

Walk 6 – Nikiā to Mandraki Nisyros

via the caldera rim and Stavros

START POINT: Nikiā bus stop

GRADE Moderate

TIME: 3 + 1 hours

This walk is from the spectacularly located village of Nikiā, through abandoned ancient settlements and around the inside of the western rim of the volcano with dramatic views of the craters more than 1000 feet below. After skirting around the caldera at a high level on footpaths, a paved kalderimi drops down to a low point in the caldera rim before rising up again to the monastery of Stavros (above). The next section of the route is less interesting but offers the opportunity to visit the ancient, long-deserted monastic settlement of Siones with its church decorated with frescoes renovated in 1733 (Walk option 3). The final section is on the remains of a 15th Century stone-paved kalderimi and on paths through fields and terraces leading to the Paleocastro and back to Mandraki.

⊕ From the bus terminus/car park in Nikiā^{ref}, go up the narrow main street(1) to the 'Porta', the oval-shaped main square at the top of the village^{ref}, considered to be one of the most attractive in the Aegean, with its cathedral church, old school and town hall, black-and-white mosaic 'hochlakos' paving, an elliptical stone bench – and two tavernas

⊕ Go straight ahead through the square and up steps into the narrow alley at the side of the large blue and white taverna(2). In a few yards turn right(3) at a painted sign and up 3 steps into an even narrower alley at the end of which turn left (4) at the entrance to a walled garden and then immediately right, following the wall around. At a large rock turn left again into an open square^{ref}(5) with views straight down 1000feet into the crater **height: 415 metres**

⊕ Leave the square at the bottom right hand corner and go down white-edged concrete steps(5). Ignore the first turning on the left. When you reach the second turning on the left^{ref} turn right off the concrete and onto an indistinct dirt path trending slightly to the right and downhill(6).

⊕ In a few yards the path drops down rough stone steps, turns to the left, and becomes a broad, paved kalderimi between stone walls. This meanders down between ancient terraces with stone houses built underneath them.

⊕ After a while going downhill come to a fork^{ref} and take the path to the right (7), marked by a red spot, and going level towards a hill-top stone tower.

⊕ Continue on this level path following terrace walls (8) to reach another fork at the corner of a old stone building at the edge of a small abandoned settlement ^{ref} (9). Again take the path to the right and follow it as it skirts the derelict houses and passes between old stone gateposts to reach an ancient sterna (a good place to sit).

⊕ Just after the sterna and before the hill with the stone tower on top, turn right on a marked path^{ref}(10).

N 36° 34' 29.0"
E 27° 10' 42.8"
N 36° 34' 26.6"
E 27° 10' 37.1"

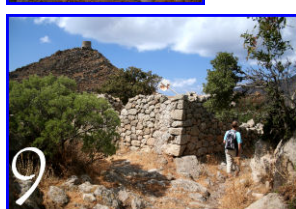
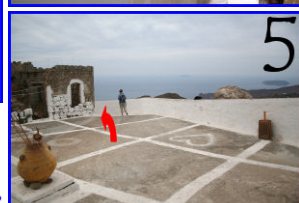
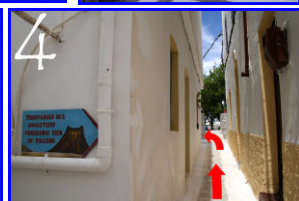
N 36° 34' 27.5"
E 27° 10' 35.6"
N 36° 34' 25.7"
E 27° 10' 36.0"

height: 415 metres

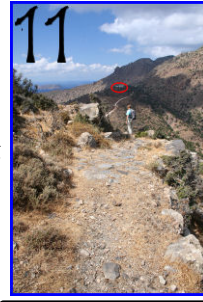
N 36° 34' 19.8"
E 27° 10' 30.4"

N 36° 34' 19.8"
E 27° 10' 23.2"

N 36° 34' 19.8"
E 27° 10' 20.9"



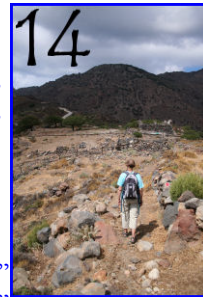
⊕ In a few yards the path drops down two rough stone steps and turns at right angles to the left to contour around inside the rim of the caldera and below the hill-top stone tower. Follow this narrow but clear path, do not take paths off to right or left which only give access to adjacent terraced fields and derelict houses. After a while the path becomes broader and



⊕ ... eventually it starts to drop down^{ref} at which point it becomes a broad paved kalderimi(11) and the next section of the walk can be seen far below and Stavros monastery can be seen on the hill opposite(12 and 13).

height: 310 metres

⊕ Follow the paved path to the bottom and at the 'T' junction^{ref} turn right onto a dirt path between walls(14).



