

NATIONAL PARK OF TZOUMERKA PERISTERI AND ARACHTHOS GORGE

Location

The National Park has a land area of about 820 km², stretching across the mountainous regions of Ioannina, Arta and Trikala Prefectures in the central part of the Pindos mountain range. Within the boundaries of the Park there are two large mountainous complexes: Mount Lakmos (or Peristeri), with its highest peak Tsoukarella (2,295m), and the Athamanika Mountains (or Tzoumerka), with the highest peaks Kakarditsa (2,429m) and Katafidi (2,393m). Apart from these mountainous complexes, the National Park also includes the Arachthos River gorge, which is formed by the western ends of the above mentioned mountains and the eastern slopes of the Xirovouni Mountain. The water catchment area of the Acheloos River (Aspropotamos) comprises the eastern part of the National Park, while that of the Arachthos River and its tributaries are the northern, western and southern parts of the Park. This area was identified as a National Park in 2009 by virtue of Presidential Decree (Official Government Gazette 49Δ/12.02.2009) with a view to the proper management of the natural and man-made environment, as well as the ensuring of harmonious coexistence of man and nature.

Protection Zones

The basic organisation of the National Park consists in establishing a graded system of four protection zones, each one with its own protection level and special regulations. The first two zones (Zone I: Nature Protection Areas and Zone II: Landscape, Habitats and Species Preservation Areas) are characterized by a higher protection than the Zone III (National Park Area) and the Peripheral Zone (Zone IV), where the protection is lower.

MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

The Management Authority was founded in 2009 and is responsible for the protection, conservation and management of the National Park of Tzoumerka, Peristeri and Arachthos Gorge. It is a non-profit-making legal entity governed by private law, which is administered by a nine-member Administrative Board and operates under the supervision of the Greek Ministry of Environment and Energy.

The main responsibilities of the Management Authority include: guarding and patrolling of the area, scientific monitoring of flora/fauna species and habitat types, informing and raising the awareness of the public, provision of advice and cooperation with other competent authorities etc.

The Authority's headquarters are in Ioannina, and it has under its supervision the Information Centres of Pramanta, Choulirades, Agnanta, Vourgareli, Neraida, and Kalliroi/Aspropotamos at Triafolia.



MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY OF THE NATIONAL PARK OF TZOUMERKA PERISTERI AND ARACHTHOS GORGE

Postal Address: Scientific and Technological Park of Epirus

Ioannina University Campus, 45110 Ioannina

Tel.: 2651043663, Fax: 2651043575

E-mail: park.tzoumerka@gmail.com

Website: www.tzoumerka-park.gr



Co-financed by the Greek State and the European Union


© MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY OF THE NATIONAL PARK OF TZOUMERKA PERISTERI AND ARACHTHOS GORGE

Cover page picture:

The locations "Verligka - Tsoukarella" at the Mount Peristeri




NATIONAL PARK OF TZOUMERKA, PERISTERI & ARACHTHOS GORGE



The yellow-bellied toad (*Bombina variegata*)



The plant primula



The Plaka Bridge



The Apollo butterfly in Lakmos



The monastery of Panagia Galaktotrofousa (i.e. Virgin Mary breastfeeding) in Anthousa

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Flora

The rugged and diverse terrain, the great altitude variations (144m–2,429m) and the striking presence of water contribute to the formation of a variety of natural habitats. Diverse vegetation, which varies with the location and altitude, grows in the terrestrial ecosystems of the National Park, which also includes the separate aquatic ecosystems.

17 different types of habitats have already been registered, the most interesting of which, due to their rarity, are: a) the forests of foetid juniper (*Juniperus foetidissima*), growing at an altitude of 1000m–1500m, b) the forests of black pine (*Pinus nigra*) and c) the mountain or sub-alpine fields located in relatively wet areas above the upper limit of the forest. The forest habitats, such as those of fir and oak, are also remarkable. Those of evergreen and hardwood deciduous trees, such as oaks, kermes oaks, arbutus, heathers, and of plane-trees, Holm oak and laurel are particularly important for the National Park.

More than 700 plant species, such as *Lilium chalcidonicum*, *Lilium candidum* etc., grow in the different habitats of the National Park. Various alpine plants and herbs, such as saleg, wild mint, tea, oregano, crocuses, narcissi and many other plant species, flourish in the clearings between the forests and the alpine fields. These plants, during their florescence, emit a mixture of characteristic scents of the mountainous areas.

