**Taken by The White Mountains**

**Lefka Ori, The White Mountains, May 18-22 2016**

**(plus bonus walks on May 26, June 10 and June 14)**

**A 14 year old idea**

The decision of going into The White Mountains directly on the first day after my arrival to Crete didn’t come out of thorough or detailed planning.

The idea of walking from the Omalos plateau to the Askifou plateau is 14 years old. It has for me stood as the most important missing piece of all of the E4 path from east to west across Crete, a walking route of altogether about 450 kilometres that I was planning to walk when I was off from work for 40 days in October-November 2002, but parts of it I didn’t do then.

Now I feel that I’m in good shape after doing several long walks in the woods and along the coasts of the peninsula north of Copenhagen (Nordsjælland) and after taking up jogging again after about one and a half year’s break.

Tuesday May 17, 3.39 PM, Athens Airport, email to Anne:

”Booked a room at Casa di Pietra in Chania – one night. Think I’ll leave most of the luggage there while I go to Omalos/Lefka Ori – tomorrow I guess.”

Tuesday May 17, 8.20 PM, email to Anne:

”I’m sitting on the balcony at the old city wall. Have been given a bottle of the hotel owner’s (excellent) red wine and have got permission to store my luggage here, while I’m hiking.”

Wednesday May 18, 1.15 AM, email to Anne:

”I have packed my stuff, so I can walk rather minimalistically the next couple of days. Bus tomorrow at 7.45 to Omalos, from there eastwards across The White Mountains.”

I have wanted to do this for so long, and nevertheless it seems such a luxury to do it and far from the realities of life compared to Anne’s work with refugees with a tough destiny in Piraeus or compared to the reality I’m reading about in a book just now, written by my colleague Pernille Glavind Olsson about her life with her two handicapped daughters. But it’s different levels, different worlds, and it doesn’t give sense to hold them up against each other.

**Five liters of water, four oranges and a sandwich**

**Wednesday, May 18.**

The ordinary bus from Chania leaves at 7.45 AM, but it’s packed with hikers for the Samaria Gorge, when I arrive at the station, and they put in an extra bus, departure when everybody is aboard, less than 10 minutes later. Arrival a few minutes before 9 AM at Xyloskalo, the south eastern point of the Omalos Plateau, from where the hike down into the Samaria Gorge begins.

My aim is to walk from here over/through Lefka Ori (The White Mountains) to the Askifou plateau. It should be possible to do in two days, but aware of the risks of making mistakes, losing my way or ending in ”blind streets” it might take up to three days. The first evening I ought to hit the Kastiveli shelter, but I don’t know if I’ll have access to it. Doesn’t matter, I bring a tent.

At the cafe at the bus end station I buy a big feta sandwich, some nut/fruit bars, 4,5 liters of water, a brik of fruit juice, a breakfast menu and a cup of coffee, most of it for carrying on the walk. From Chania I have brought 0,75 liters of water and four oranges from the farm that Josef and Lula, my hostesses, run along with their small hotel.

I take it slow and easy. I have taken the only daily bus to Omalos this time of the year, didn’t have time to buy anything else in Chania.

I find the short cut from Xyloskalo to ”the main road” from Omalos up to the Kalergi shelter and further eastwards. I start my walk around 9.50 AM.

This area is familiar to me. Stayed two nights in Kalergi in October 2002, when I together with Margit walked from the shelter eastwards as far as to the peak of Melindaou (altitude 2133 metres). Then we climbed the top, today I just pass it in the middle of the afternoon and continue along the E4 route according to my plan.

During the day I meet five human beings, in the morning a couple shortly after leaving Xyloskalo, in the afternoon a party of three on their way down and back from Melindaou. They ask if I consider staying overnight in the nature, to which I answer yes and mention that I have brought a tent. ”There’s a few people ahead of you” they tell me. As a matter of fact I am not going to catch up with those amentioned people.

After Melindaou the area is new to me, but it’s easy to find the way following the iron poles with or without E4 signs, yellow-black-white painted marks and oldfashioned waymarks, cairns, stones put on top of each other. At one spot I pass some kind of small water reservoir with a fence around it – and the body of a dead bird floating on the surface of the water.

Late in the afternoon I see a shepherd and his sheep on the other side of a valley. I wave and shout to him, but apparently he doesn’t hear me. Around here I’m looking directly up at the north side and the peak of the tallest of all The White Mountains, Pachnes (altitude 2453 metres).

Around 8 PM I’m beginning to realize that I’ll not reach the Katsiveli shelter. Alright, then I will have my new tent tested. I find a spot close to the path, quite plain (apart from a few small stones that I kick away) and soil, not rock. It darkens quite quickly while I put up the tent and find the sleeping bag and other necessarities inside the tent.

I’m almost asleep when I hear something outside the tent, obviously walking sticks. No voices actually. First the sound approaches, then it moves away. I’m fresh enough to take a look through the opening of the tent, and I see two people in a distance of maybe 100 metres away, apparently discussing something.

Katsiveli must be close, but now I have put up the tent. It’s not 9 PM yet, but I am tired and fall asleep.

**Ice on the tent**

**Thursday, May 19.**

It becomes colder and colder during the night, and I think that my 15 years old ”3 seasons” sleeping bag no longer is as fantastic as it once was supposed to be. At 6 AM the sun is rising, and I’m crawling out of my new home. To my surprise the tent is white on the surface. It’s ice – it has been freezing! In other words my sleeping bag has been excellent and just has protected me from freezing even more.

I consume a little water, fruit juice, a bite of feta sandwich, pack everything together and walk on. After less than 10 minutes I pass the Katsiveli shelter and say good morning to some other hikers who have stayed here overnight. Maybe the ”few people ahead of you” are among them?

A little further up there is a chapel-like building, closed and locked. Somebody has tried to arrange a mosaic with pieces of a stone sign with greek letters that obviously originally was placed over the door of the building. According to the plan I continue northwards for a short while. Rather soon then eastwards, as the E4 signs and waymarks lead me.

Further ahead in the area I see a third building. In the beginning I think that it is situated outside my route, too much to the south, but after having lost the E4 for maybe a quarter of an hour I get back to the waymarks, and they lead directly towards this house that from the distance looks quite advanced, but at a closer look seems to be a shelter for shepherds. As I approach it a dog shows up there, barking at me. The continuation of the path leads around the building, and I can now follow the waymarks to the right seen from the direction that I come from, I would believe towards east or southeast. Most important for me, though, are the E4 signs. The following couple of hours the path ascends towards a pass that can’t be anything else than Koutalá which is a central spot on the route according to the map and to ”The High Mountains Of Crete”, the guidebook I rely most on this time.

