

# Adventure Biotourism in Southeastern Phthiotis



## The Railroad Workers Trail

At the turn of the 20th century, railroad workers were forced to clear a path in the Asopos Gorge so that they could cross to the other side. This path became known as "Railroad Workers Trail," one of the most amazing hiking destinations in Greece.

The landscape is unspoiled, as the only artificial structure crossing it is the railroad. The hiking trail begins near the village of Herakleia (Irakleia), next to the ancient city of Trachina, off the 11th km of the Lamia–Athens National Road. A 2-km hike up a dirt road leads to this impressive mountain path which also features two small tunnels chiseled in the mountainside. The path ends at the Asopos Railroad Station, where one can turn and follow the same trail back. Total hiking time: 5 hours.



The Gorgopotamos bridge

## New Trends in Adventure Tourism

Tourism trends towards new destinations and experiences have notably increased outbound adventure tourism. According to a 2012 survey, around 42% of travelers from both North and South America and Europe mentioned an adventure activity as their last trip's main purpose, while in 2009 this number was only 26% (Adventure Tourism Study, 2013).

## Adventure in Numbers

- ❖ \$264 billion is the outbound adventure market for Europe and the Americas
- ❖ 5% annual increase of adventure tourism between 2009 and 2012
- ❖ 20% yearly increase in adventure travelers between 2009 and 2012
- ❖ 85% is the largest increase in South America regarding hard adventure travel (caving, heli-skiing, climbing)
- ❖ 25% increase in soft adventure in South America (canoeing, cycling, hiking).

## In the heart of Greece

Destinations and tour operators need to quickly adapt to this demand and offer more adventure trips and excursions. An ideal place for both hard and soft adventurers is Southeastern Phthiotis with its evergreen forests, lofty mountains, enigmatic rivers, healing hot springs and gorgeous beaches. Fans of hiking and mountain climbing can turn to the clubs and organizations in the area, or hire a professional guide; the bravest can try to discover the secrets of Mts. Oeta, Othrys and Kallidromo on their own. Southeastern Phthiotis welcomes hikers, climbers and all nature lovers year round.

A Mountain Bike Race on Mt. Oeta is organized yearly since 2011, with many enthusiastic participants racing around the heart of this historic mountain. More daring travelers interested in mountain biking can follow the bike trail that runs next to the legendary Spercheios River on an unmarked path through a dense forest.

One of the most stunning sites in the area is the cave of Nerospillia (water cave) which conceals one of the biggest underground rivers in Greece. It stands at an altitude of 1,090 m beckoning travelers to discover the complex and magnificent natural formations that surround it.



## Hiking Trails

### Anopaia Atrapos – the Path of Ephialtes



The Path of Ephialtes

“Anopaia Atrapos” is the secret path revealed by the traitor, Ephialtes, to the Persians, which they followed in their final assault at Thermopylae. Before its existence was known, the Persian forces were unable to overcome the defenses mounted by Leonidas and his men. Today, the exact ancient route is hard to pinpoint, due to several geological changes that have taken place over the past 2500 years. However, the most likely route has been marked as a hiking trail on Mt. Kallidromo, circling the Straits

of Thermopylae. The trail is easily accessible and begins near the Monastery of Damasta. It offers a 15-km hike with an elevation gain of 500 meters through a beautiful evergreen forest with breathtaking views of the Malian Gulf. The trail ends at the village of Thermopylae, where one can visit the archaeological site of the historic battle ground, as well as the Innovative Centre of Historical Information.



### The Path of Heracles

This path leads to the “Pyre of Heracles,” the mythological site of the hero’s self-immolation. The path begins at the village of Pavliani, at an elevation of 1100m. A well marked trail leads hikers through the forested slopes of Mt. Oite, covered with beautiful wildflowers in the spring. Remains of the ancient temple of Heracles are located at an elevation of 1560m, on a green plateau with a view of Mt. Giona and the Vardousia mountain range. The cave of Katavothra, where the waters of the Gorgopotamos River seem to disappear, is definitely worth a visit. The path is circular, and the return to the village of Pavliani is also well marked. The total distance is 15.5km with an elevation gain of 600 meters. The Path of Heracles enjoys international acclaim and features in several hiking guides, such as those issued by the Club Alpino Italiano. The site of the Pyre of Heracles is also accessible by four-wheel-drive vehicles.



The Legendary Path of Heracles

For more information visit

<http://biopolitics.gr/biowp/wp-content/pthiotis/e-book/index.html> and download a free copy of the Biotourism Guide and Map of SE Phthiotis

