



# Greek Islands

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HISTORY



Over the centuries, the Greek islands have been the stepping stones between North Africa, Asia Minor and Europe, across which warriors, tradesmen, conquerors and even civilisations have hopped. Since ancient times the islands have been fought over and claimed as prizes by successive invaders. Their strategic location, in a seafaring world, made many islands prosperous and autonomous trading centres. Some were run by foreign masters, as evidenced by the Venetian ports, Roman aqueducts and Frankish castles found on the islands today.

## In the Beginning

About 20-million years-ago, the northeast tip of the African plate started crashing with the Asian continent. 5-million years later, the Arab and Asia continent merged and the remaining part of Tethys was trapped between the three continents and the Mediterranean was formed.

At the same time, Crete, Cyclades and the rest islands of the Aegean Sea had totally been raised and formed a common coast with the the Greek continent and Minor Asia. Two large lakes were located at the site of current North Aegean and at the current site of Crete. Excavations show that the first settlement in Ancient Greece dates from the Palaeolithic era (11,000–3,000 BC). During the second millennium BC, Greece gave birth to the great stone and bronze civilization: the Minoans (2600–1500 BC), the Mycenaeans (1500–1150 BC) and the Cycladic civilization.

These were the first important civilizations in the Greek history.

## Alexander the Great

Often called the greatest military commander in history, Alexander expanded the Greek empire to its greatest size, never losing a battle.

Alexander inspired such loyalty in his men that they'd follow him anywhere and, if necessary, die in the process. Though Alexander the Great died before realizing his dream of uniting a new realm, his influence on Greek and Asian culture was so profound it inspired a new historical epoch—the Hellenistic Period.



# Independence

In 1814 the first Greek independence party, the Filiki Eteria (Friendly Society), was founded and their message spread quickly. On 25 March 1821, the Greeks launched the War of Independence. Uprisings broke out almost simultaneously across most of Greece and the occupied islands. The fighting was savage and atrocities were committed on both sides; in the Peloponnese 12,000 Turkish inhabitants were killed after the capture of the city of Tripolitsa (present-day Tripoli), while the Turks retaliated with massacres in Asia Minor, most notoriously on the island of Chios. The campaign escalated, and within a year the Greeks had won vital ground. They proclaimed independence on 13 January, 1822, at Epidaurus. Soon after, regional wrangling twice escalated into civil war, in 1824 and 1825. The Ottomans took advantage and by 1827 the Turks (with Egyptian reinforcements) had regained control. Western powers intervene and a combined Russian, French and British naval fleet sunk the Turkish-Egyptian force in the Battle of Navarino in October 1827. Despite the long odds against him, Sultan Mahmud II and proclaimed a holy war, prompting Russia to send troops into the Balkans to engage the Ottoman army. Fighting continued until 1829 when, with Russian troops at the gates of Constantinople, the sultan accepted Greek independence with the Treaty of Adrianople. Independence was formally recognised in 1830.







MONEY





The currency used in the Greek Islands is the Euro. The Euro, denominated in banknotes of: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 Euros, while coins come in: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 cents (or lepta in Greek) and 1 and 2 Euros. It is important to always have some cash money in Greece and the Greek Islands. Although many hotels, restaurants and tourist shops in Greece accept credit cards, you might encounter few studios or small shops in less-touristy islands that ask for cash.



## Credit Cards

In Greece, Visa and MasterCard are the most widely accepted cards. Diners Club is less widely accepted. And American Express is still less frequently accepted because it charges a higher commission and is more protective of the cardholder in disagreements.

## Debit Cards

Major card providers are accepted in larger cities and tourist areas in Greece. If you're in more remote areas, you might find that retailers don't take American Express. However, when you make it to truly rural Greece, you may find that cash is the only acceptable form of payment.







# Visitors From The USA

Currency exchange rates are clearly displayed in every bank that accepts currency exchange, while credit card holders may acquire money from the ATMs of the collaborating banks. Greek banks are open for the public from 8:00 to 14:30 Mondays to Thursdays and from 8:00 to 13:30 on Fridays. They are closed on Public Holidays.

