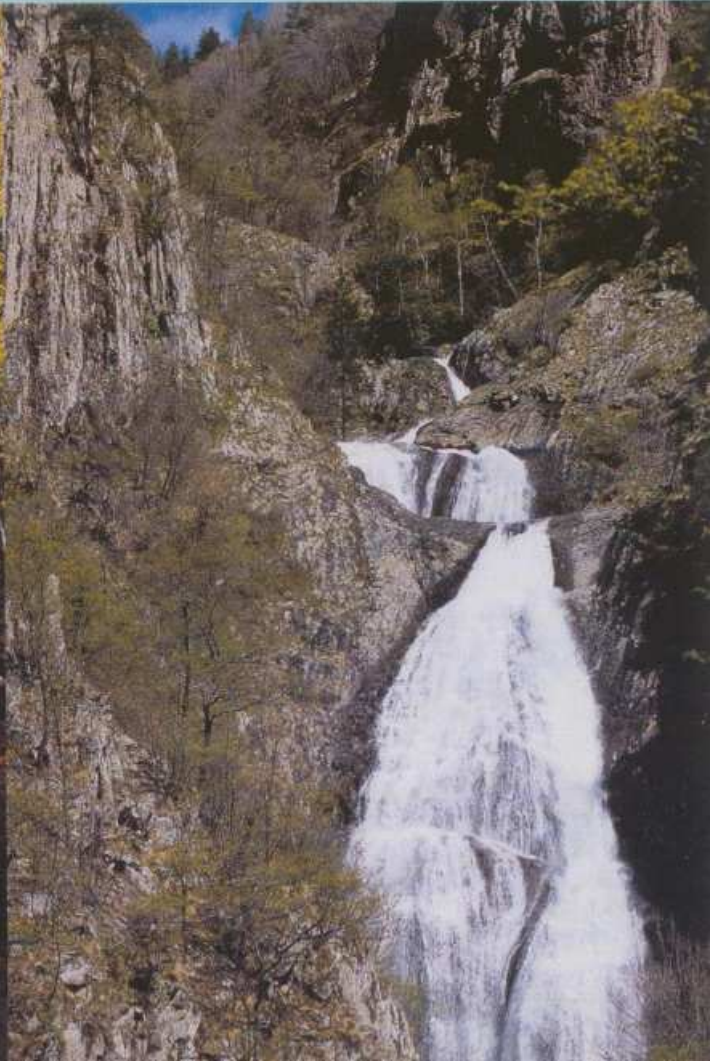


Forest Service, which may also let us use the premises of the forest worksite. This is possible for the period from July 1st through November 30th.

Either we use the premises of the worksite or not, the best way to form a good picture of the Fraktos forest is to move towards the Achladorema waterfalls and the area of Achladochori (Krusovo). For hikers there is the possibility to use a path starting not far from the worksite. This path is a part of the route taken by the super runners of the newly established yearly "Virgin Forest Trail" (VFT), an ultramarathon race of 104

kilometres that must be covered in 24 hours. This well-signed path, apart from its excellent condition and the sense of mystery it inspires, shortens the distance by about $\frac{1}{2}$. We walk for three kilometres through pine, birch^[31] and beech trees as far as the Tzaki Rema, where the path crosses the road. A few metres further we hear the sound of a small waterfall hidden behind tall, thickly foliated beech trees. We walk on to Achladorema. We have got two options: The first is to follow the path leading from the Tzaki Rema to the ruins of Achladochori and then to the Achladorema

^[31] *Betula pendula*



waterfalls. The route is hard but rewarding thanks to the landscape variety it offers. Our second option is to continue our way on the forest road and, after we cross the Achladorema, to seek, a few metres beyond the stream, the path leading to the waterfalls. The first waterfall is reached after a 300 metres walk. It is not but a small cascade. The second waterfall is at the end of the path ascending through beech trees. The landscape is deep-shaded and tranquil. A common yew^[32] tree has grown up at the end of the path in the middle of the stream. Sometimes wild goats come down here to drink water...

The most impressive of the Achladorema waterfalls is the third one being near the outskirts of the Virgin Forest. There is a sign warning that the waterfall is not easily accessible. Indeed, the path is uphill and rough as it runs through rocky screes. From the point where the path ends we see the biggest waterfall of the Fraktos area at the edge of the opposite slope. This is as close as we can get to it. The sight is superb. The waters cascade down a stepped ravine providing a spectacular reiteration of water flowing effects. The whole experience is richly rewarding.

If we want to visit the ruins of Achladochori, we return to the starting-point of our trekking way and walk for three kilometres on the forest road. The route is great. We come across rocky formations looking like human bodies petrified while dancing. Their peaks touch the clouds. Their roots vanish into the thick forests. Further on there are more waterfalls. As a matter of fact, exploring the Fraktos area is a never ending operation! Generally speaking, the profile of the area is greatly determined by the season. In the spring, waters flow from all directions filling the air with their sound. In the summer green is the dominant

^[32] *Taxus baccata*





USEFUL INFORMATION

PREFECTURE OF DRAMA
Tel.: 2521 062341, 062342
nodra@otenet.gr

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT
Tel.: 2521 062307 www.traveldrama.gr
tourismos@drama.gr

MUNICIPALITY OF PARANESTI
Tel.: 2524 022127, 022333, 022570 Fax: 2524 022333
paranest@otenet.gr

PARANESTI MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
Tel. - Fax: 2524 021020 deparane@otenet.gr

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PIZZA LEFTERIS
Tel.: 2524 022234

KILOMETER DISTANCES FROM PARANESTI

ATHENS.....	715Km.	KOMOTINI.....	105Km.
DRAMA.....	42Km.	XANTHI.....	47Km.
THESSALONIKA.....	192Km.	CHRYSSOUPOLIS (AIRPORT), from Kavala.....	110Km.
KAVALA.....	80Km.	CHRYSSOUPOLIS (AIRPORT), from Kechrokampos.....	50Km.



