



# GREECE



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## 1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

**Location:** Southeast Europe.

Ellinikos Organismos Tourismou (Greek/Hellenic National Tourism Organisation)  
Odos Amerikis 2b, 105 64 Athens, Greece  
**Tel:** (1) 327 1300. Fax: (1) 322 4148.  
**E-mail:** infoxenios@areianet.gr  
**Web site:** <http://www.areianet.gr/infoxenios/GNTO>

Embassy of Greece (Hellas)  
1A Holland Park, London W11 3TP  
**Tel:** (020) 7229 3850 or 7221 6467 (visa section) or (09001) 171 202 (recorded visa information; calls cost 60p per minute). Fax: (020) 7229 7221 or 7243 3202 (visa section) or (09001) 669 903 (visa application forms; calls cost 60p per minute). Opening hours: 1000-1300 Monday to Friday.

Greek/Hellenic National Tourism Organisation (GNTO)  
4 Conduit Street, London W1S 2DJ  
**Tel:** (020) 7734 5997 or 7499 8161. Fax: (020) 7287 1369.  
**E-mail:** eot-greektouristoffice@btinternet.com  
**Web site:** <http://www.antor.com/greece>  
Also deals with enquiries regarding conferences and conventions.

British Embassy  
Odos Ploutarchou 1, 106 75 Athens, Greece  
**Tel:** (1) 727 2600 . Fax: (1) 727 2734 or 727 2722 (consular section). E-mail: britania@hol.gr  
**Web site:** <http://www.british-embassy.gr>  
**Consulates in:** Corfu, Kos, Patras, Rhodes, Salónikam, Syros and Zakynthos.

Embassy of Greece (Hellas)  
2221 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008  
**Tel:** (202) 939 5800 or 939 5818 (consular and visa section). Fax: (202) 939 5824. E-mail: greece@greekembassy.org  
**Web site:** <http://www.greekembassy.org>  
**Consulates in:** Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New Orleans, New York and San Francisco.

Greek/Hellenic National Tourism Organisation (GNTO)  
Olympic Tower, 645 Fifth Avenue, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10022  
**Tel:** (212) 421 5777. Fax: (212) 826 6940. E-mail: gnto@greektourism.com Web site: <http://www.gnto.gr>

Embassy of the United States of America  
Leoforos Vassilissis Sophias 91, 101 60 Athens, Greece  
**Tel:** (1) 721 2951. Fax: (1) 645 6282. E-mail: usembassy@usisathens.gr  
**Web site:** <http://www.usisathens.gr>  
**Consulate in:** Thessaloniki.

Embassy of Greece (Hellas)  
80 MacLaren Street, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 0K6

**Tel:** (613) 238 6271. Fax: (613) 238 5676.  
**E-mail:** greekembott@travel-net.com

Consulate General of Greece  
1170 place du Frère André, Suite 300, Montréal, Québec H3B 3C6  
**Tel:** (514) 875 2119. Fax: (514) 875 8781.  
**Website:** <http://www.gnto.gr>  
**Other consulates in:** Toronto and Vancouver.

Greek/Hellenic National Tourism Organisation (GNTO)  
1300 Bay Street, Main Level, Toronto, Ontario M5R 3K8  
**Tel:** (416) 968 2220. Fax: (416) 968 6533. E-mail: [grnto.tor@sympatico.ca](mailto:grnto.tor@sympatico.ca)

Office National du Tourisme Grec  
1170 place du Frère André, Suite 300, Montréal, Québec, H3B 3C6  
**Tel:** (514) 871 1535. Fax: (514) 871 1498. Opening hours: 0900-1300 Web site:  
<http://www.gnto.gr>

Canadian Embassy  
Odos Ioannou Ghennadiou 4, 115 21 Athens, Greece  
**Tel:** (1) 727 3400. Fax: (1) 727 3460 or 727 3480. E-mail: [athns@dfait-maeci.gc.ca](mailto:athns@dfait-maeci.gc.ca)  
**Consulate in:** Thessaloniki.

**Country dialling code:** 30.

## 2 GENERAL

**Area:** 131,957 sq km (50,949 sq miles).

**Population:** 10,516,366 (1998).

**Population Density:** 79.7 per sq km.

**Capital:** Athens. Population: 3,072,922 (1991).

**Geography:** Greece is situated in southeast Europe on the Mediterranean. The mainland consists of the following regions: Central Greece, Peloponnese, Thessaly (east/central), Epirus (west), Macedonia (north/northwest) and Thrace (northwest). Euboea, the second largest of the Greek islands, lying to the east of the central region, is also considered to be part of the mainland region. The Peloponnese peninsula is separated from the northern mainland by the Isthmus of Corinth. The northern mainland is dissected by high mountains (such as the Pindus) that extend southwards towards a landscape of fertile plains, pine-forested uplands and craggy, scrub-covered foothills. The islands account for one-fifth of the land area of the country. The majority are thickly clustered in the Aegean between the Greek and Turkish coasts. The Ionian Islands are the exception; they are scattered along the west coast in the Ionian Sea. The Aegean archipelago includes the Dodecanese, lying off the Turkish coast, of which Rhodes is the best known; the Northeast Aegean group, including Lemnos, Lesbos, Chios, Samos and Ikaria; the Sporades, off the central mainland; and the Cyclades, comprising 39 islands (of which only 24 are inhabited). Crete, the largest island, is not included in any formal grouping. For fuller descriptions of these regions and islands, see the Resorts & Excursions section.

**Government:** Republic. Head of State: President Konstantinos Stefanopoulos since 1995. Head of Government: Prime Minister Konstantinos Simitis since 1996.

**Language:** Greek (Ellenika). Most people connected with tourism will speak some English, German, Italian or French.

**Religion:** 97% Greek Orthodox, with Muslim, Roman Catholic and Jewish minorities.

**Time:** GMT + 2 (GMT + 3 from last Sunday in March to last Sunday in October).

**Electricity:** 220 volts AC, 50Hz. Round 2-pin plugs are used.

**COMMUNICATIONS:** Telephone: IDD is available throughout the mainland and islands. The Greek telecommunication network supplier is Organismos Telepikinonion Ellados (OTE). Country code: 30, followed by (1) for Athens, (31) for Thessaloniki and (81) for Heraklion. Outgoing international code: 00. Mobile telephone: GSM 900 and 1800 networks exist. Coverage is good around the major towns on the mainland and on many islands. Fax: Main post offices and large hotels have facilities. Telegram: There are telegram facilities in main post offices and large hotels in all Greek cities and the major islands. Internet/E-mail: Cybercafés are available in the main cities, including Athens, Thessaloniki and the islands Crete, Kos, Mykonos, Rhodes and Skiathos. ISPs include Panafon, STET and Cosmote. Post: All letters, postcards, newspapers and periodicals will automatically be sent by airmail. There are Poste Restante facilities at most post offices throughout the country. Advance notice is required at all Athens branches except for the central office at 180 Eolou Street. A passport must be shown on collection. Post office hours: 0800-1400 Monday to Friday and 0800-1330 Saturday. Press: There are 18 daily newspapers in Athens including Ta Nea, Eleftherotypia and Eleftheros Typos. Athens News and Athens Daily Post are both published daily in English.

**BBC World Service and Voice of America frequencies:** From time to time these change.

**BBC:**  
MHz 12.10 9.410 6.195 3.955

A service for the Greek islands is available on 1323kHz/226.7m.

**Voice of America:**  
MHz 15.26 9.760 1.197 0.792

### 3 PASSPORT

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
<b>British</b>	Yes	No	No
<b>Australian</b>	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Canadian</b>	Yes	No	Yes
<b>USA</b>	Yes	No	Yes
<b>OtherEU</b>	1	No	No
<b>Japanese</b>	Yes	No	Yes

**Note:** Greece is a signatory to the 1995 Schengen Agreement. For further details about passport/visa regulations within the Schengen area see the introductory section How to Use this Guide.

**Entry restrictions:** (a) Greece refuses admission and transit to holders of passports issued by Bophutatswana, Ciskei, Transkei, Venda; holders of Yugoslav passports bearing a renewal stamp with the name 'Macedonia'; and holders of Somalian passports issued after Jan 23 1991; Norwegian Fremmedpass or Reisbevis; Ethiopian emergency passports. (b) Nationals of CIS countries, China (PR), Cuba, Korea (DPR) and Vietnam must register with the Aliens Department of the nearest police station within 48 hours of arrival.

**PASSPORTS:** Passport valid for 6 months required by all except:

- (a) 1. EU nationals with a valid national ID card and with sufficient funds for their length of stay;
- (b) nationals of Monaco and Switzerland with valid national ID cards.

**VISAS:** Required by all except the following:

- (a) nationals of the countries referred to in the chart above for a period of up to 3 months;
- (b) nationals of Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Korea (Rep. of), Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Poland, St Kitts & Nevis, San Marino, Singapore, Slovak Republic, St. Christophe, Switzerland, Uruguay and Vatican City for a period of up to 3 months;
- (c) nationals of El Salvador for a period of up to 2 months;
- (d) those continuing their journey to a third country within 48 hours provided holding tickets with **reserved seats and other documents for their onward journey except:** nationals of Angola, Bangladesh, Congo (Rep. of), Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria and Turkey who always need a visa, even if transiting by the same aircraft.

**Note:** The above list is subject to change at short notice; please check with the Consulate or Consular section at Embassy before travelling.

**Types of visa and cost:** A uniform type of visa, the Schengen visa is issued for tourist, business and private visits. There are 3 types of Schengen visa: Short-stay, Transit and Airport Transit. Contact the Consulate/Consular section at Embassy for details of prices.

**Note:** Spouses and children of EU nationals (providing spouse's passport and the original marriage certificate is produced), and nationals of some other countries, receive their visas free of charge (enquire at Embassy for details).

**Validity:** Short-stay (single- and multiple-entry): valid for 6 months from date of issue for stays of maximum 90 days per entry. Transit (single- and multiple-entry): valid for a maximum of 5 days per entry, including the day of arrival. Visas cannot be extended and a new application must be made each time.

**Application to:** Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy); see address section. Travellers visiting just one Schengen country should apply to the Consulate of that country; travellers visiting more than one Schengen country should apply to the Consulate of the country chosen as the main destination or the country they will enter first (if they have no main destination).

**Application requirements:** (a) Completed application form with stamped, self-addressed envelope. (b) Proof of sufficient funds to cover stay, at least GRD 5,000. (c) Fee (payable in cash or postal order only). (d) Passport valid for at least 6 months with blank pages to affix visa. (e) 1

passport-size photo. (f) Return or onward ticket or proof of booking/itinerary from travel agent. (g) Proof of reason for visit; a letter of reference from employer and letter of invitation from Greek company for business trips; a letter from school for school trip. If self-employed, a letter from a solicitor or an accountant. (i) Proof of travel insurance.

**Note:** Applications can be made in person only.

**Working days required:** 3 weeks for personal applications; 1 month for postal applications.

**Temporary residence:** Apply to the Aliens Department in Athens.

**Important note:** Persons arriving in and departing from Greece on a charter flight risk having the return portion of their ticket invalidated by the authorities if, at any time during their stay, they leave Greece and remain overnight or longer in another country.

## 4 MONEY

**Currency:** Drachma (Dr). Notes are in denominations of Dr10,000, 5000, 1000, 500, 200 and 100. Coins are in denominations of Dr100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1.

**Single European currency (Euro):** The Euro is now the official currency of 12 EU member states (including Greece), although it is currently only used as 'written money' (cheques, bank transactions, credit cards, etc). The first Euro coins and notes will be introduced in January 2002; the Greek Drachma will still be in circulation until July 1 2002, when it will be completely replaced by the Euro. 1 Euro = DR340.750.

**Currency exchange:** Foreign currency can be exchanged at all banks, savings banks and bureaux de change. Exchange rates can fluctuate from one bank to another. Many UK banks offer differing exchange rates depending on the denominations of Greek currency being bought or sold. Check with banks for details and current rates.

**Credit cards:** Diners Club, Visa, American Express, MasterCard and other major credit cards are widely accepted (although less so in petrol stations). Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

**Travellers cheques:** All major currencies are widely accepted and can be exchanged easily at banks. Generally banks in Greece charge a commission of 2% with a minimum of Dr50 and a maximum of Dr4500 on the encashment of travellers cheques. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in Pounds Sterling.

Exchange rate indicators

The following figures are included as a guide to the movements of the Drachma against Sterling and the US Dollar:

Date May '00 Aug '00 Nov '00 Feb

'01 £1.00=560.30546.53573.45541.75 \$1.00=377.46364.27396.13370.99

The following figures are included as a guide to the movements of the Euro against Sterling and the US Dollar:

Date Oct '99 May '00 Aug '00 Nov '00 1 Euro=£0.64£0.60£0.62£0.591 Euro=\$1.06\$0.89\$0.93\$0.86

**Currency restrictions:** The import and export of foreign currency is unrestricted, subject to declaration of amounts greater than US\$1000 (non-appliance will result in fines and confiscation).

The import of local currency is limited to Dr100,000 and the export to Dr40,000 (only allowed in denominations up to Dr5000).

**Banking hours:** 0800-1400 Monday to Thursday; 0800-1330 Friday. Banks on the larger islands tend to stay open in the afternoon and some during the evening to offer currency exchange facilities during the tourist season. The GNT0 bureau in Athens can give full details.

## 5 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported into Greece by visitors without incurring customs duty by:

(a) Residents of European countries with goods bought duty-free outside the EU: 800 cigarettes or 400 cigars or 200 cigarillos or 1kg of tobacco; 10 litres of alcoholic beverage or 90 litres of wine and 110 litres of beer; there is no limit for perfume; gifts up to a total value of Dr25,000.

