



**Northern  
Pindos**  
National Park



# GOOD VISITORS HANDBOOK

OF THE NORTHERN PINDOS NATIONAL PARK

## THE NATIONAL PARK AND ITS PROTECTED ZONES

### *The National Park*

The Northern Pindos National Park was established in 2005, covering an area of approximately 2.000 km<sup>2</sup>. It includes ecosystems of great ecological value, as it has actually become a shelter for many rare and endangered species of wild fauna and flora. Over 2,000 species of plants and about 300 species of vertebrates have been recorded at the 30 different types of habitats in the National Park, with prominent species the bear, the chamois, the otter, the golden eagle, the Egyptian vulture and more.

Unique landscapes of unsurpassed natural beauty, dominate throughout the National Park, which includes two National Parks those of Vikos - Aaos and Pindos (Valia Kalda), 11 sites of the European network of protected areas «**Natura 2000**», as well as 11 **Wildlife Refuges**. In addition, one more area is designated as a **Landscape of Outstanding Natural Beauty** (Mount Orliakas), while the core of Valia Kalda is a **Biogenetic Reserve**. Finally, the westernmost section of the Park has been included in the European and Global Geopark Network, under the name «**Vikos - Aaos Geopark**».



Aaos gorge

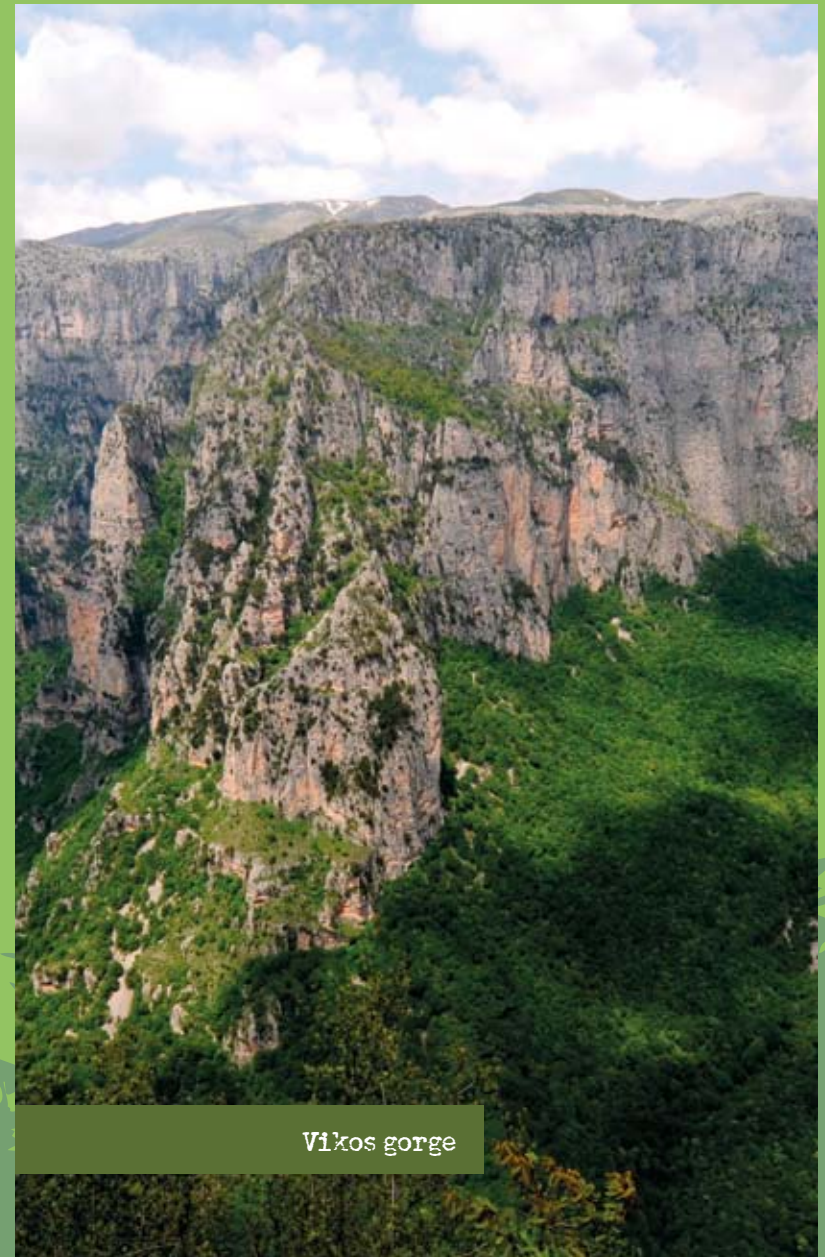




### *The National Park protected zones*

Within the limits of the Northern Pindos National Park protected area, two protection zones that provide tighter restrictions, regarding the protection of their ecosystems, have been designated. More specifically, the three cores of the National Park, which are the Vikos gorge and the Aoos gorge in the west and Valia Kalda in the east, have been designated as **Nature Protection Areas (Zone I)**. Around these areas, as well as in some additional locations of the National Park, extend the **Zones of Habitat and Species Conservation (Zone II)** in four separate positions. Finally, outside the National Park and for its more effective protection, four sub-regions have been designated as **Regional Zones (Zone II)**.

The highest protection level characterizes the **Nature Protection Areas (Zone I)**, in which the main management objective is to maintain the current state of the natural environment and its effective protection in order to follow its natural evolution without human interventions.







