

The management and promotion of Tithorea's trail at the Parnassos National Park for the sustainable touristic development of the region

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Abstract

The trails and especially the so-called "thematic trails" such as the "Nature Trails", "Geological Trails", etc, besides the outdoor recreation and physical activity that offer to a modern man, they are also significantly "tools", used by the specialists for highlighting the characteristics of the natural environment, the geological-geomorphological characteristics, as well as the historical background and tradition of certain areas. Typical example of this is the northeastern side of Parnassos National Park, which is traversed by the Tithorea's trail, at the "Aesthetic forest of Tithorea", near the village of Tithorea. The purpose of the present research is to highlight the specific characteristics of Tithorea's trail concerning biodiversity, landscape, geomorphology, history and culture, as well as to offer proposals about its management in the protected area of Parnassos National Park. The management and promotion of Tithorea's trail could become a model for alternative forms of tourism in mountainous areas and it will help to integrate the protected area in the wider ecological, economic and social environment for the sustainable development of the region.

Geographical location of the study area

A dense network of trails can be found at Mt Parnassos (Figure 1). Tithorea's trail (Route I) starts from the square of Tithorea village (Plakoto' square) and ends after 2 hours to the Cave of Od. Androutsos. Reaching the point (384013,085 X 4270971,789 Y), a hiker can follow the route (Route II) that leads to Liakoura peak, after of 5-6 hours of hiking.

Results - Discussion

Tithorea's trail management and promotion

The efficient management of a trail, the protection and enhancement of the landscape and the natural and built environment that surround it, need compliance to the relevant rules in to be maintained (Figure 2). These rules include proper signage, regular maintenance and, in some cases, monitoring and guarding as well as promotion. The appropriate signage and maintenance are prerequisites for the safe use of the trails. According to N.C.N.S.T. (1996), signs are probably the quickest and easiest way to leave the trail user with a positive impression. If the signs are high quality, well maintained, and properly located, other trail problems which are harder to solve are often over-looked (e.g., wet areas). Consistent signs are the quickest way to increase the trail's identity and the public's support for the trail.

The results of this monitoring & management program alongside the findings concerning the effects caused by the presence of visitors in the protected areas, can give its managers the possibility to systematically improve and apply a constantly rejuvenated "Rules & Regulations". As a consequence, this process contributes positively to the reduction of the environmental impact of the presence of visitors and use of the trail. Meanwhile, the "revolving monitoring program" of visitors and its systematic updating will help to the accurate identification of the target group of visitors. This will enable the competent bodies in creating the appropriate conditions and infrastructure to meet the needs and requirements of visitors (eg. cyclists, etc.). Additional actions can contribute positively to the enhancement of the landscape and generally to the rational management of a trail. These actions include the active promotion and attraction of publicity among others.

