

Greece

SPORT CLIMBING: THE BEST OF
2014 EDITION

Aris Theodoropoulos

TERRAIN

EDITIONS

GRADE RANGE	up to 5b+	5c to 6a+	6b to 7a	7a+ to 7c	7c+ & above
No. OF ROUTES	13	45	44	9	3

Nafplio from above, with sector Akronafplia to the left.



NAFPLIO

Nafplio has it all. Rich in texture and tradition, this gem of a city nestles in a protected bay on the northern end of the Argolic Gulf, a mere 1.5 hours from Athens. Its surroundings - fragrant citrus groves, emerald seawater and distant mountain peaks - are the epitome of natural harmony, and the area's castles, stately buildings and archaeological sites speak of a long and diverse history. Today Nafplio is a lively small city, where the quality of life is high, and the elegant Old Town is a very popular weekend destination teeming with quayside cafés, restaurants and hotels. Thanks to the city's location and layout you can easily navigate it on foot, and go climbing, jogging or swimming within minutes. Last but not least, Nafplio is blessed with a very mild climate, making it one of the best **winter crags** in Greece.

Climbing: The crags of Nafplio are in fantastic seaside locations. For the most part, the limestone cliffs are solid and of slightly overhanging red, yellow and white rock. There are also some very compact (though occasionally sharp) gray slabs. Most routes are equipped in the Kalymnos-style, i.e. with densely placed stainless-steel bolts. Names are not always written at the base of each route. There is a lot more room for new routes in Nafplio; apart from the crags in these pages, numerous virgin cliffs are scattered throughout the area. A new climb-

ing area is already in the making beneath the imposing Venetian fortress of *Palamidi* in Nafplio. Named after the fortress, sector **Palamidi** is a 5-minute walk along the gravel pedestrian road from the *Arvanitia* parking lot towards *Neraki*, and then up to the left for 3-4 min.

Conditions: Nafplio is suitable for **year-round** climbing, as long as you match the right crag to the right season and time of day. The area's climate is especially mild, therefore perfect for winter climbing. Summer climbing is good at *Karathona* on early mornings, and at *Akronafplia* or *Neraki* late in the afternoon (don't forget your swimming gear).

Kids: All crags in Nafplio are good for kids.

Gear: A single 60m rope and 16 QDs for the longer routes. Bolts and lower-offs are generally in very good shape, except for sector *Panagitsa* which urgently needs rebolting. Sectors *Karathona* and *Neraki* were recently rebolted (2012/2013) by Kostas Tsoukleidis and Nadine Strobl with hardware provided by the Hellenic Federation of Mountaineering & Climbing.



Getting to Nafplio

Nafplio is **148km** southwest of Athens. From the Athens International Airport, take the **Attiki Odos** motorway in the direction towards **Elefsina**. Continue towards **Korinthos**. On the outskirts of Korinthos, turn off onto the motorway towards **Tripoli**. Then, exit towards Nafplio and follow the road signs to **Nafplio**. Alternatively, you can take the **KTEL** bus from Athens, since you can easily navigate Nafplio without a car and access all crags (except *Kondyli*) on foot.

Local info

Accommodation: There are myriads of options for all budgets. A lot of restored mansions in Nafplio house romantic inns and boutique hotels, but cheaper and simpler rooms are also widely available. For example, *Vasilis* has a good choice of rooms on a budget. If you are in the mood for something more special (but not outrageous), try *Grand Sarai* or *Ippolyti*. **Food/Shopping:** Again, options are almost limitless: there are bakeries, supermarkets, gourmet food shops, *gelaterias*, and restaurants for all tastes (a personal favorite is *Alaloum*: discovernafplio.gr/en/section/8/listings/111).

Other nearby crags

Eight more crags with about 300 routes are within an hour's drive away along the Argolis peninsula. Most routes were equipped by Jim Titt, a former longtime resident, as well as Hans Weninger. The only reason these crags are not in the guidebook is a lack of space; the fact remains that Argolis is gorgeous, and some crags like *Didyma* (on a mountain crest at 1100m altitude) are certainly worth a visit if you have time and seek grades between 5c-6c. More info: climbargolis.com, climbgreece.com

Links

discovernafplio.gr
nafplion.gr/
grecetravel.com/nafplio



Bourtzi Castle, one of the landmarks of Nafplio.