## THE MANAGEMENT BODY

**The Management Body of the two National Parks of Vikos – Aaos and Pindos** was established in 2002 and it is the competent institution of the Greek State for the protection, management and promotion of the **Northern Pindos National Park**, in collaboration with the Forest Service and other co-competent administrative services.

The administration of the Management Body is located in Aspraggeli of the Zagori Municipality. Scientific and administrative staff, wardens and eco-guides work for the protection, monitoring, safe keeping, enhancement and promotion of one of the largest protected land areas in our country.

All activities carried out and on-going projects within the National Park and its Regional zones should be made in accordance with the provisions of the Joint Ministerial Decision of the National Park's establishment. In addition, the legislation concerning generally the environment in Greece, the forest law and especially the law governing the National Parks, is in force.



## THE INFORMATION CENTRES OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Knowledge about the ecological and cultural richness of the National Park is a tool for its protection and an essential factor to get acquainted with it.

The Management Body of Vikos - Aaos & Pindos National Parks has in operation five information centres in the Northern Pindos National Park: three in Aspraggeli, Papigko and Vovoussa in Zagori, one in Metsovo and one in Mavranaioi of Grevena in order to introduce the visitors to the important ecological and cultural characteristics of the protected area and make them aware of the natural and human environment.

In their premises, exhibits are presented and projections, regarding the natural wealth of the National Park and the region's unique architecture, history and folklore, are organised. Also, guided tours for organized groups of visitors, such as tourists, schools, universities, etc. are conducted.

Their visitors are supplied with free leaflets and they get informed, depending on their interests, in the local attractions, places of observation, hiking trails, monuments and generally activities that they can develop in the National Park during their stay in it.



Metsovo  
Information Centre



Mavranaioi  
Information Centre



Aspraggeli  
Information Centre

## ACCESS TO THE NATIONAL PARK



### Road Access

The Northern Pindos National Park is accessed by 4 sides of the horizon. The **southeast and east** boundaries lie on the Egnatia Odos (Highway), where the visitor can easily enter the park. First, from Interchange 05 of Ioannina one enters in Ioannina from where he can be directed towards Zagori or Konitsa, ie in the southwestern and western parts of the park.

All other junctions of the Egnatia Odos (Highway), relate to the **eastern or northeastern part of the Park**. So, from Interchange 06 Arachthos - Zagori one enters East Zagori and from Interchange 07 in Metsovo area one approaches the Park in about 20 km.

