

Hiking in Dikti



Some of the mountains in Crete have something that makes them special among the others. The Mountains of Dikti are like that. With their highest peak Spathi imperiously looking down from 2148 meters it has a lot of thrills to offer.

The view from the top is breathtaking nearly the whole of Crete unfolds in front of you. But you must know how to get up there to enjoy that magnificent view. From Heraklion you head to the Plateau of Lassithi. Although the distance in km is short, the quality of the road is poor, so it takes some time to get there.

You'll take one to one hour and a half to reach the Plateau of Lassithi (sketch No 1) and in particular the village of Agios Georgios, where the European path E4 starts from. There is no difficulty getting there, as the marking is rather good. E4 starts a few meters away from the sign welcoming you to the village heading south - southeast. It's so well marked that walking along it up to the plateau of Limnaka (see sketch No 2) is quite easy (see sketch). It takes about 2 hours to reach the plateau of Limnakaro at a slow pace.

The plateau is situated at 1200 m and there are quite a few wild pear-trees. If you are lucky enough to be up there at the beginning of November, you'll have a bellyful of wild pears, as no one picks them up. Apart from the fruit trees the hiker finds a spring of water near the chapel of Agio Pnevma. Spending the night inside the chapel is possible but not recommended unless the weather conditions are extreme. The water spring might be drained by the end of August. In that case walk on the road that leads to the east end of the plateau.

There, under a huge tree you can find another spring, with crystal-clear water coming down from the mountain springs. On Limnakaro there are two options when it comes to spending the night: either to camp outside the chapel or in the hut of the Alpine Club of Lassithi. The disadvantage of this hut is that it is away from the path to the summit, but it offers a nice view of Limnakaro, the Lassithi plateau and the west face of Mt Spathi. To spend the night in the hut please contact the Alpine Club of Lassithi.



From Limnakaro, following the E4 to the south, hiking starts on a dirt track road and that turns into a mountain path. The route you follow is shown in the above sketch. From point No3 you start heading upwards walking always on the path, until an E4 sign at the tip of a long plateau. Above this sign there is the big scree slope that defines the end of the west face of Mt Spathi. From this point there are two choices: a) to go up the scree slope (no path - just zig-zag your way up) or b) follow the E4 signs and cairns direction S-SE. This should bring you on the saddle between Spathi and Afendis

(the big mountain to the south).

From this saddle you must not follow the E4 signs since it leads to south Crete, but turn North instead and start walking on a very wide ridge. This route is longer than the scree slope way but less tiring, since it is not as steep. Both routes (from the scree slope and from the saddle) meet at the top of the scree slope, then head upwards following the ridge and the south flanks ahead of you (No 4) till you reach the top. In winter the summit ridge requires a lot of attention because it is relatively narrow (see photo below). You need 7-8 hours in total in good conditions from the village of Agios Georgios to the top. Although it is not necessary to spend the night in Limnakaro it would make the ascent less tiring.

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