**(b) Residents of countries outside Europe with goods obtained duty-free outside the EU:** 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 100 cigarillos or 250g of tobacco; 1 litre of alcoholic beverage over 22% or 2 litres of alcohol beverages of 22% or less and 2 litres of wine and liquers; 50g of perfume and 250ml of eau de cologne.

**Note:** The tobacco and alcohol allowances listed above are not available to passengers under the age of 18.

**Restricted items:** It is forbidden to bring in plants with soil. One windsurfboard per person may be imported/exported duty-free, if registered in the passport on arrival. The export of antiquities is prohibited without the express permission of the Archaeological Service in Athens. Those who ignore this will be prosecuted.

**Abolition of Duty-free Goods within the EU:** On June 30 1999, the sale of duty-free alcohol and tobacco at airports and at sea was abolished in all 15 EU member states. Although there are now no limits imposed on importing tobacco and alcohol products from one EU country to another, (with the exceptions of Denmark, Finland and Sweden, where limits are imposed), travellers should note that they may be required to prove at customs that the goods purchased are for personal use only.

## 6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 1 2001 New Year's Day. Jan 6 Epiphany. Feb 26 Orthodox Shrove Monday. Mar 25 Independence Day. Apr 13 Orthodox Good Friday. Apr 16 Orthodox Easter Monday. May 1 Labour Day. Jun 4 Day of the Holy Spirit. Aug 15 Assumption. Oct 28 Ochi Day. Dec 25 Christmas. Dec 26 Boxing Day. Jan 1 2002 New Year's Day. Jan 6 Epiphany. Mar 18 Orthodox Shrove Monday. Mar 25 Independence Day. May 3 Orthodox Good Friday. May 6 Orthodox Easter Monday. May 1 Labour Day. Jun 24 Day of the Holy Spirit. Aug 15 Assumption. Oct 28 Ochi Day. Dec 25 Christmas. Dec 26 Boxing Day.



## 7 HEALTH

	<i>Special Precautions</i>	<i>Certificate Required</i>
<b>Yellow Fever</b>	No	1
<b>Cholera</b>	No	No
<b>Typhoid and Polio</b>	No	-
<b>Malaria</b>	No	-
<b>Food and Drink</b>	2	-

**1:** A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from all travellers over six months of age coming from infected areas.

**2:** Water quality varies from area to area, depending on the source, but in most regions is excellent. Bottled water is available and is advised for the first few weeks of the stay. Milk is pasteurised and dairy products are safe for consumption. Local meat, poultry, seafood, fruit and vegetables are considered safe to eat.

**Health care:** There is a reciprocal health agreement with the United Kingdom, but it is poorly implemented and it is an essential precaution to take out holiday insurance. Refunds for medical treatment are theoretically available from the Greek Social Insurance Foundation on presentation of form E111 (see the Health appendix).

Local chemists can diagnose and supply a wide selection of drugs. There are often long waits for treatment at public hospitals. Hospital facilities on outlying islands are sometimes sparse, although many ambulances without adequate facilities have air ambulance backup. For emergencies, ring 166 (public ambulance). Further help and advice on medical treatments can also be provided by the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers (IAMAT) at **34 Themistokleous Street, 106 78 Athens (tel: (1) 381 6404).**

Travel - International

**AIR:** Greece's national airline is Olympic Airways (OA). British Airways and Virgin make scheduled flights to Greece. Delta Airlines operate daily flights from New York to Athens.

**Approximate flight times:** From London to Athens is 3 hours 15 minutes; to Rhodes is 3 hours 45 minutes; to Corfu is 3 hours 5 minutes; to Heraklion is 3 hours 45 minutes; and to Skiathos is 3 hours 20 minutes. From Los Angeles to Athens is 18 hours 35 minutes. From New York to Athens is 10 hours 10 minutes. From Singapore to Athens is 11 hours 25 minutes. From Sydney to Athens is 22 hours 5 minutes.

**International airports:** Athens (ATH) (Athina) is 14km (9 miles) from the city. There are two air terminals: the East, which is for international and charter flights by international airlines; and the West, which is only for Olympic Airways flights. Express Bus no. 91 runs to the East and West terminals from Syntagma Square or Stadiou Street in Athens every 30-40 minutes from 0600-0020 and every hour from 0130-0530 (journey time - 30 minutes). Olympic Airways' bus departs 96 Syngrou Avenue in Athens every half an hour to the West Terminal. Taxi services are available to the city centre; meters start at Dr200 and there is a surcharge of approximately Dr300 for taxis from the airport and Dr55 for each piece of luggage over 10kg. Airport facilities include a duty-free shop, car hire (Avis, Budget, Hertz, InterRent) 24-hour bank and bureau de change, bar and restaurant facilities. A new international airport is due to open in March 2001.

Heraklion (HER) (Crete) is 5km (3 miles) from the city. Bus and taxi services are available. Airport facilities include a cafeteria and a duty-free shop.

Thessaloniki (SKG) (Micra) is 16km (10 miles) from the city. Regular coach and taxi services are available. There is a duty-free shop, cafeteria and bar.

Corfu (CFU) (Kerkira) is 3km (2 miles) from the city. Regular coach and taxi services are available. There is a duty-free shop, cafeteria and bar.

Rhodes (RHO) (Paradisi) is 16km (10 miles) from the city. Coach and taxi services are available. Airport facilities include a duty-free shop, car hire (Avis, Rent-a-car), bank and bureau de change, café and a 24-hour bar.

There are also international airports at Chania (CHQ), Kalamata (KLX), Karpathos (AOK), Kavala (KVA), Kefalonia (EFL), Kos (KGS), Lesbos (Mytilini) (MJT), Mykonos (JMK), Preveza (Lefkos) (PVK), Thessaloniki (SKG), Samos (SMI), Skiathos (JSI), Thira (Santorini) (JTR) and Zakynthos (ZTH), most of which serve predominantly summer traffic.

**SEA:** The major Greek ports are Piraeus, Thessaloniki and Volos, Igoumenitsa, Heraklion, Corfu, Patras and Rhodes. Shipping and ferryboat lines link these ports with Italy, Cyprus, Croatia, Egypt, Israel, Turkey and Russia. Greek ports are used by a number of cruise lines including Epirotiki, K Lines, Celebrity Cruises, Costa, Med Sun Cruises and Swan Hellenic. The Greek/Hellenic National Tourist Office can give full details (see address section). Links with Italy: A car ferry links the Italian ports of Brindisi and Ancona with Patras and Piraeus. There are services from Igoumenitsa to Bari, Brindisi and Trieste; from Heraklion to Ancona and Brindisi; from Corfu to Bari, Brindisi and Trieste; and from Rhodes to Ancona. During the summer months there are also services from Ithaca and from Cephalonia to Brindisi. Links with other countries: Ferries also run from Piraeus to Haifa in Israel and to Istanbul in Turkey.

**RAIL:** The national railway company is Hellenic Railways Organisation Ltd (OSE). The following continental rail services run from London to Athens: Acropolis Express: London-Paris-Milan-Trieste-Belgrade-Athens. Hellas Express: London-Amsterdam-Cologne- Bonn-Stuttgart-Munich-Salzburg-Zagreb-Belgrade-Nis-Athens. Another way to travel from the UK is to take the Eurostar through the channel tunnel, from London to either Brussels or Paris, both of which have onward connections to Greece. For further information and reservations contact Eurostar (tel: (01233) 617 599 (travel agents) or (0990) 186 186 (public; within the UK) or (01233) 617 575 (public; outside the UK); web site: <http://www.eurostar.com>); or Rail Europe (tel: (08705) 848 848). Travel agents can obtain refunds for unused tickets from Eurostar Trade Refunds, 2nd Floor, Kent House, 81 Station Road, Ashford, Kent TN23 1PD. Complaints and comments may be sent to Eurostar Customer Relations, Eurostar House, Waterloo Station, London SE1 8SE. General enquiries and information requests must be made by telephone. Enquiries in the UK can also be made to Rail Europe (tel: (0990) 848 848). All enquiries in France should be made to SNCF in Paris (tel: (1) 836 353 535). Rail passes: Inter-Rail tickets, for those aged 26 and under, include rail travel within Greece, but a supplement will be added for couchettes; the ticket does not include the cost of ferries between the mainland other countries or islands, but certain shipping lines offer a discount to ticket holders. Prices for those aged over 26 are approximately 40% higher. The Eurailpass (for first-class travel) and the Eurail Youthpass (for persons aged 26 and under), both to be purchased in advance, also cover rail travel in Greece. The Saver Ticket is available for groups of 3-5 persons, which is valid for 15 days, 21 days or 1 month. Check with the companies concerned for details.

**ROAD:** It is possible to ferry cars across to one of the major ports of entry or to enter overland. Points of overland entry are from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia via Evzoni, 550km (342 miles) from Athens, and Niki, 632km (393 miles) from Athens; from Bulgaria via Promahonas, 736km (457 miles) from Athens or Kastanies, 985km (611 miles) from Athens and Kipi, 892km (554 miles) from Athens. From Yugoslavia the route is via Italy (Trieste), Austria (Graz) and Belgrade. The journey from northern France to Athens is over 3200km (2000 miles).

For car-ferry information, see details under SEA above. Bus: There are routes from Athens via Thessaloniki to Sofia, Paris, Dortmund and Istanbul. Information and bookings are available from terminals in Athens at 6 Sina Street; 1 Karolou Street and 17 Filellinon Street; also at Thessaloniki rail station. See Travel - Internal section for information on documentation and traffic regulations.

#### Travel - Internal

**AIR:** The national airline, Olympic Airways has its own terminal (Athens West) and flies from Athens to Alexandroupolis, Astypalaia, Chania (Crete), Chios, Heraklion, Icaria, Ioannina, Kalamata, Karpathos, Kassos, Kastellorizo, Kastoria, Kavala, Kefalonia, Kerkira (Corfu), Kithira, Kos, Kozani, Lemnos, Leros, Milos, Mykonos, Mytilini, Paros, Preveza Aktion, Pyrgos, Rhodes, Samos, Santorini (Thira), Sitia, Skiathos, Skiros, Siros, Thessaloniki, and Zakynthos; from Rhodes to Heraklion, Karpathos, Kassos, Kastellorizo, Kos, Mykonos, and Santorini (Thira); from Chios to Mykonos, Samos and Thessaloniki; from Heraklion to Santorini (Thira), Mykonos and Paros; from Karpathos to Kassos and Sitia; from Kefalonia to Zakynthos; from Kos to Leros and Samos; from Mykonos to Mytilini; and from Thessaloniki to Chania, Heraklion, Ioannina, Kavala, Kerkira, Kos, Larissa, Lemnos, Mykonos, Mytilini, Rhodes, Samos and Santorini.

**SEA:** It is both cheap and easy to travel around the islands. There are ferry services on many routes, with sailings most frequent during the summer. Tickets can be bought from the shipping lines' offices located around the quaysides. In major ports the larger lines have offices in the city centre. There are three classes of ticket (First Class, Second Class and Tourist Class) which offer varying degrees of comfort; couchette cabins can be booked for the longer voyages or those wishing to avoid the sun. Most ships have restaurant facilities. During high season it is wise to buy tickets in advance, as inter-island travel is very popular. Routes from Piraeus: There are regular sailings to the following ports: Dodecanese: Astypalaia, Chalki, Kalymnos, Karpathos, Kassos, Kastellorizo, Kos, Leros, Lipsi, Nissiros, Rhodes, Symi, Patmos, Rhodes and Tilos. Cyclades: Aegiali and Katapola (both on Amorgos), Anafi, Donoussa, Folegandros, Heraklia, Ios, Kimolos, Kythnos, Koufonissia, Milos, Naxos, Mykonos, Paros, Santorini, Schinoussa, Serifos, Sifnos, Sikinos, Siros and Tinos. Peloponnese: Gytheion, Hermioni, Kithira, Methana, Monemvassia and Porto Heli. Saronic Gulf Islands: Aegina, Hydra, Poros and Spetses. Crete: Agios Nikolaos, Chania, Heraklion, Kastelli, Rethymnon and Sitia. Samos: Karlovassi and Vathi. North Eastern Aegean Islands: Agios Kyrkos (Icaria), Evdilos (Icaria), Chios, Limnos, Mitilini (Lesvos) and Psara. Northern Greece: Kavala and Thessaloniki. Check sailing times either with individual lines, the Greek/Hellenic National Tourist Organisation, or in Piraeus upon arrival in Greece.

**Routes from Rafina:** There are local services from Rafina (near Athens) to: Agios Efstratios, Amorgos, Andros, Chalkida (summer only) Chios, Donoussa, Heraklia, Karistos (Evia), Kavala, Koufonissi, Kythnos, Limnos, Marmari (Evia), Milos, Mykonos, Naxos, Paros, Schinoussa, Serifos, Sifnos, Syros, Thessaloniki and Tinos. Other routes: These include Agia Marina-Nea Styra; Perama-Salamis; Rio-Antirio; Aedipsos-Arkitsa; Eretria-Oropos; Glifa-Agiokambos; Patras-Ithaca; Patras-Kefalonia (Sami); Patras-Corfu; Patras-Paxi; Preveza-Aktion; Igoumenitsa-Corfu; Corfu-Paxi; Kyllini-Zante; Kyllini-Cephalonia (Poros); Kavala-Thassos (Limenas); Kavala-Thassos (Prinos); Keramoti-Thassos; Alexandroupolis-Samothrace and Lavrion-Kea. Hydrofoil: A hydrofoil service (also called the Flying Dolphins) offers a fast and efficient service from Piraeus, travelling through many of the nearby islands. Although this is somewhat more expensive than travelling by ferry, journey times are cut drastically. There are also fast hydrofoil services from Zea Marina (Piraeus), Lavrion, Agios Konstandinos, Volos, Kimi (Evia), Thessaloniki and Gytheion. For further information on various ferry and hydrofoil timetables, contact Flying Dolphins (tel: (1) 922 7772; fax: 923 2101; e-mail: [dolphinhellas@travelling.gr](mailto:dolphinhellas@travelling.gr)). Yachts: Numerous types of yachts and sailing vessels can be chartered or hired with or without crews. 'Flotilla holidays' are popular, and the

Greek/Hellenic National Tourist Office (see address section) has a full list of companies running this type of holiday.