Thursdag May 19, 1.13 PM, email to Anne:

”Right now I came up to a mountain pass where my telephone has a little signal. It’s cold here, when the sun is not shining. Minus degrees during the night – I discovered this morning! Tough to carry 5 liters of water (around 3,5 liters left), a tent and other things. Heavy for me when I walk upwards. But the surroundings are great, spectacular!”

Here it becomes a little bit difficult. There is a choice: Follow the ”traditional” route towards Askifou – or follow the newly marked E4 route. No matter what, it goes downwards, and both big and small stones make it unsafe  and unsteady over a long distance to move your feet. In some way the E4 marks seem the more safe, but in the beginning as I go downhill I lose the path. After having been sliding downwards for maybe half an hour I prefer to move upwards to some kind of in-between-ridge, and here the E4 marks continue! Still the stones slip away here and there. I get into a low area between two mountains.

To the right I now have the mountain Kastro (altitude 2219 metres) that here in the western part of Lefka Ori seems to have an almost mythical aura around it. To the left some kind of side-mountain to Kastro, as I understand the explanations in the books. Here I again lose the E4. I search forth and back, up and down, but I find no marks. I choose something that looks like a path up to the ridge of the side-mountain, as I’ve read that E4 goes down into the valley from such a side-mountain. Theoretically Askifou should be only a couple of hours’ walk away.

From different high points I have a wide spanding view to the Akrotiri peninsula, to the iconic mountain east of Kalives and to the coastline between Giorgiopouli and Rethymno. To the south there are mountain peaks and – irritatingly enough – not a regular view down to the Askifou plateau.

I walk a little around on these lower mountain edges and then I focus on an area further down looking somehow like an abandoned minefield. There ought to be a road out from there. But as I get down there it looks more like a moon landscape. There are no roads leading anywhere, but a lot of deep and big holes in the landscape that has no vegetation at all. There is a powerful wind, and soon it’ll get dark. I try to move a little bit up the mountain to find a plain place for the tent, but end putting it up in the higher parts of the moon landscape on a spot that is relatively flat and protected from the winds.

**Hiking boots collapsed**

**Friday, May 20.**

There must be a way out. If nothing else seems possible I should be able to walk all the way back to Omalos. I try to walk in the direction where I last saw an E4 sign, now on the side of the big Kastro mountain itself. Here there is both risk for slipping and lots of big holes and ravines. But I take care and I am quite close to the last E4 sign from yesterday, when I discover the continuation on the side-mountain, just further down than the path I tried to follow to the ridge yesterday.

This continuation quite often changes direction, and as the backpack is quite heavy I use a new method: When I at an E4 sign get the feeling that there can be difficulties finding the next sign I leave my stuff there, while I keep searching. Then I return for it, when the sign is found.

During yesterday and today the sole of one of my hiking boots has begun to loosen, then gradually also the other loosens. The loose and sharp stones have helped this to happen. I keep fighting, now up a mountainside, where I in front of me on the ridge see an E4 pole which very well can be the one that according to ”The High Mountains Of Crete” is the last one before a long break between the waymarks.

Friday, May 20, 4.37 PM, email from Anne:

”Hope you have a wonderful walk! Like to have a report as soon as you can!”

Friday, May 20, 5.39 PM, email to Anne:

”I have done my walking indeed and have slept in tent two nights – not exactly the plan. Both of my walking boots have slowly collapsed. But finally after three days it looks as if some kind of civilization is getting closer. More later, if I have not ended up on another blind road …”

In the least, as I come up to the pole on the ridge I don’t see any obvious E4 continuation. The question is if I shall follow the ridge southwards or northwards to find the continuation of the route. I choose north. For a start I leave the rucksack at the pole. Below the ridge that has several single peaks lies the valley, and it looks very much like the area above Askifou, as I saw it 14 years ago, with among other things a lot of pine trees spread up the lower parts of the mountain sides. I don’t see any waymarks at any of the peaks, and I go back for the rucksack and start the descend – or the downslide – between two of the peaks on the ridge. I am swearing a lot on the way down because of all the times I slip. The inner soles of my boots are also beginning to loosen. My heals are now only protected by the socks, so it hurts repeatedly, when I hit a sharp stone or a plant with thorns. The bag of the tent attached to the bottom of the rucksack also gets torn up in more than one place.

It takes about an hour to get down to the valley. Here I go to the right, as it corresponds with the south/southeast direction, in which Askifou and the higher situated Niáto plateau shall be. Just like yesterday: When I find the right track there is theoretically no more than two hours walk down to Askifou.

In the beginning the terrain in this long valley is rather open and with big rock formations that sometimes are a little bit difficult to pass, but then it becomes more vegetated with bushes, big and small trees and – not the least – a lot of thyme plants. This landscape is arranged as a row of small parts, a chain of almost square fields surrounded by rocks. Actually quite easy to pass through. But the night approaches, and I have to find a new place for the tent. It happens to be in the middle of a thyme field.

Friday, May 20, 7.40 PM, email from Anne – I get to see it at some point the next day:

”Wow! Haven’t you met anybody at all during these three days? And where are you now? Hot kisses!”

**Rescue helicopter? Maybe ...**

**Saturday, May 21.**

Saturday, May 21, 3.55 AM, email from Anne – I get to see it about 12 hours later:

”Where are you?? A third night in tent? No water left? Yesterday it sounded as if you were close to the civilization…”

I’m beginning getting used to sleep in a tent. Getting used to feel the wind pulling in it – and this night I even got some rain. But food supplies and water are beginning to get short. The previous days I used water for cleaning my hands when I was going to put on my contact lenses. But with half a liter left I spare the rest for other purposes. From now on no contact lenses, just my old glasses, of which just one glass helps the eye – the left eye. Half sight, actually a pity for the viewing of the scenery.

I want to find the E4 or whatever other possible way out, down to Askifou. I pack down the tent, cover the rucksack with it’s rain cover and put it together with the collapsed walking boots a little above the ground on some rocks, so it is hidden a little and at the same time quite easy to find, when I return after doing some searching for how to get out and down. I still carry my passport, my wallet, my telephone, my oldfashioned compass and my rain poncho, but not the remaining water, because no need to carry that now or to drink of it – there can be more need for that later. Instead of the german Meindl boots I now wear my danish Ecco sandals.