All the crags (except Kondyli) lie next to, but just hidden, from Nafplio, on the far (south) side of the small, rocky hills beneath which the city lies. The fortresses on these hills, from left to right as you approach Nafplio from the north are Palamidi, Akronafplia and Bourtzi (the 'island' castle). A very convenient promenade or walkway runs along the edge of the sea beneath the crags. The described sectors, from left to right as you look in from the sea, are: **Akronafplia**, **Neraki**, and **Karathona**.

AKRONAFPLIA

Akronafplia is a rocky promontory atop which sit the remains of the ancient city's fortified walls. The landscape is idyllic, the cliffs are solid - if a bit sharp - and routes start just above the romantic promenade which links *Arvanitia* beach to the port. Despite the 'ban' in recent years (see note below), strolling along the promenade is the favorite pastime of locals and visitors alike. There will always be somebody walking, jogging or cycling beneath the cliffs, so please don't take up too much space belaying and keep your gear out of the way.

A note about access: After severe rainfall in early 2007, some rocks were dislodged from a non-climbing cliff above the *Akronafplia* promenade, not too far from the climbing sectors. As a result, the municipality restricted access to the promenade and banned walking and climbing until 'necessary works to protect pedestrians/

climbers are performed'. To our knowledge, these works were never started, much less completed. Over the years, people have come to ignore the warning signs and continue to walk, run, and climb. No further problems have been reported; but, funnily enough, pedestrians will sometimes 'reprimand' climbers for climbing. Don't fret. Instead of barking "What? You're not allowed to walk here either!" a polite retort will usually suffice; something like "Don't worry, we never climb on loose rock. Neither of us is at risk". A group of climbers, including this author, has had ongoing discussions with local authorities about this arbitrary ban, and climbers are encouraged to include *Akronafplia* in their itinerary even though the 'ban' is technically still in effect.

Climbing: Vertical, somewhat sharp gray rock, along with smoother, slightly overhanging, fully-pocketed yellow and red limestone. Pitches are between 15-30 meters long.

Conditions: Ideal for climbing between September and May, but summer climbing is also possible in late afternoon shade.

☀ **Sun:** Until 17:00. **Exposure:** SE

Approach: Go to the Arvanitia parking lot (37.563434, 22.800084), between the hills of *Palamidi* and *Akronafplia*. As you come into town from **Leoforos Argous**,



Aris Theodoropoulos on 'Amaryllis' 7a+ (page 177).



stay to the right and onto **Kiprou St** (which becomes **25 Martiou St**). Turn left on **Polyzoidi St**, which ends at a parking lot 250m further. If you have a car/motorbike, park there. Then, walk west along the cobbled promenade. Alternatively, you can approach the crag from the port of Nafplio, by walking SW along the promenade. **Walking time:** 5-10 min.

PANAGITSA

Routes are past the stone arch, just beneath the chapel. The first of the area's crags (1990), it was bolted mainly by Aris Theodoropoulos & Kostas Liakos/Nikos Iliakis.

☀ **Sun:** After 11:00. **Exposure:** S

- | | | | |
|---|---|----|--------|
| 1 | Slab of Panagitsa | 1★ | 5c 20m |
| 2 | Peratzada | 2★ | 5a 20m |
| | Good for beginners. | | |
| 3 | Corner of Panagitsa | 2★ | 5b 15m |
| 4 | Clean corner | 2★ | 5c 15m |
| | A nice smooth corner. | | |
| 5 | Aigisthos | 2★ | 6b 18m |
| | Starts hard but eases off. Not shown in the topo. | | |