Afterwards, at the junction of Egnatia to Thessaly (Interchange of Panagia 07B) one can follow the old National Highway and through Katara passage can be found within the National Park (except winter time). Finally, from Interchange 08A of Venetikos in the Grevena area, visitors can follow the old provincial routes to Metsovo or Perivoli and generally the Vlachochoria of Vassilitsa and enter into the wider area of the Pindos - Valia Kalda National Park. Moreover, one can follow the road to Samarina and find himself in the northern part of Smolikias and then through mountain passes to reach the section of the Park located in the Regional Unity of Ioannina. At the end, from Grevena and following the road to Dotsiko and Eptachori one can approach the northern part of the Park.

The **southwestern and western part** of the park is accessed by the National highway Ioannina -Konitsa- -Kozani. More specifically from the 19th km in the village Metamorphosis, the 34th km at the historical Kalpaki as well as from the 38th km and 48th km, one enters in Zagori and the wider area of the Vikos-Aoos National Park.



### The National Park

*The area of the National Park of Northern Pindos belongs to Epirus and Western Macedonia and is accessed by the corresponding road network of the Northern Pindos settlements. The largest urban centers near the National Park are Ioannina and Grevena. There are often bus routes between major urban centers in the vicinity of the Park (Ioannina, Grevena) with Athens and Thessaloniki, and sparsely routes between them and most of the Park settlements.*



## ACCESS TO THE NATIONAL PARK

Also, from the 63rd km, where Konitsa is and up to the 80th km, the western boundaries of the Park are the same as those of the National highway Ioannina - Konitsa - Kozani. So, from the 63rd km one enters Konitsa and can penetrate into the inner part of the National Park following the provincial road to the villages of Lakka Aaos in the slopes of mount Smolikas. Also from the 80th km (junction to Agia Paraskevi) the boundaries of the Park diverge from the highway and turn east from where one approaches the northern part of Smolikas which coincides with the northern boundary of the Park and through mountain passes joins the section of the Park located in the Regional Unit of Grevena.

One can also approach the National Park from Albania, as in approximately 15 km from the Border Posts of Kakavia and Mertzani (Three Bridges) one can be in Zagori or Konitsa, i.e in the southwest boundaries of the National Park. Naturally, visitors to the park following the reverse direction through the above mentioned Border Posts can easily visit the neighboring country (areas of Gjirokaster and Premeti).



### Airports and Ports

The nearest airports to the boundaries of the National Park are these of Ioannina (25 km), of Aktio (145 km), of Argos Orestiko (60 km) and that of Thessaloniki (180 km), while the nearest international port is located in Igoumenitsa (108 km) away.



### Aziz Aghas Bridge

*In the National Park there are around eighty villages belonging to the areas of Zagori, Konitsa, Metsovo and Grevena, many of which are designated as traditional, while it is important to mention that the whole area is dotted with numerous cultural monuments (churches, monasteries, stone bridges, fountains, paved pathways and more).*



