



## The most important hiking paths of Amorgos

### 1. FROM CHORA TO KATAPOLA

The route with the red and white mark "2" connects Chora with Katapola in about half an hour. The path is old and actually it looks like a traditional path for donkeys. The route begins at Chora, about 50 meters north of the parking area, next to the sign that points to Katapola, Arkesini and the helicopter runway. Between dry stonewalls and rocks, the path leads us downwards going past the northern precipice of the hill in front of us. On the right, a valley is situated. At this specific point, if you turn around and look at Chora, you realize that Chora looks like a swallows-nest on the mountain.


In about 15 minutes from the start of the route, 4 pointed turnings lead us much lower. At the end of these turnings, on the left, ends a path coming from above. We remain in our own path and - in a while - we arrive to 2 narrow turnings. In a few minutes we see an old tree leaning towards the path (because of the wind) and giving its shade away. After nearly 7 minutes we arrive to a dry spring and then we can find drinkable water on the right side of the path.

Frogs can be heard croaking and a sage smell fills the air; the place really invites us for a short break! After that, the path becomes narrower and narrower because of the existence of bushes. However, this is not a serious difficulty at all. After 10 minutes of walking down the path, the magnificent view to the bay of Katapola lies there - in front of us! 10 minutes more and we are in a small cross road; we follow the road leading straight into the destination of Katapola, and - here we are - in the port of Katapola, after going past the chapel of St. Irene.

Walking time: about 1 hour

### 2. From Arkesini to Vroutsi (route number 3) and then to Katapola

Route number leads us to the southern part of Amorgos, a place that is rarely visited by tourists and is called "Kato Meria by the locals.

Setting off from the little village Arkesini, we go along the long path that is mostly well preserved but has been replaced by road for cars in the end. It is a trip with small heights and the great view to the small eastern Cyclades and to Naxos, as well as with little valleys above the villages Rachoula, Vroutsi and Lefkes. Walking along this road is quite easy without large hypsometrical differences. It is a distance of 13 klm with duration of about 3 and half hours of walking. The route, though, has been marked only from Arkesini to Vroutsi with red and white signs and with number 3. 

From Vroutsi to Katapola, we see very few blue or red marks and some wooden signs showing the way to one of the small villages or the little churches of the area. Despite this fact, the route is generally clear. The start of route number 3 is found at the northern part of Arkesini. A little path branches off the main road (on the right) towards the archaeological side of Holy Trinity. Just before the remnants of an impressive Hellenistic outpost, we see the first sign with number 3. Following the road along the stone walls, we get a cistern after a while. From there we go on a little downward.

Then, the road branches off to the right going up from a precipice. In a while, we see the village of Rachoula. In about 20 minutes we get to the first houses of the small village after walking on an abrupt upwards road. We go across the village through an asphalted road and we get to a parking space near a little church. From the end of the square - which is diagonally opposite - we take the road leading to the left, along high stonewalls round a precipice. 5 minutes after getting out of the village, we see the end of a road coming from below.



In Vroutsi we have the opportunity to take a break in the cafe for some food and rest. We walk through the village going past the baker's and the post office to the direction of the church St. Spiridon with the blue dome (in the south-east exit of the village). Then, we follow a concrete road towards the asphalted road that we reach in 10 minutes. Following the road to Chora, we get to the church of St. Stavros with the 3 narthexes. Right opposite is an inconspicuous tavern. The road turns left behind the church towards a country road. At a stable, it turns right and it is cobbled up to a certain point. In 5 minutes, we see another road on our left hand leading to the hill "Vigla" with the homonymous little village. We remain in our path that - so far - has signs to "Agia Thekla" and "Kastri". The path leads us to a valley.

