

# MEDITERRANEAN

SIGGY AND HEATHER | TRIP AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN | SATURDAY, 27 APRIL 2013

## Between Heaven and Earth

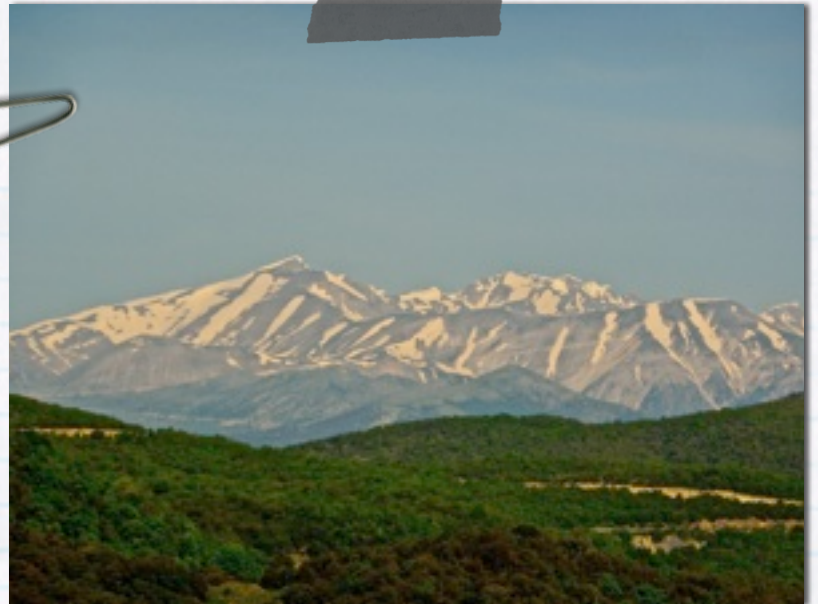
The Zagorohoria region is incredibly mountainous. After speaking to a young Greek man and his parents who told us not to be too worried about taking the van up onto the mountain roads, we decided to give it a try. The maps we had were quite confusing but we did eventually locate the correct road and up we went.

Despite being steep, with hairpin bends in places, the road was well paved and wide enough for two vehicles. As we slowly ambled up the steep slope the views got more expansive. Around each corner a new vista opened up but we dared not stop. Our aim was to have a look at at least one of the stone villages we had read about in our literature.

Aghio Minas (a small village) came into view in the distance but the road signs did not help us as they were in Greek. We had to stop at one point because horses blocked our path and did not move despite our honking. Heather got out and moved them on. Next it was getting around a herd of the local goats. Talk about a goat track!!



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## Driving in Greece

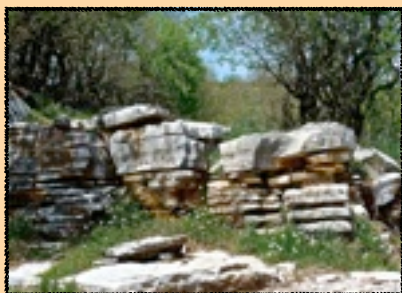
For a country that prides itself in living life in the slow lane, with some work places taking a two hour rest period in the afternoon, how come the traffic situation here is so awful? It seems that everyone loves to just sit around and enjoy life until they get into their car.

Many drivers on Greek roads are impatient, nasty, honk their horns ALL the time, do not respect road rules and are just plain stupid.

During our first 30 minutes driving in Greece we were cut off by a large bus that passed us whilst cars were

coming the other way and we had a motorist suddenly stop his car in front of us. Today we saw motorbikes weaving dangerously in and out of traffic at high speed. Lonely Planet suggests that Greece is a good place to practice your "defensive driving" techniques!

Despite this, the roads themselves are actually better than we thought they would be. The toll roads, with their extensive tunnel systems, are quite impressive. EU money no doubt.



**BUILDING STONES** The geological structure of these mountains is perfect for building stone houses and walls AND roofs. They easily break off into brick size blocks.



**WHICH WAY?** Finding your way around can be quite frustrating. If the English name is not given you can end up in strange places. Even "Emily" had problems.



**GOAT TRACK?** Up and up and up we drove. The roads were excellent - so much so that even the goats use them.

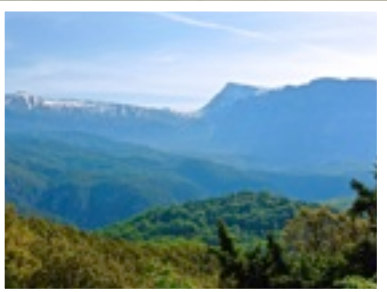
## SNAPS



SNOW COVERED MOUNTAINS



WE DID NOT REALIZE HOW HIGH WE WERE



A VIEW FROM AGHIOS MINAS



CLEARING THE ROAD



SOUVLAKI GREEK STYLE

# The beautiful views and solitude is what we came here for.

It was worth it when we finally drove in to Aghios Minas. Beautiful stone cottages, glorious stone paved paths and friendly locals going about their daily activities. We spent some time strolling the streets and a nearby track. No wonder the locals live so long - they get so much exercise and fresh air walking around their town. Some say that the reason they live longer lives is because of their unique local honey. A great selling point.