I try with my eyes to mark some of the spots I pass, especially big old trees. Climb a high point to get a feeling if there for instance should be some ”sideroad” to the valley that I’m caught in now. There actually seems to be such one going down, and I leave the small peak, walk a little bit further. Still through one little beautiful square scenery after the other, still with a lot of vegetation surrounded by rocks, easy to pass through. On the other hand I don’t seem to be getting anywhere, it’s no longer a ”one way road”, and my belief that I easily could find my way back to my luggage shows up to have been naïve.

This beautiful scenery is somehow arranged as a labyrinth. I circle around and around without finding a way out, without coming back to surroundings that I can be sure that I have seen before. As the hours pass I’m of course beginning to become a little thirsty. I try to eat fresh leaves from thyme and other plants.

Saturday, May 21, 12.08 PM, a telephone message from Anne – I don’t hear it until some days later:

”Now it’s mid Saturday, and now I’m beginning to get worried about where you are. Most likely you can’t use your telephone, and you must have lost your way again. Let me hear from you.”

Saturday, May 21, 1.58 PM, sms to Anne:

”I can’t call you, but maybe I can get an sms through to you with the little connection there after all seems to be from this small mountain top. Your mountain man is in trouble – seriously! Walk around in sandals, have no food left and only a little water, which I left in my rucksack that I can’t find my way back to now … Rescue helicopter? Maybe. I am in a kind of valley somewhere between the Kastro mountain and the village of Askifou. Don’t know how to continue from here …”

Saturday, May 21, 2.08 PM, sms from Anne – I receive it at 5.15 PM, when I again reach a point with telephone connection:

”We are making all the alarm we can! Love you! Hang on! The hottest kisses!”

Suddenly there is at big operation going on. I’m at this point a little bit up at the side of a mountain, where I for a short while have telephone connection with Anne and for a longer while and 5-6 times have connection with the greek 112 emergency service. From there I am told that there are several rescue teams in the area looking for me. I am told to stay where I am. I am also told that my calls should lead to my accurate position, as my iPhone has some kind of GPS function. One of the people I speak to is obviously not sure if I am where I say I am. He asks doubtfully how I can be so sure that I am close to Askifou. The last of these calls ends when there is no more battery on my phone.

I stay at that spot in about an hour. It ought to be easy to see me if somebody is nearby. I have spread out my blue rain poncho upon a gigantic stone. And I’m shouting out in all directions: Hello! Hello! Rescue team! Where are you? Can you hear me? Can you see me? Kalispera! Kalinikta! And so on.

Finally I move down into the complex system of vegetated valleys again, partly to do a last effort to find my luggage, partly to find a sheltered place for the coming night. I keep on shouting, while I walk. I’m wondering that I’m able to shout loudly and clearly. My throat has felt more and more bad during the day, sometimes like almost throwing up. But the shouting leads to nothing. No reaction.

Again I find a small flat field surrounded by rocks. I creep into the rain poncho that now serves as both sleeping bag and tent. This night feels almost as cold as the first night in tent, when I afterwards discovered that the temperatures had been below zero.

**”His absolute favourite place on earth”**

**Sunday, May 22.**

Sunday, May 22, 1.53 AM, a telephone message from Anne, my mermaid – I don’t hear it until some days later:

”Hey sweet mountain man! Now I’m near you. I don’t really know where you are, but tomorrow things must happen, so we meet. Stay there.”

It feels extremely strange to be the object of a big rescue operation. At the same time I’m convinced that I am situated somewhere where nobody is looking for me. Today I have nothing else but the rain poncho to pack down, so I’m quickly on my way after getting up, as the previous days shortly after 6 o’clock, right after sunrise.

I don’t have a feeling of being in danger and certainly not in life danger. I myself chose to walk up here, I knew that these mountains were a difficult area, I was ready to take the consequences. Should I have sent out the emergency signal at all? My situation can’t be compared to the war, the violence, the threats, the physical problems and the economical sufferings among the Syrian, Kurdish, Afghan, Pakistan refugees Anne is working with in Piraeus and neither to the life of Pernille’s girls that from their 4th year are going backwards in development and problably are going to die long before their parents.

Sunday, May 22, 7.51 AM, sms from Anne – I will be seeing it late that day:

”Have just been meeting with one of the rescue teams. They are going out to search again and are even sending a helicopter. They ask you to make a small fire if you can. And react in any way of course if you hear a sound. How does it look around you?”

I do a final small effort to find a way back to the rucksack and then takes a decision – to walk eastwards, only eastwards and nothing else, no matter how much it might go up and down. In that way I in the least get out of the labyrinth of valleys and after some time up to a ridge, from where I have a direct view down to something that is no longer mountain. There is a lot of sheep and goats up here and still a lot of vegetation.

For a while I correct my direction a little bit, because the view is too northerly according to my taste – the horizon again consists of everything from Akrotiri almost to Rethymno. For a while my direction is southeast – and then again directly east. Down into a valley, up upon a ridge, down into a new valley, up upon a new ridge. And so on. At one point I’m standing on a mountain peak with a small concrete monument with some greek words written upon it and the number ”1969”. Year or altitude? From there I can look down upon a peak with a much lower situation. I go for the ravine between the two mountains.

Sunday, May 22, 9.56 AM, a telephone message from Anne – I don’t hear it until some days later:

”I understand that you have no connection, but I love you, and soon they’ll find you, there’s a helicopter out there, and you can’t hear me saying that, but you maybe can hear the helicopter.”

Sunday, May 22, email from Anne to my sisters and brother:

”I have, as you know, been working in a refugee camp in Piraeus since the middle of April. Jakob passed by and stayed for 16 hours on his way to Crete. He arrived this Monday and left again Tuesday afternoon. He was going to hike and I should finish my engagement in Piraeus and then go to Crete the coming Tuesday. And from there go together home to Copenhagen the coming Friday.

Jakob went out Wednesday morning with tent and water for a couple of days to do a tough hike with staying out in the nature during the night. We didn’t have much contact, as the telephone signals in the Cretan mountains are bad. But more than once he lost his way.

Friday afternoon he got an sms through to me writing that he was approaching populated areas and soon would write more – if the path he was walking not turned out to be another ”blind road”.

When I still yesterday morning, Saturday, had heard no more, I began to worry for real. I began pulling different threads. But still, he could simply be out of telephone battery and without the possibility to load it.