**RAIL:** The two main railway stations in Athens are Larissa (with trains to northern Greece, Evia and Europe) and Peloponnissos (with trains to the Peloponnese). Train information and tickets are available from the Hellenic Railways Organisation (OSE) at 1 Karolou Street, 104 37 Athens or at 6 Sina Street, Athens (tel: (1) 529 7865; fax: 524 4150). Rail information is available on (tel: (1) 529 7777). Travelling north, there are regular daily trains from Athens to Thessaloniki, Thebes, Livadia, Paleofarsala, Larissa, Plati, Edessa, Florina, Seres, Drama, Komotini, Halkida and Alexandroupolis (connections from Thessaloniki and Larissa). Travelling south, there are regular daily trains from Athens to Corinth, Kiato, Xylokastra, Diakofto, Patras, Mycenae, Olympia, Argos, Tripoli, Megalopolis and Kalamata.

**Cheap fares:** 20% rebate on return fares. Touring cards lasting 10, 20 and 30 days entitle the holder to unlimited travel on trains (second class) for a reduced cost (further reductions for groups). Prices depend on the number of passengers and duration of validity. Other reductions available for passengers residing outside Europe, include Eurail and Eurail Youthpass cards. Senior Cards: Entitle passengers to a 50% reduction on rail travel. The cards are valid for one year. Group Tickets: Entitle passengers to a 30% reduction for groups of at least 10 persons. For further information on the above schemes, contact the the Hellenic Railways Organisation (OSE) (for address, see above).

**ROAD:** Greece has a good road network on the whole, totalling approximately 116,150km (72,174 miles), mostly paved. Traffic drives on the right. Examples of some distances from Athens: to Thessaloniki, 511km (318 miles); to Corinth, 85km (53 miles); to Igoumenitsa, 587km (365 miles); and to Delphi, 165km (103 miles). Bus: Buses link Athens and all main towns in Attica, northern Greece and the Peloponnese. Service on the islands depends on demand, and timetables should be checked carefully. Some islands do not allow any kind of motorised transport, in which case islanders use boats, or donkeys and carts to travel around; these are also worth finding out about. Fares are low. The Greek/Hellenic Railways Organisation Ltd (OSE) runs bus services to northern Greece from the Karolou Street terminus and to the Peloponnese from the Sina Street station. Bus information: There are two terminals in Athens: Terminal A and Terminal B. For information on buses from Athens to the provinces, enquire at Terminal A, 100 Kifissou Street, Athens or Terminal B, 260 Liossion Street, Athens. Taxi: Rates are per km and are very reasonable, with extra charge for fares to/from stations, ports and airports. Taxis run on a share basis, so do not be surprised if the taxi picks up other passengers for the journey. There is an additional charge from 0100-0600, with double fare from 0200-0400. Car hire: Most car hire firms operate throughout Greece. For details, contact the Greek/Hellenic National Tourist Office (see address section). Reservations can be made by writing or telephoning the car hire agency direct. Regulations: The minimum age for driving is 18. Children under 10 must sit in the back seat. Seat belts must be worn. There are fines for breaking traffic regulations. The maximum speed limit is 120kph (70mph) on motorways, 110kph (60mph) outside built-up areas and 50kph (31mph) in built-up areas. There are slightly different speed limits for motorbikes. It is illegal to carry spare petrol in the vehicle. EU nationals may import a foreign-registered car, caravan, motorcycle, boat or trailer for a maximum of six months. This period may be extended to 15 months for a fee and further paperwork. Documentation: A national driving licence is acceptable for EU nationals. EU nationals taking their own cars to Greece must obtain a Green Card, to top up the insurance cover to that provided by the car owner's domestic policy. It is no longer a legal requirement for visits of less than three months, but without it insurance cover is limited to the minimum legal cover in Greece. The car registration documents have to be carried at all times. Nationals of non-EU countries may need an International Driving Permit and should contact ELPA (Grecian Automobile Touring Club). Road assistance: A breakdown service is available on main roads, conditions of which have vastly improved. For details, contact ELPA, 2-4 Messogion Street,

115 27 Athens (tel: (1) 779 1615; fax: (1) 778 6642). The 24 hour information line is 174 and in an emergency, dial 104. There are good repair shops in big towns and petrol is easily obtainable.

**JOURNEY TIMES:** The following chart gives approximate journey times (in hours and minutes) from Athens to other major cities/islands in Greece.

	Air	Road	Sea
Corfu	0.50	*11.00	-
Crete	0.50	-	12.00
Mykonos	0.45	-	5.50
Rhodes	0.55	-	14.00
Thessaloniki	0.50	8.00	14.00
Thira	0.40	-	12.00

**Note\*:** The journey time by road to Corfu includes a sea crossing from Patras.

## 8 ACCOMMODATION

**HOTELS:** The range of hotels can vary greatly both among the islands and on the mainland, from high class on larger islands and mainland to small seasonal chalets. Booking for the high season is essential. Xenia hotels are owned and often run by the Greek/Hellenic National Tourist Office. Small family hotels are a friendly alternative to the hotel chains.

Hotel reservations can be made by writing directly to the hotels, through a travel agent, or through writing, faxing or phoning the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels, 24 Stadiou Street, 105 64

**Athens (tel: (1) 331 0022; fax: (1) 322 5449; e-mail: grhotels@otenet.gr).** Reservations can also be made in person one month in advance at the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels inside the National Bank of Greece on 2 Karageorgi Street (tel: (1) 323 7193). Opening hours: 0830-1400 Monday to Thursday, 0830-1330 Friday and 0900-1230 Saturday. Grading: Hotels are all officially classified as Luxury or rated on a scale from A to E. The category denotes what facilities must be offered and the price range that the hotelier is allowed to charge.

**SELF-CATERING:** Furnished rooms in private houses, service flats, apartments and villas are available. On most of the Greek islands, rooms in private homes are an extremely popular form of accommodation and can usually be arranged on the spot. All types of accommodation can be arranged through tour operators in this country. The Greek/Hellenic National Tourist Office can provide further information on request. Grading: As for hotels.

**TRADITIONAL SETTLEMENTS:** Known also as paradosiakoi oikismoi in Greek, these traditional hostels can be found throughout the country, notably on Makrinitza (Pilion), Vizitsa (Pilion), Milies (Pilion), Ia (Santorini), Mesta (Chios), Psara Island, Areopolis (Mani), Vathia (Mani), Papingo (Epirus), Koriskades (Central Greece), Monemvasia (Peloponnese) and Gythion (Peloponnese). This type of accommodation normally offers single, double or triple bedrooms with shower, or a 4-bed house. Grading: As for hotels.

**CAMPING/CARAVANNING:** There is a wide network of official campsites. For details contact the Greek/Hellenic National Tourist Office (see address section). Note: It is not permitted to camp anywhere except registered sites.

**Youth Hostels:** Greece has only one youth hostel recognised by the International Youth Hostel Federation, which is located in Athens, 16 Victor Hugo Street (tel: (1) 523 4170; fax: (1) 523 4015; e-mail: athenshostel@interland.gr; web site: <http://www.interland.gr/athenshostel>). A number of youth hostels belong to the Greek Youth Hostels Association, whose main office is at

the Damareos Street Youth Hostel in 75 Damareos Street, Athens (tel (1) 751 9530; fax: (1) 751 0616; e-mail: y-hostels@otenet.gr). Other members of the Greek Youth Hostel Association include the Patra Youth Hostel in the Peloponnese, at 62 Heroon Politechniou Street (tel: (61) 427 278 or 222 707; fax: (61) 452 152); the Olympia Youth Hostel, also in the Peloponnese, at 18 Praxitelous-Kondili Street (tel: (624) 22580); the Heraklio Youth Hostel in Crete, at 5 Vironos Street (tel/fax: (81) 286 281 or 222 947); the Rethimno Youth Hostel, also in Crete, at 45 Tobazi Street (tel: (831) 22848); the Thira Youth Hostel in the Cyclades, at Fira Santorini (tel/fax: (286) 22387); and the Perissa Youth Hostel, also in the Cyclades, at Perissa Santorini (tel: (286) 81943; fax: (286) 82182).

## Attica

For the purposes of clarity, information on Resorts & Excursions within Greece has been divided into 13 regional sections. These do not necessarily reflect administrative boundaries.

**Note:** (a) Some of the beaches and seas of Greece are host to the threatened Loggerhead Turtle and the Monk Seal; visitors who find themselves in areas where they breed should keep their distance, behave quietly (this includes car noise), avoid leaving rubbish which may be dangerous (for example turtles may die after eating plastic bags which they mistake for jellyfish) and avoid showing lights at night. (b) After a recent initiative by the Greek Government, opening hours and fees for major museums and archaeological sites are now uniform throughout Greece.

Archaeological sites with museums now only charge one admission fee, allowing entry to both at no extra cost. Visitors can now have access to these attractions from 0800-2000, seven days a week. (c) Tourist police in the main tourist destinations of Greece are specially trained to assist visitors with accommodation, maps, timetables, details of places to visit or special events. All wear flag badges denoting which language(s) they are able to speak. English and German are fairly common. Do not hesitate to ask them for help.

Attica is characterised by calm beaches, and the pinewoods and thyme-covered slopes of Mount Parnes, Hymettus and Pentelico.

**ATHENS:** ATHENS: The city of Athens is dominated by the flat-topped hill of the Acropolis, site of the 2400-year-old Parthenon, one of the most famous classical monuments in the world (which is beautifully lit at night by a mass of coloured lights), the Theatre of Dionysus, the Doric Temple of Hephaistos, the Hadrian's Arch, and the waterclock (Tower of the Winds). On the far side of the Acropolis is the restored Odeon of Herodes Atticus, a superb theatre in which the open-air performances of the International Athens Festival are held from June to September. The ruins of the civic, political and commercial centre of the Ancient Agora can be visited, as can the reconstructed Hellenistic Stoa of Attalos, which houses the Agora Museum. Most artefacts are displayed in the National Archaeological Museum on Patission Street. The centre of Athens has many modern shops, restaurants, international-class hotels and nightclubs. The old quarter of the town, Plaka, which spreads around the Acropolis, is picturesque with its famed flea market, small tavernas, craft shops and narrow winding alleys. The excavations of the Library of Hadrian can be observed from Pandrossou street. The Piraeus, lying at the innermost point of the Saronic Gulf just outside Athens, is the main port of the town and there are a number of good fish restaurants. From here ferries leave regularly for the islands and other points along the coast. An electric train service connects Athens and Piraeus.

**SOUTHWARDS ALONG THE WEST COASTLINE:** SOUTHWARDS ALONG THE WEST COASTLINE: The Apollo Coast is one of the best developed tourist areas, stretching from Piraeus as far as Cape Sounio at the southern tip of the promontory. Marinas, well-appointed swimming beaches, small bays, modern hotel complexes, rented flats, numerous tavernas specialising in seafood, luxury-class restaurants and nightclubs are all attractions of the area. Here, crowning

the Cape Sounio, 69km (43 miles) from Athens, is a towering promontory which dominates the landscape for miles around. Here the superb ruins of the Temple of Poseidon, surrounded by steep access paths. Other resorts (and their distance from Athens) include: Paleo Faliro (8km/5 miles), Alimos (11km/7 miles), Glifada (17km/11 miles), Voula (18.5km/11.5 miles), Kavouri (23km/14 miles), Vouliagmeni (24km/15 miles), Vouliagmeni Lake (a natural lake with medicinal waters, set in beautiful surroundings) (26km/16 miles), Varkiza (28km/17 miles), Lagonissi (40km/25 miles) and Anavissos (51km/32 miles).

**NORTHWARDS AROUND THE GULF OF CORINTH:** Kineta: NORTHWARDS AROUND THE GULF OF CORINTH: Kineta (55km/34 miles from Athens), a coastal resort with an extensive beach, lies on the Saronic Gulf and can be reached on the Old Corinth road. Porto Germeno (73km/45 miles from Athens), Psatha (67km/42 miles) and Alepohori (61km/38 miles) are typical Attic villages, set in thick pinewoods and bordering on the Gulf of Corinth. Sheltered bays provide excellent swimming. Accommodation is available and there are numerous restaurants specialising in seafood dishes.

**THE EAST COAST OF ATTICA:** THE EAST COAST OF ATTICA: Stretching from Cape Sounio to Skala Oropou, there is a succession of resorts, set amid pinewoods. These include (all distances are from Athens) Lavrio (52km/32 miles), Porto Rafti (38km/24 miles), Loutsa (30km/19 miles), Rafina (28km/17 miles), Mati (29km/18 miles), Agios Andreas (31km/19 miles), Nea Makri (33km/21 miles), Schinias (44km/27 miles), Agia Marina (47km/29 miles) and Agii Apostoli (44km/27 miles). In general, there is a wide choice of hotels, rooms to rent, restaurants and tavernas.

**THE SARONIC GULF AND ISLANDS:** THE SARONIC GULF AND ISLANDS: The Saronic Gulf stretches from the Attica coastline to the Peloponnese shores. The best-known islands here are Aegina, Salamis, Poros, Hydra, Spetses, Dokos, Spetsopoula and the islets of Angistri and Moni. Information about fares can be obtained from Piraeus Central Port Authority (tel: (1) 422 6000). One-day cruises to the islands of Aegina, Poros and Hydra leave daily throughout the year from Flisvos Marina at Paleo Faliro.

