



## Greece Travel Information



**Activity Level** – Travelers should be able to walk about 2 – 3 miles at a moderate pace, stand for an extended period of time with no difficulty, and able to climb stairs. This tour involves walking on uneven surfaces and climbing stairs with no handrail. Travelers should be able to haul their own luggage with no assistance. Luggage pieces with 4 wheels are the easiest to maneuver.

**Air Conditioning** – All accommodations and vehicles on this tour provide air conditioning.

**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. Packing cube organizers with mesh tops are very helpful in organizing clothing in your luggage. The following is a list of recommended items to pack for your trip to Greece:

- Lightweight sweater and jacket, sun hat, scarf
- Comfortable sandals and walking shoes
- Travel umbrella and traveler's poncho
- Sunglasses and extra pair of prescription sunglasses
- Medication (prescription meds, antibiotics, pain reliever, anti-diarrheal, sleep aid)
- Antiseptic hand cleanser, face mask, disinfectant wipes
- Energy / granola bars

**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. Currently the exchange rate is 1 USD = 1.19 EUR, or 1 EUR = 0.84 USD. The rate fluctuates daily.

€ 5 = \$ 6	€ 15 = \$ 18	€ 25 = \$ 30	€ 50 = \$ 60	€ 100 = \$ 120
€ 10 = \$ 12	€ 20 = \$ 24	€ 30 = \$ 36	€ 75 = \$ 90	€ 150 = \$ 180

**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” section below.)

**Electrical Current** – 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 ask first.

**Food and Drink** – Greek food is simple and delicious. The four Greek food groups are olives (and olive oil), salty feta cheese, ripe tomatoes, and crispy phyllo dough. A filling snack is *souvlaki pita*, a tasty shish kebab wrapped in flatbread. Flaky nut-and-honey *baklava* and creamy yogurt with honey are tasty treats. On the islands, enjoy fresh seafood.

Greek coffee is an unfiltered brew prepared in a small copper pot, usually served with a glass of water and a chunk of candy. Espresso and other coffee drinks are widely available. Greece is receiving more recognition for its wines, with about two-thirds of the wine produced is white. Local beers are also popular in Greece. Other traditional alcoholic beverages are anise-flavored *ouzo*, brandy-like *tsipouro*, and golden-colored *metaxa*, a dessert wine.

**Health** – Greece does not pose any major health issues. All travelers should be in reasonably good health and be vaccinated against covid-19. Check with your doctor that you are current with all relevant vaccinations. 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. 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. (See “Travel Insurance” section below.)

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

**Luggage** – Limit your luggage to one medium-size check-in, one smaller-size carry-on, and one backpack or shoulder bag. In your carry-on bags, 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. You will also need proof of Covid-19 vaccination.

**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 room 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 9 hours ahead of California time in April.

**Tipping** – Tipping is not a common practice in Greece, and a service charge is often included in your restaurant bill. Guidelines for tipping:

- Hotel porters – 1 € / bag
- Hotel housekeepers – 2 € / night / room
- Villa housekeeper - € 20 / 5 nights / person
- Taxi drivers – round up the fare; add 5-10% if the driver helps with luggage
- Servers – add 5-10% if the service was extra good. Tip the server personally in cash.

Gratuities for private guides and drivers stated in the itinerary are included in the tour package.

**Travel Insurance** – You will need to purchase a travel insurance policy for this trip. For covered reasons stated in the policy, you would be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the event of illness of yourself, a family member, or a traveling companion; cancellation of the trip due to a covered event specified in the policy; flight delays and cancellations; medical expenses and evacuation, etc. What it does not cover is “fear of travel” so you may want to add the “Cancel for Any Reason” option which will reimburse 50% - 75% of your expenses for any reason. You can compare policies at [www.travelguard.com](http://www.travelguard.com) or [www.travelinsured.com](http://www.travelinsured.com)

**Weather** – April weather is temperate with a possibility of rain. April is a good time to visit Santorini to enjoy hiking and sightseeing at any time of the day with fewer crowds. The average high/low temperatures in April are: Athens (68° / 53°) Santorini island (65° / 55°)