Among the rare, endemic and endangered species there are some, such as *Seseli parnassicum*, *Allium parnassicum*, *Sesleria vaginalis*, *Allium phthioticum*, *Barbarea sicula* etc., which are difficult to find, as they either grow in locations which are difficult to reach or their flowering period is very short. *Solenanthes albanicus* is found only up the high peaks of the Tzoumerka mountain range, on the Grammos and Smolikas mountains. It is a rare plant species, which is considered to be endangered according to the Red List of endangered species of IUCN.

Fauna

The National Park is a refuge not only for the common and well known fauna species of the Greek mountains, but also for some rare and/or endangered species. The fauna includes a great number of land-dwelling, aquatic and flying invertebrates and vertebrates, such as fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. Despite the fact that the existing studies on invertebrates are limited, the protected area is particularly important for them, since some Lepidoptera, Orthoptera and Coleoptera species observed in the area are rare worldwide. 7 fish species live in the crystal water of the tributaries of the Arachthos and Acheloos Rivers, while the trout (*Salmo farioides*) is the predominant species living in the rivers of the area. Moreover, 10 amphibian species breed in the streams, the wet alpine fields and the seasonal ponds of the area. The yellow-bellied toad (*Bombina variegata*) is found at wet locations with vegetation, the greek frog (*Rana graeca*) lives next to the beds of mountain streams, while toads and salamanders find shelter in the forests of the area after their breeding period. The different natural habitats of the National Park host 21 reptile species: their presence is necessary for the balance of the ecosystems. The rarest reptile species found in the Lakmos and Tzoumerka mountains is the *Vipera ursinii*, which mainly feeds on grasshoppers.

Concerning the bird species, the area also hosts a great number: about 145 species. Among them, those which stand out are: the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), the griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*), the common kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*), the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), the lesser kestrel (*Falco naumanni*) etc. Some common species are the partridge (*Alectoris graeca*) and the breeding alpine Passeriformes.

The National Park is a particularly important area for mammals, considering that 1/4 of mammal species living in Greece have been recorded in the different habitats of the area. Especially remarkable is the presence of mammals defined as endangered species in Greece, such as the bear (*Ursus arctos*), the wild goat (*Rupicapra rupicapra*) and the otter (*Lutra lutra*). The presence of the wolf (*Canis lupus*), the roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), the wild cat (*Felis sylvestris*), the various bat species (in total 17) etc. denotes the diversity and the variety of the National Park's ecosystems, highlighting the need to protect and preserve the animals and their habitats.

Tzoumerka & Peristeri:
The perfectly crafted coexistence
of the man-made and the natural environment.

MAN-MADE ENVIRONMENT

The monuments are indisputable witnesses of the long history of the Tzoumerka Mountains, dating back from prehistoric to classical times and all the way to the post-byzantine and modern periods. These monuments are interesting not only in terms of their historic and archaeological value, but also because of their construction and special architecture.

In total, the National Park has 157 monuments and two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There are also five villages (Syrrako, Kalarrytes, Raftanaioi, Chaliki, Anthousa), which are protected under special provisions, since they have been designated as traditional settlements. The aim is to preserve their old-time traditional charm and unique local character.

Several churches and monasteries dating back to the 17th century are still preserved in the villages, but also in remote places difficult to reach, proudly built on breathtaking mountain ridges. Among the modern monuments there are several constructions, such as water-rollers and water tubs for wool processing (mantania), watermills, bridges, school buildings, even entire settlements, which magically reveal the traditional way of life and livelihood, as well as the folk culture of the area's residents during the Ottoman occupation and the pre-industrial period. There are numerous bridges, wonderful architectural testaments to man's ingenuity, giving a view of how people and goods were transported in the past. The famous Plaka Bridge was one of the largest stone one-arch bridges in the Balkans. This bridge was built in 1866, but unfortunately collapsed in February 2015. Furthermore, there are several interesting local museums in the area with rich displays of remarkable exhibits. Some other extremely impressive natural masterpieces found in the area are the caves, the natural waterfalls etc., which enchant both young and older visitors.