

Greece

PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION



Congratulations on your decision to travel to Greece with JOURNEYS! This information will help you prepare for the exciting experience ahead and help you to get the very most from your trip. While all trips (and travelers) are unique in their requirements, this information will help you adapt your own style and preferences.

Greece is a land of diverse terrain; from mountainous regions sprinkled throughout to the sparkling coastline. It consists of a peninsula and approximately 1400 islands, of which 169 are inhabited. Greece is at approximately the same latitude as Philadelphia and Denver. The summers are usually hot and dry, and winters are usually mild and wet.

GETTING READY FOR YOUR TRIP

Passports

- ❖ Passports are required of U.S. Citizens to enter
- ❖ Must be valid for at least 6 months after your trip – if not, apply or renew immediately
- ❖ Keep a copy of the picture page of your passport in a separate place while traveling
- ❖ Carry an extra passport photo in case you need to apply for a quick replacement

Visas

- ❖ No visas required for US or Canadian citizens for stays of up to 3 months
- ❖ Nationalities of other countries please inquire regarding visas

Health, Immunizations

- ❖ Greece has no unusual health problems or serious endemic diseases and no special health precautions or immunizations are required for tourists.
- ❖ Recommended standard immunizations for all travelers include: polio, tetanus, MMR, hepatitis A & B
- ❖ SEEK INDEPENDENT MEDICAL ADVICE from your physician or local travelers health service
- ❖ For the latest recommendations for immunizations or malaria prevention contact the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia: 800-311-3435, or visit their website: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>
- ❖ Many universities have immunization clinics that can assist you

Time Difference

- ❖ Standard time in Greece is 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+2 GMT)
- ❖ Daylight saving time is observed March to October, when they are +3 GMT
- ❖ When it is 5 PM in Athens, it is 10 AM in New York City, and 7 AM in Los Angeles

Electricity

- ❖ 220 V/50 Hz
- ❖ Plugs are typically the 2 round prong (found in Europe), as well as the “schuko plug,” both pictured here



ARRIVAL

- ❖ On arrival in Athens, you will be met and transferred to your hotel.
- ❖ Your trip is coordinated through a locally-based and locally-owned tour operator. Your guides are local to the area and are knowledgeable about the products, history, and culture of their region. Your guide's main responsibility will be handling the details of travel, making sure reservations are honored, facilitating your own exploration projects, and helping you to avoid problems related to your lack of knowledge of local customs.
- ❖ We encourage you to be bold in your explorations while you are on your own. Enough people speak English in the larger towns for you to ask directions if you are lost. Alternatively, you can just hail a taxi and give the name of your hotel to your driver. There is much to observe, photograph and purchase.

GETTING ALONG AS A VISITOR



Food & Restaurants

- ❖ Look for a restaurant where lots of locals are eating - chances are the food will be delicious and reasonable
- ❖ The chance of getting sick from eating in Greece is minimal.
- ❖ The water supply is safe to drink in Athens and major cities or resorts, but you may want to use bottled water when in more rural locales.
- ❖ Greeks tend to eat a late dinner, which can be served as late as 8 or 9 pm. The restaurants in tourist areas will offer an earlier dinner, but in rural areas, restaurants may not open until 8 pm.
- ❖ When visiting, it is considered rude to leave the table before everyone is finished eating, and taking second helpings is a way of showing respect and gratitude to one's host.
- ❖ In restaurants, it is a common custom to order several meals and share them amongst the diners. When choosing a meal, some restaurant diners may even go into the kitchen and inspect the various meals while they're being prepared!
- ❖ It is considered appropriate to leave tips for both the server and the busboy.
- ❖ A typical Greek dinner will include appetizers or soup and a main course. Some of the nicest restaurants may serve Western-style desserts, but Greeks usually go to a separate bakery for such items.
- ❖ Some Greek specialties include:
 - ❖ Tzatziki - a cucumber and yogurt dip with garlic
 - ❖ Halva - a cake made with semolina or sesame seeds
 - ❖ Moussaka - a layered meat and potato dish with cheese
 - ❖ Soutzoukakia - spicy meatballs in tomato sauce
 - ❖ Baklava - layered honey pastry, which may contain nuts

Accommodations

- ❖ We choose accommodations by balancing safety, convenience, value, location, and integrity of the staff.
- ❖ The hotels we use in Greece are clean and quiet, usually 3-4 star, with private baths.