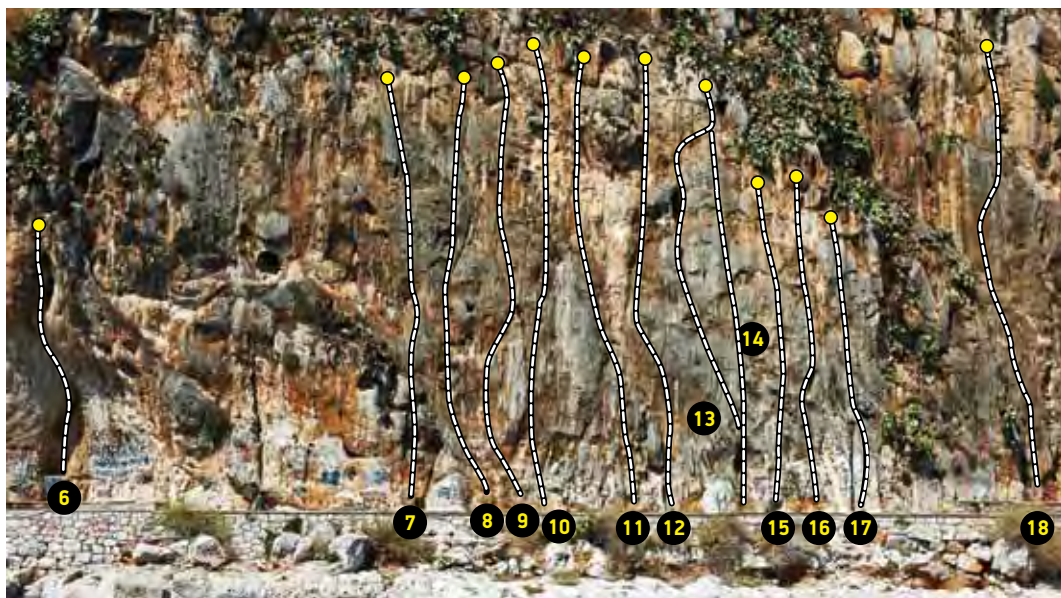
Good times on 'Kali Lefteria' 5c (page 183).

APSIDA

Slightly before the stone arch, these cliffs are sharp gray slabs or Tonsai-style yellow overhangs. The first three routes were equipped by Aris Theodoropoulos, and additional routes were bolted in June 2006 by Josef Gstoettenmayr with local climber Aris Georgopoulos.

☀ Sun: Between 10:30-18:00. Exposure: SE

- 6** Tonsai 7b 15m
- Steep Thai-style climbing!
- 7** La Sinistra 2★ 6b 20m
- 8** Herz Dame 2★ 6a 20m
- 9** Herz Bube 2★ 6a+ 22m
- 10** Premiere 2★ 6b 22m
- 11** Evi 2★ 6b 22m
- 12** Exhaustion 2★ 6b+ 22m



Vangelis Kastanias cutting loose on 'Tonsai' 7b.

- 13** Apsida 3★ 6a 20m
- The first route opened here (1990). A bit sharp but good, with a demanding rightward traverse at the end.
- 14** Apsida Direct 1★ 6b 20m
- 15** Dickes Ende 1★ 6c 17m
- 16** Big Foot 1★ 6a 17m
- 17** Footwork 1★ 6a+ 16m
- 18** The 3 Duch 2★ 6b 20m

NERAKI

Neraki is the star attraction of Nafplio crags. In Kalymnos it would have been one of the most popular sectors for winter climbing. Located halfway between the beaches of Arvanitia and Karathona, it is well-protected against the freezing north winds. People swim at the small beach beneath the cliff year-round; don't forget your swimming gear.

Climbing: Bullet-proof, huecoed, slightly overhanging, deep-red rock with challenging, technical footwork. Primarily bolted by Aris Theodoropoulos (2003-2006) with some assistance from Thanos Sotiropoulos, Thomas Michaelides, George Koutsoukis and Vangelis Kastanias. 'Chimp' and 'Ape' were bolted by Jim Titt; 'Tarzan' by George Karnakis.

Conditions: Ideal for winter climbing; best on cloudy, colder days between November and March, with temperatures below 18°-20°C. The cliffs are quick to dry after rainfall.

