

Leusë - Sheper

Trail distance: 11.6 kilometers

Elevation min: 257 meters, max: 1,450 meters

Cumulative height uphill: 1, 239 meters, downhill: 613 meters

Difficulty level: Moderate

Time: 7 hours

Markings: white/red/white?

This is a nice hike that gives the opportunity to transfer from Vjosa valley to Zagoria valley on an ancient mule path that is still frequently used by locals, shepherds that spend the summer time near the pass and from cattle caravans that usually comes from Konispol to Gramoz Mountain in Erseke for the summer time.

The Albanian part of the Zagoria Valley is encircled by three mountain ranges and only accessible from the Libohova through the Suha river gorge or by the new road of Çajupit Mountain to Zhej village that is shortest option considering Permet as the starting point.

Due to its remote location it is unknown to most visitors and conserved much of its natural charm. The surrounding mountains offer plenty of walking options and it's probably just the lack of infrastructure that prevents its rise as a major hiking destination.

This trail cuts down a travel distance from over 100km on the road to only 13km across the pass. It is because of this that the ancient mule trail is still frequently used by locals.

The trail starts at the church of Leusë (WP 1) that is in the entrance of the village and follows south taking the little trail that ascends on the right of the dirt road, leaves the school of the village behind and ascends to a little meadow (WP 2) where the view opens towards Dhembelit pass, a good point to create an idea for the upper destination of this hike. From here the route follows south to a chapel (WP 3) and then follows southwest leaving a big meadow with a shepherd hut down on your left. After few hundred meters the trail passes in pond for cattle and a water source after approx. 100 meters. From the water source the trail follows a steep accent by taking right at the junction (west). After approx. 600 meters of following a good mule path the trail reaches a meadow (WP 4) and the trail starts to become steeper following southwest. At the WP 5 the trail enters the forest and one has to pay attention on the path because it may be not very visible from the following leaves. At the next junction (WP 6) the trail takes left ascending in zigzags through the woods until it exits the forest where amazing views open towards Vjosa valley, the mountains of Bredhi i Hotoves National Park and Dhembeli Mountain. After the forest exit the trail takes the last bit of the steep accent to the pass (WP 7), an inviting place to rest awhile and enjoying the views towards Permet and the valley that ascends from Zagoria.

The descent to Sheper is easy a hike on good and visible path and one can just follow south the gorge lined by mountains of Dhëmbelit on the west and Nëmërçkës on the east. The first part of the decent is in nice meadows where many shepherds' huts could be seen during the summer.

Is good to avoid going close of the huts before you make sure the shepherd is there. The dogs are not very friendly when one approaches their territory. From the WP 8 (the last shepherd hut) the gorge becomes narrower and the trail stays in the left (east) side of the canyon. The trail is frequently used, impossible to miss it and offers breathtaking views towards Lunxhëri Mountain and the meadows of Sheper. After approx. 2.5 kilometers the trail crosses the dried up stream (WP 9) and after that one can easily see the village of Sheper. In less than one kilometer the trail meets the dirt road that is the main road of Sheper (WP 10). Walking right (west) along the dirt road one can reach the bus station of the village in approx. 200 meters.

UTM Waypoints

1. 34 T 445303 4452285, church in Leusë, 257 m
2. 34 T 445239 4452163, meadow, 458 m
3. 34 T 445286 4452041, chapel, 472 m
4. 34 T 444906 4451109, meadow 751 m
5. 34 T 444510 4450923, forest entrance, 916 m
6. 34 T 444161 4450872, junction, 1026 m
7. 34 T 443325 4450317, Dhembeli pass, 1450 m
8. 34 T 443108 4448419, last shepherd's hut, 1274 m
9. 34 T 441927 4446956, cross dried up stream, 982 m
10. 34 T 441179 4446880, Sheper main road, 906 m

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