

“SKIAS ONAR”

General information (VII, 700m vertical gain, 20 pitches)

This direttissima was climbed in August 2011 by Panos Athanasiadis and Yiannis Constandakis. Because a lot of time was spent at the belays laughing and hammering holes for bolts, the route was completed in two separate pushes, each one with a bivouac on the wall. The first four pitches are shared with other, pre-existing routes. The name of the route “σκιάς όναρ” (meaning “dream of a shadow”) originates from Pindar (in translation): “creatures of a day! what is a man? what is he not? a dream of a shadow is our mortal being.” On the same line, Shakespeare wrote: “we are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep.”

The party aimed for a direct, aesthetically pleasing route. Thus, some pitches (e.g. 7th, 8th, 11th and 14th) will definitely be a good reward to your efforts. Generally, the route moves on very good quality limestone; however, at R19 there is a traversing section on very poor rock, which (despite the thorough cleaning) requires your utmost caution. The route may be long, yet retreat by rappel is facilitated up to R11. Also, at R6 one can escape to a much easier route (see light-blue line in the picture), and after reaching the upper ledges (R14) there is also an escape path to the left (marked, II-III).

To start the route one has to scramble up to the highest point of the wooded zone running across the wall, one-third of the way up the face as seen from the village. There is a marked path that can take you there in about 2.5 hours from the road (see description below). Alternatively, the route can be combined with one of the classic routes of the lower section of the face (our recommendation is to follow the route “Aisthiseon”, which is of similar style and difficulty). In any case, especially on hot days, it is advised to carry plenty of water. Only very fast parties, familiar with the terrain, are likely to complete the approach, the climb and the descent in a single push, that is without a bivouac. The integral route (Skias Onar + Chloe) was first climbed by A. Assimakopoulos and P. Athanasiadis in 13 hours.

Rack: Ropes 2 x 50m, a full series of wire-nuts, friends up to BD Camalot No4, quick draws and slings (including some double-length ones). Hammer and pitons are not essential.

In situ gear: Most of the belay stations have one bolt with a rappel ring, plus a piton, or a second bolt. Between R11 and R15 no fixed belays will be found, yet the rock easily accepts clean gear. After R15 retreat may be more difficult due to the traversing course.

Approach: Start next to the fountain at the village of “Συκιά” and follow the ravine upstream, following the yellow marks towards “Λαζόρεμα”. The path will take you up and left, overlooking the left branch of the ravine. Shortly before you reach some open, semi-flat ground you come to a shoulder with a small rocky protrusion on your left. Leave the path and zig-zag up the steep slope on your right side, aiming straight up and slightly right to a rock with a red mark pointing up. This is the start of a marked path used by climbers,

called "monopati Karayianni" (not found in maps), that goes all the way to the top of the mountain ridge. After an exposed passage (cliff on your right) you should make a sharp left turn, following the marks. In a couple of minutes, after a small step, you will find blue marks next to the red ones. Follow the blue marks traversing right. After an obvious couloir, which you do not take, the marks lead to a narrow steep passage, continue to the right-going ledges until their end, where a big conifer tree is found. Climb up to your left (III) for 15m. Then, traverse immediately to the right, towards a steep and dry ravine that marks the left end of the lower part of the mountain wall. Go up the ravine keeping to the right side (marks) until you get to a fixed rope hanging on the right side. Go up the rope (after testing it) and follow the marks to the woods above. Move up and right to the top of the conical scree slope. 2-3 hours from the road.

Descent: The most efficient descent is to get to the red-marked path and follow it carefully down (poorly marked in some parts). In the picture, both routes (light-blue and green lines) finish at a big ramp going up and right. At the height where the light-blue line ends you will find some blue marks (sparse) that traverse the ramp and finally lead, with minimal elevation loss, to a big, open gully. To identify this open gully keep in mind that near its top another ramp (scree slope) ascends the mountain face in the opposite direction. Locate and follow the red marks that go down the gully. Do not lose the marks, because the terrain is rugged, and any other course will be very adventurous, at least. Finally, you will find the blue marks of the approach route, and shortly after you will be relieved to get to the yellow-marked path. Time: 2-4 hours. This descent should be avoided in the dark. **A safer but longer descent path:** If not familiar with the terrain, and especially if running short of daylight, it is recommended to follow the large, sloping ramp to the mountain ridge, reach the top of the mountain, and descent more easily and safely its back side towards "Vathia Laka". From there one can follow the yellow-marked path (found in the maps) towards Lazorema and the village of Sykia.

Retreat: as soon as the wide, wooded ledge is reached at base of the route, move to the left side of the wall staying as high as possible when traversing the scree slopes. At the far end, follow a short, steep gully (like a ramp) to its top. On your left you may see a rappel sling around a big tree – do not use this, instead search near the edge of the cliff for a single ring bolt cemented onto the rock. A 50m rappel will take you down to the scree slopes. Traverse left, slightly gaining height, until you finally reach the red-marked path.