## AGHIOS MINOS AND MONODENDRI SEEMED FAR FROM THE MADDENING CROWDS

We savored the quiet and the views and decided it was time to drive on. More stone villages and a monastery beckoned. After another 45 minutes driving over very windy roads, we reached the Vikos Gorge area and the main stone village of Monodendri.

We parked outside of the town and walked in. The place was fabulous.

Many of the buildings were obviously new, but they had been built in the old

style. They blended in so well with the old paved streets and retaining walls. Even the roofs of all the houses are clad with stone. We walked on through the village to Moni Agai Paraskevi - a monastery established in 1413. It is perched on the walls of the Vikos Gorge.

The gorge is 900 m deep and most impressive. Unfortunately my photos do not give the correct impression of its depth relative to the land/valley.

After leaving the village we headed off to our next destination - Meteora - about two hours distant.

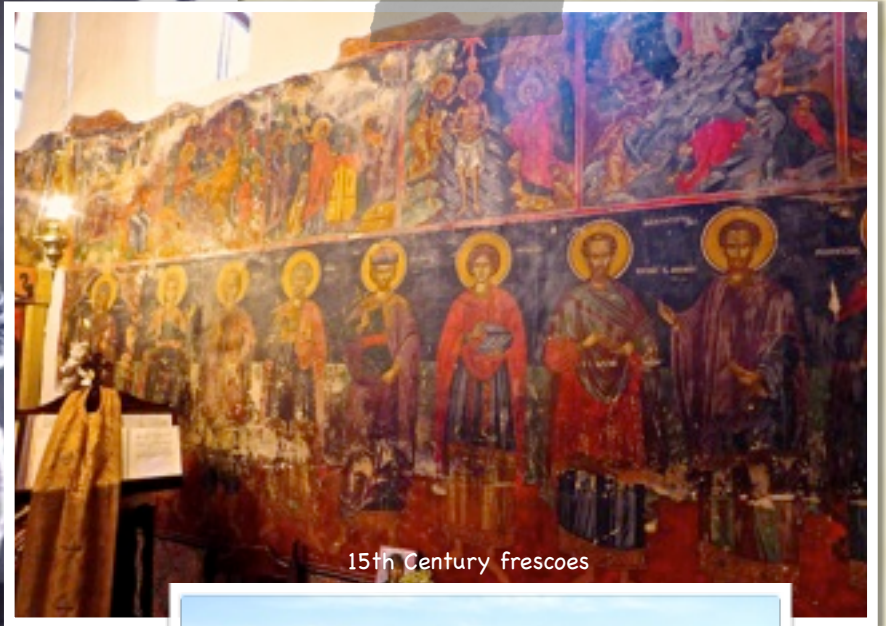
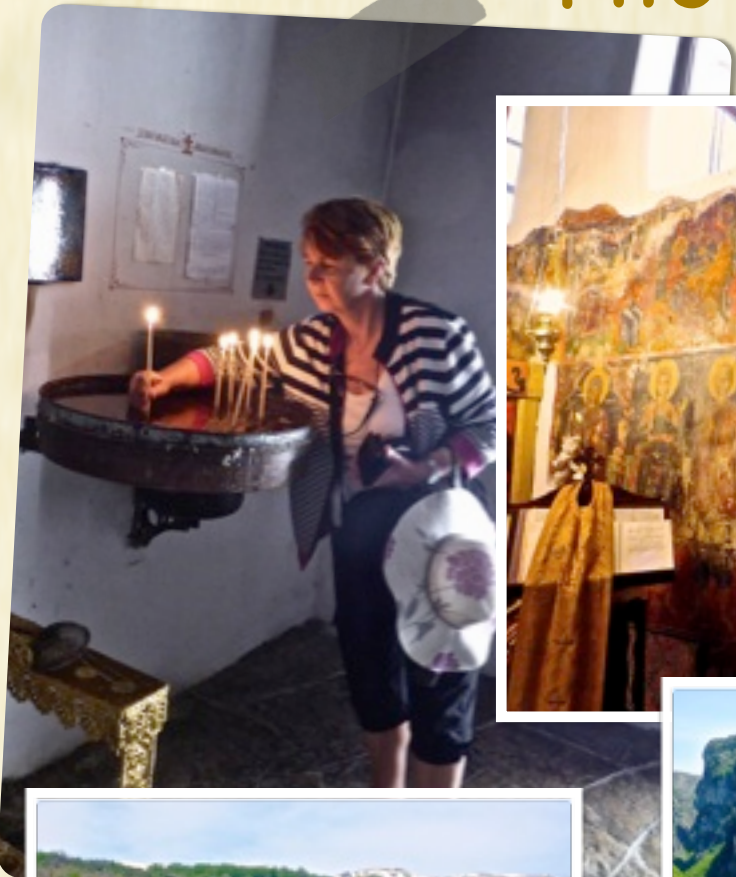
It eventually took us about 3.5 hours to get there because of us wanting to choose the route. With limited maps and Greek spelling this proved very difficult - and frustrating. Heather wanted to go via the freeway and therefore avoid more mountain climbing. Eventually she got her way over Emily and we were able to enjoy the easy route. Mind you, we spent about one third of the time in tunnels. It is a seriously impressive road system.

Tomorrow we will do more rock climbing.





# PHOTOS



15th Century frescoes