**Aegina:** Aegina (Egina) is a favourite among holidaymakers for its excellent beaches, clear seas and fine climate. The terrain is flat and cycling is popular. Other means of transport are buses, taxis and horsedrawn carriages. There are beauty spots and beaches at Plakakia, Agia Marina, Faros and Marathonas. Angistri and Moni are two small wooded islands which offer opportunities for excursions.

**Salamis:** Salamis enjoys a frequent shuttle service from nearby Piraeus and from Perama by motor-sailing vessels (called caiques) across the Straits. The island has good roads and a network of bus and taxi services. At Eandio there are the remains of ancient Telamon. Sandy beaches line the shores of the resorts at Kaki Vigla, Moulki, Kanakia and Peristeria. There are few large hotels.

**Methana:** Methana, jutting out from the Peloponnese peninsula, is renowned for its medieval springs at Methana town and modernised hydrotherapy installations run by the Greek/Hellenic National Tourist Organisation. Methana attracts a large number of visitors every year.

**Poros:** Poros is a thickly-wooded island lying just off the Peloponnese mainland township of Galatas. It is made up of two islands, linked by a narrow neck of land: Kalavria and Sphaeria on which the town of Poros is built. Ferries leave for the mainland where there is a famous lemon grove and the remains of ancient Trizina, the legendary birthplace of Theseus. Sandy beaches, at Askeli and Neorio, are also accessible by ferry.

**Hydra:** Hydra is a cosmopolitan island offering an active nightlife. Resorts with good beaches are at Kamina, Molos, Palamida, Bisti and Mandraki and the sea cave of Bariami has been converted into a swimming pool; many beaches are more easily reached by boat. The island does not allow any motorised transport. There is only a small number of hotel rooms and most visitors hire or own their accommodation. A large (closed) monastery is centred at the highest point of the island.

**Spetses:** Spetses lies at the southern extremity of the Saronic Gulf. It has long been a holiday resort and has good hotels and a variety of entertainment facilities. Seaside resorts include Zogeria, Agia Marina, Agia Anangiri and Agia Padaskevi.

#### Central Greece (Sterea Ellas)

North of Attica is the region of Central Greece, mountainous and dry in the interior, yet temperate along the coast. Near the main road from Athens to Delphi lie the southern slopes of Mount Parnassus, which towers 2457m (8061ft) over the Gulf of Corinth. Here the land forms a natural stone amphitheatre which houses the Sanctuary of Apollo, one of the most famous archaeological sites in Greece. There is also a newly developed ski centre, Parnassus Ski Centre, accessible from Arachova, Amfiklia and Eftalofos, which has modern ski facilities, restaurants, a first-aid centre and a ski school. Livadia, built into the foothills of Mount Helikon, was famous in ancient times for the Oracle of Trophonios Zeus and the Springs of Forgetfulness (Lethe) and Memory (Mnemosyne) to the north of the town. Delphi (176km/109 miles from Athens) can be reached by road through Boeotia via Livadia and Arachova. This is the site of the famous Oracle, where rulers of Greece came for many centuries for political and moral guidance. The complex of treasury buildings, plinths and the foundations for the 4th century BC Doric Temple of Apollo are set on the steep rocky hillside, overlooking olive groves and the small Sanctuary of Athena, known as the Marmaria (marbles). The Delphi Museum contains the superb statue of the Charioteer, circa 475BC. Itea, ancient Chalkion, lies on the northern coast of the Gulf of Corinthia. There is an excellent beach that skirts the olive trees and a good road leads to Kira where the remains of the ancient pier can still be seen at the bottom of the sea. Good bathing spots in Phokida include Itea, Kira, Galaxidi, Eratini, and the small islands of Trizonia and Ai-Gianis. There are a number of spa towns in Central Greece, such as Thermopiles, Kamena Vourla, Plastistomo and Loutra Ipatis. West of Karpenissi (built on the foothills of Mount Timfristos at an altitude of 960m/2438ft) can be found the picturesque mountain villages of Fragista, Granitsa and Agrafta, which are covered in snow during the winter.

#### The Peloponnese

Corinth is the most convenient starting point for a tour of the seven provinces of the Peloponnese, separated from central Greece by the Canal of Corinth.

**CORINTH:** CORINTH: Corinth was once a city state rival of Athens and a powerful maritime state. The old town of Corinth, destroyed by earthquake in 1858, was built up only to be destroyed again in 1928. The modern city, despite its beautiful location, is unremarkable. 8km (5 miles) away, on the northern slopes of Akrokorinthos Mountain, are the ruins of ancient Corinth, where well-preserved remains and the columns of the Temple of Apollo are still to be seen. South of Corinth lies the impressive open-air theatre of Epidaurus, which offers performances at weekends during the Epidaurus Festival from July to August. Other archaeological sites in the area include the famous Lion Gate at Mycenae, where it is possible to stay overnight in the pavilion; the ancient temple, theatre and sanctuary at Argos; and the Heraion near the village of Perahora.



**WEST AND SOUTHWEST FROM CORINTH:** WEST AND SOUTHWEST FROM CORINTH: From Corinth the coast road passes the villages of Vrahati, Kokkoni and Kiato before it reaches the popular coastal resort of Xylokastro, where there is a magnificent view of the Parnassus and Elikon mountains. After the Kiato Bridge, a road leads high into the mountains and the extensive fir forests round Goura. Another mountain road leads inland from Xylokastra to the cool alpine climate of Trikala at Mount Ziria, the main ski centre of the south.

**WESTERN PELOPONNESE:** WESTERN PELOPONNESE: Scores of bays and sandy beaches deck the coastline. Several resorts, including Katakolo and Agios Andreas (to the west of Pirgos) and Kourouta and Kyllini (to the north), offer modern amenities. Patras is a thriving commercial and industrial centre, the third most important town in Greece and its main western port. Distinctive for its arcaded streets, Patras is also a pleasant seaside resort with some good hotels. It is an ideal base for visitors to the region. West of Patras is Lapas and, further south, Palouki, connected by a daily bus to Amaliada.

At Kyllini there are mineral springs, hydropathic installations, new hotels and a public beach. East of Patras there are resorts at Psathopirgos, Lambiri, Longos, Selianitika, Kounoupele and Kalogria. A tiny train climbs up the Vouraikos Gorge from Diakofto to Kalavrita. Other resorts include Vartholomio, Nikoleika (Egio), Lakopetra and Metohi. A road runs 77km (48 miles) southeast of Patras through superb mountain scenery to Kalavrita. Olympia, the original site of the Olympic Games where the flame is still lit, can be reached by train or by the mountain road from Kalavrita, or along the coast, via Patras and Pyrgos. The site is a mass of marble inscriptions, restored temples and civic buildings, including the Temple of Zeus, which once housed the colossal chryselephantine statue of Zeus, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Tourists often conduct their own impromptu races in the stadium. There is also a good archaeological museum. From Olympia the road turns east and follows the Alfios River through the wild Arcadian Mountains. There is a spa at Loutra. The road becomes hair-raising with a sheer drop of 300m (1000ft) after Isounda, and should only be attempted by the adventurous. The main road from Olympia to Tripoli is less treacherous, going down from the mountains to the plain of Tripoli.

At Bassae is the well-preserved temple of the Epicurian Apollo. At Kaiafa there is a hot-spring resort built on an island in the middle of the lake. The picturesque coast of the western Peloponnese offers plenty of opportunities for swimming. Between Kyllini and Kiparissia, the Kastro, Loutra Kyllinis, Kourouta, Skafidia, Katakolo, Kaiafa and Kiparissia are popular resorts with good beaches.

**SOUTHEAST OF CORINTH:** SOUTHEAST OF CORINTH: The best-known resorts in this area are Loutraki, which has restaurants, modern shops, hotels and cinemas; Nea Kios near Argos; Asini and Kosta in the south and Tolo. On the southern tip of the promontory, southeast of Corinth, is the resort of Porto Heli, which has attractive beaches, some quite unspoilt, and good swimming. There is ample hotel accommodation, and many opportunities for watersports. A good road network makes trips to interesting places such as Nafplion and Epidavros convenient. There is a sea connection between Porto Heli and the Saronic Gulf Islands and a ferry from the island of Spetses. On the east coast, Nauplio is a well-preserved Venetian town which overlooks a lovely bay.

**SOUTHERN PELOPONNESE:** SOUTHERN PELOPONNESE: The once powerful city state of Sparta is notorious in ancient history for the austerity of its regime, but it is now a provincial town with parks, broad avenues and a pleasant atmosphere. At Mystra, 4km (2.5 miles) away, lie the ruins of a Byzantine city and, to the north, are the Taigetos and Parnon mountains. South of Sparta, the port of Githion is a good starting point for exploring the Mani area. There are caves with underground lakes and rivers at Glifada and Alepotripa in the Diros region. The island of Kythera (Kythera) lies 14 nautical miles off Kavos Maleas on the south-easternmost tip of the Peloponnese. Ships dock at Agia Pelagia and Kapsali. This bustling harbour is overlooked by a

Venetian Castle. The capital, Kythera, 30km (19 miles) south, is a neat hamlet overlooking the sea, easily reached on the main roadway which crosses the island. Other resorts include Areopolis, Gythion and Monemvassia.

#### Euboea (Evia)

The island of Euboea is the second largest in Greece after Crete. A main highway and ferryboats from several terminals connect this island, of great natural beauty and scenic variety, to the mainland. Euboea is brisk with tourist traffic, but there are still many peaceful and unspoilt villages. There are large fertile valleys, sandy beaches, organised bathing facilities, secluded coves and wooded mountainsides, ideal for climbing.

Resorts include Halleida, Malakonta, Lefkanti, Amarinthos, Almiropotamos, Marmari, Honeftiko, Limni, Agiokambos, Edipsos, Nea Stira, Karistos, Kimi and Rovies.

On the other side of the Northern Euboean Gulf is the prefecture of Fthiotida with mountains, valleys, rivers, numerous medicinal springs, woodland, and sandy beaches. There are some excellent beaches at Kamena Vourla, one of the best-known and most frequented spas. Skala also has fine bathing beaches and, west of Lamia, the capital of the region, is the Ipati Spa with modern hydrotherapy facilities.

Mount Parnassus Wintersports Resort, 27km (17 miles) from Arachova and 17km (11 miles) from Amfikliia. The Greek/Hellenic National Tourist Office installations are located at Fterolaka and at Kelaria, at an altitude of 1600-2250m (5250-7380ft). The centre is open daily from December to April between 0900-1600. In Gerondovrahos, at an altitude of 1800m (5910ft) on Mount Parnassus, there is a ski centre run by the Athenian Ski Club. Other coastal resorts include Agios Konstandinos, Arkitsa and Livanates.

#### Thessaly

The fertile plain of Thessaly in Central Greece is surrounded by the Mount Pindus Range, Olympus, Pelion, Orthrys, Ossa and Agrapha. The River Pinios, flowing down from the western slopes of the Pindus, cuts Thessaly in two and, passing through the valley of Tempi, meets the sea.

**Olympus:** Olympus, home of the immortal gods and land of the Centaurs, is only one of the many places in Thessaly where relics of ancient Greece can be seen and, on the western edge of the plain of Thessaly, just as the Pindus range begins to form, there are 24 perpendicular rocks on which Byzantine monks built their monastic community, the Meteora, about 600 years ago. Nearby villages include Agiokambos, Elati, Kalambaka, Kardista, Larissa, Neraida, Smokovo and Trikala.

At the northernmost point of Pagassitikos Bay is the port of Volos, traditionally the launching place of Jason and the Argonauts in their search for the Golden Fleece. There are several seaside villages along the Pagasitic Gulf, including Agria, 7km (4 miles) southeast of Volos. Northeast of Volos, there are hill villages and seaside towns on the Aegean; notably Portaria, Makrinitza, Hania, Zagora, Horefto, Ai-Gianis and Tsangarada.

Other coastal resorts include Afissos, Agios Ioanis, Agios Lavrendis, Alikes, Kala Nera, Milies, Vizitsa (where there are traditional mansions, some of which are being renovated by the Greek National Tourist Office as guest-houses), Trikeri, Nea Anhialos, Platania and Milopotamos. There are winter sports centres on Mount Pelion.

#### Epirus

Epirus, the northwest corner of the Greek peninsula, is the most mountainous region in Greece. Parga, surrounded by wooded hills, lies 77km (48 miles) from Preveza and 90km (56 miles) from Arta. It is a small, picturesque town built in a semi-circle round the bay, flanked by coves and

sandy beaches. Going north out of Ioannina, the road leads through the Vikos Gorge, the canyon formed by the River Aoos, which houses 46 pretty villages, known as the Zagorochoria. The Gorge is set in the Vikos-Aoos National Park, where the small villages of Mikro and Megalo Papingo are also located. Tourists can visit archaeological remains at Nikopolis, Kassopi, Mesopotamos and Dodoni.

## Macedonia

Macedonia stands slightly apart from the rest of the country; its scenery and climate have more in common with the adjoining Balkans. Though bitterly cold in winter, this is still a particularly beautiful part of Greece, rich in historical monuments and archaeological sites. In the area around Florina, are the lakes including the dramatic Prespa basin. Grevena, in the southern part of Macedonia, is mountainous, with the Pindus range rising to the west and the Hassia range to the north. The unspoilt villages in the area are ideal for those in search of peace and quiet, these include Aridea, Edessa, Nymfeon and Kastoria. In the south, there are more to be found at Perivoli, Ptolemaida, Veria and Naoussa which is near Kato Vermio (seli), one of Greece's largest sports centres. Platomonas, on the west coast, is a popular summer resort, with camping grounds and supervised swimming beaches.

