Greece

HIGHLIGHTS

- Acropolis Savour your first glimpse of the most important monument of the ancient world, in Athens (p521)
- Rhodes Meander the atmospheric streets of the largest inhabited medieval town in Europe (p547)
- Olympia Dash off a quick 100m at the evocative birthplace of the games (p534)
- Santorini Experience the dramatic volcanic caldera, arguably the most spectacular Greek dot on the map (p542)
- Best Journey Explore the Peloponnese: the ancient sites of Corinth (p531), Mycenae (p532) and Epidavros (p530), pretty Venetian Nafplio (p531), magical Byzantine Mystras (p532) and walled Monemvasia (p532)
- Off-the-beaten track Party with the locals in Thessaloniki, Greece’s second city, but for many its best and its hippest (p535)

FAST FACTS

- Area 131,900 sq km
- ATMs Widespread
- Budget £50 to £60 per day
- Capital Athens
- Famous for ancient ruins, beautiful beaches
- Language Greek
- Money euro (€); AS$1 = €0.60; CA$1 = €0.68; ¥100 = €0.66; NZ$1 = €0.51; UK£1 = €1.47; US$1 = €0.78
- Phrases yasas (hello), andio (goodbye), parakalo (please), efharisto (thank you), ne (yes), ohi (no)
- Population 11 million
- Telephone codes country code 30; international access code 00
- Time GMT/UTC + 2
- Visas most travellers don’t need a visa

TRAVEL HINTS

Don’t leave home without strong sunglasses in summer and paperbacks for long ferry rides. If you’re heading to northern and central Greece, a phrasebook is essential.

ROAMING GREECE

After exploring Athens, travel to the Peloponnese for the ancient sites of Corinth, Mycenae and Olympia, Byzantine Mystras, pretty Nafplio, romantic Monemvasia and Mycenae. Catch a ferry from Gythio to Crete, and after exploring Crete, island hop through the Dodecanese (medieval Rhodes is a must) and Cyclades (don’t miss Santorini and Mykonos) before returning to Athens.

There is something magical about Greece. The combination of the ancient archaeological sites that vividly recall Greece’s rich past and the magnetism of over 1400 islands harbouring breathtaking beaches that guarantee you a deep tan while soaking up a chilled-out vibe is alluring. And also makes for guilt-free travel – a slice of history served alongside a healthy dose of hedonism.
Greece has a rich history dating back to ancient times. During the Bronze Age, Greece was home to various civilizations such as the Mycenaean, which flourished from about 3000 to 1200 BC. This era is known as the Dark Ages, followed by the classical (or golden) age, during which Greece became a major player in the Western world.

The Iron Age was followed by the Classical Age, which included the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC) and the formation of city-states under the leadership of Athens. During this period, Athens grew to be the center of the Western world, and philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle made significant contributions.

The Hellenistic period followed, during which Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire and spread Greek culture throughout the Mediterranean. This period saw significant advancements in art, science, and philosophy.

By the 19th century, Greece was still under Ottoman rule. In 1821, a Greek revolution began, gaining independence from the Ottomans in 1830. This was followed by the rise of a modern Greek nation, with the unification of Greece in 1881.

Today, Greece is a democratic republic with a rich cultural, literary, and artistic heritage. It is known for its beautiful landscapes, beaches, and contemporary art. Its history and culture continue to influence the modern Greek identity.
Thessaloniki is also well served, and Iraklio, Crete’s capital, takes scheduled flights.

**Athens** (Eleftherios Venizelos International Airport (ATH; +30 210 353 0000; www.aia.gr))

**Iraklio** (Nikos Kazantzakis International Airport (code HER; +30 281 022 8401))

**Thessaloniki** (Macedonia International Airport (code SKG; +30 231 047 3700))

The country’s national airline, **Olympic Airlines** (+30 210 114 4444; www.olympicairlines.com), receives strong competition from Crete-based **Aegean Airlines** (+30 210 112 0000; www.aegianair.com). Both serve most European cities. Aegean has an excellent online ‘e-ticket’ booking system.

**Bus & Train**

**NORTHERN EUROPE**

Overland travel between northern Europe and Greece is uneconomical, as buses and trains are unable to compete with cheap airfares. All bus and train services now go via Italy and take the ferries over to Greece. However, Greece is part of the Eurail network, and passes are valid on the ferries operated by Adriatica di Navigazione and Hellenic Mediterranean Lines from Brindisi to Corfu, Igoumenitsa and Patra.

**NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES**

The Organismos Sidirodromon Ellados/Hellenic Railways Organisation (OSE) operates buses between Athens (500m west of the Larisis train station) and Tirana, Albania (€35.20, 16 hours, daily) via Ioannina and Girokostra. To Bulgaria, the OSE operates an Athens–Sofia bus ($14.50, 15 hours, daily except Monday) and a Thessaloniki–Sofia service ($19, 7.5 hours, four daily). To Turkey, the OSE operates from Athens to Istanbul ($67.50, 22 hours, daily except Wednesday). This stops at Thessaloniki ($4.50) and Alexandroupolis ($15). There are daily trains between Athens and Istanbul ($63, 22 hours) via Thessaloniki ($4.50).

The crossings into Turkey are at Kipi and Kastanies; into the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) at Evzoni, Nikis and Doinari; into Bulgaria at Promahonas and Ormenio; and to Albania at Kakavia, Krystallopi, Sagiada and Mertziani.

**GETTING AROUND**

Greece is easy to travel around. Buses travel to just about every dot on the map, and trains generally offer a good alternative where available. Island-hopping in Greece is easy as, during summer, there are countless ferries criss-crossing the Adriatic and the Aegean.

**Air**

Most domestic flights are handled by Greece’s financially national carrier, **Olympic Airlines** (+30 210 144 4444; www.olympicairlines.com). Crete-based **Aegean Airlines** (+30 210 120 0000; www.aegianair.com) offers flights to many of the same destinations, and has youth discounts as well as occasional discount fares.

**Bicycle**

With hilly terrain and stifling summer heat, cycling is not popular in Greece. Bicycles for hire at most tourist centres are for pedalling around town rather than for serious riding. Prices cost €5 to €12 per day. Bicycles are carried free on ferries.

**Boat**

Most islands have ferry services, although in winter these are reduced. Services become more frequent from April, and during July and August Greece’s seas are a mass of wake and wash. The hub of the ferry network is Piraeus, Athens’ main port. Piraeus has ferries to the Cyclades, Crete, the Dodecanese, the Saronic Gulf Islands and the northeastern Aegean Islands. Patra (p530) is the main port for ferries to the Ionian Islands, and Volos and Agios Konstantinos are the ports for the Sporades islands.

New high-speed ferries are slashing travel times on some of the longer routes. **NEL Lines** (+30 22510 26299; www.nel.gr) offer a return fare to Chios in 4½ hours – nearly half the time of a normal ferry – but at twice the price. The newer ferries also have the advantage of being inherently safer than some of the older tubs plying the routes.

Hydrofoils offer a faster alternative to ferries on some routes, particularly to islands close to the mainland. They take half the time, but cost twice as much. Most routes operate only during July and August.

High-speed catamarans are as fast as hydrofoils and have roughly the same fare structure, but are much more comfortable. They are also much less prone to cancellation in rough weather. The main players are Hellas Flying Dolphins and Blue Star Ferries.

Information about ferry routes and schedules is online. For an overview try [Greek Ferries](http://www.greekferries.gr). Most of the ferry companies also have their own websites:

- **Aegadimos Lines** ([www.aegadimos-lines.com](http://www.aegadimos-lines.com))
- **ANEK Lines** ([www.anek.gr](http://www.anek.gr))
- **Blue Star Ferries** ([www.bluestarferries.com](http://www.bluestarferries.com))
- **Hellas Flying Dolphins** ([www.hellasferries.gr](http://www.hellasferries.gr))
- **Hellenic Mediterranean Lines** ([www.hmferry.com](http://www.hmferry.com))
- **Minoan Lines** ([www.minoan.gr](http://www.minoan.gr))
- **Superfast** ([www.superfast.com](http://www.superfast.com))

**Bus**

Greece’s comfortable and punctual, long-distance buses are operated by regional collectives known as **KTEL**. ([Kino Tamio Eirinopoleos Leoforion; www.ktel.org](http://www.ktel.org)). Fares are fixed by the government, and routes can be found on its website. Journeys cost about €4 per 100km, and tickets should be bought at least an hour in advance to ensure a seat. Ticket prices from local agents can vary depending on how much (undisclosed) commission they add.

**Car & Motorcycle**

Greece recognises all national driving licences and the International Driving Permit. The automobile club, **Automobile and Touring Club of Greece** ([www.elpa.gr](http://www.elpa.gr)) offers reciprocal services to the members of other national motoring associations.

