



USEFUL INFORMATION IN GREECE

DOCUMENTS: Citizens from the USA are allowed to enter Greece without a visa and to stay up to three months.

MONEY: Unit of Currency in Greece is the **Euro** replacing the drachmae (Dr) **1 EURO = \$ 1.30** (January 2007).

CREDIT CARDS: Most hotels/restaurants, retail stores, jewelry stores, etc. accept the American Express, Master Card, Visa, Diners cards. You may withdraw cash 24 hours a day (from your personal account in the US) in most ATM machines (check for the sign to make sure that the bank accepts Visa, American Express or MasterCard transactions)

BUSINESS HOURS: Mon. & Wed 8:30am-3:30pm, /Tue., Thus., Fri. 8:30 am-2:30 pm & 5:30 pm -8:30pm.

Sat 8:30 am-3:30 p.m. Special holiday hours for Christmas & New Year's.

BANKS: National Bank on Syntagma: Mon. – Thurs. 8am-2pm and 3:30-6:30pm, Friday from 8am- 1:30pm and 3pm-8:30pm., Sat 9am-3pm, Sun 9am-1pm (extended hours are for foreign exchange only) as usually banks are open Mon.-Fri. 8:00am -1:30pm (there is a EOT office added to the National Bank on Syntagma where you may get information, maps of Athens/Greece, etc.) Main office of AMERICAN EXPRESS is in Ermou St.2/ Syntagma.

CUSTOMS: Visitors from most countries outside the EU may import up to 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars, 1 liter of Alcohol or 2 liters of wine/liquor, 50 grams of perfume, 500 grams of coffee and 100 grams of tea. Importation of plants with soil is prohibited, cats and dogs may be brought into Greece with a health and rabies inoculation certificate.

HEALTH: No immunizations necessary for Greece. Tap water is safe to drink, milk is pasteurized, health services are good. One can obtain a list of English-speaking doctors before dep. from the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers (IAMAT) at 417 Center St., Lewiston, NY 14092/ tel: (716) 754-4883). For such conditions as epilepsy, diabetes, heart condition; please wear a Medic Alert ID tag. Contact Medic Alert Foundation in Turlock, CA 95381 (tel: (800) 432-5378) for further info.

WATER: Tap water is drinkable, but you may also order a **bottle of non-carbonated mineral water**. If you like carbonated water, you should ask for it as "SODA".

WHAT TO PACK: Light casual clothing is the best defense against Greece's intense summer heat, lightweight hat is recommended. Cottons and linens are far preferable to synthetics. Skirts, sleeveless dresses, slacks, long shorts and T-shirts are acceptable in any but the most formal situation. Men may want a short sleeve dress shirt and summer sport coat for the fanciest resort restaurants. Although topless and nude sun bathing are common on remote beaches you must cover up when swimming near towns or religious buildings. Bring a light sweater, wind-breaker, light jacket for cooler spring and fall and unexpected night ferries. Most important are comfortable shoes for exploring Archaeological sites and hiking the hills .

CLIMATE: Mild climate in general: cool winters (that hover around 55-60 F in Athens and the south and 45-50F in Thessaloniki and the north and "meltemi" breeze cooled summers (about 85-95F throughout the country). The best seasons visiting Greece are spring (late April-June) and fall (mid September to November) .

HOLIDAYS/ SPECIAL EVENTS:

NEW YEAR'Ss DAY January 1

SHROVE MONDAY occurs 41 days before Easter

GOOD FRIDAY - EASTER MONDAY

WHIT MONDAY occurs 50 days after Easter

OCHI DAY October 28

EPIPHANY January 6

INDEPENDANCE DAY March 25

MAY DAY May 1 (Labor Day)

ASSUMPTION TO THE VIRGIN August 15

CHRISTMAS December 25

On these days, government offices, banks, post offices and most stores are closed. Various museums and attractions, however may be open, as well as some restaurants. For further information, consult the English language publications (such as weekly newspaper, "The Athens News").

MUSEUMS: Museums and sites in Athens (Acropolis), Delphi, Crete, Mycenae and Epidaurus are open in the winter from 8.00 am - 2.45 p.m and in the summer until 6.30-7.00 pm. Most museums are CLOSED on Mondays but schedules might vary. Students with International Student Cards receive a fifty (50%) reduction to most sites and museums. On Sundays, sites and museums are FREE of charge (except guided tours)

ELECTRICITY: Electric current in Greece carries 220 volts at 50 cycles. Some of the larger hotels, deluxe hotels have 110 volts outlets in the bathrooms for electric shavers.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Cameras, accessories and film are readily available, but are rather expensive in Greece.

Be advised that you will have to pay a charge for photographs taken with flash and video cameras inside the museums.

LANGUAGE: Greek is one of the oldest languages in the world and belongs like English to the Indo-European family of languages. The language of the New Testament, the "Koine", which became the "common" language for many centuries in the eastern Mediterranean region derives from Ancient Greek. Our language today is a simplified version of the "Koine".