## ATMs

ATMs on the Greek Islands can be found in the typical tourist areas and main town centres. ATMs on the smaller and less populated islands may be hard to come by. To avoid being caught without cash, plan ahead and withdraw money at the tourist areas for your Greek Island holiday.



HELPFUL INFO

## Climate

The Greek islands have a Mediterranean climate, with mild and rainy winters, and hot and sunny summers. The northern cities, located in inland areas of Epirus, Macedonia and Thessaly, have a slightly continental climate, with quite cold winters, during which air masses coming from the north can sometimes bring snow and frost, and hot summers, sometimes torrid.

## Electricity

For Greece there are two associated plug types C and F. Plug type C is the plug which has two round pins and plug type F is the plug which has two round pins with two earth clips on the side. Greece operates on a 230-V supply voltage and 50-Hz. Electrical power in Greece is supplied by lignite-fueled power stations. Lignite is a type of coal. Hydroelectric power is also used. Solar energy and wind power are being considered as alternative energy sources. Total power production in 1998 amounted to 43.677-billion kilowatt hours (kWh), while consumption in that year was 42.18-billion kWh.







## Technology & Communication

The country's telephone system is adequate, with networks reaching all areas for main telephone lines and mobile cellular phones. Most telephone calls are carried by microwave radio relay. Underwater cables transmit calls to the Greek islands. In 1997 there were 5.431-million main lines in use and 328,000 mobile phone users. As of 1998 there were 26 AM radio stations, 88 FM stations, and 4 shortwave stations. In 1999, 64 television stations were operating in Greece. Computers and communications are increasing in popularity and availability. By 1999 there were 23 Internet service providers (ISPs) operating in Greece.

## Infrastructure & Transport

Greece has a modern infrastructure complete with airports, railways, and paved roads and highways. There are a total of 80 airports (1999 est.), 64 of which have paved runways. There are 2,548-kilometers (1,583 miles) of railways and 117,000-kilometers (72,703-miles) of highways, 107,406-kilometers (66,742-miles) of which are paved. As expected from a historically seafaring country, Greece has 12 ports and harbors and a large merchant fleet of more than 700 ships.







# In Case Of An Emergency

In order to get help in Greece during emergencies, you can call one of the following numbers, which respond at all hours and in all languages:

European Emergency Number (Police/Medical/Fire) 112

Police-Immediate Response: 100

Ambulance 166

Fire 199

## Language

Greek is the official language of Greece. It is spoken by about 99.5% of the population. It is also, alongside Turkish, the official language of Cyprus. Because of the membership of Greece and Cyprus in the European Union, Greek is one of the 23 official languages of the European Union.







## LGBT Travel

Greece features large and active LGBT communities both on the mainland and the islands. Especially during the summer, the Greek islands show an increasing amount of LGBT tourism who arrives here to enjoy the special facilities and the warm hearted character of the locals. There are many islands which are famous for their gay friendly and lesbian friendly features, offering amazing opportunities for all couples who are interested. For those reasons, there are also special events taking place every year on various islands of the country to support the homosexual rights and fight homophobia.

## Religion

The religion of Greek people is an important aspect of the Greek culture. The Greek population in mainland Greece and the Greek islands is Christian Orthodox per 98%. The religion of rest of the population is Muslims, Catholic and Jewish. Greece and Russia are the only countries to have such a great proportion of Orthodox population.





ΕΝ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΙΣ ΕΥΛΟΓΕΙΤΕ ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ



## Getting There

One can travel to Greece in many different ways: by road, plane, train or sea. Major roads link Greece with Europe and Asia. The country's airports provide top-notch services. Rail connections with Europe allow for a lovely nostalgic journey. And last but not least, Greek ports welcome ocean-going ships and local ferries all year round. Some of the larger Greek Islands will have airports which can accept international flights, with the airports in Rhodes and Corfu among the largest offering the broadest range of flights. However, if you are planning to see different islands and explore several different parts of the region, then the only real way to travel between the islands economically is by ferry. Because it is such a large area, there are a variety of ferry companies serving different parts of the islands, and the prices and schedule can vary dramatically, particularly if you are looking to travel outside the main tourist season.

