

PELISTER NATIONAL PARK

SOURCE: DISCOVER PELISTER CHURCHES & MONASTERIES

Pelister National Park has undertaken to mark and maintain a hiking footpath that will enable all nature lovers and cultural heritage admirers to visit the churches and monasteries on the slopes of Mt. Pelister. The first part of the footpath begins in the village of Trnovo and, through the villages of Magarevo and Rotino, leads to the village of Capari, while its second part passes by the churches and monasteries in the village of Maloviste.

Those who decide to walk along this path will first visit the Church of Assumption of the Mother of God on the outskirts of the village of Trnovo. The church, built in 1854, is at the very entrance to the village. It was entirely destroyed in WWI and many of its valuable relics were lost without a trace. Its valuable iconostasis has known to be dismantled by Bulgarian soldiers who intended to take it to their country. However, due to the difficult circumstances of the war, they were not entirely successful and the iconostasis was recovered and taken to the church of the Most Holy Mother of God in Bitola. In the 1930's the church in Trnovo was reconstructed by the local population and it again became the center of the village's spiritual life. In recent years, the church's yard has become a summer meeting place for emigrants living in Europe and overseas, as well as for Macedonians driven out of Greece during the Greek Civil War.

From Trnovo, the footpath continues to Magarevo, where a church was built in 1834 and dedicated to the Holy Great Martyr Dimitry. During WWI this church shared the same fate as the church in Trnovo. It was entirely destroyed and nothing of its interior remained. Even the iconostasis suffered the same fate and was later recovered and brought to the same church in Bitola. This church, the Holy Great Martyr Dimitrij, was restored after the war and ever since has been regularly visited by its congregation.

Quite nearby there used to be a female monastery dedicated to St. George. It has been erected in 1871 but unfortunately, its hospice was destroyed in the WWI military actions and only the church that now stands bears witness to its existence.



riOn their way to Capari, the visitors pass through Rotino, where they can see St. Nicholas's Church and St. Elijah's Monastery. The church was built in 1870. The damage it suffered in WWI was repaired after the war and the church was consecrated again. Every year of December 19th, the church celebrates its patron saint.

The picturesque trail that leads to St. Elijah's starts from the last house in the village, and through the thick oak forest, winds up to the base of Mt. Pelister. One kilometer from the village, the monastery stands at 1,070 meters above sea level. Visitors are welcome to explore the church and the monastery's buildings, which are particular because, unlike elsewhere, they are not separated from each other.

The first part of this mountain trail ends in the village of Capari, and brings the hiker to St. Petka's Monastery and St. George's Church. The monastery was built in the 16th Century, while the existing monastic church was built in the 19th century. For a long time this monastery was under the Diocese of Ohrid, while being within the administrative boundaries of the county of Bitola. The monastery was in a rather poor state of repair until 1724, when, as historical evidence shows, it was restored by a priest named Dionysius. The fire that broke out in the late 19th Century consumed its iconostasis, icons and most of the church's contents. However, the damaged sections were soon restored with the help of the congregation. The church occupies the center of the monastery, its east, south and west walls being flanked by the monastic chambers whose high balconies are connected and form a single ensemble. The congregation flocks to the monastery every 8th of September to celebrate the monastery's feast.

Capari's spiritual heritage is further complimented by St. George's Church, whose foundations were laid by the local population on the 11th of May, 1888. The church's frescoes date back to 1890 and are the work of Josif Radevik from the village of Lazaropole, near Debar. The church was consecrated on 26th July 1891, when there were 196 households in the village.

The second part of the trail takes visitors to the village of Maloviste and its surroundings. The village, like few others, boasts an extraordinary spiritual and cultural heritage, and has remained untouched and is thereby able to testify about the life and centuries long customs that have endured in this part of Macedonia.



St. Dimitry - Magarevo



Church of the Assumption - Trnovo



St. Petka - Malovišta



At 1,410 meters above sea level, 2.5 kilometers southeast of the village of Maloviste, in the midst of an oak forest, the Monastery of St. Anna stands high between the tall trees. There are records testifying that it was there as early as the mid 18th Century. However, the existing church was built in 1936, while the hospice was built in several stages during the 20th Century. Visitors can refresh themselves at the monastery's great fountain that generously spouts clean and fresh mountain water.

The next site that this footpath leads to is the cathedral temple dedicated to the protector of the dead, St. Petka. It was erected in 1856 upon the foundations of another church where it is believed to date back to the 16th or 17th Century. The church, a testimony to the skill of the master craftsmen at the time, captivates with its architecture. Its interior is dominated by the iconostasis of 1892 covering the space of 100 square meters, which was executed in the technique of deep woodcarving by master craftsman Dimitrij. The icons and frescoes, works of renowned fresco-painters, add to the mystic atmosphere that entralls the visitors already at the doorstep of the church. A true cultural and spiritual treasure rests in the temple's permanent galleries of icons, where about 100 icons are exhibited in chronological sequence covering a period of about 400 years.

High on Mount Baba, beneath the peak called The Pyramid, at 2,000 meters above sea level, is the church of the Holy Saviour, dedicated to Christ's resurrection. It has been built by people of faith on the very rocks of the mountain. The peak, where the small belfry stands, offers a grandstand view of Lake Prespa. The church's feast day is always on Thursday, 40 days after Easter.

While in Maloviste, one can also visit the small St. George's Church along the north approach to the village and the chapel of St. Athanasius the Great, north of the last house in the village.