**Thessaloniki:** Thessaloniki is the second-largest city in Greece. A modern coastal town, it contains much Byzantine art as well as churches and museums including the superb Archaeological Museum. The neighbouring villages and suburbs offer good walks and cafés, but beaches are often unclean. There are many historical sites in Thessaloniki, including the Arch of Galerius built in AD297; ruins of the Roman Agora (which are still being excavated), Roman market, theatre and Roman baths; Exedra close to the Egnatian Way; Nymphaion, the circular building whose cisterns now serve as the chapel of Agios Ioannis Prodromis; the Rotunda and the fine churches including the 8th-century Ayia Sofia. The newly-restored and striking White Tower affords an excellent view.

Northeast of Thessaloniki is the mountainous and wooded peninsula of Chalkidiki, the highlight of eastern Macedonia. Poligiros, the capital, is set in the countryside, with pinewoods, olive groves and is an ideal base for peaceful walks. There are numerous archaeological sites, including the Temple of Zeus Ammon on the shore at Kalithea and the ruins of ancient Olynthos on Kassandra. The countryside, with pinewoods and olive groves, is ideal for peaceful walks. Kassandra and Sithonia shelter the north's best beaches and are both fast-growing holiday destinations. Here also is the religious community of Mount Athos. Women are refused entry, but men can visit with **a special permit is issued by the Mount Athos Visitors' Office, Canary Street 21, Thessaloniki (tel: (31) 833 733)**. Overnight stays are forbidden for those without proven religious or scholarly interests in the area.

In east Macedonia, on the road from Drama to Kavala, lies Philippi, one of Macedonia's most extensive archaeological sites. Named after the father of Alexander the Great, it is where Caesar's murderers, Brutus and Cassius, were defeated by Octavius in 42BC, and is believed to be the site of St Paul's first recorded preaching in Greece.

**Thassos:** Thassos lies off the coast of eastern Macedonia. It is thickly wooded with plane, oak, cedar and olive groves. Thassos has good beaches for swimming and fishing at Makriamos, Archangelos, Agios Ioannis, Potos and Pefkari. The islet of Thassopoula just offshore can be reached by caique. On the north shore is the capital, Limenas, which has a museum. There are archaeological sites nearby including the Temple of Pythian Apollo, the agora (market-place), the theatres and the Choregic Monument set inside the sanctuary of Dionysus. Thassos can be reached by ferry from Keramoti or Kavala on the mainland.

**Kavala:** Kavala is a modern, commercial seaside port which still retains many traditional features, particularly in the town centre. There are hotels, beaches, museums, restaurants and

tavernas as well as an aqueduct and Byzantine citadel. Boats can be hired for fishing, water-skiing and sailing. Popular sandy beaches are at Kalamitsa, Batis and Toska, and secluded ones at Iraklitsa and Peramos. There are also some little-known stalactite and stalagmite caves and many archaeological sites nearby. Mount Pangaion is a good area for hunting and climbing.

## Thrace

Going east from Macedonia the villages become more oriental in style. Xanthi is an attractive small town clinging to the hilly sides of the Remma Valley. Southwest of Xanthi is Avdira. Nearby Lagos, built on the narrow strip of land in the lagoon, is rich in wildfowl. One of the best northern beaches is 8km (5 miles) east of Fanari. The main road dips down to the coast before going inland again to Komotini, further east, then follows the coast via Nea Hili to Alexandroupolis, which has an archaeological museum of local finds. North from here is Soufli, famous for its silks.

## The Ionian Islands

The Ionian Islands lie off the west coast of mainland Greece. Comparatively isolated from each other in the past, each of the six islands has developed differently.

**Corfu (Kerkyra):** Corfu (Kerkyra) is the northernmost island of western Greece. Its natural beauty has led to a degree of commercialisation. The capital, also called Corfu, has two small harbours with large Venetian fortresses. With Italian, French and English influences evident in its architecture, Corfu is a typical Ionian island town. It is made up of wide avenues and large squares, among them the graceful Spianada or esplanade, cobbled alleyways, arches and colonnades. Recommended sights are the Archaeological Museum, which houses finds from local excavations; the Museum of Asiatic Art; the Town Hall, a splendid example of Venetian architecture (built in 1663); the 12th-century Byzantine Church of St Jason and Sospater and the Church of St Spyridon. Good roads lead out of Corfu town to excellent harbours suitable for swimming and fishing, such as Roda, Kassiopi and Douloura, and to traditional inland villages such as Ano Korakiana, Ano Garouna, Doukades, Agii Douli and Pelekas where, from the top of its rocky hill, the sunset can be superb. In the region of Pelekas lies Ropa Valley (Livaditou Ropa), with its excellent Corfu Golf Club. On the western side of the island the roads thread their way through olive and orange groves, pine trees and cypresses. Resorts on Corfu include Kanoni, where a narrow causeway leads to the Monastery of Vlaherni; Perama; Benitses; Moraitika; Messongi; Dassia; Gouvia; Gastouri and the museum palace The Achilleion, partly converted into a casino; Ipsos and Paleokastritsa.

**Paxi:** Paxi, as yet undeveloped, is the smallest of the Ionians and has quiet sandy beaches, bays, rocky promontories and caves. Dense grapevines and olive groves cover the island. The main resort is Gaios (or Paxi), on the east coast. Excursions can be made to Antipaxi, a tiny island 5km (3 miles) to the south.

**Lefkas (Lefkada):** Lefkas (Lefkada), joined by a narrow strip of land to the Greek mainland, is a green and fertile island which is surrounded by many islets. Excursions, involving some mountain climbing, can be made in the centre of Levkas, near the Stavrota Mountain. There is good swimming and fishing in the villages of Agios Nikitas on the northwestern coast, Ligia on the southeastern coast or Vassiliki (which is also popular with windsurfers) on the southwestern coast.

**Cephalonia (Kefalonia):** Cephalonia (Kefalonia) has beaches at Makri and Plati, Yialos, Skala, Fiskardo and in the Palli district close to the Monastery of Kepourio. The mountainous scenery (including the 1600m/5250ft Mount Enos) is dramatic and the island has a good network of

roads. At Assos there is a castle and in the capital, Argostoli, an Archaeological Museum and Folk Art Museum.

**Ithaca (Ithaki):** Ithaca (Ithaki) is close to Cephalonia, and is well known for being the island home of the great Odysseus, Homer's hero of the Trojan war. The small, quiet and mountainous island is renowned for its coves. Vathi, the capital, is small, and its white houses fan out in a mounting semi-circle at one end of the bay. There are beaches at Kioni, south of Frikes, from where a road leads to Loizos' Cave, an ancient place of worship of Artemis, Hera and Athena.

**Zakynthos:** Zakynthos is the southernmost island in the Ionian group. Ionian historic treasures can be found in the town museum. In the southeast is the huge bay of Laganas, with numerous hotels, restaurants and a lively nightlife. There are more sandy beaches at Argassi, Alikes and Tsilivi, 3km (2 miles) from the town of Zante.

## Crete

The largest and most southerly Greek island, Crete is rich in historical remains and scenic variety. Along the northern shores there are modern resorts. Alongside lie the scattered remains of older civilizations - Minoan palaces, Byzantine churches, Venetian castles and sites of more recent struggles. Crete is divided into four prefectures - Chania (Hania), Rethymnon (Rethimno), Heraklion (Iraklio) and Agios Nikolaos - and has a good road network and regular communications.

**Heraklion:** Heraklion, the largest and busiest town on the island, offers a variety of nightlife and sightseeing opportunities. The prefecture of Heraklion has three of the most important Minoan centres - Knossos, Phaestos and Malia. Crete is well known as the setting for the battle between Theseus and the Minotaur, and the ruins of Knossos are thought to be the site of the labyrinth. East of Heraklion is Agios Nikolaos, one of the best-known holiday resorts on the island. As a result it is very crowded in the high season. Much of the east coast of Crete has been developed specifically as a tourist area and is a popular target for package tours. The prefecture of Rethymnon combines the gentle scenery of the northern and southern coastlines with the precipitous gorges of the Idi and White Mountains. The main town, Rethymnon, on the northern coast, is an hour and a half's bus ride west from the airport. There is a well-preserved Venetian fort behind the harbour and, like the other large towns on the north coast, Venetian influence is apparent in the architecture.

In the Lasithi region, Elounda and Ierapetra are the most developed resorts and, at the western end of the island, is the fertile region of Chania (Xania). Chania, the main town, has a mixture of modern, neo-classical and Venetian architecture. Places to visit are the popular seaside resorts of Plátanos, Máleme and Kolimbari; the freshwater springs at Falarsana; and the Samaria Gorge, the longest in Europe.

Other resorts include Agia Galini, Agia Marina, Agia Pelapia, Amnisos, Amoudara, Gouves, Kokini Chani, Limenas Hersonissou, Malia, Sitia and Stalida.

## The Dodecanese

This cluster of 12 (dodeca) islands lies to the southeast of the Greek mainland. Distances between the islands are fairly small, so visitors can easily hop from one to another, swapping the relative sophistication of Rhodes and Kos for the calmer and simpler life on Tilos or Astipalaia.

**Rhodes:** Rhodes is one of the most popular and best-developed islands in the Mediterranean. It offers international-class hotels, varied nightlife, sports facilities and duty-free shopping. It has 370km (230 miles) of coastline and a good, well-surfaced road network. Bus services bring most of the towns and villages within easy reach of the capital. Travel agents organise daily

sightseeing trips to the archaeological sites and beauty spots. Rhodes is 267 nautical miles from Piraeus and is connected by boat services. There is also an international airport with daily direct flights from Athens. The main town, also called Rhodes, lies on the very northern tip of the island. It is made up of two distinct parts, the new town and the old town which stands within the walls of the medieval fortress. The 15th-century Knight's Hospital is now an archaeological museum which houses the celebrated Aphrodite of Rhodes. The Palace of the Grand Masters also has a splendid collection. 2km (1.2 miles) to the west of Rhodes town lies the Acropolis of ancient Rhodes. Many impressive ruins can still be seen, including the Temple of Apollo and a theatre and stadium, which date back to the 2nd century BC.

At Filerimos, 15km (9 miles) from Rhodes, lie the ruins of ancient Ialisos. The view from the Acropolis is spectacular. Ancient Kameiros, 25km (16 miles) southwest of Ialisos, has impressive remains spread on a hillside. 56km (35 miles) to the southeast of Rhodes is Lindos, with its well-preserved remains scattered on the ancient Acropolis.

**Rhodes is a favourite for sports enthusiasts:** there is good fishing at the resorts of Lindos, Kameiros and Genadi and there are facilities for water-skiing, sailing, tennis, basketball and golf at sports grounds and clubs all over the island.

There are other resorts at Faliraki, Ixia, Kalithea, Kremasti, Afandou, Ialisos, Kritinia and Profitis Elias

**Kos:** Kos is a fertile island with a mild climate, sandy beaches (some of which have black volcanic sand) and ample hotel accommodation. Most places of historical and sightseeing interest lie within the pretty main town of the same name, and its immediate surroundings, and can be visited easily on foot or by hiring a bicycle. The Plane Tree of Hippocrates, a massive tree with a trunk 12m (39ft) in circumference, is near here, as is the castle of the Knights of St John, an impressive example of medieval defensive architecture with its double wall and moat; an ancient agora with remains of Greek buildings of the 4th to 2nd centuries BC; the Temple of Dionysus; the Odeon; a restored Roman villa with mosaic decorations; some Roman baths; and a Gymnasium of the Hellenistic period (2nd century BC) with a restored colonnade of Xytos. The beaches towards Lambi, to the north of Kos, and towards Agios Fokas, to the south, are being developed. Places to visit include Asfendiou, Kardamena, Pili, the old fortress at Palio Pili, the fishing villages of Marmari and Mastihari, Kefalos with its pleasant beach and Palatia where ruins of Astipalaia, the ancient capital of Kos, survive.

Other resorts include Antimahia, Lambi, Milos Lappa and Psalidi.

**Patmos:** Patmos lies 140 nautical miles from Piraeus, with which it is connected by steamship services. It is also linked with the Dodecanese group of islands by an inter-island boat service. The nearby isles of Fourni, Lipsi and Leros are easily accessible from Patmos. The island, a place of pilgrimage, is dominated by the massive and formidable Monastery of St John the Divine in Hora. The 'sacred grotto', where St John received and accounted his 'Revelations', is enshrined in the Church of the Apocalypse, just below the Monastery. Hora, the island capital, lies 2km (1.2 miles) away from the port of Skala and can be reached by bus or taxi. It is an extraordinary sight: whitewashed houses arranged along maze-like alleys too narrow for cars, clustered around the base of the monastery. Patmos has fine beaches at Grikos, Meloi, Netia, Diakofti and around Kambos Bay, which can be reached by motor launch or by car from Skala. Excursions to the monasteries of Panagia Apollou and Panagia Geranou are particularly pleasant.

**Kalymnos:** Kalymnos lies 180 nautical miles from Piraeus, with which it is connected by regular steamship services. An inter-island boat service also links Kalymnos with other islands of the Dodecanese. Rocky and barren on the whole, Kalymnos is famous for its sponge fishing - a tradition which is expressed in many folk songs and local dances. Along the west coast of the island there are several resorts, including Linaria, Mirties and Massouri. Excursions can be made to the stalagmite and stalactite Grotto of Spilia Kefalas (35 minutes by motor launch); to the health springs at Therma (1km/0.6 miles to the south of the Kalymnos town); and to Horio, the

old capital which stands below the medieval castle. Near Horio are the remains of the Franco-Byzantine fortress, Pera-Kastro, and the traces of the Church of Christ of Jerusalem, built towards the end of the 4th century AD. To the southwest lie the monasteries of Evangelistria and Agia Ekaterini, both of which have guest-houses. There are boat trips to the nearby isles of Telendos and Pserimos, ideal for swimming and fishing.

