

SV/AG-049 Nisyros and SV/AG-026 Lipsi/Skafi

SV5/HB9DST/P, August 2014

Traveling by sailboat, I was able to make two first activations near the island of Kos in the Aegean Sea. Both are straightforward and it was possible to do them in the summer heat taking only ordinary precautions.

I had the opportunity to take a 2-week sailing cruise in the Aegean Sea and also brought my radio gear along in the hope I could make some activations. And even though the other people on board were not hams, they made allowance for me so I could get on the air two times during the trip.

Finding hams who are SOTA enthusiasts and also sailors and have access to a sailboat in the Aegean -- that's a rare combination, so it is no surprise that many of the islands have not been activated. I had been warned by Panos SV1COX that some island peaks have military installations and are off limits, but the two I activated did not fall in that category. And while there are ferries and excursion boats that travel to most of the islands, their schedules are often not flexible enough to allow time for an activation. In my case, I was on the Sea-Rocco, a 44-foot Gib-Sea manufactured in France, and the skipper Kurt was very accommodating and conscientious.

SV/AG-049 Nisyros

This island is a 1-day sail south of Kos. The harbor for pleasure ships is Paloi (commercial ships go to Mandraki). I left at 14.00 and was back around 19.00.



Paloi harbor.



The Sea-Rocco (44-foot Gib-Sea).

The easiest way to the summit is to rent a motor scooter, ride almost to Mandraki and then take the road up to the M. Evagelistra monastery. The biggest trick (not really tough) is to find the trailhead, which is about 50 meters before you get the monastery gate. The ascent is 473 meters (summit at 698 meters), 2.3 km long and took just over 1.5 hours including a few minutes here and there to verify the trail. Once you find the start of the trail (see photo below), the trail itself is not always well marked but it is mostly easy to follow and it is generally clearly evident where to go. There are no dangerous spots or

exposed locations on the trail. But you definitely need hiking boots and long pants, and hiking poles are a great help. Of course, be sure to bring plenty of water!



Transport to the monastery



Another abandoned monastery (middle) and the summit chapel (right) as seen from the scooter parking area.

There is an abandoned monastery near the summit and a chapel on the summit itself. It was a very, very windy day, so I set up in the lee of the chapel, which conveniently had two hooks in the wall to which I could attach my fiberglass mast. I made no contacts on 40m, and barely enough for the qualification on 30m; better would have been 20m, but I didn't bring my 20m rig/antenna on the trip (regretfully).

If you have the time, a visit to the island's semi-active volcano is very worthwhile (south-center of the island, roads leading right to the crater). You can walk inside the crater and see the hot gases escaping. One time, our skipper Kurt took eggs along and cooked them in the boiling water in the crater!



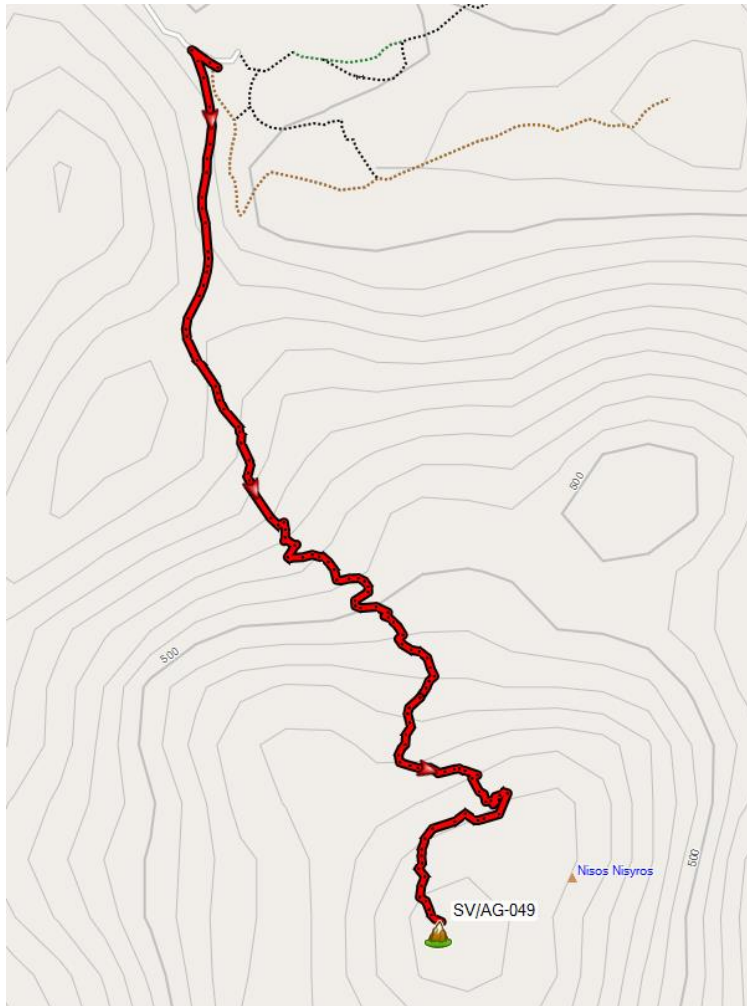
Trailhead marker (note the scooter in the background)



