

Travelling to any new country can be overwhelming and there is often a plethora of conflicting information available. Greece seems to attract a particularly unique set of myths and misleading advice often based on limited exposure by inexperienced travellers. These are the most frequently asked questions about Greece in the private [Facebook Group](#) and in my [one on one trip consultations](#), and their answers!

PLANNING A TRIP TO GREECE?

Whether you've been before or it's your first time it can be hard to process all the information out there. Be sure to check out our complete [Planning Guide](#) as well as our [FREE 13-page downloadable itinerary](#).

If you are feeling really overwhelmed you might like a [Trip Consultation](#) perhaps!?

And come join our private [Facebook Group](#) where you can ask questions and get advice from real travellers!

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Itineraries & Planning

When is a good time to visit Greece?

Greece is a year-round destination although the official Tourist Season is from Orthodox Easter to mid-October each year. This mostly applies to the islands although Santorini and the bigger islands like Rhodes and Crete still have things open (obviously not beach related activities etc...) all year. More covered in [When to Visit Greece](#).

Where should I go?

This question is very hard to answer. There are 227 inhabited [islands](#) and a plethora of wonders to see on the [Mainland](#) as well. The country is brimming with history and also beautiful beaches, stunning vistas, quaint villages, waterfalls, national parks and wildlife. It has more mountains than Austria and a lot of diversity across the country due to its rich history.

Many first timers go to [Santorini](#) and [Mykonos](#) or perhaps to [Crete](#), [Rhodes](#) or [Corfu](#). [Naxos](#), [Milos](#) and [Paros](#) have also become very popular in recent years. But these are the busiest and most populated islands and can also be the most expensive, especially Mykonos that has become a playground for the rich and famous. It is still possible to find small, authentic places on those islands but there are hundreds of others islands to visit, with many off the tourist radar completely.

Have a look at [111 Amazing Places for your Greece Bucket List](#) for a heap of ideas and inspiration!

Also:

[Best Islands for Families](#)

[Best Islands for Couples](#)

[Top Greek Islands for Solo Travellers](#)

[Island Hopping in the Cyclades](#)

[Lesser Known Greek Island Alternatives](#)

How many days do I need?

Anything less than [one week in Greece](#) will mean you will likely see one island and Athens. Or just Athens and some of the Mainland, if it is off-season. [Two weeks](#) is a good amount of time to see 4 or 5 destinations and [three weeks](#) is even better. The reality is you could spend months in Greece and still not see all the highlights. It is a very diverse and very mountainous country and things are spread far and wide.

What is the weather like?

With a Mediterranean Climate Greece has a dry, temperate climate with hot summers and cold, rainy winters. People are surprised to learn there are over 20 ski resorts on the

Mainland and it actually is a very nice and very affordable destination for a winter holiday.

It important to know about the [Meltemi Wind](#) that blows from May to October and can cause disruption. It also has its benefits as well.

Further Reading: [Weather and Events in Greece](#)

Do I need a travel agent?

Greece is not hard to plan and book yourself. Once you've got an idea of where you want to go and what you want to see and do you book the hotels, transports and activities as well as your flights of course.

Everything you need is on the [Greece Travel Secrets website](#) including [itineraries](#), accommodation guides, activities, [transfers](#), [packing lists](#), and more and you can get lots of help from the [Facebook Group](#) as well.

If you are feeling really overwhelmed and/or just want someone to run over your plans with you there is a [face-to-face consultation service](#) now available that has been very popular (and has saved people many thousands).

Is a Cruise the best way to see Greece?

Doing a small cruise in a yacht or small ship can be a wonderful way to explore the Greek Islands, especially as they usually dock in ports and towns that are inaccessible to big ships. It's especially good if you use a Greek owned and operated company such as [Variety](#) so you have a Greek crew and Greek food and a fully immersive experience.

Cruising on a huge ship can sound tempting but the reality is you will see the least authentic places and with thousands of others all at the same time - often over 15,000 people! There can be up to 6 or 7 ships in port in [Santorini](#) and [Mykonos](#) on any given day and the social and environmental impacts are significant.