Money and Currency Exchange

- ❖ Your guide can advise you on the best place to exchange currency
- ❖ It is a good idea to bring newer dated currency that has no rips, marks, folds, or holes
- ❖ Be aware that you may need to show your passport when using a credit card. Also, credit card companies are now charging a 3%+ surcharge on all foreign currency purchases (purchases of goods made outside of the US). Check with your credit card company before you travel as the charges change frequently without notice and vary with card and destination.

Tipping

- ❖ The service charge will be included in your restaurant bill, but it is customary to leave a small amount in addition, usually enough to round off the bill. (The custom is the same for taxis.)
- ❖ It is considered appropriate to leave tips for both the server and the busboy.
- ❖ There is no fixed policy for tipping guides or drivers. It is not compulsory and completely at your discretion. Usually, guests tend to give main guides about 20-50 euros per day (on a group basis). But whatever you may wish to give is welcome, if you are pleased with the services provided by local staff.
- ❖ Anytime you especially appreciate someone particularly informative or helpful, an extra tip is always gratefully accepted.

Emergency Services

- ❖ There are good medical facilities in Greece
- ❖ Most over-the-counter medications are available at local pharmacies.
- ❖ Your guide will advise you in the case of urgent medical need during your tour

SPECIAL REMARKS



People

- ❖ Greeks are an extremely hospitable people.
- ❖ The standard greetings in Greece are kalimera (good day) and kalispera (good evening). This greeting is used when meeting someone on the street, and also when greeting the waiter or host at a restaurant.
- ❖ Personal questions are not considered impolite in Greece, and you may expect a barrage of them. It is considered rude to take offence at these questions. If you're over 25 and unmarried, you may expect commiseration!
- ❖ It is common practice to invite a stranger in to share a meal or even stay the night. Attempting to recompense someone with money is considered offensive, but giving a gift to the family or to a child of the family is acceptable.
- ❖ If you go out for a meal, the bill will not be split but rather paid by your host.
- ❖ When drinking wine, the glass must remain more than half-full. It is bad manners to empty your glass, and you can expect that your host will keep it full for you.
- ❖ If you are offered coffee, it is considered impolite to decline.
- ❖ Greece is a country steeped in traditional customs. Name days, weddings and funerals all have great importance in Greek life. Greeks tend to be a bit more superstitious than most Europeans; Tuesdays, for example, are considered an unlucky day. Many Greeks believe in the "evil eye", bad luck which befalls someone who has received too many compliments and has thus become envied. You should avoid paying excessive compliments, especially to newborn babies.

Time

- ❖ Relax and enjoy the easy-going rhythm of Greece
- ❖ Do not expect everything to happen on time; remember that in some places time is not as important as it is back home, and there is often little concern for punctuality
- ❖ Despite best efforts, departures and arrivals could be a little before or after the time given. This applies particularly to aircraft and boat movements. Operating requirements, weather and terrain sometimes present problems, and on these occasions, to ensure your safety, times may vary

Safety

- ❖ Observe the same precautions taken at home
- ❖ Do not flaunt a bulging wallet, lock unattended vehicles, do not leave baggage unattended in public
- ❖ Make use of security facilities provided for valuables in your accommodation and on the boat
- ❖ In towns, the best place to carry your passport and money is in a pouch worn around the neck inside of the shirt or in a money belt around the waist
- ❖ It is highly recommended that you buy travel insurance that covers your baggage before you leave
- ❖ Don't take anything you can't afford to lose or can't replace

Shopping

- ❖ Bartering is the norm at street markets. Ask your guide for tips on local bartering. But don't push too hard - remember that what is only a few dollars to you may mean a great deal to the average seller or artisan. Never barter unless you intend to buy.

