



VOYAGEUR TRAIL NEWS

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*A member of
Hike Ontario,
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Ontario Trails Council, and
Trans Canada Trail.*



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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN *by Mike Landmark*

It seems there may be some questions and uncertainty about what exactly the Voyageur Trail Association is and what it does for its members.

First of all, the Voyageur Trail Association is a non-profit organization, which is composed of clubs and individual members at large, who help to build and maintain the Voyageur Trail and enjoy outings and social activities along the trail system. At the present time, the Association clubs range from Elliot Lake to Terrace Bay/Schreiber. Each club is responsible for maintaining and promoting the section of Voyageur Trail in its area.

The Coordinating Council of the Association is made up of members who have been nominated from the various clubs and duly elected to the Council. Each club is also allowed two representatives to attend and vote at all Coordinating Council meetings.

Each member club is independent to a large extent. In other words, the local executive determines when to hold meetings, what to discuss at the meetings, what outings and activities the club will promote in the area, what local fundraising activities to hold, etc. This does not mean that the Voyageur Trail Association and each member club are separate entities. All of the clubs and the individual members at large make up the VTA as a whole. Each member is expected to uphold the VTA mandate and the Constitution and bylaws.

So, what do you get for your membership fee? First of all, \$2.50 per member is returned to the club to which the individual or family group belongs. Secondly, every individual member or family group receives an excellent newsletter three times a year, which contains interesting articles and tidbits and outing schedules for any clubs who submit them. The Association also sends free newsletters to

the landowners, who have generously made their land accessible to the VTA for its trail systems. Part of your membership fee goes towards the printing of the newsletter and the postage and envelopes to mail it out. Another portion of the fee is used to pay for insurance and membership in Hike Ontario. In addition, the VTA provides brochures, colour posters, signs, aluminum nails, trail maintenance tools, reimbursement for certain expenses, etc. for any clubs requesting such materials. In the case of brochures, posters and tools, the Association is, in most cases, able to obtain discounts for bulk orders. Each individual club is not expected to pay for these items out of its own bank account. The money comes from the collective account of the whole Association.

I hope that this has clarified some of the uncertainties with regards to the Voyageur Trail Association. If anyone still has questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at cheryl.landmark@sympatico.ca or (705) 779-3409 or contact any other member of the Coordinating Council.



REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

Yellow antifreeze and blue fabric softener containers make excellent blazes for our trail.

Anyone with some of these containers can drop them off at 167 Kohler Street, Sault Ste. Marie or at your club meetings. If you have a contact that does vinyl siding, give Mike a call for pick-up or more info (705-779-3409).

Local schools can recycle used printer ink cartridges and fax cartridges. They can be dropped off at 26 Primrose, Sault Ste. Marie or at your club meetings.

STUDENT WANTED! ... SEE PAGE 9

HIKING THE SAMARIA GORGE by Patrick Capper

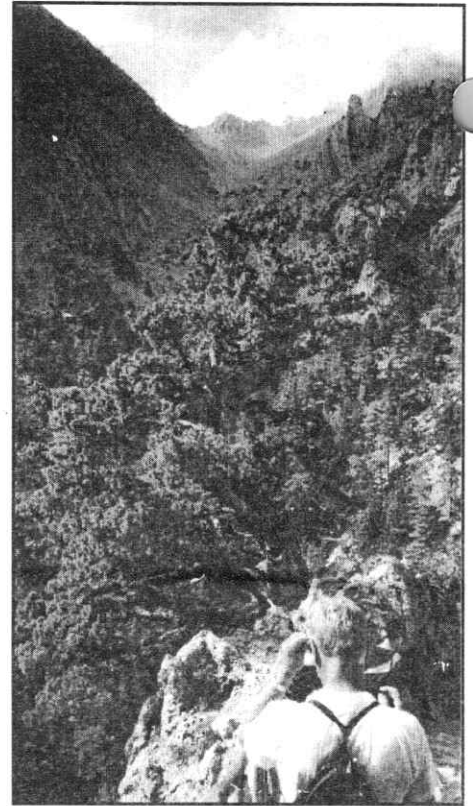
Have you ever felt lonely on the Voyageur Trail? Have you ever wondered if this hike will be one of those rare occasions when you actually meet some other person on the trail? Did you ever wonder what it would be like if 1000 people were hiking the trail? We managed to find out what it was like to be just one of about 750 hikers going down the Samaria gorge in Crete on a trip on September 25th. Samaria gorge is advertised as being the longest ravine in Europe and is reported as one of the prime attractions in Crete. The weather was comfortably warm with mixed sun and clouds forecast for the day. We started out before the crack of dawn at 05:20 when the coach picked us up from Chersonisos and then we seemed to stop at nearly every hotel along the next 20 miles. We traveled practically the whole length of Crete including over 40 hairpin bends before arriving at the height of land where our coach stopped to unload our 50 hikers at the top of Samaria gorge at 10:40. At the entrance there was a map of the path and the guide told us that we could contact any of the many guides from other groups if we needed help or, if needed, there was a first aid station half way down the trail. Anne was very relieved to know that there wasn't any hills to climb, the trail was pretty well downhill all the way.

At the start the path was quite steep with a lot of stairs. With so many people - about 15 coach loads altogether, it was nice to have the trail about 4 feet wide. Particularly at the start, many fast hikers were overtaking slower ones and we were overtaking the really slow ones, or the ones stopping to take photos of the scenic views. The top part had great vistas of the tree covered hills and about half way down we reached the deserted village of Samaria. The inhabitants had been forced to relocate when the gorge was made a national park in 1962. They had survived the German occupation in world War II as the gorge was so inaccessible the path down drops 1000 meters in the first 2km and, at the bottom, steep cliffs are only 3 meters apart and form the so-called *iron gate*. At the village we stopped to have lunch and admired the kri kri goats - a wild goat only found in the Samarai gorge and a few other places in Crete.

Further down, the path was much gentler but still very rocky and in one place hikers had erected thousands of miniature cairns - mostly with three stones. Most of these will undoubtedly be swept away the following spring when the creek turns into a torrent and due to safety concerns the trail is closed (from November 1st to April 10th). The past summer had been much drier than usual so there were very few flowers and few birds - some swallow-type birds and a few moni preveli at the top (these look quite similar to chickadees). The terrain was quite varied and as the buses had arrived at many different times, hiking on the same day as 800 people was not nearly as bad as you would think. We arrived at Agia

Roumeli after a 17km walk about 4pm so we had plenty of time to eat at one of the many restaurants before catching the 6 o'clock ferry to Seakia, the nearest place that is accessible by road. I even had time for a quick swim in the ever warm Mediterranean. At Seakia, the 700 passengers quickly disembarked and walked a short distance to the 15 waiting coaches to

take us back to our hotels - we arrived back about 11pm. We were impressed by the rest stop. The restaurant had food laid out on tables and there were about 15 single stall unisex toilets and a area with wash basins. Many passengers were fed in a very short time with the Greek version of fast food-typical breakfast options in the morning and a barbecue in the evening. The weather the whole day was excellent with some clouds and only two brief showers, one while in the bus and the other while on the ferry. There was no language problem as the guides all spoke excellent English as did most shop keepers and waiters and the menus were in Greek, English and German. The hikers, we think, were mostly German with some English and other nationalities but very few Canadians. There were crude toilets along the trail, and several fountains with drinking water, but there was nowhere to buy food except at the village at the end. All told, a very rewarding excursion, though I am sure it would not be quite as enjoyable in the height of the tourist season with hot weather and many more hikers.



Heather Scott

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