Further to that few big cruises stay in port at night which is when the islands really come alive and you see them at their absolute best.

Transport

How much time do I need to connect with a domestic flight when I arrive on my international flight in Athens?

Two hours minimum. [The airport](#) is small and efficient but you do need to leave the International side arrivals downstairs and re-enter through domestic departures upstairs.

Can I fly between islands?

Rarely. In summer there are sometimes charter flights between the Ionians islands ([Corfu](#) and/or [Kefalonia](#) and even Zakynthos) and [Crete](#) and [Santorini](#). Also [Rhodes](#) to Kastelloritzo.

All other islands are simply too small and/or too close together to be serviced other than by tiny, expensive single propeller planes, and given the excellent ferry system that is not an option, unless with a private seaplane carrier (these are rare too).

In 2024 a [small airline](#) is planning to launch with 3 very small planes to connect some of the Cyclades Islands. It is based in Paros and could be a great option for some people, but if it is a very windy days these flights are likely to be cancelled.

How do I get to Athens historical centre?

There are a [number of ways](#) including [private drivers](#), taxis, [buses](#) and the Metro.

How do I get to the Port in Athens?

Also [private drivers](#), taxis, buses and the Metro although the last two will require changes. See the above question.

Also there are [3 ports](#) - Piraeus is the main one, but there are ferries from Lavrio and Rafina that are closer to the airport and they service the Northern Cycladic islands.

How do I find my ferry at Piraeus Port?

This is one of the largest passenger ports in Europe so it can be very busy and very overwhelming. [This article](#) explains everything you need to know about it including what Gate to go to for which location.

How do I get from the ferry port in Santorini to my hotel?

[Buses](#) meet all ferries. There are also taxis or you can pre-arrange a [private transfer](#) or hire car. We highly recommend booking [Santo Luxury Escape](#) who can take care of all your transfers and tours. Use the code 'GTS2023' for a 10% discount!

Do I need an International Drivers Permit?

Residents of the EU and UK do not need anything. In November 2021 the law was also changed so that residents of Canada, the USA, Australia and Gibraltar no longer need an IDP either. In 2023 some small car hire places on a few islands still did not seem to know about this new legislation and were insisting on IDL's so if it's easy for you to get one it may still be worth it.

Here is a link to the [Greek Government Gazette legislation](#) (in Greek). Information regarding this can also be found on the [US Embassy site](#). There is more detail in [this article](#).

Should I rent a car, ATV/Scooter or Buggy?

All of these are available on many islands and are a popular way to explore. If you do not have a motorcycle license back home you will not be able to rent a scooter and ATV's often struggle on hills. They can also be quite dangerous and there are many accidents (and sadly deaths) each year. If you have never driven one before Greece is probably not the place to start.

Be sure to check your travel insurance too as many classify ATV's and Buggies as adventure sports and do not cover them.

For cars we have recommendations in the more popular spots in [this article](#).

When do the Ferry Schedules come out?

The full summer schedules are usually finalised by Easter. Schedules are subject to change especially in the [off- season](#).

How do I buy tickets for the Ferries?

You can get them at the time at the ticket offices at the ports most of the year unless it is high summer (July & August) or a public holiday weekend in which case it is advisable to book in advance through [Ferry Hopper](#).

Should I book fast ferries or slow ones?

We always choose the big, slower ones if they are available. These are like cruise ships with shops and restaurants, big outdoor decks and even cabins. They are more stable in rough weather and better if you are prone to sea-sickness. This also makes them more reliable as they can handle inclement weather better.

Further reading:

[Ferry Routes in Greece](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions about the Ferries](#)

[Driving and Car/ATV hire](#)

[The Ferry Ports in Athens](#)



Accommodation

Should I book a hotel or an Airbnb?

Greek hotels are probably not what you are used to. They have often been in families for many generations and have significant benefits including the legendary breakfasts. Many also have family rooms that can sleep 5 or more. Read more about the pros and cons of both in [this article](#).