⊕ Pass a derelict stone building on the left, go slightly upwards to the left, cross over a rusty steel pipe and turn right onto a rough track before joining a concrete road at a meteorological station on the caldera rim^{ref} (15)

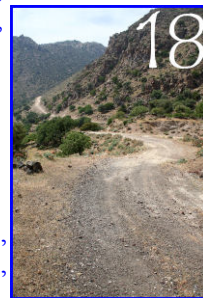
height: 200 metres N 36° 34' 18.6" E 27° 09' 44.8"



⊕ Follow this road uphill, still around the rim of the caldera, alternating between concrete and rough, unmade surface(16), up to the entrance to Agios Stavros monastery^{ref} (17).

height: 260 metres N 36° 34' 25.9" E 27° 09' 23.6"

⊕ Continue on the unmade road which from the monastery onwards no longer follows the rim of the caldera.



⊕ It first drops down(18) and then passes a cave and old church, (now in agricultural use)(19) on the right before rising up to a high point in a col^{ref}.

height: 335 metres N 36° 34' 54.5" E 27° 08' 45.3"

⊕ Continuing on the unmade road, shortly after the col is a path off to the right^{ref} (20) past old stone buildings, leading to the ancient monastery of Siones with fine, if somewhat deteriorating, frescoes.



⊕ At this point choose whether to continue direct to Mandraki (1-1½ hours) or to divert to Siones, for which allow at least another hour (Walk Option 3), coming back to the road at the same point.

⊕ In either case, continue downhill on the rough-surfaced road which was built by obliterating an old and very fine kalderimi. In a few places remnants of the kalderimi can be seen just to the side, in other places the surface of the road is starting to wash away to reveal the stone-paved surface of the kalderimi beneath.

⊕ Follow the road to a very pronounced hairpin bend^{ref} (21). At this point decide whether to continue to follow the road or to follow what is left of the kalderimi and old footpaths back to Mandraki.

N 36° 35' 31.6" E 27° 08' 16.0"



⊕ To follow the old paths, continue straight ahead at the hairpin bend(21) onto a thin footpath which soon becomes a well paved if slightly overgrown kalderimi. In a short distance it drops down steeply to rejoin the road again^{ref}.

N 36° 35' 35.3" E 27° 08' 13.9"

⊕ Walk diagonally across the road and drop down the road-building rubble to rejoin the kalderimi on the other side(22). From here on the path is in some places clear and obvious, in other places it can be confused with alternatives. However, the Mandraki path is marked by red spots as it winds between the terraced fields.



⊕ After some distance reach a gap in a tumble-down wall^{ref} (23) where a broad path between stone walls goes off at 90 degrees to the right back towards the road and a thin footpath goes straight ahead through the gap. Go through the gap and take the left of two thin paths.



⊕ Pass a disused stone building and drop downhill through terraces to reach a cistern in the middle of the path^{ref}. From the cistern continue on the path down through 3 terraces, go a few yards along the third and then drop down onto a 4th, follow it to a dead tree with a red spot, drop down another terrace and follow the path through a gap in the wall.

N 36° 35' 44.1"
E 27° 08' 07.7"

⊕ Immediately after the gap in the wall there is another drop down to the left – do not go down here but follow the path along the terrace to reach another gap in a wall where it becomes a dedicated rough stone path with walls on both sides. Follow this to a red spot alongside a gap in the wall^{ref} (24) with steps up to a thin path through a field.



N 36° 35' 50.1"
E 27° 08' 01.2"

⊕ Do not go through the gap – stay on the broad path between walls as it turns sharply to the left shortly after which it again becomes an ordinary narrow path along terraces before going through a level area with stunted oak trees, then again becoming another dedicated path with walls and fields on both sides. Continue on this until, as it skirts a house in a fenced agricultural enclosure on the right, it drops down to rejoin the road^{ref}

N 36° 36' 06.7"
E 27° 07' 55.9"

⊕ Turn left and follow the concrete road downhill to a 'T' junction^{ref} where it turns sharp right to go down into Mandraki or left to go the short distance to the Paleocastro.

