

Greece Travel Information

Airport Arrival and Departure – Arrive at the airport at least two hours before your scheduled departure time. **Upon arrival in Athens**, go first through Passport Control. Then retrieve your luggage and proceed through Customs. Meet your greeter in the Arrivals Hall who will have a sign with your name and will escort you to the driver. Upon departure in Athens, arrive at the airport at least two hours before your scheduled departure time. At your **first point of entry in the U.S.**, go through Passport Control. Then retrieve your luggage, go through Customs, and return your luggage to your airline personnel. Finally, go through Security before proceeding to your gate if you are transferring to another domestic flight.

ATM and Credit Cards

Contact your bank before the trip to let them know you will be using your ATM and credit cards while traveling. Notify the bank of your travel dates so that they will anticipate charges being made while traveling outside the U.S. Also, make copies of the front and back of your ATM and credit cards, keeping one copy with you and leaving the other copy with someone at home who will assist you in the event your cards are misplaced or stolen.

Cell Phones – Check with your cell phone provider for the best international calling plan available for your needs.

Clothing and Packing – Dress for comfort and convenience with a wardrobe that is flexible and allows for layering. A scarf and/or jewelry can dress up any casual outfit if needed. “Packing cubes” are very helpful in organizing clothing in your luggage. The following is a list of recommended items to pack for your trip to Greece:

- Short and long-sleeved shirts
- Slacks, skirts, capris
- Lightweight sweater and jacket
- Comfortable sandals, walking shoes, and socks
- Travel umbrella and traveler’s poncho
- Sunglasses and extra pair of prescription sunglasses
- Sun hat and sunscreen
- Electrical adapter and converter
- Toiletries
- Medication (prescription, antibiotics, pain reliever, anti-diarrheal, sleep aid)
- Copies of your travel documents (passport, flight itinerary, ATM, credit cards)
- PASSPORT!

Currency and Exchange Rates – The official currency is the Euro. ATMs are widespread and are generally the most convenient method of obtaining cash and have the best exchange rate. To obtain up-to-date currency exchange rates, you can check the website, www.oanda.com.

Customs and Tax-Free Shopping – Current regulations permit bringing back \$800 worth of items duty-free, as long as you physically bring them with you. Greece levies a 16% Value Added Tax (VAT) on most consumer goods and services. As a U.S. citizen, you will be entitled to a VAT refund on more expensive items and should inquire about the refund policy where you shop. (See “Shopping” on next page.)

Electricity – The electrical current is 220V (instead of the U.S. 110V) and the plug is two round prongs. You will need to bring the appropriate current converter and outlet adapters for your appliances. The hotels have hairdryers. Irons may not be available in the rooms but are available upon request.

Flight Comfort – For the overnight flights, you may want to bring a pair of slipper socks, a neck pillow, a lightweight blanket, and a jacket or sweater. Wear loose fitting, comfortable clothing. Set your watch to Greece time as soon as you board the plane to start adjusting to the new time. Walk around the plane periodically and do stretching exercises at your seat. Stay hydrated.

Etiquette and Customs – Greeks are open and friendly to visitors, striving to demonstrate *filotimo* (“love of honor” – doing the right thing). They tend to show hospitality with drinks – often ouzo or *tsipouro*. They eat dinner about 9:00 pm sharing a variety of local dishes family-style. You will often hear live music playing in the neighborhoods. Greeks love to dance, especially when celebrating an event, but any good music is reason enough. They dress modestly when not at the beach and expect tourists to do the same, especially when visiting a church. Almost all encounters begin with a greeting, *Kali mera* (Good day) and ending with *Eucharisto* (Thank you). Although most Greeks don’t mind having their photo taken, always as first.

Health – Greece does not pose any major health issues. The water is safe to drink, but to be cautious, drink mainly bottled water. Moderate your drinking and eating habits and bring anti-diarrheal medication as a precaution. Check with your doctor that you are current with all relevant vaccinations. If a medical emergency arises, you may have to pay medical costs upfront and be reimbursed by your insurance when you return home. Medical evacuation service back to the U.S. is covered by travel insurance. It is highly recommended that you purchase travel insurance that will cover a wide range of unexpected expenses.

Internet -- All accommodations have free internet connection but the reception may be sporadic.

Luggage – Try to limit your luggage to one medium-sized piece of luggage and one smaller carry-on. In your carry-on, pack all important documents, camera, prescription medication, extra set of clothing, etc. Be sure to attach luggage tags to each piece of luggage on the outside and the inside of your luggage. Reminder: in your carry-on, all liquids must be 3 oz. or less and all must fit in a quart size plastic baggie.

Passport Requirements – You will need a passport that is valid for six months from the date of your arrival in Greece. Make at least two copies of the photo page for yourself and someone at home.

Safety – Greece has a moderate rate of crime, but tourists can be targets for pickpockets. Carry your credit cards, passport, and extra cash in a hidden money belt under your clothes or leave them in the hotel safe. Wear your purse across the front and hold on to it and keep cash in a wallet attached to the inside of your purse. Don’t put your wallet in your back pocket. Be aware of your surroundings and suspect any disturbance as a distraction for theft. Demonstrations can break out at any time in Greece. Avoid large gatherings.

Shopping -- If you purchase more than 90 euros worth of goods at a store, you’re entitled to get most of the Value Added Tax (16%) back. Have the merchant fill out the necessary document at the store (show your passport), get the document stamped at the airport upon departure, get your refund at the airport (for a fee) or mail the stamped documents in the self-addressed envelope. Some merchants will mail your purchase to your home at a reasonable price with the VAT waived.

Time – Greece is 10 hours ahead of California time.

Tipping – Guidelines for tipping: Hotel porters (1 euro/bag), Housekeepers (1-2 euros/day), Taxi drivers (round up + 5-10% if help with luggage), Servers (5-10% if the service was good). Tip the server personally in cash. Tipping is not a common practice in Greece, and a service charge is often included

Weather – April weather is temperate with a possibility of rain. The average high/low temperatures are:
Athens (68° / 53°) Paros Island (69° / 57°)