We partner with [Booking.com](#) to book hotels and apartments as they are the world biggest and most reputable booking platform and most rooms have free cancellation - very

important in recent times.

If you would prefer to stay in one place a week or more and/or a travelling in a large group then we also recommend [The Plum Guide](#) and [Vrbo](#) who have great self-contained luxury, properties that need to meet numerous eligibility criteria.

What is the best part of Athens to stay in?

The ancient centre is very compact and you cant go wrong in any of the [neighbourhoods around the Acropolis](#). Plaka is the most touristic but for good reason. You can also stay on the Riviera or near the ports which I cover more in [Athens Airport Hotels](#).

What is the best part of Santorini to stay in?

This is covered in detail in [this article](#) which talks about the different towns and villages as well a recommended accommodation for various budgets and needs.

Which hotel should I stay in at Athens Airport?

The Sofitel is the only hotel AT the airport but there are other options, [all covered here](#). We like to spend out last night by the sea if we can.

Should I book direct with the hotel?

This can sometimes mean you will get a better rate but not always. But it is likely the hotel will ask for a large deposit, often by bank transfer, and the booking may not come with free cancellation.

Personally I would rather pay a few extra dollars and know I can cancel at late notice if I have to. Plus I have all my bookings in the one app and I'm not juggling multiple emails.

How come hotels are showing as fully booked for next year already?

Many hotels, particularly those that are seasonal instead of year-round, do not open their bookings until the current season is over or even until around Christmas time. They often use that time to work on renovations, pricing and other logistics for the following season.



Etiquette, Food & Culture

Do I tip in Greece and if so how much?

The USA has the biggest tipping culture in the world as people rely heavily on tips to subsidize the very low minimum wages. In Europe, people can be insulted when foreigners try and force their culture on them, although tips for good service are often appreciated. In the biggest tourist traps, you may even be asked for a tip but be mindful that there are service charges usually included in restaurant bills as well.

On portable EFTPOS machines now in restaurants, you can choose a tip of 5%, 10%, or 15%. Ten percent is perfectly acceptable and would be the most common tip made, for Tour Guides as well.

Do I need to dress differently?

Greeks are stylish people and dress like many Europeans in a low-key, simple, and often elegant way. It is fine to wear your normal clothing but the people wearing things like active wear are either exercising or are tourists.

In places of worship, you need to dress conservatively and have your shoulders covered as well as anything above the knee. At Monasteries like [Meteora](#), they can lend you scarves to wrap around yourself.

At the beach, people are very body-positive and all women wear bikinis regardless of shape or age. Given the many steps and cobblestones it is important to wear [good shoes](#)!

What time are mealtimes?

In Greece, and all around the Mediterranean, everyone tries to avoid the midday sun and people eat late. This means rising late, shops and businesses open no earlier than 10:00 (except bakeries, coffee shops, some convenience stores, etc...), Lunch is no earlier than 2 and Dinner is after 9 pm. Many places will take bookings earlier for tourists.

Is it safe?

Greece is a very safe place to travel. It is clean, well organized and the people are very friendly and helpful. Many women feel very comfortable traveling there on their own, particularly on the better-known islands and there are some [islands that are especially great for solo travelers](#).

Like all big cities, there can be petty crime in Athens and it always pays to be alert and sensible when it comes to your valuables and belongings.

Do they speak English?

Almost everyone under the age of 60 speaks English, in fact, it is taught as a mandatory subject in most schools. It does help to learn a few [common phrases](#) if you can.

What's the situation with the toilet paper?

Like many parts of the world, especially those with significant ancient history, the infrastructure and indeed plumbing can be very old. This means pipes in many places are very small and do not cope well with modern sanitary products including toilet paper.

You will find bins beside each toilet in most places. In some modern 4 & 5-star hotels they often have replaced the pipes and/or have their own treatment plants so it may not be an issue.

It can pay to carry a small pack of wipes and/or bags with you.

Are there public toilets available?

They do exist but they can be hard to find. You will find them at all major attractions and scattered across the country but there is usually a small charge. If you are visiting Athens there is one in Syntagma Square and another nearby in the National Gardens.