## RULES APPLYING TO SEPARATE ZONES OF THE NATIONAL PARK

### *Nature protection areas (Zone I)*

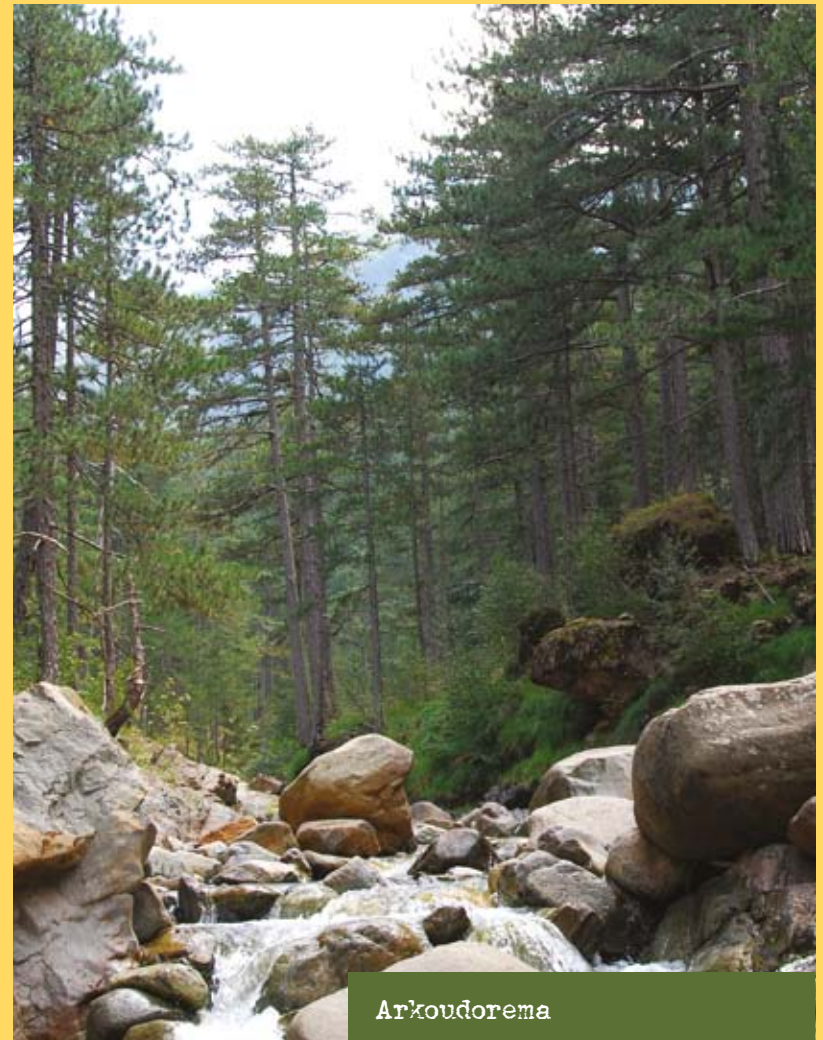
The highest degree of protection applies to **Nature Protection Areas (Zone I)**. In these areas, many activities such as hunting, fishing, collecting herbs, insects and other organisms, as well as the cutting of trees, shrubs and flowers are not allowed. Also, camping and remaining in the area after sundown, setting fires, swimming and disposing of garbage and debris are not allowed either. For some activities, such as river crossings by kayak and rafting, special permission is required from the local Forest Services. However, in general terms, one can enter the national Park freely by car (following the provincial road network) or on foot (hiking, trekking etc.) from sunrise to sunset throughout the year.

### *Habitat and Species Conservation Areas (Zone II)*

In **Habitat and Species Conservation Areas (Zone II)** restrictions are related to the protection of landscape and the non disturbance of wildlife being different from the restrictions applying in Zone I. Thus, the construction of roads, the creation of quarries for mining materials (stone, etc.) and other activities and facilities that create problems to ecosystems, wildlife, flora and vegetation are not allowed. Generally, car entrance to the provincial road network and walking tours (hiking, mountaineering etc.) from sunrise to sunset are allowed freely. In addition, many of the basic productive activities such as livestock, agriculture, silviculture etc. are allowed.

### *Peripheral Zones (Zone IV)*

In **the area of the National Park** and in the **Peripheral Zones** there are no special restrictions other than just the basic obligations that visitors who are in a protected area have. Also, almost all productive activities are permitted. It is possible though, that certain restrictions and regulations may be in force spatially and temporally, for various uses and activities.