## Driving

The road network in Greece covers 117,000-kilometres in total (mainland and islands). Roads in the mainland of Greece are modern and newly-constructed in a large scale. The main highway of Greece is E75 Athens-Thessaloniki, whose construction has almost finished, except for a couple of spots (in Styrida and Tempi). A large highway, Egnatia Odos, was also recently finished, crossing all Northern Greece and connecting the port of Igoumenitsa to Alexandroupoli, a town close to the borders between Greece and Turkey. This highway has given a large burst to trade and tourism in northern Greece. Many other highways are under construction in Greece over the last years, including the road from Corinth to Patras, from Tripoli to Patras, from Patras to Ioannina and from Chania to Agios Nikolaos in Crete. While driving in the Greek highways, have in mind that you may encounter toll posts. The toll fares vary from 1,5 to 3,5 euros, as each toll post has different fares. Although the Greek highways are in good condition and easy to travel, have in mind that the roads connecting smaller towns and mountainous villages are pretty narrow (one line per direction) and can be winding. The roads on the Greek islands are also narrow and winding. Most roads on the island are asphalted but it is not impossible to encounter dirt roads especially roads leading to non-touristic places.

THE EXPERIENCE

## Culture

Greece is a country of great interests and diverse cultures, influenced by its location, at the junction between the East and the West and by the many occupations of the Greek people throughout history. The Orthodox Church is at the heart of Greek culture. Blue-domed, whitewashed chapels are iconic symbols of the Greek islands. They were often built along the coast, so people could pray for relatives out at sea. One of the most famous—featured in the movie *Mamma Mia* on Skopelos, high on a rocky outcrop lashed by the waves. Traditional Crafts and folk artists abound on the Greek islands. On Skyros, you'll see old ladies on stoops bent over embroidery and wood-carvers chipping away at miniature chairs in their workshops .

## Bucket List

Swim in Gaiola of Thassos

Traverse the Corinth Canal

Marvel at the Santorini Sunset

Make Waves on Lefkada

Get Up Close With History at the Acropolis

Rent a Sunbed in Mykonos

Hike Up the Santorini Volcano

Visit the Red Beach

# Family Travel Highlights

Percy Jackson Tour at the Acropolis Museum

Fun family sailing adventure at Milos Island

River Trekking in Crete

Mountain Biking around Lassithi Plateau

Taste and learn traditional Cretan Cheese

Stargazing at Cape Sounion

## Tourism Authority

The Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNTO) is a Public Entity (PE) supervised by the Ministry of Tourism. The GNTO was first established in 1927 and re-established in 1950 by Emergency Act 1565/50, ratified by law 1624/51); in the meantime, tourism fell under the competence of various ministries. Since 1950, the GNTO constitutes the ruling state agency for the tourism sector. According to law 3270/04 (Government Gazette 187/A/11.10.2004), GNTO consists of the Head Office located in Athens and the Regional Departments of Tourism (as of 01.01.2005). The structure of the GNTO's services and the competences of each unit are included in Presidential Decree 343/2001 (Gov. Gazette no 231 A).







## Foods To Try

Baklava

Bougatsa

Dolmadakia

Feta Me Meli

Galaktoboureko

Greek Salad (Choriatiki)

Kataifi

Moussaka

Souvlaki

Yemista

Tzatziki







## Drinks To Try

Greek Ouzo

Chios masticha

Retsina

Greek Coffee

Tsipouro

Raki/Tsikoudia

# Photography Hot Spots

Stavrota mountain in Lefkada

Windmill in Mykonos

Meteora

Melissani Cave, Kefalonia

quaint island of Symi

Crete

Santorini

Corfu

## Souvenirs To Buy

Greek Cosmetics

Leather Sandals

Tagari Bags

Kompoloi : Worry Beads

Tavli : backgammon set

Karagiozis figurine

A mati talisman for the evil eye

Handmade ceramics

Bouzouki