**Simi:** Simi, a predominantly rocky island, lies 235 nautical miles from Piraeus and 25 nautical miles from Rhodes. The steamship line that serves the rest of the Dodecanese calls at Simi. The beach at Pedi is good for swimming and the bays of Nanou, Marathoundas and Emborio can be reached by motor launch. Nearby are the deserted islands of Seskli and Nemo, ideal for fishing.

**Karpathos:** Karpathos is a mountainous island with fertile valleys and plains. Piraeus lies 227 nautical miles away while Rhodes, with which it is connected by steamship and summer flights, is only 89 nautical miles away. The island capital, Pigadia, lies in a wide, curving bay on the east coast. Its small port of Possi is a natural harbour and there are good beaches nearby. Transport is provided by buses and taxis while motor launches serve the coastal areas. Attractive spots are Aperi, Volada, Mirtonas, Othos, Messochori and its beautiful bathing beach, Agia Marina, the fishing port Finiki, and Arkassa. The northern part of Karpathos is dominated by the densely forested mountain of Profitis Ilias (1140m/3740ft). From the small harbour of Diafani, on the northern coast, a road will take you to Olimbos, a charming village where ancient traditions and customs are very much alive. Excursions can be made to the northern headland of Karpathos and the tiny isle of Saria, where the remains of the ancient city of Nissiros can be seen (access is by motor launch from Diafani), and to Kira-Panagia, a picturesque bay with a fine beach and monastery.

**Leros:** Leros, a mountainous but extensively cultivated island, lies 169 nautical miles from Piraeus. Excursions can be made to the coastal villages of Agia Marina, Koukouli, Kithoni, Panagies, Plefounti, Gournas, Lepida and Temenia. Traces of the island's past glory include the Franco-Byzantine fort overlooking the capital town, Platanos, and the ruins of the Byzantine castle on Mount Kasteli, to the northwest. Leros is ideal for fishing and small craft can be hired. Laki, one of the largest natural harbours in the Mediterranean, lies 3km (2 miles) from Platanos. The villages of Leros can be reached by taxi along well-paved roads. Old customs and traditions also survive on Leros: the celebrations at Carnival time are reminiscent of the ancient Dionysian festivities.

**Tilos:** Tilos, lying 290 nautical miles from Piraeus and only 49 nautical miles northwest of Rhodes, is an island neglected by tourists. It is a hilly island with many isolated and unspoilt beaches. Its few inhabitants live at Livadia, a natural port, and at Megalo Horio which is crowned by a medieval castle. There are good bathing beaches at Livadia, Agios Antonios and Plaka. Mules and donkeys are the major forms of transport. Almost all coastal regions offer splendid fishing and boats are available for hire.

**Nissiros:** Nissiros is connected with Piraeus (200 nautical miles) and Rhodes (60 nautical miles) by regular steamship service. Only 42 sq km (16 sq miles) in area, Nissiros seems larger, due to the massive but inactive volcano which towers over the island. The capital, Mandraki, is built below the medieval castle and Monastery of Panagia Spiliani. 8km (5 miles) southwest of Mandraki lie the remains of the ancient Acropolis with its Pelasgian walls, still well preserved in many places. The fishing village of Pali also has an excellent beach for swimming.

**Chalki:** Chalki, a small hilly island with many unspoilt beaches, lies 302 nautical miles from Piraeus and 35 nautical miles from Rhodes. The steamship line, which serves all the small islands of the Dodecanese, calls at Chalki. There are no cars or buses on this peaceful island but horses and small motorboats can be hired. The small population of Halki busies itself with fishing and

sponge diving. The capital, Niborio, is built in tiers, and from the midst of its squat white houses rises the tall bell-tower of Agios Nikolaos. Nissiros's best bathing beach is nearby.

**Kastelorizo (Megisti):** Kastelorizo (Megisti), the easternmost of the islands in the Aegean Sea, is a mere 9 sq km (6 sq miles) in area. It is connected to nearby Rhodes by a twice-weekly boat. Above the houses, on a high rock, rises an old castle which the Knights of St John reconstructed in the 14th century. The fascinating Grotto of Parasta, which can be reached by boat, is to the southeast of the island. There are beaches next to the harbour at Agios Stefanos and on the uninhabited isle of Agios Georgios (10 minutes by motorboat).

**Astipalaia:** Astipalaia, mountainous but fertile, has a coastline 110km (68 miles) long, indented with beautiful bays. It can be reached from Piraeus, 165 nautical miles away, by the steamship line which links the Dodecanese. Astipalaia offers peace and quiet. The capital, also called Astipalaia, is dominated by its Franco-Byzantine castle. The most beautiful parts of the island are Livadi and Maltezana where there are fine sandy beaches.

**Kassos:** Kassos lies between Crete and Karpathos from which it is separated by only 3 nautical miles. Piraeus is 255 nautical miles away and Rhodes 94 nautical miles. Like all the small islands in the Dodecanese group it is served by an inter-island steamship line. Emborios, the port, and Fri, the principal town, are picturesque. Selai, a cave to the west of the village of Agia Marina, is filled with stalactites of various formations. Nearby there are remains of an ancient wall. Non-asphalt roads and country paths lead to pretty villages such as Panagia, Arvanitohori and Polio. The isle of Armathia can be reached by boat.

#### Northeast Aegean Islands

This group of islands, fairly widely scattered in the waters of the northeast Aegean, includes Chios (Hios), Samos, Lesbos, Lemnos (Limnos), Icaria and the smaller islets around them.

**Lemnos:** Lemnos, 188 nautical miles from Piraeus, is still relatively unknown to the main tourist stream. Mirina, its capital, is built over the ancient city of the same name and has a museum housing exhibits from the island's history. There is a swimming beach nearby. At Nea Koutali, pinewoods reach down to the sea. Exactly opposite Nea Koutali, on the eastern shore of the large bay, is Moudros, a charming town with attractive houses, a stately church and good beaches. Shellfish and strong local wine are specialities.

**Lesbos:** Lesbos, home of the ancient poet Sappho, is 118 nautical miles from Piraeus and is the largest island in this group, with vast olive groves, shady pinewoods, good beaches and picturesque monasteries. The capital, Mytilini, has a bathing beach with good facilities at Tzamakia. There are other beaches at Vateron, Petra, Skala Eftalou, Agios Issidoros (pebble beach) and along the Gulf of Kaloni on the east coast of the island. At Loutra Thermis there are therapeutic springs which have been known since antiquity. Mithimna, or Molivos, in the north of the island, is a meeting place for artists from all over the world.

**Chios (Hios):** Chios (Hios), 153 nautical miles from Piraeus, is dominated by two mountains, the Profitis Elias and Oros. The capital town Chios lies on the eastern shore, very close to the coastline of Turkey. The port has a dual character - the old waterfront with its small, distempered houses and numerous fishing shacks, and the new quays behind which stand modern buildings and busy patisseries. The archaeological museum, located behind the quay warehouses, contains interesting exhibits. There is also a museum of modern Greek sculpture and the fine churches of Agios Issidoros and Agios Andreas. There are good beaches at Karfa, Marmaro, Nago, Pandorikias, Langada and Emborios (black pebbles) and near the Monastery of Agia Markella. Villages in the south of the island still have a medieval appearance. The village of Mesta is one of



the traditional settlements which the Greek/Hellenic National Tourist Organisation has turned into small guest-houses. A medieval settlement, it has suffered little damage and change in the course of centuries. The port serving Mesta is Passalimani, a small fishing village, where there are rooms to let. Small vessels from Chios sail to the historic island of Psara with its unfrequented beaches, rich fishing grounds and the Kimissis Theotokou Monastery. The one port and village on the island has a guest-house. Small vessels also sail to the Inoussai Islands, another secluded refuge with sandy beaches and small tavernas.

**Samos:** Samos, 174 nautical miles from Piraeus, is a land of forested hills, olive groves, vineyards and meadows. Samos, the island's capital, has undergone extensive development but has retained many elegant buildings and museums. A short road links the port area with Vathi, the old quarter built on the slopes of the red clay hills behind the port. From Samos town a good asphalt road runs the length of the island's coast to Karlovassi, passing the beaches at Kokkari, Tsamadou, Avlakia, Karlovassi (pebble) and Potami, 2km (1 mile) beyond. To the west are the beaches at Votsalakia and Hrisi Amnos, probably the best on the island. There are well-appointed beaches at Psili Ammos and Possidonion, on the south-east coast, and along the Cape of Kotsika. Close to the eastern shore lie the islets of Agios Nikolaos, Prassonissi and Vareloudi, excellent for snorkel fishing.

**Ikaria:** Ikaria is 143 nautical miles from Piraeus and lies between Samos and Andros. The southern side of the island is steep and rocky but the northern shore is lined with good bathing beaches. The main port and capital is Agios Kirikos. There are thick pinewoods, streams and a sandy beach at Armenistis and a spa at Therma. At Therma Lefkadas there are hot medicinal springs. Motorboats can be chartered to Fanari, on the northeastern corner of the island, and to the small island of Fourni, famous for its lobsters, raki, honey and an exceptional sandy beach.

#### The Sporades

Across the waters from the eastern coast of mainland Greece are the four islands of the Sporades - Skiathos, Skopelos, Alonissos and Skiros. The islands are becoming very popular and it is advisable to book early, especially in the high season. In addition to hotels, there are villas and rooms to rent from individual families. A list of private lodgings can be obtained from the local tourist police.

**Skiathos:** Skiathos is 41 nautical miles from the town of Volos. The island is green and idyllic, with 70 sandy inlets, several bays and three harbours. Its highest wooded summit rises to 438m (1437ft). Nine smaller islands surround Skiathos. Two of these, the Tsougries, lie across the main harbour, offering safe anchorage to boats and a small marina for yachts. The main town, also called Skiathos, was built in 1830 on two low hills. It is the hub of the tourist summer season, with several hotels, villas and rooms to let. There is a good road which hugs the southern coast with its many bays, linking the town with Koukounaries, the famous pine grove beach. Another way to get around Skiathos is by motor launch. They run at regular intervals to the more popular beaches for a moderate fare. There are also motorboats for hire. The nights in Skiathos are especially lively, with tavernas, bars and discotheques. There are beaches at Koukounaries, Mandraki, Lalaria (pebble beach) and Agia Eleni. Worth visiting is the ancient walled town of Kastro, northeast of Skiathos town. Skiathos has many facilities for tourists including a marina with a supply station, a medical centre, tourist police and a garage for light car repairs.

**Skopelos:** Skopelos is 58 nautical miles from Volos. The island has small bays, golden sands and slopes covered with olive trees, churches and monasteries. The main town of Skopelo, a seaport with narrow cobbled streets and a sandy beach, is quieter than Skiathos. There are beaches which have shallow and safe waters for children at Stafylos Cove; at Limnonari - to which one

crosses by boat from Agnondas; at Panormos, a wind-protected bay; at Milia and Elios; and at Loutraki, the Glossa port. For those who prefer shingle beaches, there is Agios Konstandinos. The Tripiti Grotto is also worth visiting.

**Alonissos:** Alonissos is 62 nautical miles from Volos. The centre of the island has been submerged, leaving two small islets and several smaller ones still. A rock mass called Psathoura, where there are several grottos with stalactites, is all that remains of ancient Alonissos. With only 10km (6 miles) of roads on Alonissos, the best way of getting about is by motorboat, sharing the fare. These ply between the islands and beaches and excursion sites.

The resorts at Kokkinokastro, Palavodimos, Steni Vala, Ai-Nikolas and Kalamakia, are 30 minutes by caique from the small port of Patitiri and offer excellent beaches and bathing. On some of the surrounding, virtually uninhabited isles there are isolated, good beaches but no amenities. There are guest-houses and rooms to rent as well as bungalows and small hotels. Other services include a medical centre, port authority, customs, police and motorboat rentals for fishing trips and excursions. Cyclops' Cave, decorated with stalactites and stalagmites, is to be found on the island of Gioura. Psathoura has remains of an ancient city, most of which are submerged. Divers will see traces of streets, houses and windows in shallow waters. When the sea is calm they can be seen from the surface.

**Skiros (Skyros):** Skiros (Skyros) is 25 nautical miles from Kimi, in Euboea, and 118 nautical miles from Piraeus. The island's main port is Linaria and there are beaches nearby at Magazia, Molos and Girismati. The more distant beaches of Achili, Aspi, Kalamitsa, Pefkos, Atsitsa, Tris Boukes and Acherounes also offer good bathing and can be reached by car. However, only the road to Achili, Aspi and Acherounes is asphalt. Atsitsa and Pefkos are more isolated beaches. In most places there are small tavernas by the sea and, in summer, cruises round the island with small boats are organised.

The Cyclades

**Kea (Tzia):** Kea (Tzia), 42 nautical miles from Piraeus, is dotted with small, cultivated valleys, sandy beaches, fruit orchards, clusters of whitewashed houses, quaint villages and a large number of churches. A short distance inland from the port of Korissia lies Hora, with its 15 churches and elegant archways. Several windmills, chapels and notable monasteries are scattered around the island's countryside. One is the famous Convent of Panagia Kastriani, overlooking Otzia Bay. Archaeological sites include one close to the Vourkari fishing hamlet. At Koundouro and Pisses there are good swimming beaches.