Next to the path we see a gully with vegetation. In the deepest part of the valley we cross a small bridge and a dry brook. On the other side, we go on upwards. In half an hour, we get to a col where enough stock-farms from natural stone have been constructed. From this point we have a nice view to the monuments from Ancient Arkesini (Kastri), which lies in a big distance southwest. Down in the center of the valley, we discover the church of St. Saranta with 2 narthexes. We return to the valley again. On our right side starts a small gully that gets wider and deeper and leads down to the valley. Having almost arrived to the deepest part of the valley, on a left turn, the view to bay of St. Saranta is presented.

In the gully, the plant of oleander is in bloom, which is an indication of plenty of underground water. On our left, next to the dry brook, there is a palm tree. In about 25 minutes from the cols behind us, we get to the widest point of the valley. We go on the road opposite, passing by another small church. After 15 minutes of climbing, we get to a cross road; on the left lies the village and the country church of Agia Thekla. The small settlement lies high, above 2 blue bays. However, we follow the road on the right (road for cars) and we will go up the mountain with a view to the village Lefkes and the hill Minoa. 10 minutes after Agia Thekla we get to Lefkes.

Below us on the left we can see a bay suitable for swimming; it is the "Finikes" bay where a road for cars leads as well. About 20 minutes after Lefkes, we arrive to the church of Stavros which is famous for its marble. From here we see for the first time the bay and the valley of Katapola. A little behind the church, turns the road to the interesting archaeological side of Minoa. We follow the road going down the valley. Behind a huge beetling cliff, we can see a path going to the center of Katapola.

Walking time: about 3 and a half hours

### 3. ***A "promenade" round the bay of Egiali***

The circular road with number 4 leads us from the port of Egiali through the 2 mountainous villages Tholaria and Lagada and ends at the port area again. The whole walk takes nearly 2 hours. What we actually do in this walk is encircling the amphitheatrically valley behind the bay of Egiali through paths for donkeys. Traditional stone walls, smells from herbs and wonderful views of the "stepped" fields and the bay of Egiali are the most important features of this walk. ▲

The trip starts from the path which connects Egiali with Tholaria. After you have passed by the sign indicating the end of Egiali area, there is a small country church (St. Theodori). On the right side of the church, an asphalted road branches off towards some houses above. In a distance of about 10 meters along this road, starts a narrow path. After following the path, we soon discover a small red and white sign with number 4. This is the mark to be followed from now on. We walk along the propping and arrive to an old stepped path leading to another small church after 10 minutes. The path goes on upwards and - in 10 more minutes - a spring built within the rocks invites us for a short break. A bucket is always there, in case someone wants to give water to the animals. In a short distance after the spring, a road branches off abruptly towards the valley. We go on towards the left direction and walk along the precipice to Tholaria. 10 minutes after passing by the spring, we arrive to the large parking area of the



village. From that point, we go towards the big church of St. Anargiri and then, take the stepped path on the right below the church. At the first turning of the road, we go left up the stairs. Our route has now become clear through the precipice behind the village. After having walked for about half an hour from the exit of Tholaria, on a cobbled path with a great view to the bay of Egiali, the route makes a big turn to the right.

On our left hand, we can have a view of the small church St. Taxiarchis below. A little after that, on the left side of the path there is a wooden sign indicating "Astratios". However, we go on straight forward to the direction of the hill "Pagos". In a few minutes we arrive at a crotch with a sign. At this specific point the path leads to a road which encircles half of the hill. About 10 minutes after this point, we can see a brilliant white church; it is the church of "Panagia Epanochoriani".

The sign for the route number 4 leads towards the hill. Following the route, we would arrive above the small village "Stroumbos". But our destination is the church of "Panagia Epanochoriani" with the great view and the peaceful yard with the shade of cypress trees. Therefore, we go down to some stairs on the left towards a small gorge and we go past a cistern made of corrugated sheeting. In 5 minutes we stand in front the magnificent white church. The place is ideal for a longer break so as to be able to enjoy the view and the quietness. There will be no doubt that the "deviation" from the normal route was actually worthwhile. Leaving the church area, we follow the white path downwards and cross a small gorge