Rescue: Keep in mind that there is nothing like a well-organized rescue service in Greece. Therefore, as usual, one should rely primarily on self-rescue. However, saving some emergency contacts in your mobile is good practice. If you get the chance, you may want to inform the owner of the little tavern opposite to the church about your climbing plans, as well as, the local climbing community (check <http://www.routes.gr/Community/index.php>).

Time: 2-3 hours for the approach, 9-14 hours for climbing "Skias Onar" alone, 2-4 hours for returning to the village. There are several possible on-route bivouac sites near R4, R6, R8, R10 and R18. However, the best ones are found: (1) near the base of the route, going

down the conical scree slope, near the edge, and (2) at the upper ledges, as marked in the picture.

Route Description

*: bolt, p: piton, n: fixed nut, δ: see-through, μ: horn, N: no fixed gear.

R1 (, 45m, V+, 1*)**: Move up and right towards a smooth dihedral, pass a bolt and continue to the belay at the base of another dihedral.

R2 (, 45m, V-, 1p)**: Follow this dihedral/chimney and before its end step left to the ledges. Go up the steep and smooth wall at its left side. Continue straight up until the bolted belay is found on the left.

R3 (*p, 40m, VI-, 1p): General direction is straight up. Clip a piton at the beginning of a short overhanging chimney. Climb it and after some more meters find the belay to your right, at the center of the wall.

R4 (*p, 45m, VI-): Continue straight up (do not veer left). Save your No3 (fist size) friend for near the exit. When over the top, follow the water path and find the belay on your left.

R5 (, 50m, V+)**: Move up the slab staying on the left. Stemming helps at the exit. Continue up in the dihedral.

R6 (*μ, 50μ, V): Continue up the gully / dihedral and exit towards the left side. Walk up a few meters and climb a short step to the top of the protruding rock, to the right of the big tree.

R7 (, 40m, VII-, 1p)**: This is a beautiful pitch. Go up the crack and over the blocks and traverse right clipping to piton. Move up to the thin crack but be careful not to pull on the flake. Get to the sloping ledge above, and pass up and left to a sloping ramp leading to the belay behind a little tree.

R8 (, 45m, VII, 3p, 1*, 1n)**: Climb the dihedral straight up and continue in the overhanging crack (left-hand jug, piton). Above, you will be driven left, and then right towards the bolt (VII grade, friction). Above the bolt you will find a large piton. Then traverse right to the vegetation (ledge). Continue straight up and find the belay on your right.

R9 (N, 50m, IV-): Above the belay follow the big ramp to the left. Then up and left to a ledge where it is easy to build a belay.

R10 (*, 50m, VI-): Follow the short dihedral, pass next to a tree, and continue up and left following the upper end of the solid slab. At the end, around the corner, go up another dihedral.

R11 (*p, 50m, VI+): Here a test of your skills awaits: one of the nicest pitches found in the Hellenic mountains. Get your No4 Camalot ready. Climb the off-width crack and continue straight up in the vertical dihedral above. Find the belay a few meters past the top.

R12 (N, 50m, IV): Move to the broken steps on your left and into the groove/dihedral. Pass a short, steep step and build a belay to the left side, outside the groove.

R13 (N, 50m, V): Leave the belay and cross the groove, where the rock is good. Move up and exit the dihedral to its left (exposed). Then, veer to the right and make a belay at a little cave at the top of a sloping ledge. Be careful with the ropes not to knock down rocks.

R14 (N, 50m, V+): Go right, up and left so as to come above the belay. Continue to the clean dihedral crack, exiting to the right. Pass next to the dead tree (at its left) and move up to the left overhung (easier than it looks) and around the corner. Continue to the slope above and make a belay when climbing is over.

R15 (N, 80m, II): Walk up to the "tower" above, where 2+1 bivouac spaces can be found. Continue to the rocks at the base of the sloping slab. Improvise a belay as high as possible.

R16 (*, 50m, V): Get up to the slab at its corner and traverse right to the wall. Go up a little and get to the characteristic ramp that goes right. Move far right on the ramp until you can move up without difficulty. The rock quality deteriorates. Get over a small overhang and find the belay (single bolt + No1 / No2 Camalot).

R17 (2δ, 40m, VI, 1p): Continue straight up, clip the piton and traverse up-right. Follow ramps around a corner to the belay (slings threaded to the rock).

R18 (N, 35m, VI-): Start the next pitch on the left, reach a small flake, overcome a mantle, continue right and up in the dihedral (No4 Camalot useful). Then move up and right towards a big cave with a column inside, where you can make a belay.

R19 (1p, 40m, VI+): Here your nerves will be tested. A poorly protected traverse on bad rock is awaiting. Start at the left of the cave, go up a little and start the traverse. Mid-way you will need to move up a little, then you will reach a concave corner. Up and right follow the crack/groove with a high step. Pull on the vegetation for help. Continue in the dihedral until you find a piton (small blade). Back up this to make a belay.

R20 (N, 50m, IV+): Go up the easy chimney and continue in the gully above veering slightly left. The difficulties are over. Descend to the amphitheatrical gully behind the ridge, traverse it, climb to the little "V" and get to the wide open ramp. This can be followed to its top (to reach the mountain ridge), or descended until the blue marks are found (end of light-blue line in picture).