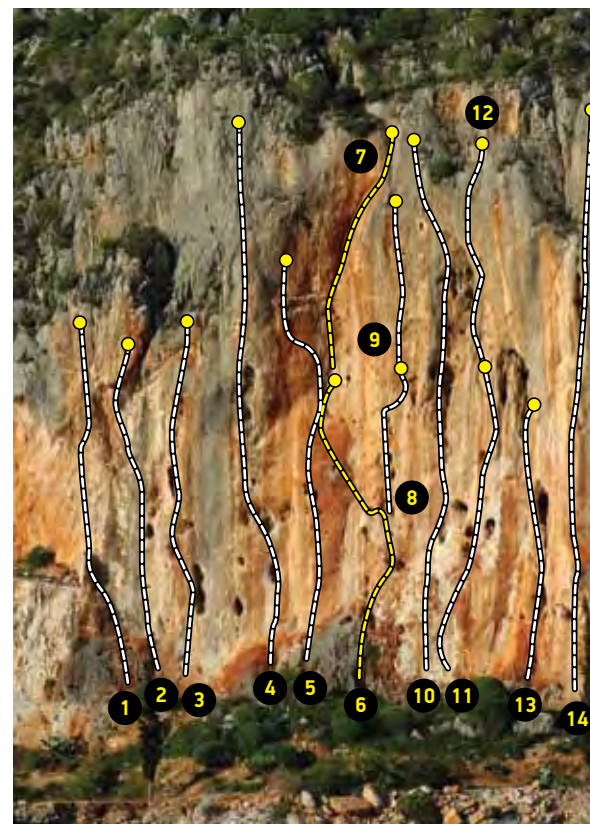
☀️ **Sun:** Until 18:00. **Exposure:** S

Approach: There are two possible approaches.

1) **Either** head to the parking lot of **Arvanitia** beach (37.563434, 22.800084), through the obvious gap between the hills of Palamidi and Akronafplia. To reach this: as you come into town from **Leoforos Argous**, keep slightly to the right and onto **Kiprou St** (which then merges with **25 Martiou St**). Turn left on **Polyzoidi St**, which ends at a parking lot 250m further. If you have a car/motorbike, park there. Then, walk left/south along the sea on a dirt/gravel pedestrian road for 1.5km. This is, hands down, one of the most pleasant crag approaches in Greece.

2) **Alternatively**, you can approach from **Karathona Beach** (37.546687, 22.816322). As you come into town from Leoforos Argous, keep slightly to the right and onto **Kiprou St**. As soon as you see Palamidi hill ahead of you, turn **left** onto **25 Martiou St** following the sign to 'Palamidi'. Outside of Nafplio now, continue straight ahead towards **Karathona Beach**. Go down to the beach and park on the west (right) side of the beach, next to a small marina. Then, follow the seaside dirt road/promenade NW/rightwards for 1.2km.

Walking time: 12-15 min.



George Koutsoukis high up on 'Me Stelneis' 6c.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Grouvalos 2★ 7a 20m | 8 Kolokotronis ♪ 6a+ 20m |
| Maintains its interest. | Slightly overhanging with big pockets. Classic! |
| 2 Ponas Ore? 1★ 7a+ 20m | 9 Super Kolokotronis (Ext) 3★ 7b+ 30m |
| A technical wall; sharp in places. | Very technical wall. |
| 3 Me Stelneis 3★ 6c 20m | 10 Rossida 3★ 7b 30m |
| Moves from hole to hole with many rests and a delicate finale. | A bouldery move leads to an easier steep section with big holds. |
| 4 Tsounami ♪ 7a 20m | 11 Pontiki 3★ 6b+ 20m |
| Climb 'like a wave' to connect the huecoed wall. Harder for the short | Another wall with good holds and jugs (even though they're not in the right order!) |
| 5 Thailand 3★ 8a? 25m | 12 Arouris 2★ 7c 30m |
| The dark red, dreamy wall with a definite crux. | Extension of 'Pontiki' up a steep pocketed wall. |
| 6 Mr. Snape ♪ 6b 20m | 13 Anoixi 3★ 6a 18m |
| A bold leftward traverse but with good, if reachy, holds. | A classic technical groove with a devious, soapy finish. |
| 7 Mr. Snape Extension ♪ 6c+ 33m | 14 Kathreptis (Mirror) 3★ 8a? 30m |
| Sustained technical bridging up a perfect corner. A 60m rope is just enough. | Delicate wall climbing. |



Amaryllis Frangia on 'Anoixi' 6a (page 178).

15 Chimp 3★ 6a+ 15m

'Ape' variation from the left.

16 Ape 3★ 6a+ 15m

Tricky to connect these pockets and hard to onsight, but enjoyable.

17 Tarzan 2★ 7c? 28m

'Chimp' extension to the left.

18 Orangutan 2★ 6b 30m

'Ape' extension. Long and adventurously interesting!

