

Oxia – Mikrolimni Trail

STARTING POINT: Oxia Settlement, altitude 855m.

TERMINATION: Mikrolimni Settlement

LENGTH: 4440 m.

AVERAGE WALKING TIME: 2 hours

AVERAGE DURATION OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: 4 hours

Our tour starts from the settlement of Oxia. We follow the uphill dirt road to the south, towards the slopes of the mountain, crossing meadows and old fields. We reach the boundaries of the forest, where we follow a wide path between oak and other deciduous trees. We find again the forest dirt road and after about 2.5 km we reach the meadow of Latsista. In front of us is the Lesser Prespa with its banks covered by an extensive reed bed, an important habitat for birds. As we approach the shores of the lake, we meet the lakeside path that connects Mikrolimni with the abandoned settlement of Kranies. If we were to continue to the left (or southwest) following the old road, after 2.2 km we would reach the ruins of the old settlement.

We continue to the right, cross the meadow of Latsista and go up the hill north of the meadow. The rest of the route, 1.3 km long, runs parallel to the shores, offering a beautiful view of the lake and of Vidronisi, while crossing the thin forest of junipers, a forest formation characteristic of the region. Our walking comes to its end at Mikrolimni, where we can again observe the birds and the fish in the reed beds around the small pier.



1st Thematic unit:

The place and the people

We are in the settlement of Oxia (former name Bukovik). The few inhabited houses of the settlement maintain the image of the local architecture. The few inhabitants are engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry.

Part of our route follows a section of the old mule track which, until the end of the 19th century, connected Monastery with Korytsa. In the area of Latsista we find the cross-road leading to the now abandoned settlement of Kranies (former name Drenovo). For as long as the old road was still in operation, the settlement was bustling with life.

Our route ends at the settlement of Mikrolimni (former name Lag), a settlement of fishermen, stockbreeders and farmers.

I look around for the remains of another era: berms, dry-stone walls, stone roads.

I imagine what the area would have looked like a hundred years ago.

3rd Thematic unit:

The Prespes lakes

We are in the meadow of Latsista. In front of us the Lesser Prespa, which is almost entirely part of Greece, with a small part of it in the Southwest belonging to neighboring Albania. The Lesser Prespa, along with Great Prespa and the neighboring Ohrid are considered the oldest lakes on the European Continent.

In the waters of the lake there are two small islands, Agios Achilleios and Vidronisi that we see from our route.

I observe, draw, photograph, try to identify some of the tens of species of birds that fly or swim around us.

2nd Thematic unit:

The Bear in between the forests and the people

Crops and fruit bearing trees are gradually giving way to the forest of oaks and other deciduous trees. This is an ideal place for the bear, because here it can find food but also hiding places to protect itself.

The Bear is the largest wild mammal on the European mountains. It is considered an animal with exceptional intelligence, memory, as well as curiosity. It is omnivorous but prefers plant foods such as fruits from shrubs and from other fruit-bearing trees.

In the past, due to the fragmentation of its habitats, the illegal hunting and poisoned baits, the bear population had reached dangerously low levels. Today, however, its population has begun to grow again. Although conflicts continue, we cannot but recognize that there is a long tradition of coexistence of the wildlife and the inhabitants of mountainous settlements.

On the way, I am looking for traces of the brown bear: footprints, excrement, broken branches, hairs on tree trunks. I note down -and sometimes try- food sources: fruit trees, blackberries, acorns, etc.

4th Thematic unit:

«Three countries, two lakes, one future»

Leaving the meadow of Latsista behind us, we follow our way back, enjoying the view over the whole area of the lake.

Since 1974 the area has been declared a National Park. The area later joined the European Natura 2000 Network, with the aim of preserving the natural habitats as well as the wild fauna and flora. In 2000, with a joint Declaration of Greece, Albania and Northern Macedonia, there took place the creation of the Transboundary Prespa Park.

For the administration, protection and management of the area, the Prespa National Park Management Body was established, which operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Environment and Energy.

I think and discuss what is the best that can be done for the protection of nature and its coexistence with the people and the activities of the area.

The environmental education program «On the Paths of Coexistence» was created by the Environmental Organization «Callisto», in the framework of Action E.5. «Environmental Education Activities» of LIFE ARCPROM «Improving human – bear coexistence in 4 National Parks of South Europe» (LIFE18 NAT/GR/000768). It includes a tour of selected trails of the National Parks of Prespes and the Rodopi Mountain Range, as well as educational activities inside and outside the classroom.

The booklet you are holding in your hands will assist you in taking a tour and get informed about the wildlife, the plants and the habitats, the social and productive activities, the local communities which share the same area and resources as those of the wildlife. On the basis of everything we are going to see, we are called upon to reflect on the complex ways in which human activities interact with wildlife and to propose solutions that alleviate conflict and promote coexistence.

The Environmental Organization for Wildlife and Nature «Callisto» was created in 2004, with the aim of protecting the natural environment, wild animals such as bears and wolves, but also in order to ensure their harmonious coexistence with humans.

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