Yesterday afternoon an sms came that he had lost his way, couldn’t find the right path, no water and no food left. You know that he’s not the one who ever asks for help or thinks that he is in a difficult situation, but in the sms he mentioned rescue helicopter as a possibility.

Then the big operation got started. From Greece I was active, and friends helped me from Sweden and Denmark. I was in a refugee camp a little bit outside Athens yesterday, otherwise we are almost always in Piraeus, but we had a rented car and it took some hours to get back to the hotel. I packed my stuff as fast as I could and flew to Chania, landed at 11 in the evening, hired a car and drove towards the village that Jakob had mentioned as the closest to him, Askifou. After some mistakes driving in the Cretan mountains – I felt it as if it was a mirror of his walking – I arrived right after 2 o’clock in the night. All the time I was in contact with the rescue teams – they had three teams out searching until 2 in the night. Then they took a break before going out again now in the morning.

The latest sign of life was that he succeeded getting a telephone call through to me at 5.50 yesterday afternoon. It was short, because the greek 112 had explained to me that it was extremely important that he called 112 himself, so they could track his position via his signal. So I asked him to do that and afterwards try to call me again. He didn’t succeed getting through to me again and neither did I succeed getting a call through to him, but I called 112 and asked if he had got through to them, and he had, so they have a signal.

Now in the morning there was a knock on my door just before 8 o’clock for a meeting with the police and one of the rescue teams, seven concerned fire fighters. They asked detailed questions about anything I knew, but I had already given the same information yesterday on the telephone. And I don’t know much. He took a bus from Chania to Omalos Wednesday morning 7.45 to walk eastwards across The White Mountains, Lefka Ori. I think he had one night in tent in mind, but brought water and food for two nights, if it should be necessary. He brought 5 liters of water.

Now more rescue teams have been sent out there again and they even send up a helicopter.

We can only hold our thumbs that he will be found as soon as possible.

These mountains are his absolute favourite place on earth.”

My sandals have become used to stand rather steadily, although there’s still a lot of loose stones on the long mountain sides. The ravine is passable, although not quite easy all the way down. Sometimes I have to go a little bit up one of the mountain sides to be able to continue.

Some times I hear the sound of an engine. It might be a helicopter, but I don’t see the machine, I can’t wave to it.

The ravine between the mountain sides goes down through a wood with rather tall pine trees. In the beginning of the afternoon I see on the left side that there is no longer wood, but apparently some kind of field. Soon after I go up that side, and a little bit later I come to a farm building – and the end of a road! I follow this road through something that seems to be a very big farm with lots of goats, sheep, production of honey and a few pig stables. It takes about an hour before I am through the farm, coming to a regular asphalt road. Despite of everything still in normal walking speed.

To the left it goes downwards, to the right there’s a church and apparently a small village. I go up there. Every house has a barking dog, but there’s not many people to see. In the garden of one of the last houses I see a teenage girl, call her and explain that I just came down from the mountains, that I have not been drinking anything for two days, and ask, if it’s possible to have a glass of water. She brings a caraf and a glass. I only drink one glass – think that I shouldn’t shock my system, thank her and walk down to other villages.

Come through a bigger village, Ebrosneros. There is a sign for a restaurant, but it turns out to be closed today. A little bit above it is a spring, where I drink a little more. It has the same taste as the water I got from the teenage girl.

Now I try to hitchhike and car number two stops. I ask the three young people in the car, where they are going – to Vrisses for instance? And that’s exactly where they are headed. It turns out that there is only a couple of kilometres there.

They let me off, I walk down to the river, go down to one of the tavernas there and order water, white wine and greek salad. After having taken seat – or rather put my jacket on a chair – I go up to the taverna owner and ask if he has something I can use to load my telephone. We try with his Samsung equipment and my iPhone, but it doesn’t work. Instead he lets me make a call from his telephone. When I dial 112, he tries to correct me, because he’s sure that I don’t want to call a number starting with those figures – and certainly not the emergency service. But that’s what I want – to call off the alarm.

Sunday, May 22, 6.34 PM, another mail from Anne to my sisters and brother:

”He is found! And he is doing well! He came walking on a road near the village of Vrisses, a little north of where I am, and now they take him to Chania, so I’m soon on my way there! Am so relieved and happy!”

Sunday, May 22, 7.12 PM, sms from Thor Bjørn:

”Next time I like to go with you, so we are two to lose our way.”

Two uniformed fire fighters arrive at the taverna almost an hour after my call. One of them is the boss of the fire brigade in Chania, the other is probably his deputy and the one who’s best communicating in English. They ask me some questions while I’m finishing my eating and drinking, but soon it becomes obvious that they want me to follow them to the local fire station, because there quite a few are waiting from the rescue teams that have been searching for me for two days. And they will like to meet me … 12-14 men I think I am confronted with after been driven there.

More questions and more answers, and a report is written. Also a police man shows up, and he copies the informations from the report.

I thank the rescue people for all their efforts, as the deputy has encouraged me to do, especially because many of the men operate voluntarily and without being payed.

A few of them turn out to have taken part in another big event today, this year’s 17,6 kilometres Samaria Run, also called ”Run The Gorge”, before they took part in the continuation of the rescue operation. One of the volunteers taking part in this meeting recommends me in the future to use maps published by Anavasi, when I walk in The White Mountains.

I go with the two first amentioned fire brigade heads to Chania. On the way there are telephone calls to me, first from the Danish Embassy in Athens, then from Anne, whom I have not been able to call, because I don’t have her number in my head, but only in my phone, which still is without battery. First here I learn that she is in Crete, hurried here because of my disappearance, and I learn that I in this moment am on the way in the wrong direction, northwestwards, and she is south of here in Amoudari, the village in the Askifou plateau where I was supposed to end my Lefka Ori walk.

**What did you think of?**

**Monday, May 23.**

Monday, May 23, email from me to my sisters and my brother:

”Three medias were ready, waiting for me, when I was brought to the fire station in Chania yesterday early in the evening – see the news about me here:

<https://www.neatv.gr/teo-aisio-telos-eiche-i-peripeteia-toi-60chronoi-danoi-sta-leika-ori/>

<http://flashnews.gr/post/271050/xtenisan-ta-boyna-oi-pyrosbestes-kindynepse-dyo-fores-o-pilotos>

<http://www.chaniapost.eu/2016/05/22/search-and-rescue-operation-for-a-63-year-old-danish-hiker/>

I think that the big alarm that I caused was somewhat too much – and I came down by my own force, I came to the first taverna, before the rescue teams succeeded finding me. There I started drinking one big glass of water and then one more, before I called the rescue organization from the taverna owner’s telephone (my own phone had no more battery) and told them to call off the search, and then I got something to eat …

But I can confirm that two days without eating and drinking and continuingly physical activity is no joke – by the way my walking boots broke down on the way, so the last two days I was walking in sandals!”