19 Rosso 3★ 6c+ 25m

Excellent climbing. Balancy moves on slopers at mid-height, a crack at the end

20 Espresso 3★ 7a 25m

Variation of 'Rosso'. Bouldery start on a crimp.

21 Kastoras 2★ 6b 20m

Tricky at the beginning. Even trickier for the short.

22 Dirty Dog 2★ 6a 20m

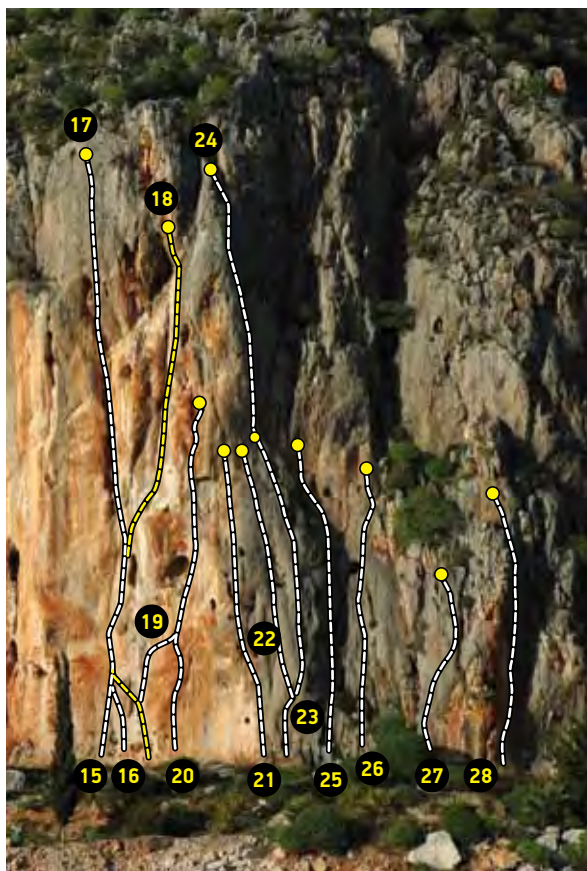
Same start as Laura, but 'dirtier' as you go up.

23 Laura 3★ 5c+ 20m

Challenging first moves; then, delicate wall climbing.

24 Super Laura (Ext.) 2★ 6b 33m

A long technical groove. It helps if you're tall.

**25 Glyka** 2★ 5c 18m

An interesting, technical finale for the grade.

26 Tzoutzouka 2★ 5b 18m

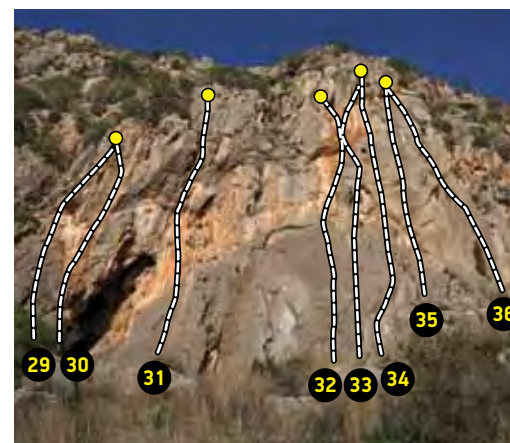
A nice warm up.

27 Babyline 1★ 5c 10m

A rightward traverse.

28 Calliope 2★ 6a 15m

A stiff start.

**MYTHOLOGY**

A miniature sector 100m to the right of **Neraki** (37.552667, 22.808775), equipped in 2006 by Josef Gstoettenmayr and his wife Maria, featuring eight short routes on sharp gray (and occasionally red) limestone.

☼ Sun: Until 18:00. Exposure: S

29 Uranus 2★ 6c 15m**30 Chaos** 2★ 7a 15m**31 Gaia** 2★ 6c 18m

There's a good rest in the cave past the crux.

32 Oros 2★ 6a+ 20m**33 Pelagos** 2★ 6a+ 20m

Share the lower-off with 'Pontos' to avoid rope drag. Sharp rock; mind your shoes.

34 Pontos 2★ 6b 20m

More sharp rock.

35 Oceanos 1★ 6b 20m

Hard to maintain foot friction when the rock surface sheds.

36 Chronos 2★ 5c 20m



Nafplio town as seen from the port.