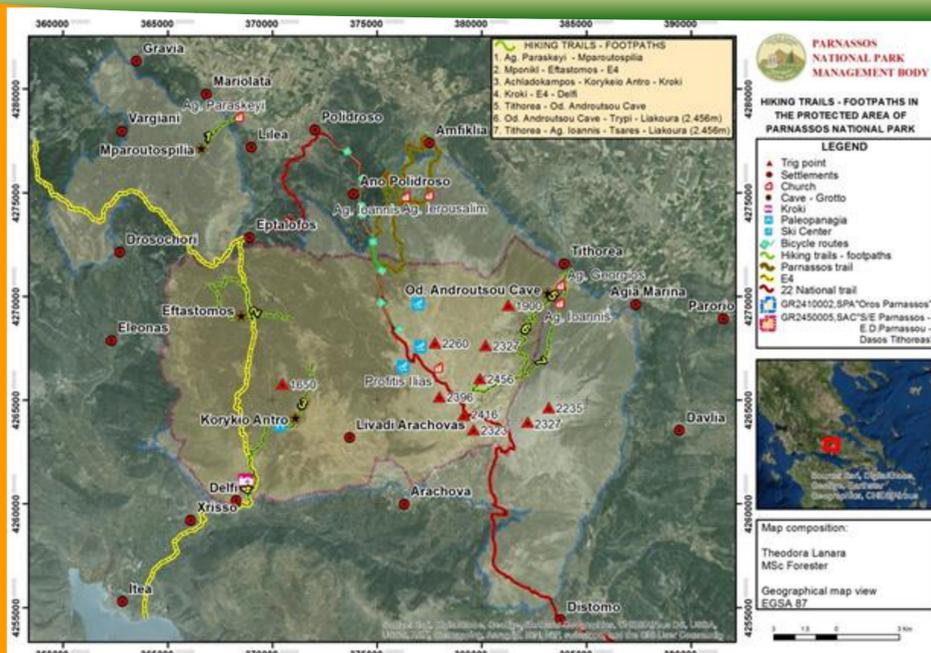


Figure 1: Map of the hiking trails in the protected area of Parnassos National Park

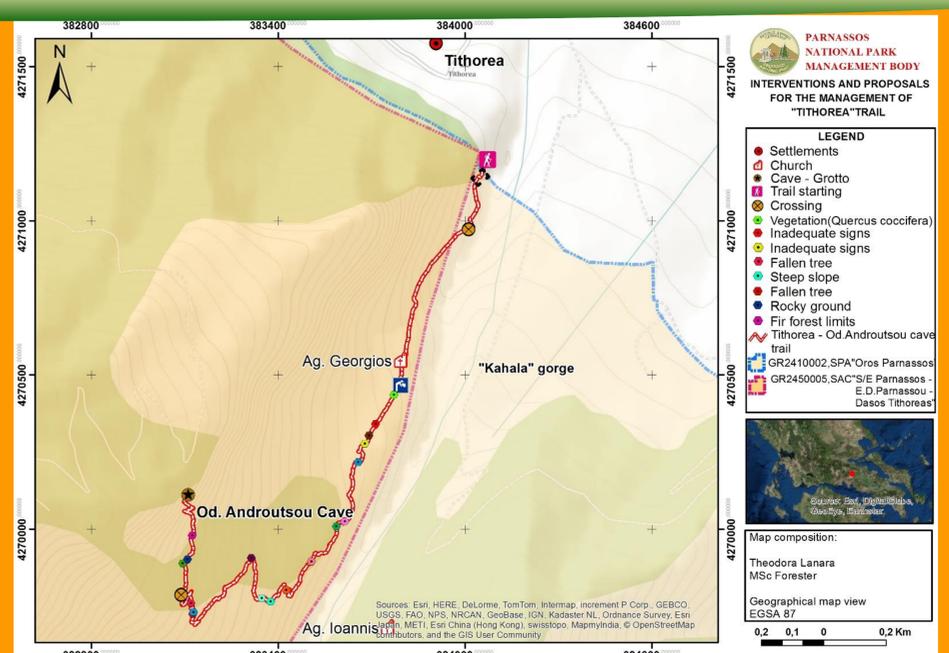


Figure 2: Map of Tithorea's trail (Route I). Interventions and proposals for the trail management



Conclusions

A dense network of trails are can be found at Mt Parnassos. Following their route, the traveler can enjoy many of the special features. The management of Tithorea's trail, and the protection and promotion of the environment, namely of the vegetation, flora, fauna, landscape, geology, geomorphology, history and archeology, of this area, constitute the main subject of this paper. According to both recent and older recordings that took place in Tithorea's trail, there are no systematic interventions competent authorities to date. These interventions are suggested for the efficient management of the trail and include: a. Appropriate infrastructure (construction of trail structures, boardwalks & wooden steps, litter bins, etc.), b. Signage (Trailhead information signs, kiosks or Information/Interpretive signs, Destination signs, Reassurance markers/blazes, You-Are-Here signs, etc.), c. Improvement of the trail (trail widening & clearing, tree & shrub trimming, etc.), d. Trail maintenance (user safety, access, protect adjacent resources, preserve trail investment, cleaning, etc.), e. Visitor monitoring & management and f. Promotion & marketing (publicity).