We are in Chania all this day. Stay at Casa di Pietra (the night before and after today).

We walk to the Danish-Norwegian-Swedish consulate. The consules are two fresh and relatively young women, Nicole and Simula, Norwegian and Danish, both with Greek blood in their veins. Simula knows the mountains quite well, and her husband is one of those who put E4 paint on the rocks along the paths up there.

Nicole is the one who gives us advice about where to buy open air/walking equipment, and a few hours later I’m in possession of a new pair of walking boots, bought in a kind of US Army Depot. And three Anavasi maps.

Simula has told about and supplied us with the adress of E.O.S., the alpine club of Chania with opening hours from 9 to 11 in the evening! So there we are shortly after it opens. ”What did you think of?” is the most asked question I get these days. Several times it is asked almost existentially: What were your thoughts when you were without water that long and didn’t know if you would survive? But here it is more asked with authority and followed by: ”And you are even still smiling?!?” It’s a mystery for these experienced mountain people that anybody goes up in the mighty white mountains all alone and without a detailed knowledge of the geography of the area and the risks. But they are kind, offer us raki and nuts and try to contact someone who one of the coming days can go with me and search for the rucksack I left behind.

**The loss – a list**

Backback, Fjällräven ”Friluft”, green, presumably 35 liters, covered by a black rain cover with a big Fjällräven logo ...

Contact lenses, one of them a special lense, value maybe 4000 dkr.

GPS, Garmin, with a memory card, 2500 dkr.

Camera, Sony, with a memory card, 1000 dkr.

Sleeping bag …

Tent, 2000 dkr.

Various toilet articles.

Various clothes, including thin Fjällräven trousers.

Powerbank, MiTone, 150 dkr.

3-4 walking guidebooks in English/German.

A couple of excellent maps of Crete, including a german map on which I have marked which parts of E4 I walked in 2002.

Walking boots, Meindl, no value, in the least not now.

**Never leave your backpack**

**Thursday, May 26.**

We have an appointment at 7.30 at the kiosk near the river in Vrisses with Vangelis, the mountain guide that E.O.S. has connected us with. We also have an appointment with Nikos, who runs the Lefkoritis Resort at Askifou/Amoudari. He will drive us as far as possible in his 4-wheel drive vehicle. Half an hour’s drive up the mountain, at the Niáto plateau, Vangelis and I are let off to ascend and go westwards, while Nikos and Anne drive down again. This is the path on which I had the intention to come from the east, down to Askifou. We just walk in the opposite direction now.

Vangelis, 48 years old, has a lot of knowledge about the mountains and also some teaching qualities. ”Never leave your bottle of water.” ”Never leave your backpack.” ”Always carry a flute.”  To mention a few of the earliest and the most obvious examples. He is a little bit shocked that I brought a GPS that I had not learnt to use, but just hoped that I could be comfortable with by bringing a manual as well …

We walk up, up, up. Vangelis asks me from time to time if I recognize something in the surroundings, a relevant question. And by holding the landscape formations, the E4 route and the newly bought Anavasi map that covers this part of Lefka Ori up against each other, I must realize that I followed another E4 route few days ago. All logic says that I must have been walking northwards from the point called Livada (where I a week ago met a barking dog outside a shepherd shelter), from where there according to the map is both an E4 route eastwards and one northwards (plus the one I was coming with from the south). The essential point is that I followed an E4 marked route, and Vangelis claims that the path northwards is not marked.

My glasses are not what they were and are now kept together by tape and sewing thread. It means a somewhat fragmented and one-sided picture of the reality.

We walk quite a distance, 16 kilometres, 8 kilometres each way, Vangelis reads on his GPS, when we are back at the Niáto plateau. Something has become clearer for me. For instance that it was not the Kastro mountain I was close to a few days ago, but some other big mountain. I can only presume what went wrong last week. And my backpack is still up there.

I would like to get deeper down into the adventure, would like to know more about the geography, in which I ”disappeared”, would like to get back my luggage, including the pictures I took during the first four walking days and other things with affection for me.

**Lightning, thunder and flight mode**

**Friday, June 10.**

Anne and I have been at Brännö for 10 days ending Wednesday by putting the boat into the ocean. Most of the nights I was in Lefka Ori in my dreams. Not unpleasant dreams, I’m just not done with the mountains. I have picked up a couple of my old contact lenses in Copenhagen.

Thursday we landed at the airport of Chania again, and after having learnt that there unfortunately was no room for us in Casa di Pietra in Chania we decided to try to search for accomodation in the coastal villages Kalives and Almirida. We ended at a ”hotel” simply called Almirida Rooms and a room with … mountain view. We have rented a Suzuki Jimny with 4-wheel drive, and in the afternoon we drove up towards Lefka Ori with a couple of offroad roads from the north, first into an area called Chóses and then into Ghournes, some kind of village spread in the mountains. None of the roads led to direct recognition. But we saw more of the mountains, and we picked up some healthy mountain tea.

Today, Friday, we have a new appointment with Vangelis, with whom we meet at 7.30 AM outside a cafeneion in Neo Chorio, not very far from Almirida. Right from the beginning he makes clear that his barometer has told him that the forecast for the afternoon is rather bad. It’s likely that there will be rain and thunder. Besides it’s part of the deal that we have to be back before 7 PM, because he at 7.30 is going to be picked up to be taken to a place south of Heraklion, where he Saturday-Sunday is going to guide a group of mountaineers.

We drive up towards the mountains, the last eight kilometres from the village Madaro almost to the Volikas shelter (altitude 1400 metres) going on a road that Vangelis regards as the one in worst condition on the island. That doesn’t annoy Anne at the wheel. She also walks with us up to the hut that is locked, and Vangelis tells her where to go for spring water and where to seek shelter, if it starts raining. Vangelis and I continue – steeply upwards.