KARATHONA

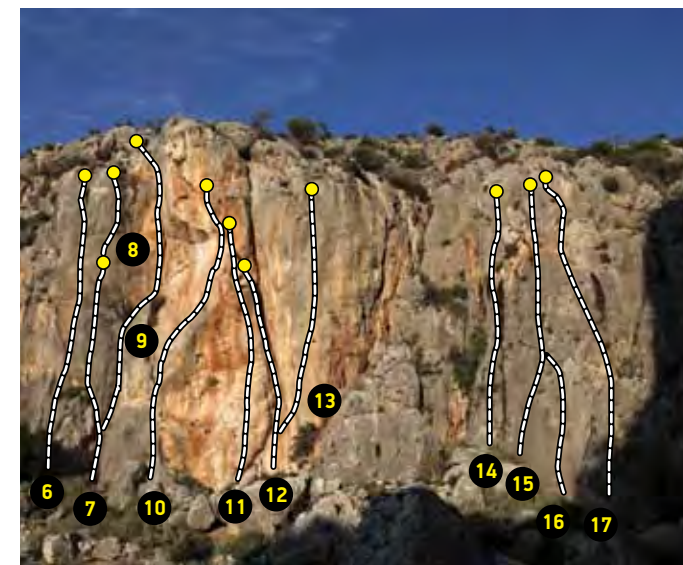
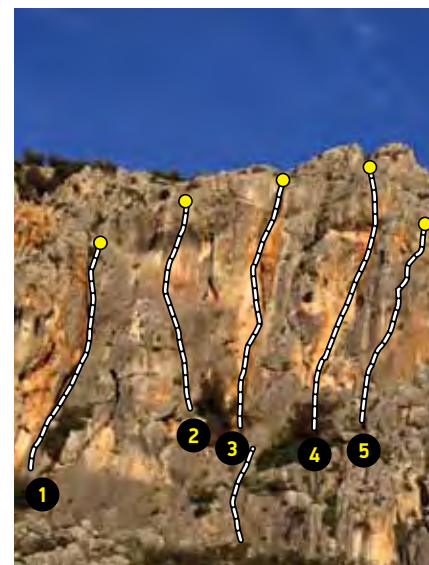
A very nice crag to the left of a small white chapel overlooking the enormous sandy crescent of **Karathona Beach**. Easy, well-equipped training routes are on the right, and some harder climbs are on the left.

Climbing: Solid, fully-pocketed gray and red limestone; some interesting cracks, too. Aris Theodoropoulos started bolting in 1998, mostly with climbing schools in mind, and over time more routes were added by Tasos Petrocheilos, Antonis Antonopoulos, Jim Titt, Hans Weninger, Thomas Michaelides, Kostas Tsoukleidis, Agnes Wilkon, and George Karnakis.

Conditions: Good for year-round climbing. In summer stick to the routes on the right, as there is shade until early afternoon.

☼ **Sun:** Routes 1-17 are in the sun all day; routes 18-30 are in the sun after 14:00. **Exposure:** SW, N

Approach: As you come into town from **Leoforos Argous**, keep slightly to the right and onto **Kiprou St**. As soon as you see the hill of *Palamidi* ahead of you, turn **left** onto **25 Martiou St** following the sign to 'Palamidi'. At the top of the uphill road, on the outskirts, do not turn



right towards 'Palamidi' but continue straight ahead, towards **Karathona Beach**. At the bottom of the downhill road, do not turn right towards the beach but continue straight ahead. About 200m further, make a 'half' U-turn onto a steep concrete road leading up towards the chapel and the crag. You will recognize it by the white

crosses painted on the cliffs. Park at the open space off to the right side of the road, about 100m before it ends. The footpath to the crag starts to the left of the fenced steps going up to the chapel (37.541175, 22.828889). **Walking time:** 3 min.

- 1 **Hou Hou** 2★ 5c 15m
A classic chimney.
- 2 **Mission Impossible** 2★ 6c+/7a 18m
Has it all: slab, chimney, overhang and hard crux.
- 3 **Cracken** 2★ 6a+ 18m
A wide crack.
- 4 **Slivowiza** 2★ 6a 18m
A brand of potent Polish vodka!
- 5 **Wind of Change** 2★ 6b 18m
Good, varied climbing.
- 6 **Hercules** 2★ 6b+ 30m
A crux requiring 'cool' and calm balance, and the bolting isn't great, either.
- 7 **Kali Lefteria** 2★ 5c 18m
A crack and gray wall, good for warming up.
- 8 **Kali Lefteria Ext.** 2★ 7a 30m
Old school: thin, sustained, sharp. Hard to onsight.
- 9 **Tasos** 3★ 5c+ 25m
A varied climb up the corner and off-width crack.