N 36° 36' 16.5"
E 27° 07' 54.6"

⊕ To take the footpath down into Mandraki go diagonally across the road, drop down onto the signposted path (25) and follow it down into the town.



⊕ When you come into Mandraki turn left downhill and then right at the tiny square with a monument in the corner. In a short distance the narrow alley leads into another square with a black and white pebbled hochlakos mosaic and a food shop on the right. Immediately after the shop turn to the right into another alley which leads into the main square.

Notes of caution: Nikia – Stavros – Mandraki

This part of the walk is entirely downhill with just two short uphill sections, one to Stavros monastery, the other to the col. However, little of it is in the shade of trees until close to the end. Therefore, like all walks in Greece, in the height of summer it can be tiring and cause dehydration. It is therefore important to set a comfortable pace and to keep enough water in reserve for your needs.

Be careful not to be attacked by the prickly pear cacti on final section of the path down into Mandraki, both overhead and underfoot. The walk is fairly easy-going underfoot and it can be done comfortably and safely in walking sandals such as Teva or Merrell. However, as is always the case in the mountains, urban sandals, flip-flops and slip-on shoes are definitely NOT suitable footwear.

GPS references are given using the common GPS default datum WGS 84 (World Geodetic System 1984) – degrees, minutes and seconds. The final digit is included for completeness but is shown in grey to indicate that it cannot be relied upon as accurate due to the degrading of the satellite data.

Other walks on Nisyros

- Walk 1: Emborios to Mandraki via bubble
- Walk 3: Nikia to Mandraki via caldera
- Walk 4: Emborios to Mandraki via caldera
- Walk 5: Mandraki to Oros Diavatis
- Walk Option 1 – to Nifios
- additional to Walks 3 and 4
- Walk Option 2 – to Oros Diavatis
- additional to Walks 1, 3 and 4



Walks on Nisyros By Barry Hankey

Walk option 3 – to Siones

Nisyros

START POINT: road from Stavros to Mandraki

GRADE : Easy

TIME : 1 hour

This is an optional addition to the walk to Mandraki from Nikiā via the caldera rim and Stavros monastery. Starting from just beyond the high point in the col after leaving Stavros, the path goes into a small valley with the deserted ancient monastery complex of Siones. Clustered around a traditional inner courtyard or 'avli' is a compact group of buildings displaying various stages of agricultural and religious occupation including original cave dwellings, a one room family house with open hearth and sleeping platform, and a church adorned with frescoes renovation in 1733 but now deteriorating due to water ingress in winter. The easy path takes about 20 minutes each way. Allow at least an hour for the additional walk and exploration.

⊕ The way to Siones begins shortly after the col beyond Stavros.

A path goes off to the right^{ref} (1), turn onto the stone-paved path(2) and follow it to the enclosure around the old stone buildings.

N 36° 35' 02.7"
E 27° 08' 44.0"



⊕ Go in through the gate(3), straight ahead and in a few metres up 2 rough-built stone and concrete steps(4) through a gap in a palette-fence to pass the old house on the left.



⊕ Just past the (unoccupied) house climb up the low part of the stone wall and turn immediately left(5) on an initially clear but increasingly thin path.

⊕ Follow this through rocks and trees onto a terraced field, soon turning down to the right, and into a hidden valley. The path dog-legs to follow the floor of the valley(6).



⊕ Drop down through terraces and overhanging trees onto the valley floor and continue along the left hand edge until a thin path goes up to the left. (7).



⊕ At the top of this are an old stone trough, some half barrels and stone gate pillars(8). Go through the pillars (8+9) and immediately left along paths up to a terraced field leading leftward to Siones which is now in view^{ref} (9+10).

N 36° 35' 18.8"
E 27° 08' 46.8"



Other walks on Nisyros

Walk 1: Emborios to Mandraki via bubble

Walk 3: Nikiā to Mandraki via caldera

Walk 4: Emborios to Mandraki via caldera

Walk 5: Mandraki to Oros Diavatis

Walk Option 1 – to Nifios

..... additional to Walks 3 and 4

Walk Option 2- to Oros Diavatis

..... additional to Walks 1, 3 and 4



Walks on Nisyros
By Barry Hankey



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