After my walk together with Vangelis two weeks earlier I have found it most likely that I during my original walk by mistake have taken the path northwards from the place called Livada instead of the path eastwards. As mentioned sometime before my new Anavasi map seems to indicate that the path northwards, towards Volikas, is E4-marked. Vangelis has claimed that it isn’t, but is he updated in this case? The waymarks I saw three weeks ago were quite freshly painted.

This is not climbing, but it’s up, up, up, among other things up upon the top of Spathi (altitude 2048 metres). I am thankful that Vangelis is with me, as I’m not sure that I would have been able to find all of the path on my own. Here are no signs, and only in the beginning there are white-yellow waymarks (not white-yellow-black E4 waymarks), then only cairns here and there – by Vangelis called cuckoos.

A little after 12 AM we have reached so far that we can look down upon the Livada plateau. Here Vangelis doesn’t find it responsible to continue. Heavy clouds are approaching both from west and from east. According to the plan we should go down there to see if I could recognize the point from which I left Livada on May 19. As I see it from the view point that we have reached it’s likely that I turned east that day exactly as my plan was. In the least it becomes obvious with this day’s walk that I didn’t continue northwards as I have been suspecting.

We hurry back towards Volikas. We hear thunder coming closer and closer. Vangelis tells me to put my iPhone on flight mode to not attract the lightning, and although I walk as fast as possible he asks me to speed up even more. Almost more than is good for my right knee. At 2 PM we are back at the car, still dry. But the first big drops have fallen, and we have not been driven far before the rain is falling heavily.

During an excellent meal in Agii Pandis in a taverna recommended by Vangelis we are discussing what could be the next step. Vangelis gets more and more eager to do a new try the following Tuesday, when he will be back from his trip to the more eastern part of Crete. On that day he actually has a plane ticket for France, where he is going to guide a group in the Alps, but he thinks that he can get the ticket changed to two days later. He argues that the best way to get to Katsiveli/Livada is from the south, from Anopoli, because it’s from there is possible to drive quite far up into the mountains with a 4-wheel drive vehicle. By driving up Monday evening or before daybreak Tuesday morning we should be able to go eastwards early and find the path I lost three weeks ago. Hopefully even to find the luggage.

Our agreement is that Vangelis the following hours will try to find out if he can have his flight ticket changed, if he can borrow the key for the Katsiveli shelter, where he and I eventually will sleep between Monday and Tuesday, how the forecast looks now, three-four days before, and how the economy for the project will be.

Anne and I haven’t booked a flight home yet, but our plan is actually to go already Saturday evening, among other things because Friday was the only day Vangelis wasn’t occupied before he was leaving for the Alps.

Before the day has gone we have some kind of new appointment with Vangelis. We will go very early Tuesday morning. According to him the weather forecast for Monday is not very good, but he believes that we can do all the walk Tuesday. I only need to cancel an appointment I have with my optician in Copenhagen Monday – then everything is ready for not going home before Tuesday or Wednesday.

**Here I slept the last night**

**Tuesday, June 14.**

While Vangelis during the weekend has been climbing the mountains in the southern/central parts of the island Anne and I have been enjoying life at the beaches – staying at our favourite place Preveli Rooms, Amoudi Beach, driving a little around in that area.

In Plakias I discovered a book published by Anavasi in March this year, ”The Cretan Way / E4”, written by an Italian, Luca Gianotti. In the book it’s made quite clear that the E4 between Katsiveli and Askifou now during 2016 has been/will be moved back to the traditional route a little north of the E4 route that has been used through some years. Can the freshly painted marks that I followed from Katsiveli/Livada on May 19 have been put on this new/future version of the path? In that case it in the least could explain why I didn’t recognize any of the E4 parts that I followed together with Vangelis on May 26.

Vangelis could during Monday see that the weather for Tuesday in the mountains would be too unsafe to go, and we have cancelled the planned tour. Already before we did that, Anne and I decided to buy Norwegian tickets for going home Tuesday with departure 9.10 PM. Maybe a little bit risky, as Vangelis and I presumingly would come down from the mountains rather late, but the tickets were cheap, 56 euro/63 US dollars a piece.

Monday Anne and I went up to the Niáto plateau and walked a little in the direction where the so-called traditional route is supposed to go. There could be no doubt about the direction, but there were no waymarks.

And now, Tuesday around noon, I again am on my way following this path, now all alone. Anne has driven me as far as possible in the car, and the appointment is that I at 5 PM if not before will be back at the point where we part.

After 10 minutes I’m actually beginning to see waymarks, good oldfashioned cairns. It’s not always easy to find them, but I actually succeed doing so in about an hour, and the direction changes from northwards to northwestwards, as it also does on the map. But then I lose the waymarks, I presume they continue up the side of the mountain. And although it could be fine to get up to the pole on the ridge that was the last waymark I saw on my walk on May 18-22, my primary focus is the lost backpack, which apparently is somewhere on the same level as I am now.

So I continue straight ahead, cross some rather tough small peaks, and then – at 2.35 PM – I am finally in surroundings that look familiar to me. And at 2.45 I pass a spot that makes me feel sure that this was where I slept the last night during my fiveday-walk, that night when the rain poncho was making it out for both tent and backpack.

But exactly as then I cannot find the way ”backwards”. And after about an hour having tried to continue in the directions that seem right I must give up. Again. But this time I’m not ”disappeared”. I know where I am.

I choose a route higher up on the mountainside to return as quickly as possible to the meeting point, the point where I started walking today. The area is not so easy to pass as I imagined, and it shows up to be difficult both to make a call and to send sms’es from here.

It’s almost 6.30 PM when I’m back where Anne and the Suzuki are waiting for me – and we reach the check-in at the airport so late that only Anne’s special sense for convincing works towards the employee, who tells us that ”it’s late – it’s closed” – to which Anne replies: ”But it’s not TOO late!” Then we are allowed to pass through.

To be continued?

**Cheryl Strayed – a lonesome hiker too**

The 5th of July, email from my friend Carolyn, who this year can celebrate her 50th anniversary with David:

”Have you read the book ”Wild” about the American woman who hiked the Pacific Crest Trail? You might enjoy it.

David got lost once a few years ago backpacking in the Olympic mountains by himself and got pretty dehydrated before he found his way to a ranger station where they gave him water and called me to come and get him.

Those kind of experiences can be a wake up call about how fragile life can be and about how much you love certain people in your life. The experience certainly brought me and David even closer together and even more appreciative of each other!”