TRANSPORT: You may travel around Athens by using public transportation, blue buses and yellow electric buses or the subway. **Tickets for the buses cost 0.50 Euro**-p.person, one way, and can be bought at most newsstands. The new subway system is very efficient and practical around downtown Athens, Kiffisia and Pireaus. Closest subway station from your hotel is the **Acropolis station** and the Syntagma station. **Tickets are bought at the station and cost 0.80 Euro** for one way, or 2.90Euro for a day pass. Introduced in December 2004, the **“Combined Ticket”** that can be used within 1 hr. 30 minutes in all blue buses, trolley, tram and subway, that costs **1 Euro** and can be bought from kiosks and the subway ticket counters. *Not to be used for the airport shuttle.*

TAXIS: Minimum charge are **2,50 Euro**-. There are very few taxi stands on main streets, but usually you stop the taxi by waving your hand. During rush hours, you may have to share you taxi with other passengers going to the same destination, paying full charge. You can also order radio taxi with an additional cost from your hotel (usually around 2-3Euro). On Easter, Christmas and special holidays there is a holiday surcharge. Luggage has also an extra charge as well as there is an add-on fee for pick-ups or drop offs to airports, port and bus stations.

STAMPS: An airmail **letter/postcard** to the USA costs **0.65 Euro**, to Europe 0.65 Euro-.Parcels (more than 2 kilo) can be send from the parcel post office in Mitropoleos St. near the Cathedral.. The nearest post office (yellow mail boxes) is located on the **Dionysos Aeropagitou Str- the pedestrian street** on the way to the Acropolis.

TIPPING: Service is usually included - but, if you were satisfied with the service, a tip of 5-10 % of your bill in restaurants, taverns, hotels, taxis is recommended. A tip of 1 to 2 Euro for housekeeping and porters in hotels is suggested. Tips for guide/tour-escort are \$ 2-3 per day, and \$ 2-3 per day for the driver of your coach. Cab drivers usually 5/10 % tip is expected.

WHERE TO MEET YOUR GUIDE: Our office representative will meet your clients after passport control or outside the customs area. Your guide will meet you after customs.

BAGGAGE allowed: On domestic flights 15 kilos and 20 kilos on flight in Europe.

AIR PORT TAX is normally included in your ticket price.

SHOPPING: Around Syntagma Sq. in Voucourestiou & Panepistimiou St. for very expensive jewelry and antiquities ("Zolotas", "Lalaounis"). **Shoe shops, leather, furs** e.g. Ermou St. /Syntagma Sq.. **Best streets for museum copies**, less expensive jewellery and modern Greek ceramics are in **Plaka in Voulis St, Kidathineon Str.** ("Vergina Gallery"). For European Casuals, Italian sportswear, designer wear shop go to Kolonaki in the area between Solonos and Anagnostopoulou St., Omirou , Iraklitou & Skoufa St..

Best items are those, which are uniquely Greek Folk art, handicrafts, copies of Ancient jewelry/ceramics, as well as "flocati rugs", cotton embroideries.

TELEPHONE CALLS: For local, domestic and inter-European calls, we advise you to buy a **prepaid telephone card** (available at OTE /Stadiou Street and newsstands for 3 Euro with 100 units). Also a calling card (5 euro) based on an indiv. Pin number. **“Chronokarta” in Greek.** You may use that card to call the US as well. Calls to the US are not expensive, for \$ 3 you could speak for 8-10 minutes. You may use a telephone calling card from AT&T, MCI. For **AT&T service** call **00800-1311** and for **MCI 00800-121**. For calling Athens from another city in Greece or within the city, dial 210 and the number, for calling the US directly, dial 001 plus the number.

TIME: Greece is 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. With reference to North American time zones (**EST**), **it is 7 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time**, 8 hrs. of Central Standard Time, 9 hrs. of Mountain Standard Time and 10 hrs. of Pacific Standard Time. In Greece, the 24-hour-clock system is used officially, so for example, noon is 12:00, 4pm is 16:00 and 11pm is 23:00. Popularly, however, expressions such as "2 in the afternoon "and" 8 at night" are used.

EVENTS: There are many cultural events around Athens and Greece. Please consult the newspaper “Athens News” (on stands every Friday) to check for theatres, movies (original versions), opera (“The Megaron of Music”), art galleries and special events.

LITERATURE *Mary Renault:* "The Mask of Apollo", "The King Must Die". etc.(historical novels) *Homer's "Iliad"* and "Odyssey" (i.e. translation of Robert Fitzgerald), *Hamilton's "Mythology"*. Entertaining reading provide "Women of Andros" by *Thornton Wilder*. Highly recommended is "From Alpha to Omega" (The Life and Times of the Greek Alphabet) by *Alexander and Nicholas Humez*.

For Art and architecture: *John Boardman "Greek Art"* (Oxford Press) **Fiction:** *Henry Miller:* "The Colossus of Maroussi, *Nikos Kazantzakis:* "Zorba The Greek"and "A Modern Sequel to the Odyssey".

Travel: *Richard Stoneman:* "Literally Companion to Traveling in Greece", *Patrick Fermor's* personal journeys to "Mani" or "Roumeli." You may also find a lot of individual guides, published by Lycabettus Press, rich in photography, lively folk and historical lore as well as **FROMMER'S Budget Travel Guides.**

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