Summit operating position



Overview of Nisyros Island. The road to the monastery and trailhead comes from Mandraki; we docked our sailboat in Paloi. The shaded area in the lower center is the semi-active volcano that you can also visit.



Detailed track of the trail, which itself is easy to follow to the summit.

SV/AG-026 Lipsi/Skafi

The island of Lipsi has only one SOTA summit, Skafi. We got there as part of a 10-day cruise north of Kos. From the harbor of Lipsi to the summit takes roughly two hours, 4.1 km and an absolute delta elevation of 285 meters (height of the summit) but you actually hike up 358 meters. There is a road leading directly to the waypoint marked Monastery on the map below, but the hike across the hill to that point is pleasant and easy.

From the harbor, you walk along the road to the northwest, and when you come to an intersection with a road leading to the right, on the left is the trailhead. Simply follow the trail, which leads to the chapel, and from there a road leads to the monastery. Then things get tougher -- there is no specific hiking trail I could find, so you hike between the brush and bushes to get to the summit, which is clearly marked with a short concrete pillar. Again, contacts made only on 10 meters, and a spot was essential.



From the harbor (upper center), you follow the road until the intersection of the road leading to the right, and the trailhead is on the left (photo taken after following the trail up the side of the first hill).



The major landmark: the monastery (note the winding road leading to it, which you could ride along on a scooter). The chapel is barely visible -- follow the road from the monastery up to the left, just where it turns to go up to the communications tower.



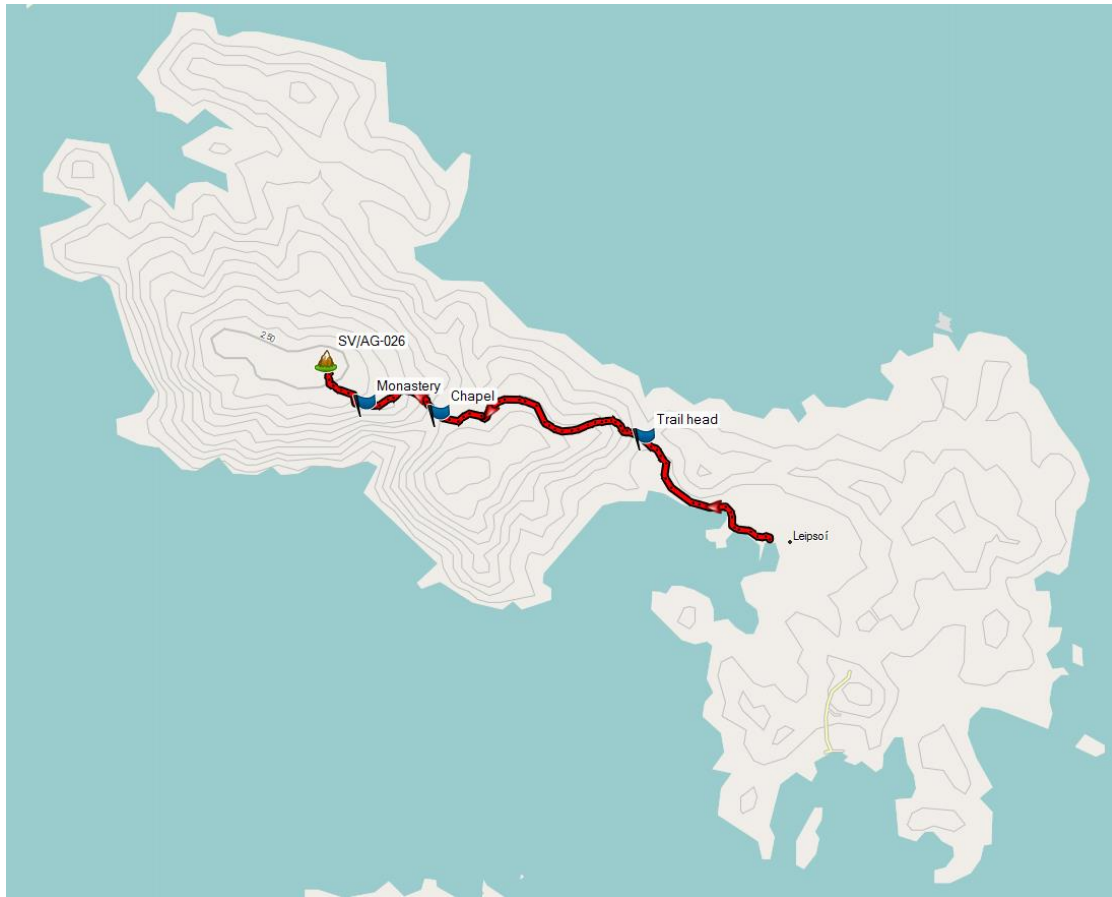
From the monastery to the summit you have to fight your way through the brush to some extent. However, you can generally find a rocky section between the small trees to make it easier.