Equipment & Packing

- ❖ A good goal is to fit everything into a single piece of checked luggage and a carry-on daypack
- ❖ We recommend a durable, water-resistant, soft duffel bag or lightweight soft-sided suitcase as your checked luggage. Hard suitcases are not practical due to space limitations.
- ❖ A small backpack or hip-pack is ideal for carrying bottled water, camera, extra sunblock, etc, while on excursions where the terrain requires your hands to be free.
- ❖ Choose a distinctive, easily identified bag, and use a JOURNEYS luggage tag for bag identification by staff, and your name and address should be also indelibly affixed inside the luggage.
- ❖ Casual clothing is appropriate at all times
- ❖ Some hotels may have laundry services, but you will probably need to wash out some clothes en route



- ❖ Be aware of weight limits on checked luggage and pack accordingly
- ❖ You may want to bring an extra smaller, collapsible (lockable) duffel, to leave items in a city hotel while you are on an excursion or to use on your return for souvenirs

CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT SUGGESTIONS CHECKLIST

Pre-Departure Tasks

- Obtain or renew passport
- Buy travelers checks in low denominations
- Evaluate and obtain trip cancellation, baggage and medical insurance
- Consult with physician for immunizations and prescription medicine recommendations
- Break-in primary footwear
- Make final payment to JOURNEYS at least 60 days before trip departure

Clothing

- Comfortable athletic or walking shoes
- Sport sandals with Velcro strap, extra shoes, flip-flops or sandals
- Shorts
- Comfortable, lightweight pants
- Nicer pants or skirt (optional)
- Lightweight long-sleeve shirt
- T-shirts, short sleeve shirts and/or tank tops
- Sweater/Jacket and windbreaker
- Rain gear - poncho or jacket and pants
- Sun hat or cap with wide brim
- Bandana
- Swim suits
- Socks
- Sleepwear & under clothes

Personal Items

- Sunblock (waterproof, high SPF)
- Lipbalm with SPF
- Insect repellent with DEET content
- 2 spare passport photos (in case of lost passport)
- Wrist watch and/or travel clock
- Sunglasses (with strap, case)
- Extra eyeglasses/contacts
- Money belt or pouch for valuables
- Small flashlight with extra batteries
- Copies of all important documents
- Day pack (can also serve as an airline carry-on bag)
- Camera, memory cards, film, batteries, charger
- Lead bag/containers to protect film in X-ray machines
- Binoculars (lightweight)
- Plug adapter (if needed)
- Soft duffel with shoulder strap or durable suitcase
- Luggage tags
- Ziploc-type bags for packing shampoo or other liquids
- Stuff sacks or plastic bags for organizing inside luggage (also useful for dirty laundry)
- Thread, needles, safety pins for minor repairs



Personal First Aid Kit

- Aspirin or other pain killer
- Cold relief tablets, antihistamine, cough drops
- Band-aids, gauze pads
- Antibiotics
- Prescription medicines
- Aloe gel or lotion in case of sunburn
- Anti-diarrhea medicine
- Antibiotic cream/ointment
- Supply of feminine hygiene items
- Motion sickness tablets
- Earplugs

Essential Items For Your Carry-On Bag

- Passport
- Domestic and international air tickets
- Travelers checks, money and credit cards
- Insurance certificates
- Address and telephone number of emergency contact
- Prescription medicines
- Extra set of underclothes
- Toiletries in small leak-proof bottles
- Camera gear, film and other valuables

Optional Items

- Address book, writing paper, or journal, pen/pencil
- Map
- Video camera
- Phrase book
- Small washcloth
- Wet wipes/moist towelettes and Kleenex
- Favorite snack foods (pre-packaged)
- Pictures of your house and family
- Mask, snorkel, fins, wetsuit (if applicable)
- Underwater camera (disposable kind is very handy)