**Kithnos (Kythnos):** Kithnos (Kythnos) is 54 nautical miles from Piraeus. A small island, its harsh landscape is softened by the dashes of green provided by vineyards and fig trees. It has two harbours, Loutra and Merihas, both sheltered anchorages. Clinging to the barren hillside is Hora (this is the name usually given to the main township or head village) also known as Messaria. White Cycladic cottages, churches with frescoes and icons and the spontaneous hospitality of the islanders combine to make Kithnos increasingly popular with visitors in search of beauty and quiet. Loutra gets its name from the well-known warm medicinal springs in the area. Sites worth visiting include the monasteries of Panagia tou Nikou and Panagia tis Kanalas.

**Serifos:** Serifos is 70 nautical miles from Piraeus. Ships calling at the island anchor at Livadi which is surrounded by gardens and orchards. From here the road climbs up to Hora where flagstones pave the narrow alleys, lined by typically Cycladic houses and churches. Higher still stands the old Venetian fortress. Attractive beaches are to be found at Mega Livadi and Koutalas.

**Sifnos:** Sifnos is 82 sq km (52 sq miles) in area. An attractive drive inland from the port of Kamares leads to the capital Apollonia, which echoes back to the time the god Apollo was

worshipped there. In the modern town, many houses retain their distinctive Cycladic character. There are a number of notable churches and a folkloric museum. The medieval atmosphere in the old capital, Kastro, is striking. There is an archaeological collection in the Roman Catholic Cathedral. The villages of Artemonas and Exambela are built on gently undulating hills amid picturesque windmills. It is estimated that there are 365 churches and chapels on Sifnos. Monasteries such as those of Agios Ionnis tou Mougou, Agios Symeon, Profitis Ilias and Panagia Hrisopigi are of interest.

**Kimolos:** Kimolos, 88 nautical miles from Piraeus, is an island of white chalk cliffs. Ships call at the harbour of Psathi. In the capital, houses are smothered with flowers and the streets are laid with decorated flagstones. The indented coastline is lined with fine, sandy beaches. There are hot natural springs at Prassa, and a submerged city off the coast at Koftou is of archaeological interest.

**Milos:** Milos is 82 nautical miles from Piraeus. This beautiful island is inseparably associated with Venus, the goddess of love. Adamas, on the eastern shore, is the island's port. The icons of the Church of Agia Trias are noteworthy. Plaka, the island's typically Cycladic capital, is overlooked by the remains of a Frankish castle and the 13th-century Byzantine Church of Thalassitras. The Archaeological Museum houses ceramics from the island dating back to the 6th millennium BC, and the Folkloric Museum contains examples of popular art. There are extensive early Christian catacombs near the small village of Tripiti. Attractive swimming beaches include those at Chivadolimni, Pollonia and Adamas and excursions can be made in small craft to the Glaronissia; to volcanic islets with remarkable caves and crystalline rocks; to the Sykia Sea Cave with its gaily coloured sea bed; and to the islet of Andimilos.

**Andros:** Andros is 85 nautical miles from Piraeus. The island is green with pine-clad hills, olive groves and vineyards. Its port is Gavriou and its capital Andros, an attractive town with numerous mansions in the neo-classical style, hotels, clubs, the noteworthy Maritime Museum, as well as an Archaeological Museum with ceramics from ancient Agora and a rich collection of finds from the excavations on the island, dating back to the Geometric, Classical and Hellenistic Periods. There are fine swimming beaches all over the island, including Gavriou, Batsi, Nimborio and Korthion. At Paleopolis there are remains of ancient walls, a theatre and stadium. The Panachrantou Monastery at Falika and the Byzantine Church of Taxiarchon in Messaria are worth a visit. Apikia is well-known for its mineral springs.

**Tinos:** Tinos, 86 nautical miles from Piraeus, is a focus of pilgrimages celebrating the Annunciation (March 25) and the Dormition (August 15) when thousands of pilgrims flock to this sacred island to attend celebrations in honour of the Virgin Mary at the marble Church of the Evangelistria. There is also a Byzantine Museum, and the Archaeological Museum, exhibiting finds from the ancient temples of Poseidon and Amphitrite. Buses connect the villages with the town of Tinos. The island's fine beaches include Agios Fokas and Kionia, very close to the town, and Kolibithra, on the northern coast. At Kionia there are also traces of ancient settlements.

**Siros (Syros):** Siros (Syros) is 80 nautical miles from Piraeus, lying at the heart of the Cycladic complex. Its capital and main port Ermoupolis is also the capital of the Cyclades. It has many notable buildings in the neo-classical style, such as the town hall and the customs house, as well as a fine theatre, spacious public squares and impressive churches. Upper Syros retains a strong medieval flavour with city walls, narrow cobbled streets and arcades.

**Mykonos (Mikonos):** Mykonos (Mikonos) is 95 nautical miles from Piraeus. Renowned for its many windmills, catching the brisk meltemi breezes, this barren island is a very popular holiday resort. Mykonos town comprises a modern harbour, whitewashed alleys, churches in the distinctive local style, shops selling local arts and crafts, small tavernas, cafés and discotheques.

The Paraportiani Church near the quay is considered to be an architectural masterpiece. The Archaeological Museum exhibits finds excavated from the necropolis on the nearby islet of Rineia. There is also a Museum of Popular Art. Interesting excursions can be made to the monasteries of Agios Panteleimon, close to Hora, and the Tourliani Monastery at Ano Mera. Beaches range from cosmopolitan to secluded, and include Agios Stefanos, Kalafatis, Platis Yialos and Ornos. The best beaches, however, are on the south side of the island and can be reached by caique from Plati Yialos. They are Paradise, Super Paradise, Agrari and Elia. In recent years, the island has become particularly popular with gay men. From Mykonos, there is a boat service to the island of Delos. Delos (Dilos) was a sacred island in ancient times, and is said to have been the birthplace of Apollo and Artemis. The island has many archaeological sites, such as the Lions Way and the three temples of Apollo. A museum exhibits archaic, Classical, Hellenistic and Roman sculptures, including the Archaic Sphinx of the Naxians and Acroteria (Victories) from the Temple of the Athenians.

**Paros:** Paros is 90 nautical miles from Piraeus. The island's hinterland has undulating hills that contain the famous Parian marble. Parikia, the island's capital and main port, is built on the site of the ancient city. It is the custom on the island to have doors and windows open in the houses as a sign of welcome to strangers visiting the island. A narrow, stone-paved alley leads to one of the most impressive shrines in Christendom, the Ekatondapiliani or Katapoliani church. At Kolimbithres the rugged coast forms inlets with golden sands. There are attractive swimming beaches at Drios, Alikes and Piso Livadi. Of the island's monasteries, Zoodohos Pigi Longovarda and Christou Tou Dassous are the most significant.

**Antiparos:** Antiparos is separated from Paros by a narrow channel. The main attraction on this small island is its famous cave with stalactites; this can be reached by pack animals which carry visitors from the beach. There are many deserted beaches.

**Thira (Santorini):** Thira (Santorini) is 127 nautical miles from Piraeus. Vast geological upheavals gave this Cycladic island its unique form - a steep plateau with sheer cliffs which rises from the sea. Because of its height and shape, there is often a warm wind that blows through the island. A funicular railway, pack mules or donkeys carry visitors up from the harbour of Skala to the island's capital Thira, a picturesque town with twisting alleys, arcades, a museum and an old Frankish quarter. It is also a good vantage point from which to view the Kamenes, two jet black volcanic islets in the bay that can be visited by light craft, as can Therasia (Thirassia), the second largest island of the Santorini group. There are some interesting archaeological remains in Ancient Thira which has witnessed the passage of Phoenicians, Dorians, Romans and Byzantines. There are remains of a cluster of houses, a market place, baths, theatres, temples, tombs and early Christian relics. Akrotiri is also of great interest for the relics of the Minoan civilisation which have been excavated there. The Monastery of Profitas Ilias on the island's summit and the swimming beaches of Perissa and Kamari are other attractions.

**Naxos:** Naxos, 106 nautical miles from Piraeus, is the largest and most fertile island in the Cyclades group. Everywhere lies evidence of the island's long history: the Temple of Apollo; the immense gateway on the tiny islet of Palatia, linked to the main island by a causeway; Mycenaean tombs; a museum; remains of a Mycenaean settlement at Grotta (Cave); a castle; and historical churches. The village of Halki has a medieval fortress and several Byzantine churches. From Naxos Town the road leads inland to the village of Sangri from where one can visit the famous Himaros Tower, one of the best-preserved monuments of the Hellenistic period. There are many sandy beaches, such as at Apollonas, Kastraki, Vigla, Agia Anna and Agios Georgios.

**Ios:** Ios, 114 nautical miles from Piraeus, is an extremely popular and busy island. Close to the small harbour of Ormos, where fishing smacks and yachts anchor, lies the attractive swimming beach of Yalos; other pleasant beaches are at Koumbaras, Manganari and Psathi.

**Amorgos:** Amorgos, where the cities of Minoa, Arkesini and Aegiali once flourished, has several ruins of archaeological interest. There is a harbour in Katapola and, in Hora, whitewashed houses are built up a rocky slope. In the same area lies Panagia Exohorani where a fiesta is held on August 15 every year. At Plakoto there are remains of an ancient tower and of a temple. There are good beaches at Agios Panteleimon, Kato Akrotiri, Agia Anna and Agia Paraskevi.

**Sikinos-Folegandros:** Sikinos-Folegandros: These islands lie close to Ios and are attractive for their genuine island life and solitude. Hora is the only sizeable village on Sikinos. Its cottages are built in the distinctive island style along narrow alleys and there is a fine cathedral church. Attractions include the castle and Hrissopigi Monastery, built like a fortress. There is a good swimming beach at Spillia.

**Folegandros:** Folegandros is an island of wild beauty, rugged and barren. There are some sandy beaches tucked away among the rocks, such as at Karavostassi on the southeastern coast of the island. Panagia has an interesting church and at Hrissospilia there is a cave with stalactites, stalagmites and ancient ruins.

**Anafi:** Anafi, the most southerly of the Cycladic group of islands, has a rocky shoreline with many creeks. There are several smaller, attractive islands which people in search of the 'genuine article' are gradually discovering. Schinoussa with its extremely picturesque, tiny harbour; Mersinia or Donoussa with its superb sandy beaches; and the Koufonissia group of Keros and Heraklia - all of them are very modest in size and provide peaceful anchorages.

## 9 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

**Watersports:** Watersports: There are excellent facilities along all coastlines of the mainland and particularly in the islands. Most major hotels can help with arrangements. Water-skiing is especially popular and there are over 30 water-ski schools in Greece with restaurants and child-care facilities. Speed boats are also available for hire. Independent scuba diving is strictly forbidden, in order to guard against the pilfering of underwater antiquities. Divers may only venture out under the auspices of a recognised diving school. Snorkelling is permitted, however, and is possible practically anywhere. For further information, contact the Hellenic Federation of Underwater Activities, Post Office of West Air Terminal, 166 04 Hellenikon, Athens (tel: (1) 981 9961; fax: (1) 981 7558).

**Fishing:** Fishing: Greek waters offer good fishing, particularly during the summer and autumn. Boats and equipment can be found in most villages.

**Mountaineering:** Mountaineering is becoming increasingly popular and there is scope for hill walking and climbing. There are well maintained trails in the most popular areas, supplemented by donkey and goat tracks connecting villages and leading over mountains. The best areas for walking include the Peloponnese, the Pindos Mountains and the south and west of Crete. Sites of archaeological interest abound, and the visitor can often come across ancient ruins and traces of lost civilisations. It is often advisable to use a guide when visiting the more remote regions. There are over 7000 karstic cave formations in the country, the majority in Crete. Further information on these caves is available from the Hellenic Speleological Society, 32 Sina Street, 106

72 Athens (tel: (1) 361 7824; fax: (1) 361 7824). There are some horseriding clubs in Greece (in Attica, Thessaloniki, Corfu and Crete).

## 10 SOCIAL PROFILE

**Food & Drink:** Restaurant and taverna food tends to be very simple, rarely involving sauces but with full use of local olive oil and charcoal grills. Dishes like dolmades (stuffed vine leaves), moussaka (eggplant casserole with minced lamb, cinnamon, red wine and olive oil), kebabs and avgolemono (chicken broth with rice, eggs, salt and lemon juice) can be found everywhere. Taramosalata (a dip made from fish roe, bread, onion, olive oil and lemon juice) and a variety of seafood dishes, especially squid (kalamari) or octopus, are excellent. Greek menus typically include a selection of meze (appetisers), such as keftedes (hot spicy meatballs) or tzatziki (a dip made from yoghurt, olive oil, garlic, shredded cucumber and dill). Salads are excellent and often made with the local feta cheese, tomato, cucumber and fresh olive oil. Other vegetarian specialities include gigantes (large white beans), kolokithakia (small boiled zucchini with oil and lemon). Olives are cheap and plentiful. Deserts, such as baklavas (filo pastry filled with almonds and topped with honey, vanilla and sugar) or loukoumades (honey-drenched pastry puffs) are sweet and filling. All restaurants have a standard menu which includes the availability and price of each dish. A good proportion of the restaurants will serve international dishes. Hours are normally 1200-1500 for lunch and 2000-2400 for dinner. Waiter service is usual. Drink: One of the best-known Greek drinks is retsina wine, made with pine-needle resin. Local spirits include ouzo, an aniseed-based clear spirit to which water is added and very similar to the French pastis. Local brandy is sharp and fiery. Greek coffee is served thick and strong, and sugared according to taste. Greek beer is a light Pilsner type. Visitors may be required to pay for each drink if seated some way from the bar. Opening hours vary according to the region and local laws.

**Nightlife:** This is centred in main towns and resorts with concerts and discotheques. Nightclubs featuring Greek bouzouki music are extremely popular. There are some casinos in Greece, such as the Mount Parnes Casino in Athens, the Corfu Casino in Corfu and the Casino at the Grand Hotel Astir in Rhodes.