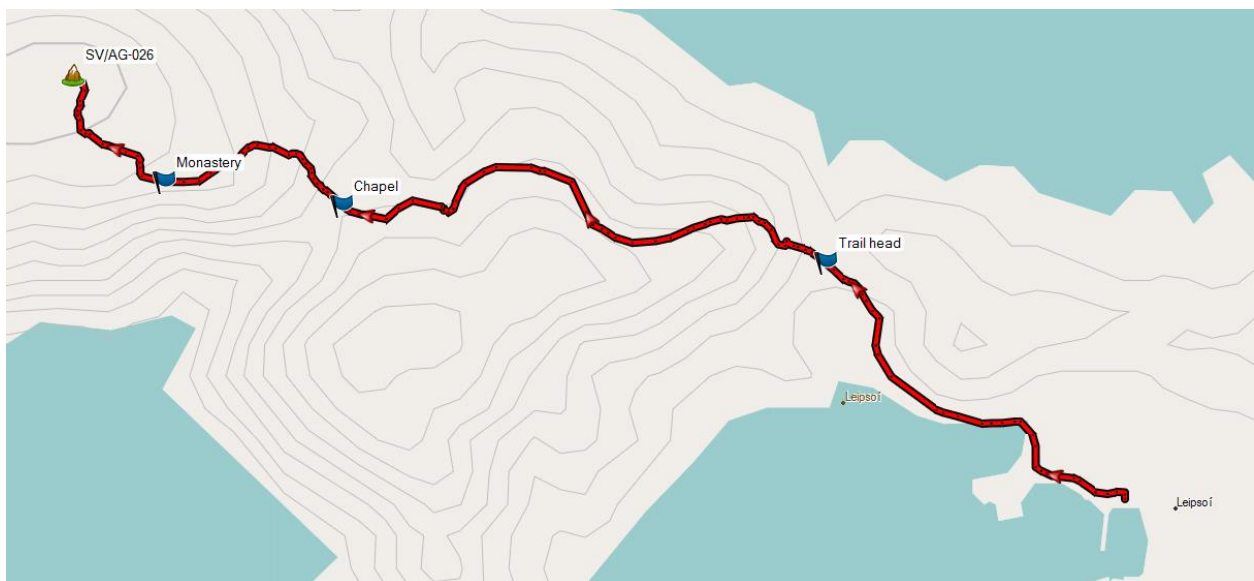
Antenna lashed to the summit marker.



View from the summit looking south.



Overview of Lipsi Island.



Detailed view of the path including key waypoints.