Arkoudorema

*Throughout the National Park and even more in the zones of high protection, the visitor must show due respect to the natural environment and his activities and actions should comply with the rules in force. He also has to respect the cultural monuments that are within the settlements or scattered in the area, as well as history, habits, manners and customs of the people living here since time immemorial.*





### The good visitor

*The presence of man in the protected area of the National Park goes back to antiquity. He used to be present in space, from time immemorial till today, with all his daily activities.*

## THE GOOD VISITOR AND HIS ACTIVITIES (TIPS, ADVICE AND INSTRUCTIONS)

Throughout most of the National Park and the Regional zones (except Zone I), roughly all basic productive activities and occupations of the inhabitants of the region are allowed, such as live stocking, agriculture, silviculture and tourism. These activities are associated with the past, present and future of the National Park and for this reason we recommend you to taste or buy local products, strengthening thus the local economy while keeping alive the memory of your tour in the National Park. Therefore, you contribute to ensuring the continuation of local traditional practices associated with e.g gastronomy, traditional techniques, woodcarving, cooperage, etc. The area of the National Park is ideal for developing numerous recreational activities:

### **Touring with vehicles (private cars, 4x4, motocross):**

Touring with vehicles is allowed throughout the officially recognized road network except where there is relative prohibitive signage. All the villages and towns in the National Park are connected with asphalt roads. It is likely, in some

cases, long buses (coaches) to have difficulty reaching some villages or sites. Follow the existing road network, avoid high speeds because, at any moment, you may encounter on the road other than people, a herd of livestock or rarely a wild animal. On dirt roads enter only if your car has the appropriate specifications. In winter, make sure you always have chains with you and be very attentive to the ice.

### **Parking for campers / caravans:**

Under current legislation parking for overnight campers is permitted only in designated areas. The nearest such site is located in Ioannina (Camping Limnopoula). However, in case you need to stay overnight with your caravan in the National Park, avoid at least Zones I and II. Be extremely careful when lighting a fire, collect all the garbage and waste.



### **Hiking / Mountaineering:**

There are no spatial and temporal restrictions on hiking / mountaineering. However, keep in mind that wandering after sundown on Nature Protection Areas (Zone I) is not permitted and also, during the fire protection period further restrictions on the time of your stay in wooded areas might apply. It is recommended that you stay on existing trails and avoid approaching wild animals, herds and shepherd dogs. Avoid reaching the limits of your strength. If you are unsure of your skills, make sure you are accompanied by an experienced companion/ mountain guide and obtain printed material with trekking / hiking trails from the Information Centres.

Be sure to always carry the necessary (backpack, hat, raincoat, cap, water, some food, etc.) and wear appropriate shoes. If you don't have relevant experience, do not stray from the marked paths and make sure you always have a map with you. If any path you choose to walk does not meet your expectations (dense vegetation, poor signage, difficult passages, etc.) turn back. Sometimes the information that "circulates" does not reflect the real situation of certain paths. Consult the personnel of the Park's Information Centres in order to choose the right path for you and your company.

### **Water sport activities (rafting / kayaking, etc.):**

For an individual descent of AooS and Voidomatis rivers (i.e without the accompaniment of official river guide) a special permit is required from the Konitsa Forest Service. If the descent of the river is under the responsibility of a licensed river guide, then no such permits are required for each participant separately. The activities of this type are not allowed in the upper part of the Voidomatis river (from its sources to the Papigo / Aristi bridge).

### **Mountaineering:**

There are no spatial and temporal restrictions, except only as stated above for climbing / hiking. Special equipment is required. Avoid reaching the limits of your abilities and strength. In case you realize that your presence annoys some wild animal, like a bird of prey or large mammal, change path.

### **Photography:**

There are no spatial or temporal restrictions on photographing while in the natural environment. However, if you become aware that your presence annoys some wild animal, usually a bird or a mammal, stop photographing. Photographing in private spaces, inside museums, exhibitions, collections and religious monuments (monasteries and churches) is usually prohibited. Ask the person in charge or make sure you obtain a permit. If you photograph people, courtesy calls to ask permission first, especially if you intend to publish or post this photograph somewhere.

### **Swimming:**

Swimming is allowed in the rivers and lakes of the National Park with the exception of the nature protection areas corresponding to the cores of National Parks, which in this case is Arkoudomera in the Valia Kalda area and the Voidomatis river. For more information visit the Information Centres.