**Shopping:** Special purchases include lace, jewellery, metalwork, pottery, garments and knitwear, furs, rugs, leather goods, local wines and spirits. Athens is the centre for luxury goods and local handicrafts. The flea markets in Monastiraki and Plaka, below the Acropolis, are all crowded in high season. Regional specialities include silver from Ioannina, ceramics from Sifnos and Skopelos, embroidery and lace from Skiros, Crete, Rhodes and the Ionian Islands, fur from Kastoria, alabaster from Crete and flokati rugs from the Epirus region. Notes: (a) Visitors should be aware that most 'antiques' sold to tourists are fake; it is illegal to export any item of real antiquity without a special permit from the Export Department of the Ministry of Culture. (b) Non-EU citizens can get a refund on Greek VAT (4% on books and 18% on nearly everything else); the process is fairly complex, but well worth it. Non-EU visitors may buy goods from certain shops bearing the sign 'Member of the Tax Free Club' and have the VAT refunded, in cash, at special refund points at the airport. Ask store owners and tourist information offices for details.

**Shopping hours:** These vary according to the season, location and type of shop, but a rough guide follows: 0800-1430 Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday; 0800-1400 and 1730-2030 Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

**Note:** Most holiday resort shops stay open late in the evening.

**Special Events:** For a complete list, contact the Greek/Hellenic National Tourist Office (see address section). The following is a selection of the major annual festivals and special events celebrated in Greece.

Jan Feast of St Basil (the New Year's Cake is sliced, and the person whose slice contains a coin is said to have good luck for the coming year), throughout Greece. Epiphany (a cross is thrown into rivers, lakes and seas as the blessing of the waters takes place), throughout Greece. The Gynaecocratia (celebrates matriarchy with men and women reversing roles for the day), Komotini, Xanthi, Kilkis and Serres. Mar Carnival (a national celebration marked by pageantry and partying, fancy dress, masked figures, practical jokes and processions of Carnival chariots), throughout the country. Mar Shrove Monday (the first day of Lent is welcomed with picnics in the country, kite flying and other special celebrations reflecting the local traditions of the villages), throughout Greece; Independence Day and Feast of the Annunciation (the anniversary of Greek independence is marked with military parades in cities and larger towns, with Athens having the most spectacular celebrations. Apr Easter (celebrated with feasts of spit-roasted lamb, red-dyed eggs, and folk-dancing), throughout the country, and especially at Metsovo, Tripolis, Trapeza, Patras, and Livadia. May 1 Labour Day and Flower Festival (celebrated by country picnics), throughout the country. May 21-23 Anastenaria (traditional fire walking ritual), Serres and Thessaloniki. Jun Rally Acropolis (drivers from throughout the world take part in auto race competition), Athens. Jun-Oct Athens Festival (performances of orchestral and chamber music, classical and popular theatre, grand opera and modern/classical ballet take place in the amphitheatre at the foot of the Acropolis), Athens. Jul International Sailing Regatta, Athens. Jul-Aug Wine Festivals, Daphni, Alexandroupolis, Rethymnon, Patras. Aug Hippokrateia (ancient drama performances, musical evenings, a flower show and a re-enactment of the Hippocratic Oath), Kos. Oct International Marathon, (retracing the original marathon route taken by a young warrior in 490BC to announce the Athenian victory over the invading Persians), Athens. Oct Greek Film Festival (featuring the best of Greek and foreign films), Thessaloniki. Oct 28 Ochi! Day (commemorates Greece's refusal to allow Mussolini's troops to enter the country), throughout Greece. Oct-Nov Demetria Festival (performances in music, dance, opera, theatre and art), Thessaloniki. Oct-May Winter Cultural Season (performances of opera, ballet and concerts), Greek National Opera House in Athens. Dec 6 St Nikolas Day (Christmas celebrations in Greece begin on this day, when children make their rounds singing carols, and continue until the end of the year), throughout the country.

**Note:** Greece is hosting the Olympic Games in the year 2004.

**Social Conventions:** Visitors to Greece will find the Greeks to be well aware of a strong historical and cultural heritage. Traditions and customs differ throughout Greece, but overall a strong sense of unity prevails. The Greek Orthodox Church has a strong traditional influence on the Greek way of life, especially in more rural areas. The throwing back of the head is a negative gesture. Dress is generally casual. Smoking is prohibited on public transport and in public buildings. Tipping: 12-15% is usual.

## 11 BUSINESS PROFILE

**Economy:** Traditionally agricultural, accession to the European Union gave a new impetus to the Greek economy, particularly the industrial sectors of textiles, clothing and shoes, cement, mining and metals, chemicals, steel and processed agricultural products. Nonetheless, 20% of the working population still work the land - a very high proportion by EU standards. Tourism, the most important service industry, boomed during the 1980s and has continued to grow during the 1990s, with upwards of ten million tourists visiting the country per annum. Shipping is also an important source of income: Greece has one of the largest merchant fleets in the world. Greek

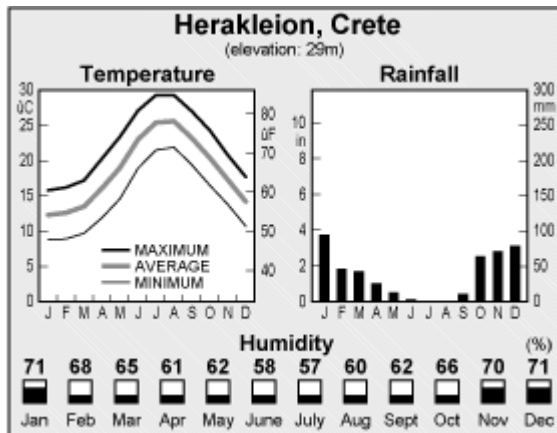
enterprises have consistently encountered difficulty penetrating European markets, however, because of the comparatively small size of the majority of businesses and high transport costs (owing to its geographical position). Nonetheless, the country exports large quantities of wheat, barley, maize, tobacco and fruit to the rest of the EU and elsewhere. The Greeks have benefited substantially from transfers of funds within the EU and support for its large public sector debt. The economy has grown considerably in the last 20 years and standards of living now approach the European average. During the 1990s, governments of both right and left have pursued a programme of privatisation of state-owned industries, notably oil and telecommunications. Greece's huge public sector deficit prevented it from meeting the convergence criteria for the European single currency for a while but it finally entered the Euro zone in January 2001. The EU takes about 65% of Greek trade. Outside the European Union, Saudi Arabia (oil), Japan and the USA are the country's major trading partners.

**Business:** Formal suits are expected. French, German and English are often spoken as well as Greek.

**Commercial Information:** The following organisation can offer advice: Athens Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ACCI), 7 Akademias Street, 106 71 Athens (tel: (1) 360 4815; fax: (1) 360 6408; e-mail: info@acci.gr; web site: <http://www.acci.gr>).

**Conferences/Conventions:** Greece has many convention centres and hotels with conference facilities, in locations ideal for post-conference tours, eg Metsovo (Epirus), Halkidiki, Rhodes, Crete, Corfu and Athens. It also has ships equipped for 'floating conferences', sailing between the islands. For further enquiries, contact the Greek/Hellenic National Tourist Office (see address section).

## 12 CLIMATE



Greece has a warm Mediterranean climate. In summer, dry hot days are often relieved by stiff breezes, especially in the north and coastal areas. Athens can be stiflingly hot, so visitors should allow time to acclimatise. The evenings are cool. Winters are mild in the south but much colder in the north. November to March is the rainy season.

**Required clothing:** Lightweight clothes during summer months, including protection from the midday sun. Light sweaters are needed for evenings. Rainproofs are advised for autumn. Winter months can be quite cold, especially in the northern mainland, so normal winter wear will be required.



## 13 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

**History:** Greece was the birthplace of European civilisation. The period from 700BC saw the rise of the great city states of Athens, Corinth and Sparta, frequently engaged in long struggles for supremacy, and uniting only when faced with the common threat of invasion by the Persian Empire. The zenith was reached in the 5th century BC when Athens became the cultural and artistic centre of the Mediterranean, producing magnificent works of architecture, sculpture, drama and literature. Athens lost her empire through a mutually suicidal struggle with her arch rival Sparta. The nation was then forcibly united under Alexander the Great. After defeating the sagging military might of Persia in a number of major battles, the expansion of the empire spread Greek influence through the East as far as India and through Egypt. The empire fragmented after Alexander's death in 323BC, and the fall of Greek hegemony was completed when the country came under the sway of Rome. Under Constantine the empire gained a new capital in Constantinople, and Greece continued under the sway of the Eastern Empire when the empire divided. The Byzantines were, however, unable to effectively defend all of their empire from invaders and only occasionally did Greece enjoy the security of effective imperial rule. The major beneficiaries of this were the Venetians, who increased their influence in Greece and other parts of the empire. Byzantium finally fell to the Turks in 1453, although the process of conquest was already well underway by the end of the 14th century. For the next 350 years, Greece was part of the Ottoman Empire. Many attempts were made to shake off the yoke of the Ottomans, such as the rising of 1770 which was supported by Catherine the Great. After a bitter War of Independence from 1821, a free state was declared in 1829. The effective consolidation was a gradual process, the last territory to be handed back being the Dodecanese Islands in 1945. Until 1967, Greece was a monarchy but the country then endured the rule of the Colonels. After their fall in 1974, elections gave the New Democracy Party a majority. A subsequent referendum rejected the idea of a return to monarchical rule. From 1981 to 1989 the country was ruled by the socialist PASOK party under Andreas Papandreou. After one inconclusive general election, the centre-right New Democracy (ND) party formed a government under party leader Constantine Mitsotakis in April 1990. The new administration's parliamentary majority was so small that an early election was almost inevitable. Indeed, it was precipitated in September 1993 by the defection of two ND deputies. PASOK, still under the leadership of Andreas Papandreou who had survived a 1991 corruption trial, returned to power. The PASOK government followed its predecessor's decision to put Greece's membership of the EU at the heart of its foreign policy. Although Greece has since found itself at odds with its partners on a number of important issues, the strategy has by and large paid dividends. One of these has been an improvement in relations with Turkey, which itself aspires to EU membership. Despite common membership of NATO, bilateral relations between Turkey and Greece have been among the worst between any two European countries. The principal causes are the continuing division of Cyprus and the ownership of territorial waters in the Aegean. Numerous efforts to solve the Cyprus dispute have failed and, although contacts between the two sides are now more frequent and productive, a settlement still seems some way off. The Balkan states to the north of Greece have been a cause of growing concern in Athens. Independence for the Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia (FYROM), was initially blocked by Greece before a complete settlement between the two countries was agreed in 1995. (See the Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia section for more detail). During the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, Greece was actively involved in finding a peaceful political settlement. Unlike most of its European partners, Greece kept up a close relationship with the government in Belgrade and lobbied for the removal of the UN-imposed trade embargo against Yugoslavia (Serbia). This stance - shared by Bulgaria and Russia - has helped cement a relation between the countries. This caused some diplomatic problems later on when in 1999 NATO decided, over strong Greek objections, to intervene in Kosovo against the Serbs. While Greek

sensitivities could be ignored on that occasion, the country's position and influence means that, in general, its position must be taken into account. Greece has also kept a careful watch on the ever-volatile situation in Albania, and has almost closed the border on several occasions to prevent mass illegal immigration. The standing of the Greek government is much improved over the position in 1995 when the ill-health of premier Papandreou and endless bickering among his subordinates undermined the PASOK government. Although Papandreou narrowly avoided a deep split in PASOK but was unable to prevent the resignation of a number of ministers. In January 1996, Papandreou was confined to hospital (he died in June that year) and PASOK voted in Costas Simitis from the reformist wing of the party as the new prime minister. In an early election held soon after Papandreou's death, PASOK won a small overall majority, sufficient to leave Simitis free to pursue the economic, fiscal and social reforms he saw as necessary to achieve EMU targets. These proved to be deeply unpopular, and from November 1996 onwards, a series of general strikes, blockades, strike actions, and other indicators of labour unrest were a permanent feature of political life. Simitis stuck to his guns, however, and the 1998 budget proposals were subsequently passed by a large margin by Parliament. Although the measures were not enough to bring Greece into line with the Maastricht convergence criteria, entry into EMU is no longer an unrealistic goal. Simitis' strategy was vindicated by the result of the general election in April 2000 at which PASOK was returned with a wafer-thin majority.

**Government:** Greece is a unicameral parliamentary democracy. The 300-member parliament is elected for a maximum 4-year term by adult suffrage. The prime minister is the leader of the largest party. The president is head of state and is elected for a 5-year term but has no executive powers.

## 14 OVERVIEW

**Country Overview:** Greece may be the home of Zeus and his fellow Olympians, but at first glance its bustling, traffic-ridden capital, Athens, is anything but divine. Yet here, as all over Greece are reminders of the country's glory - from Athens' Parthenon and Delphi's Temple of Apollo, to the ruins on Crete of the Minóan city of Knossós, a civilisation reaching even further back into history.

Scattered throughout the calm blue waters of the Aegean are the islands, each with its own special story. Visit Zykanthos in the spring to see why it is 'the island of flowers', or the volcanic Santorini, where the blackness of the sand accentuates the brilliant whiteness of the villages. The serenity of islands like Skiáthos and Skiáthos contrasts with the hedonistic party islands such as Myknos and Páros where the worship of Dionysus the god of revelry continues to the beat of garage and house music.

It is easy to forget that from this fertile land of mythology, olive groves and retsina sprang political, philosophical and artistic ideas that shaped the whole course of western civilisation. Greece today offers the traveller the comforts of modern Europe in close proximity to the stark beauty of the ancient world.

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