I get hold of Cheryl Strayed’s bestseller ”Wild” from 2012 and see the movie with Reese Witherspoon from 2014 based upon it.

Cheryl Strayed’s project was bigger and more ambitious than mine. Her hike along a path across Sierra Nevada and Cascade Range was 1800 km’s long, lasted three months and was an effort to find herself in that way upon the death of her mother, her own divorce and a period as drug abuser.

But she walked alone, and she lost her way more than once. Exciting and relevant reading for somebody like me.

**Three happy and healthy boys**

**Wednesday, September 14.**

We are back on Crete after a three months’ break. My brother Thor Bjørn has taken the consequence of his own sms words from May 22 and is taking part in this expedition which Vangelis and I were planning doing on June 14 but cancelled because of bad weather forecast. Or rather postponed – till now.

While the sun is arising slowlily over the mountains we crawl upwards in a Nissan Quasqai. We have rented it, when we asked for a 4-wheeldrive vehicle, but must recognize that that’s not really what this is. But without problems it manages to go the 13 kilometres’ rough and stony road from Anopoli where we have stayed during the night up to a place called Rousiés. That’s how far it is possible to go by any car. The drive takes an hour.

We are three happy and healthy boys, 50, 58 and 63 years old – Vangelis, Thor Bjørn and me – starting out with a steep ascent from there. The goal is the Niáto plateau that should be reached in about 10 hours by walking fastly and focused. The combination of sunshine and ascent means that before long it feels quite hot. Jackets and long trousers are packed down now. Even in T-shirts and shorts we are sweatting.

Around 8.30 we are across the first couple of mountain tops. Here, downwards, as we are approaching Katsiveli, we meet a hiker going in the opposite direction. We say hello to him and have a small conversation with him. His name is Daniel, he’s German (from Saxony), has been sleeping in Katsiveli (”There was just me and the goats”) and is on his way to Pachnes, the highest peak in Lefka Ori (altitude 2453 metres). For a moment he discusses with Vangelis if it’s possible to both reach the mountain peak and then walk all the way down to Anopoli. Vangelis recommends him to try to get a room at Anopoli Rooms when he has arrived. Daniel tells us that last year he overestimated his capability and the length of the coastal path between Sougia and Agia Roumeli – he in that case panicked when it became dark and he got aware that he had lost his way. He called the place in Agia Roumeli where he was going to sleep, and two men went out and saved him from his troubles. When Daniel has continued his ascent towards Pachnes and the three of us our descent towards Katsiveli Vangelis reveals that he knows quite well about the incident near Agia Roumeli, which occured shortly after two tourists got lost in the same area and didn’t survive.

We arrive at the Katsiveli shelter – or shelterS, as there is one in which anyone can stay overnight, but it should be rather dirty, and another where the door is locked. The latter one you can only use if you have an oppointment with the alpine club in Chania and have payed for a key to the building. No matter. We don’t need any shelter today and neither did I on the morning of May 19, when I also passed the place. From Katsiveli and forth I’m on wellknown ground from that day. We are now on the E4 route and are going to follow the path as I did then until I lost track of it.

About an hour later we are approaching the shepherds’ hut in the Livada valley, where it seemed as if I went in the wrong direction in May, in my theory following an alternative version of E4. Vangelis leads us west of the hut and northwards, until I protest, because I know that we have come too far and also have moved a little away from E4. Vangelis lets me explain in which direction I think we ought to go, and after we have been looking a little at the hut – where there in contrary to last time now is neither a dog nor a shepherd – we walk eastwards. Obviously Vangelis wanted to test me by initially leading us northwards.

The following one and a half hours we are gradually ascending. From time to time Vangelis asks me if I’m sure that I have been walking here before, and some times I am a little bit in doubt, but I don’t see any other possibilities than to walk as we do now ... ”How sure are you that you walked here – percentwise?” he at one point asks me. I decide for 85 percent. Shortly after we come to the spectacular pass which seems to be the place that on the Anavasi map is called Sideroporti. Here I tell Vangelis that now I’m 100 percent sure. I point out a ridge somewhere downwards that functions as a kind of bridge to the next mountain and declare that the E4 path (and my route on May 19) continues there. And it does!

On this spot there is connection for the mobile phones, and we are now closer to Niáto, our goal for today, than to Rousiés, where we started, and I can call our ”pickup patrol” with the message that it’s not anymore possible that we will return to the starting point.

On my behalf Thor Bjørn is hoping that we will locate the spot where I got lost in May and find the path that I followed then and in the best of all worlds thereby find the spot where I placed my backpack and left it. It’s my clear feeling that Vangelis on this day not will go very far from the E4 path, and I say to Thor Bjørn that I rather soon have better taking a discussion with Vangelis over this matter.

When we have passed the lower situated ridge and have been walking quite a lot in loose stones on the side of the mountain I overlook the ”moon landscape” in southern direction in which I stayed overnight between May 19 and 20, and I know that soon we will be at ”the last pole” – the last E4 waymark I saw back in May, before I lost my way, moved down into a long valley and was walking in circles for a couple of days.

At this point Vangelis has pointed out that now we are walking on a part of the path where he and I also walked on May 26, on our first walk together.

When we come to a higher situated and broader ridge I point out the pole. It is situated in some distance from the E4 path, along which Vangelis is leading us. He says that he is disappointed and confused because now I’m able to say that I’m sure that I was exactly here in May, but one week after my original walk, when he and I also were here, I was not able to recognize the place. I respond that on his and my hike on May 26 I said that this place looked very similar to a landscape I had been through when I had been walking alone, but I didn’t feel sure and therefore I couldn’t say that I had been there. Today I have no doubt. It’s a little past 1 PM, and the atmosphere could have been better. As mentioned Vangelis is disappointed, and he wants to continue our E4 walk. I would like to go up the ridge to se where I went on when I lost my way. Today it is quite easy to se the next E4 pole somewhere towards east on the other side of the ridge, and I might also have been able to se it on May 20, if I had been looking in the right direction.

Some clouds moving up along the side of the mountain make an end of the discussion. There are still three hours’ walking on E4 to Niáto where we are going to be picked up.

Wednesday, September 14, 2.16 PM, Tomas Polvall, swedish freelance journalist, on Facebook:

”This can be great. Some proposals for future expeditions: You buy or rent a house on Crete, learn to speak Greek, make appointments with organisations that are going to help you or mobilize the local population, put already done and future hikes on Google Maps, cooperate with the tourist office of Crete about naming hiking routes after Jakob, take pictures of the exact backpack model and sell them as art, become hiking guides under the theme ”Get Lost On Crete”, employ a consultant with experience in getting lost (I expect of course to be regarded as a serious candidate for that service), etc.”