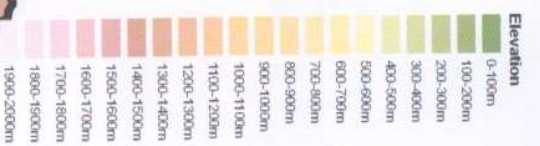
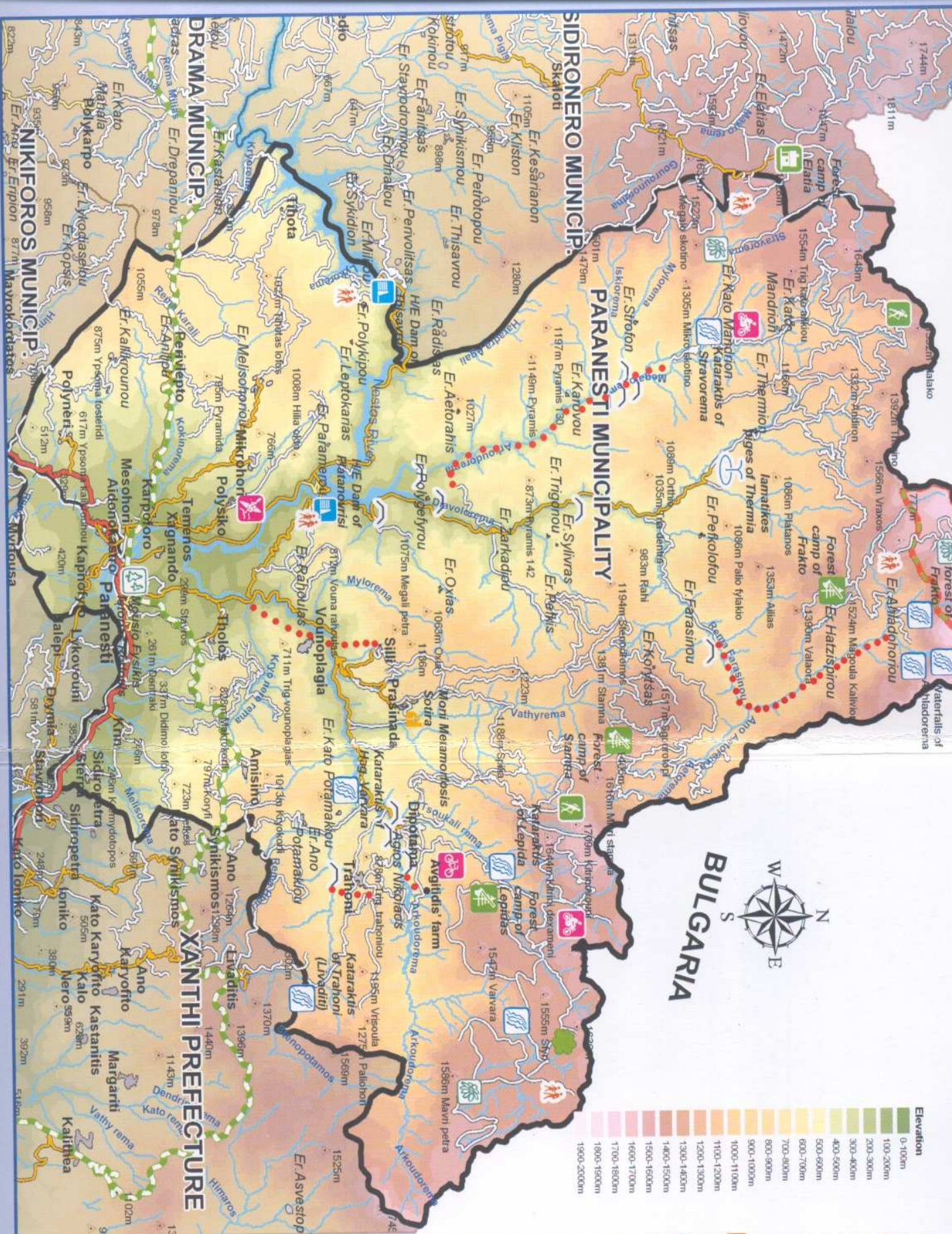
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MINISTRY OF TOURISM
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Municipality of Paranești Itinerary through the Territory of Paranești



- ### Legend
- Road network
 - National road network
 - Provincial road network (asfalt)
 - Provincial road network (dirt)
 - Forest road network
 - Trail
 - Railroad
 - European Hiking Trail E6
 - Natura2000 Area
 - Cites/Villages
 - Municipality capital
 - Villages
 - Abandoned villages
 - Hydrological network
 - Main rivers
 - Secondary rivers
 - Streams
 - Lakes
 - Trigonometric-hypsometrical point
 - Points of interest
 - Forest village
 - Forest camp
 - Areas of natural beauty - ecological li
 - Museum
 - Monastery
 - Waterfall
 - HIE Dam
 - Thermal baths
 - Mountain bike
 - Kayak
 - Motocross
 - Hiking
 - Walking
 - Small bridge
 - Active peat bog