In 5 minutes we arrive at the cross road which leads - on the right - to the monastery of St. Theologos (4 Kms) and to the church of Stavros. However, we follow the stepped path with the direction to Lagada. It is a path strewn with sage, oregano, and many other sweet-smelling herbs. On the right, we can see another small white church and the small village "Stroumbos". Going straight on, we arrive to the mountainous village Lagada. We cross the village through the central stepped road and we go past the fascinating square of the village named "Loza". It takes about 5 minutes from the entrance of the village to get to the exit of it. We follow the cobbled path which passes on the left of a cistern and leads downwards to the port of Egiali. The path is built between small stone walls. Oak trees accompany us in our trip. Nearly halfway to Ormos, we cross the asphalted road. It takes about half an hour in total to get to Ormos.

Walking time: about 2 and a half hours

#### **4. *The lonely rocky rampart - tracing the miners above the picturesque monastery of St. Theologos towards the church of Stavros.***

To walk towards the small church of Stavros on the highest mountain of Amorgos (Krikelos), is a special suggestion. The route leads us from the mountainous village Lagada, above the deserted monastery of St. Theologos, to a valley at the northeast over the island, which is one of the loneliest places of Amorgos. We seem to be tracing the miners - the local people who used to work very hard in the bauxite mine 700 meters below the church of Stavros. Despite the fact that in the mine there used to be places for the miners to reside, local men from Tholaria and Lagada used to go there daily and come back after finishing their shift. This is something unbelievable for us, especially after having walked all this distance! The mine closes down in 1943; up to 150 people had worked there. Since 1976 to 1981, some new experimental drillings took place and the mine was full of life again. Today, it is totally deserted. Going down to the mine from the church of Stavros must be very strenuous while getting into the plant of the mine is very dangerous.

Our trip starts from the square of Lagada "loza" and then, you turn right and cross the village until you reach its eastern exit. We follow the asphalted stepped road. About 5 minutes after the square of the village, you will see some steps coming up from a small gorge; on the other side of the gorge the small



"stroumbos" is located with some renovated houses right on the top of the rock. We keep walking along the main road. In 5 minutes we arrive at a crotch, which leads us - on the asphalted road - to the beautiful church of Panagia Epanachoriani. We take the path upwards on the right, which is indicated by a small blue sign with some general distance directions; "to the monastery of St. Theologos (4 Klms)" and "to the church of Stavros (7 Klms)".

The path is quite steep upwards; it consists of cobbled steps in some parts, but irregular stones in other parts, and jagged rocks in some other parts. The path is located between small walls. Behind the walls there are fields with goats, which explain the sound of hundreds of bells jingling in the fields. In about 20 minutes after the crotch of the road, a path leads to a smaller path downwards. We keep following the stepped path upwards. In about 35 minutes after the cross road, we go across a dry brook which is directed from the left upwards to the right downwards. However, we keep directing to the deepest part of the valley, which is in front of us. The path now has become very rocky. A red arrow on a dry wall indicates the right direction.

After a rather steep road, we will have almost finished with the most difficult part of it. Our rambling continues on a shady path between high stonewalls. A lot of oak trees create surprisingly green scenery. In about 50 minutes after the cross road we arrive at the church of St. Barbara on the right side of the road. The best honey of the island comes from this specific place. The yard of the small church is suitable for a short break and offers a first view of the superb monastery of St. Theologos which has been repaired in the recent years. After the church of St. Barbara, the straight path goes on for about 5 minutes. Then, we meet a crotch next to a small white shepherd house. On our left hand is the road, which leads to the monastery; it is a beautiful place worth visiting. In front of us - in the east and in the north - we have a view of the Aegean Sea.