### **Hunting:**

Hunting is allowed within the Park only in areas outside the designated Nature Protection Areas, the Wildlife Refuges and Areas of Temporary Hunting Ban. Get informed for the boundaries of the above areas from the Management Body of the National Park, the Forest Service (Forest Services in: Ioannina, Konitsa, Metsovo, Forest Service Directorates: Ioannina, Grevena) and Hunting Federations and Associations. The game species (animals allowed to be hunted) and other conditions related to hunting in those areas of the Park, where this activity is permitted, follow the general rules according to the Annual Regulatory Ministerial Decision of the Ministry of Environment, Energy & Climate change. Make sure you are aware of and respect all rules and restrictions related to hunting both generally and locally. Be extremely cautious - especially when participating in group hunting - with your colleagues and unsuspected visitors or residents of the National Park that usually follow the paths and may not have realized your presence. Avoid entering by vehicles in the interior of the important habitats of the National Park and its separate zones. Remember that among other things hunting of the chamois, roe deer, bear, woodpeckers and raptors is prohibited. Marketing of hunted animals is not authorized.





### Fishing in rivers:

In general terms, fishing is allowed in the rivers of the National Park. It is not permitted within the Nature Protection Areas (Zone I), i.e. the river Voidomatis from the Klidonia bridge to its sources, in the interior of the Aaos gorge as well as in Arkoudorema and Valia Kalda. At times, it is also possible, to be prohibited in other parts of the Park. Where it is permitted, general terms and rules for recreational fishing are applicable. Fishing is permitted from February 16 to October 31, but there may be an additional prohibition between 15 April - 30 June (spawning period for certain fish species). Especially for trout, fishing is permitted only for the fish that are longer than 22 cm. In addition, one may fish up to 3 fish (regardless of weight) or fish of total weight 2 kg per day. The only allowed method is the pole, while the use of nets of any kind, snorkeling and other materials and methods other than the reed - string - throttle is clearly prohibited. Marketing the fish catch is not allowed.

### Collection of herbs / flowers:

It is allowed throughout the park, except for the Nature Protection Areas. There may be specific temporal restrictions for certain plant species. Get informed by the Management Body or the Forest Service. One may collect herbs (tea, lemon balm, oregano, etc.), lime (lime blossom), and elderberry at the time of flowering-ripening up to ½ kgr per person / collector or a total of up to 2 kg per day. During the collection, cut only the part of the herb that is above ground (stem) and in any case do not uproot the plants. Concerning the lime and elderberry collect only the flowers and do not prune the trees. Never collect orchid and Lilly (Lillium sp.) species. Remember that in the area of the National Park grow many medicinal plants, whose properties knew and traditionally used local residents and especially the famous physician healers, the so-called "Vikogiatroi" that always collected plants in moderation and therefore have survived to our days.

### Collection of mushrooms:

It is allowed throughout the park, except for the Nature Protection Areas. There are no specific temporal restrictions. You may collect up to 2 kgr of mushrooms per person / collector per day and only by cutting the above-ground part of the mushroom. It is recommended to transfer them in net hung outside the backpack. Keep sure to distinguish between the species that are edible and the poisonous ones.



### Camping:

Under current legislation free camping is prohibited. However in case you need to stay outdoors overnight, be careful on the fire and collect all your garbage. The nearest camping area is sited in Ioannina.

### Lighting a fire:

It is not allowed to light a fire in the Nature Protection Areas. For other areas please note that the lighting and maintaining of fire for the sake of catering or camping outdoors in forests and woodlands, is only allowed from November 1 to April 30, if:

- The ground vegetation is completely removed within at least 2 meters from the hearth.
- The minimum distance of the hearth from adjacent arboreal or shrubby vegetation, that is at least 10 meters, is kept and secured by fitting around the hearth fire appropriately sized stones.
- There is enough water to tackle the fire, in case it gets out of control.

• In case the persons who lit a fire go away, they are obliged to completely extinguish the fire or cover it with dirt.