Not much is being said on the way down. The route is mostly following ridges and sides of the mountains. Vangelis says several times: ”Forget about the backpack.” I remain silent, but have no intentions about forgetting it. I want to go up to ”the last pole” again and have a precise picture in my head of how to get from there down to the backpack – thanks not the least to Vangelis and the now three walks together with him.

Once Vangelis loses the E4 path and has to search for it in maybe 10 minutes, before we are on the track again.

We arrive to the Niáto plateau around 4 PM, some time before expected, and Thor Bjørn is praised by Vangelis. As the women with the car won’t be here until later, we walk across the plateau and then wait just below the Tavri shelter at a spot, where the mobile phones have connection to the rest of the world.

After having had dinner at Yorgos’ taverna in Amoudari – the taverna is maybe called Geronimos, maybe Gialedakis – Anne and I drive Vangelis to Vrises, where we the day before have picked him up at the public parking. Here, in front of his car, we make the appointment, somewhat against my will, that he and I the following Thursday, September 22, will be making one more expedition in the mountains. The purpose this time will not be to try to find my backpack but to give me some kind of lection in navigating with a GPS, and because of that it’s part of the appointment that I’m going to buy a new GPS, although not a fine and expensive model as the one in the backpack left in the mountains.

**One man, two rucksacks**

**Monday, September 19.**

The evening before we have picked up again our white Suzuki Jimny from June, and now we drive up to the Niáto plateau, a familiar ride for us now. It’s a little past 8 AM when I’m walking up the E4, while Anne drives down towards Georgioupouli on the north coast to do a little shopping and jump into the ocean.

Up to ”the last pole” I am quite familiar with the path with which I walked with Vangelis in both directions on May 26 and towards east with him and Thor Bjørn on September 14. I have told Anne that I need no less than 10 hours today. On my way I take pictures and write down coordinates from my iPhone.

11.15 AM, ”the last pole”: 35° 18’ 59” N, 24° 5’ 42” E

Here, on the top of the ridge, I change from the western direction I have been following until now, leave E4, walk a bit along the ridge and then down the side of the mountain. Not quite easy, although my walking boots this time are in good shape.

It takes a couple of hours to get all the way down to the bottom of the valley. I try to follow almost the same track that I was sliding down on May 20. Most of the time down I can see a road curving it’s way through the landscape of the side of the mountain on the opposite side of the valley. That road I also saw from different angles during my original hike in May. But now I thanks to the Anavasi map and the iPhone coordinates can make sure that it is the Chóses road, which Anne and I actually were driving all the way to the end on June 9.

At 1.30 PM I’m down in the valley, following it eastwards, passing a couple of pretty cairns that maybe mark the so-called traditional path. 35° 19’ 43” N, 24° 6’ 46” E

Shortly after I come to an area for which I have a strong feeling of recognition, as I know it quite well from my walk four months ago. Big stones and rocks divide the valley into small fields. At some point I have a dead tree in front of me that I certainly have seen before. I look back over my left shoulder. And there is my rucksack, exactly as I left it, a little bit up between the rocks, wrapped in it’s Fjällräven cover. The tent and the collapsed walking boots lie closely into it. I must admit that I feel a couple of tears in the corners of my eyes.

1.54 PM: Found! 35° 19’ 42” N, 24° 7’ 9” E

I stay almost half an hour on the spot, checking out if everything I remember having in the backpack actually is there, take some pictures, and pick some thyme that has withered quite a lot compared with the night when I slept with the smell from the plant in my nostrils.

But I must back, now carrying two rucksacks, the bigger one – the one that I just found again – on the back, the smaller one that I had for today’s expedition mostly in front of my stomach, sometimes on the shoulder.

I decide to try to do a shortcut to E4, so I maybe avoid going all the way up to the height of ”the last pole”. I don’t really succeed in this effort, and strong wind and clouds approaching parts of the mountains also make the project difficult. It’s tough and I’m moving in a slow speed with the two rucksacks (after the walk I measure their weight to altogether 25 kilos but on the way it feels as if they are heavier than that). At no point I am in doubt where E4 is in relation to my position, but I have to ascend almost up to the pole that ”became my destiny” four months ago. According to the curves on the map it’s a descend of about 800 metres in height.

Around 6 PM I’m back on E4 and I’m aware that the walk from here and back hardly can be done in less than three hours. And it will get dark around 7.30. I have a flash light and have checked that the batteries in the head lamp in the found rucksack still are functioning. I send a message to Anne that I can’t be at the Niáto plateau earlier than 8 o’clock, I set maximum speed and hope not to get away from the E4 path.

I succeed until dusk changes to almost coal-black. At that point I no longer know, where the E4 path is or how far I am from it. Can only hope that it works to go more or less directly eastwards and avoid deep ravines and big holes in the area. Everything works slowly now, I’m falling several times, while it still goes downwards, and I have to change direction, when it seems that I’m on my way directly into a mountain wall. But suddenly I am on a stony road that only can lead to Niáto.

Just a bit battered and scratched I reach Anne and the Suzuki at 9.30 PM. The headlights of the car is the first thing I see.

**The GPS lection postponed**

Five days of walking – spread over almost four months – were needed on top of the five original days of walking, before the circle was concluded and the luggage carried down from the mountain. And it ended as it began – I, the lonesome man, came down, this time with the rucksack, untouched and undamaged.

At this point it doesn’t feel very acute to take a GPS lesson three days later. Rather practise with the Garmin GPS in the woods back home in Denmark a little later.

Tuesday, September 20, I sent this message:

”Dear Vangelis, our plans have changed, and a GPS course Thursday is not possible for us.
But we have news. Yesterday I went up to my ”last pole” on E4 and down from there and found my backpack, not very far from Chóses. This could not have happened without the walks I have made with you.”

Wednesday, September 21, email from Thor Bjørn:

”Then my world is true again that persistence, stubbornness and belief that things are possible can lead to the result wished. Also I felt that we were so close when we were standing at the pole that had lead you away from the E4 route. Of course I’m curious about the walking across the ridge without waymarks! How was it this time to find the way and to find back to the route? The passage downwards to the road with head lamp can’t have been quite easy with the extra equipment?”