We walk along a high wall, which - in some parts - is higher than 2 meters. At a certain point, the path turns left; right here we can see blue and red signs. Half an hour after going past the cross road (to St. Theologos and to Stavros) we are at the top of a cliff on the northeast shore. We can see high gray cliffs ending abruptly in the sea. On our right hand, we can see high on the precipice the line of the path we are going to follow. From such a distant point of view, the path looks more dangerous and narrower than in reality. However, if someone suffers from phobia of high altitudes should stop at this specific point. When the visibility helps, the view from here is really magical. Northwards we can see the island of Ikaria while at the northeast we can see Patmos. A lot of small islands can be seen around. Having enjoyed the view, we follow the narrow but well-defined path, which with an average inclination, leads in about half an hour to the church of Stavros. Right above us there are sheer cliffs while right below the cliffs - 700 meters height - fall deep into the sea. After some more rocky space we have finally arrived to our destination.

The small church of Stavros lies on the rock, right between the mountain of Krikelos (on the right) and the mountain of Papas (on the left).

Apart from the church, we can see two buildings where all the equipment necessary for the annual festival (14th of September) is kept. On that day people from all over the island gather to attempt the Holy Service, to eat and drink. Should someone like to walk along the valley towards the mountain "Papas", he/she will discover a path with wonderful view to the southeast coast of Amorgos, that is, the peak of "Profitis Elias", the banding road to the beach of St. Anna and the monastery of Hozoviotissa that looks like a tiny white mark on the mountain. This path also leads to the deserted bauxite mine called "metallio". If someone has enough energy - despite the impending return to Lagada through the same route - he/she could climb to the peak of Krikelos. The climbing is about 2 and a half klm and mostly without any paths. The hypsometrical distance is about 100 meters. Even climbing to the peak of Papas (800 meters) can be possible, but local people do not recommend it since the conditions of climbing can be extremely difficult.



We return to Lagada on the same path. After the church of St. Barbara we almost run with the terrific view to the bay of Egiali in front of us.

Time of walking: 4 hours of walking to Stavros and back again

### **5. Chora & Chozoviotissa Monastery (to Aegiali)**

Early this morning we travel by road to Chora, the capital of the island. We will pause here to stroll about the village, set high above the sea protected from pirates of bygone days. We leave the village and follow a magnificent staircase going down to the Monastery of Chozoviotissa. The monastery is home to the revered icon of the Virgin from the Holy Land. The dazzling white building, founded in the year AD 1099, clings precariously to a cliff face. The icon was found in the sea below the monastery, having arrived here unaided from either Asia Minor, Cyprus or Jerusalem. We will enter the monastery and climb into its snug interior. Hopefully the docent will be available to show us around and provide access to the tiny but fascinating museum. After our visit to the monastery, we commence our hike.\* This is definitely one of the most fabulous hikes in the Cyclades. We follow the spine of the island and discover some unique landscapes and flora and, of course, some stupendous views. Leaving the monastery, we climb a staircase into an impressive landscape; the silence is overwhelming. High above us towers a huge cliff and on the right you see the deep blue sea below. Twenty minutes after the monastery we get to a platform with remnants of stable walls--"Asfodilitis" with well complex and the famous rock curvings. Behind us, the highest top of the monastery is just disappearing. We continue through impressive and rocky wilderness; soon we reach a kind of saddle with the two coasts of Amorgos both before and behind us. Soon we come to the Xenodochio, the remnants of a kind of medieval hotel on the road from Chora to Aegiali. Gradually we get a great view on the elongated offshore islet of Nikouria. At Exo Meria, situated on a rocky plateau, we find some deserted houses and the ruins of two windmills. It is hard to imagine how difficult and lonely life must have been on this desolate spot. The trail now continues like a magnificent balcony: far away you can already distinguish the village of Tholaria and all of a sudden you get a great view on the bay of Aegiali where our hike ends at a lovely beach where you can cool off and relax until dinner.

-Approx 4-5 hours (actual walking, longer with stops) on uneven, undulating terrain. The path is quite well worn at first, though in places the route becomes quite vague. Expect loose stones and gravel. There is no shade along the route and one can expect a chill wind, especially in the spring (thought the stupendous wildflowers make up for this!).