From 1st May to 31st October each year, the lighting of fire is allowed but only for dining reasons and only in organized for this purpose places, such as camping and provided that the measures described above are taken.

As a rule avoid lighting fires, but if necessary be extremely cautious of it and extinguish it very well before you leave. Pick up the slightest even trash and throw it in the first bin you find, which is usually located within or on the outskirts of a village.

### Skiing:

In the National Park, during winter, ski resorts operate in Vassilitsa and Metsovo with slopes for beginners and experienced athletes, providing also the possibility to fans of this sport to learn how to ski.



There are quite many visitors to the National Park that link their stay therein to the conduct of some research work. Before starting the research it is necessary to issue a relevant license from the Directorate of Aesthetic Forests, Parks and Hunting of the Ministry of Environment, Energy & Climate change while at the same time they must inform and consult the Management Body and the responsible Forest Service. After the completion of their work, and for the enrichment of the Management Body's database, it is advised to provide the results in its Service.



Portitsa canyon

## SAFETY FIRST AND FOREMOST!

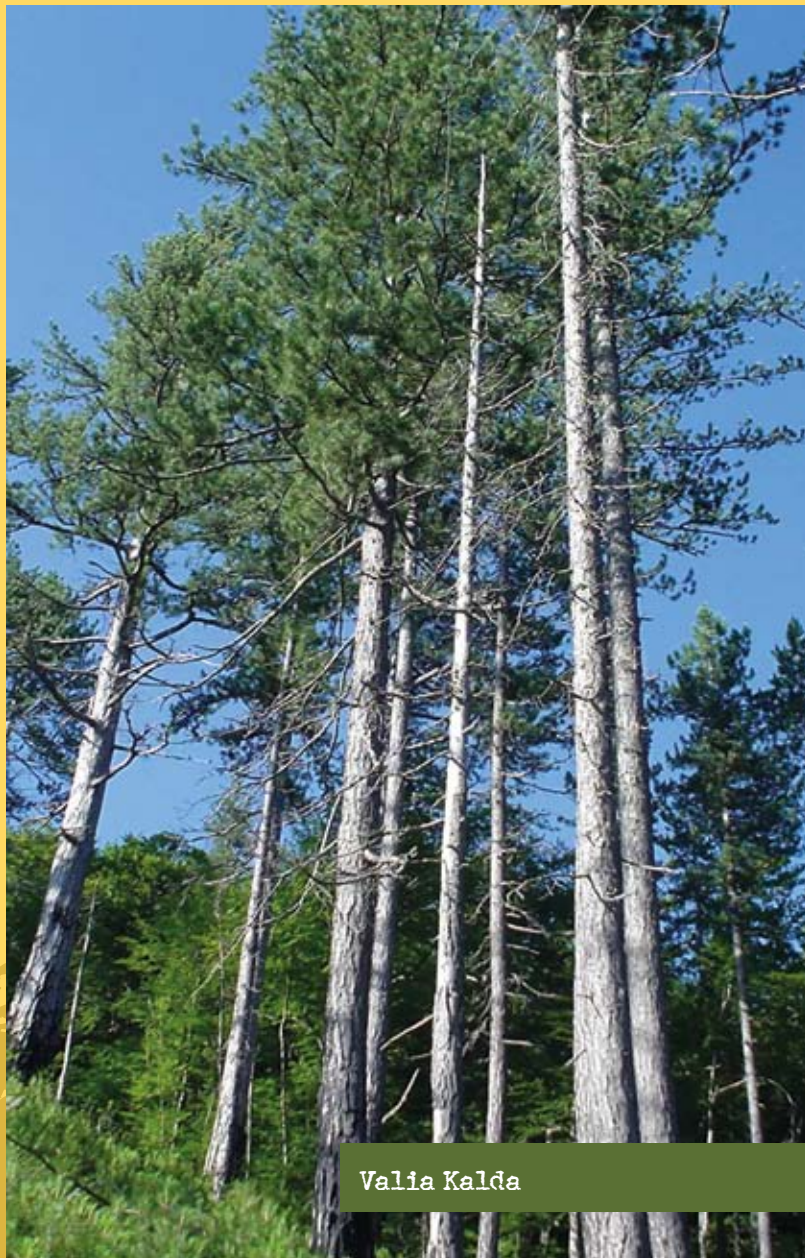
- Visit the Information Centres - You will tour the Park "Learned!"
- Do not leave the marked trails unless you have the proper experience-Risk of accident!
- Do not indulge in some adventure sports if you do not have the necessary experience and equipment - Alternatively seek an experienced guide!
- Keep off the shepherd dogs - Their job is to guard the flock!
- Do not start travelling in winter without chains - Sometimes the bad weather lasts long!