- 10 **Nychterida** 3★ 6a 25m
An excellent rightward line with airy climbing.
- 11 **Helidoni** 3★ 6c 20m
A striking, athletic, technical climb.
- 12 **Schismi** 3★ 6a 18m
Demanding and a bit awkward if you don't have proper crack and chimney technique.
- 13 **Gallida** 3★ 7c? 20m
Hard wall climbing on small holds and crimps.
- 14 **Ready** 2★ 6c 25m
Crux on small holds with no obvious solution.
- 15 **Steady #1** 2★ 6a 25m
- 16 **Steady #2** 1★ 6c+ 25m
Starts desperately on very small holds, then eases off.
- 17 **Go** 2★ 5b 25m
Mountain-style with big holds. Beware of the big rock before the finale.

18 NAFPLIO

PELOPONNESE
37.563434,
22.800084KARATHONA
KONDYLI

'Climbing visualization' at the foot of sector Kondyli.

18 Halcyon Days 1★ 5a 20m

The left arête is good for warming up.

19 Easy Corner 3★ 4c 20m

A pleasant corner, perfect for your first lead.

20 Iokaste 2★ 4b 15m

One delicate move to the right, another good one for beginners.

21 Ismene 2★ 5b+ 15m

Just a technical move at the start.

22 Ramon 3★ 5c+ 15m

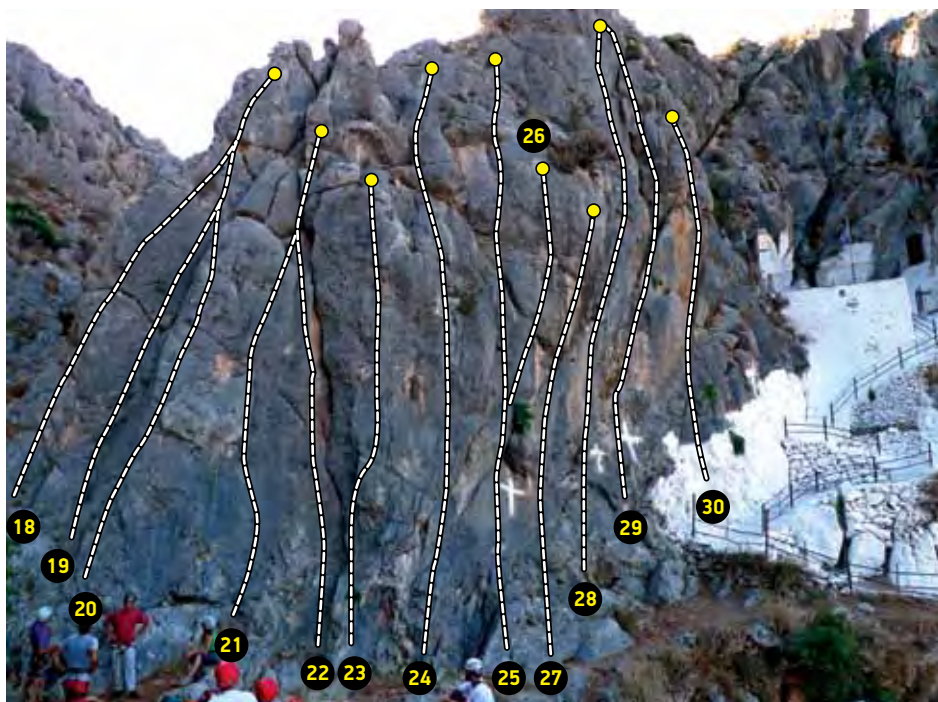
The groove requires good bridging skills.

23 Elpenor 3★ 5c 20m

Excellent climbing for the grade, up a fully-pocketed wall.

24 Kihli 3★ 5b+ 20m

More pockets and one long reach.