Of course, all tavernas, bars, and cafes also provide or have access to toilets.

What is the food like?

[Greek food](#) is considered some of the best in the world. It is fresh, delicious, and nutritious and is a major reason why Greeks are some of the oldest people in the world.

It is a myth that the diet is heavily meat-based. Many Greeks only eat meat on special occasions such as Easter and in fact they spend many weeks a year fasting when only Vegan style dishes are consumed. Many dishes are [vegetarian based](#) and are very inexpensive too.

A lot of seafood is consumed on the islands and coastal mainland but this is often for tourists' benefit too. Food of note that Greece excels in is Feta cheese, Olive Oil, and Honey.

Can I drink the water?

In Mainland towns and cities like Athens and Thessaloniki, the water is safe and good quality. In smaller islands and those without a natural water source, like Santorini, the water is often from a desalination plant or is bought in in bottles and tanks. It won't kill you but doesn't taste the best. Try and use a reusable water bottle and refill it regularly.

Are they ok with allergies and fussy eaters?

Yes, in tourist areas they are very used to people with special dietary needs. They have many gluten-free options on all the menus as well as other things including dairy-free and even [Vegan dishes](#). In fact, Tomato Fritters are the signature dish of Santorini.

For fussy eaters and some children there are many western style dishes available including pizza, pasta, and fries (although Greek 'patatas' are even better!). You will find Mcdonalds' all over the country including in Santorini. Many children actually discover how much they love Souvlaki which can often be sold to them as 'chicken on a stick'.

The food is rarely spicy but lemon, garlic, Olive Oil, and herbs are used generously.



Money

What sort of currency do I need?

The currency of Greece is the Euro. Please don't use other currencies even if it's just a tip. Many workers have no access to money exchange, especially during the busy tourist season.

How much money do I need?

How long is a piece of string? This entirely depends on how you travel and what you like to see, do, and buy. Many people live comfortably on 100 euros a day, some even less. Some people may spend thousands a day.

Do they accept credit cards?

Yes, Credit Cards and EFTPOS machines are commonly used. Cash is always welcome and you will need to keep small denominations for tips and highway tolls.

I have a [Wise Visa debit card](#) which is an award winning foreign exchange service with the lowest exchange rates I have found. Excellent customer service too.

Where can I get money from?

There are currency exchange/money changers in the main tourist areas but you will usually get better exchange rates using the ATM machines at well-known banks such as Alpha, Attica, Citibank, Eurbank, and Piraeus Bank. Avoid independent ATM machines where possible and ALWAYS accept the local currency (Euro) when the machine asks you.

Packing

What is the best luggage to take?

This is a pretty personal thing but there are some considerations you should think about:

- Try and take the smallest suitcase you can so it fits into small cars & taxis and is easy to drag around on ferries and on cobblestone streets.
- Make sure it is waterproof or at least water-resistant in case of sea spray or ferry mishaps.
- For the same reason, hard-cover is often better in Greece than soft.
- Whatever you use make sure it has very good quality wheels and/or is easy to carry.

More information is in the [What to Pack Article](#).

What should I pack?

Read [What to Pack for Women](#), [What to Pack for Men](#), as well as [Best Walking shoes for Greece](#). Families will need to pack things for their kids too of course. Shops in Greece are very good, in fact, there are many gorgeous boutiques, so if you do forget something all is not lost. Athens is a shoppers paradise - there are a lot of [great things to buy!](#)

What adapters do I need?

Again covered in the [What to Pack article](#). We find universal adapters are a good investment so you can use them anywhere in the world not just in Europe.

Will I need sunscreen?

Definitely. Even in winter, the reflection from all the marble and pale surfaces can be brutal so be sure to wear a hat AND sunscreen daily. Sunscreen brands in Europe are very good but can be more expensive than you are used to. This is because of the stringent regulations enforced in the EU on lots of nasty chemicals and the emphasis on natural and safe ingredients.

You can also find some great products to pack or to buy from Greece in our [Store](#).



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