## I ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO THE MANAGEMENT BODY'S WORK

- I respect the conditions and rules of the National Park.
- I respect the legislation in general.
- I follow all instructions in this form.
- I collect and place in the first bins I find any litter that will fall into my perception.
- If I see fire, I immediately inform the Fire Department or the Forest Service or the Management Body of the Vikos - Aaos & Pindos National Parks.
- If any possible illegal activity, source of contamination or anything else that causes damage to the environment falls into my mind, I inform the Management Body, the Forest Service or the Game wardens.
- If I see damage or lack of signage on a major trail I inform the Management Body.
- If I find people who have trouble I support them and call for help.
- If I find an injured or dead wild animal (eg bear, chamois, roe deer, eagle, vulture, etc.) I inform the Management Body, the Forest Service or the Game wardens.







**Valia Kalda**

## USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

### **EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

Police (Hellenic Police): 133  
Direct Action Police: 100  
Tourist Police (Information HOT-Hellenic organization of Tourism): 171  
Fire Brigade: 199  
Coordinating Centre for Forest Fire Response: 191  
Traffic Police of Ioannina: +30 26510 26308  
Traffic Police of Grevena: +30 24620 22100  
National Center for Immediate Assistance: 166  
Poison Control Center: +30 210 7793777  
Doctors SOS: 1016

### **MOUNTAINEERING CLUBS**

IOANNINA: +30 26510 22138  
GREVENA: +30 24620 28602  
KONITSA: +30 26550 22464  
METSOVO: +30 26560 41249  
PAPIGKO: +30 26530 41138

### **MOUNTAIN REFUGES**

Mountain Shelter of Gomara:  
+30 24620 81208  
Mountain Shelter of mountaineering and ski club of Grevena: +30 24620 28602  
Mountain Shelter of Distrato:  
+30 24620 82820  
Mountain Shelter of Astraka:  
+30 6973 223100  
Mountain Shelter of Mitsikeli:  
+30 26510 22138  
Mountain Shelter of Smolikas:  
+30 6942 939939  
Mountain Shelter of Vovoussa:  
+30 26560 22200

### **SKI CENTERS**

National Ski Center of Vassilitsa:  
+30 24620 84850  
Ski Center of the Averof - Tositsa Foundation: +30 26560 41312  
Ski center of Metsovo Municipality:  
+30 26560 41095

### **TRANSPORTATION - TAXI**

Radio taxi of Ioannina: +30 26510 46777  
Radio taxi of Grevena: +30 24620 22580  
Taxi of Konitsa: +30 26550 22500  
Taxi of Metsovo: +30 26560 41393  
Taxi of Kalpaki: +30 6945 502 138

### **BUSES**

Bus Station of Ioannina: +30 26510 26286  
Bus Station of Grevena: +30 24620 22242

### **AIRPORTS**

Athens International Airport  
(Eleftherios Venizelos): +30 210 3530000  
Ioannina National Airport  
(King Pyrrhus): +30 26510 26218  
Kastoria National Airport (Aristotelis), Argos  
Orestikon: +30 24670 21700, 21701

### **PORTS**

Port Authority of Igoumenitsa:  
+30 26650 99300

### **OTHER TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

Camping Limnopoula of Ioannina:  
+30 26510 25265

## CONTACT US

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