25 Antigone 2★ 6a+ 20m

Tricky getting into the groove, then eases off.

26 Octana 2★ 6b 20m

Same start as 'Antigone'. Then, a rightward traverse and finale on small holds.

27 Adm 1★ 7a 20m

Very small holds.

28 Agamemnon 1★ 6a+ 30m

Absorbing! Dynamic moves up the diagonal crack lead to a cunning headwall.

29 Classic 2★ 6a 30m

A squeezed-in line, sharp in places.

30 Tiryntha 2★ 5c+ 20m

Sharp again, but more interesting than its neighbor.

KONDYLI

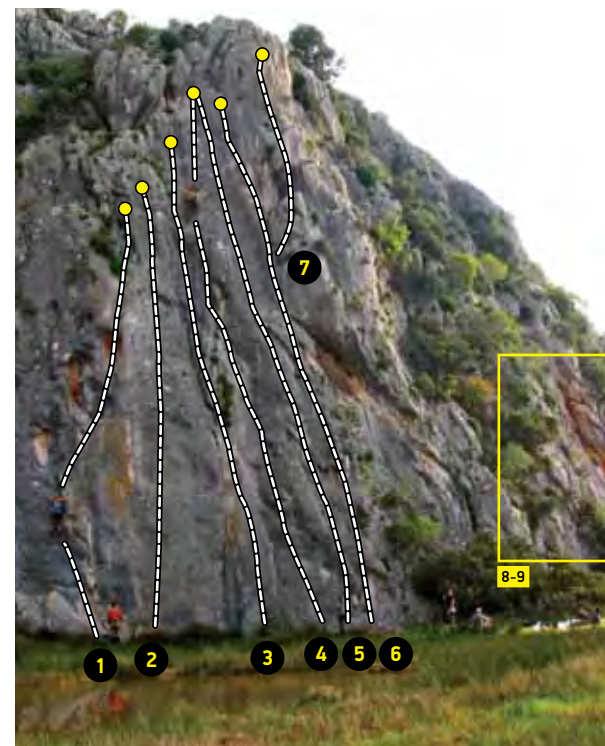
A 'dream crag' for many, it is located at the far end of **Kondyli Beach**, a pebbled, unofficial nudist beach with deep water at the mouth of a fabulous lagoon; it is considered one of the best in Argolis. The crag itself is small and the number of routes is limited, but the combination of sea & cliffs is always winning. In addition to the routes described here, there is a 'wet foot' sector on the right (with six routes in the 4th-5th grades starting at the water's edge). The water is about 50cm deep and you can belay from the first bolt.

Climbing: A very compact gray wall with occasional huescos and cracks; equipped by Jim Titt in the late '90s.

Conditions: Ideal for climbing between April and November. The crag is next to a small marsh, so water pools around it after rainfall and the foot of the routes can get muddy. On a still day this also means mosquitoes, so bug spray is a must! In summer, it's best to climb from early morning until no later than 15:00. Avoid the scorching hot hours after that; go for a swim instead, and come back to the cliffs when it cools off.

☀ **Sun:** After 17:00. **Exposure:** N

Approach: Kondyli is about 15km southeast of Nafplio. From Nafplio, drive towards **Drepano** village. When you get to the village square, turn left towards **Vivari**. About 2km past Vivari, you will come to a junction; turn **right** at the old stone houses and head down to the beach. At the beach, turn **left** and park towards the end. Then, continue on foot along the beach to the cliffs at the far end (37.527919, 22.938312). **Walking time:** 8 min.



1 Dizzy 2★ 6a+ 25m

Powerful start and a good rest at the big holes.

2 Dizzy 1★ 8? 25m

A desperate slab.

3 Stone Rider 3★ 7a 25m

An engaging start up the thin crack.

4 Powerful Stuff 1★ 6c+ 25m

Dynamic moves lead to an exposed groove and a final puzzle before the belay.

5 Invincible 3★ 6a+ 25m

A delicate slab with a pleasant bulge.

6 The Fly 3★ 6a+ 25m

An easy, compact slab followed by a corner.

7 Beach Pillar 2★ 6a 25m

A variation up the airy pillar on the right. Run-out bolting.

8 Excitation 2★ 4b 15m

An easy, slabby warm-up.

9 Excavation 2★ 4b 15m

Another warm-up.