Hire cars are widely available throughout the country. Local companies’ rates are some 25% lower than those of the big multinational companies, and they are also willing to negotiate. High-season weekly rates, including...
unlimited mileage, start at around €280 for the smallest models, dropping to €200 in winter, excluding taxes and insurance. The minimum driving age in Greece is 18, but most car-hire firms require a driver to be at least 21 or older.

Mopeds and motorcycles are available for hire everywhere; however, you will need a valid motorcycle licence for bikes from 50cc upwards. Mopeds and 50cc motorcycles start at €12 per day.

**Local Transport**
Most Greek towns are small enough to get around on foot. Major towns have local bus systems, but you’ll probably only use them in Athens and Thessaloniki. Taxis are reasonably priced and widely available. Yellow city taxis are metered. Flag fall is €0.75, followed by €0.28 per kilometre in towns and €0.53 per kilometre outside towns. The rate doubles from midnight to 5am. Additional charges are €3 from airports, €0.80 from ports, bus stations and train stations. Luggage is €0.30 per item over 10kg. In rural areas taxis don’t have meters, so agree on a price with the driver before you get in – drivers are generally honest, friendly and helpful. In Athens and Thessaloniki drivers are gifted in their ability to make a little extra with every fare. If you have a complaint, note the taxi number and the taxi number and contact the tourist police.

**Train**
Train travel is limited to two main lines: the Thessaloniki to Athens line, and the Peloponnesian. There are several branch lines, such as the Pyrgos–Olympia and the very spectacular Diakofto–Kalavryta mountain railway; see Pyrgos–Olympia and the very spectacular.

Inter-Rail and Eurail passes are valid in Greece, but you need to make reservations. In summer make reservations a couple of days in advance.

**ATHENS AΘHNA**

**pop 3.7 million**

Ancient Athens, named after the goddess of wisdom, Athena, is up there with Rome for archaeological treasures, classical mythology and influence on Western civilisation. It’s just as well Athens wasn’t named after the god of love, Eros, as until the capital’s 2004 Olympics facelift, it was a city few fell for.

The Olympics, while leaving a huge hole in the city’s wallet, showed the world that Athens was a city of style and culture, and deserving of more attention. Although much of Athens was given a makeover, she’s still no beauty, with terrible traffic congestion and pollution.

Take the time to look beneath her skin and you’ll find a city full of contradictions – funky new cafés sit beside atmospheric ouzeria (ouzo bars), stylish eateries next door to traditional tavernas, and rembetika is performed at one bar while a DJ spins trance across the street. Athens is worth visiting just as much for its ancient wonders and splendid artefacts as it is for its hip style and buzzy social life.

**ORIENTATION**

Athens is a sprawling city but most sights are within a manageable distance. Plateia Synntagmatos (Syntagmatos Sq), or Syntagma (syn-tag-ma), is the city’s heart. Surrounded by luxury hotels, banks, airlines and travel offices, it’s dominated by the Greek parliament building, Plateia Omonias (Omonia Sq) is to the north of Syntagma; Plateia Monastirakiou (Monastiraki Sq), Psyrri and Gazi are to its west; the Plaka district borders it to the south; and Kolonaki is at its east.

The city’s major landmarks, the Acropolis and Lykavittos Hill, serve as good reference points as they’re visible from most places. Omonia is home to pickpockets, prostitutes and drug dealers. Spruced up for the Olympics, its central square is surrounded by franchises and fast-food joints.

Monastiraki is linked to Syntagma by the pedestrianised shopping street Ermou and Mitropoleos, which skirts the northern edge of Plaka. Plaka, a charming old neighbourhood of labyrinthine streets (now dominated by souvenir shops and tavernas), is nestled on the northeastern slope of the Acropolis, with most ancient sites nearby.

Streets are signposted in Greek and English, but if you get lost, ask a shopkeeper for help.

**INFORMATION**

**Emergency**

- **Duty doctor** (☎ 105; 24hr - 7am)
- **Duty hospitals** (☎ 1434)
- **Duty pharmacy** (☎ 107)
- **Police Station** (Map p522; 210 725 7000; Plateia Syntagmatos during summer)
- **SOS Doctors** (☎ 1016; 24hr)
- **Tourist police** (☎ 171; 24hr) General tourist info and emergency help.

**Internet Access**

Internet cafés charge €1.50 to €5 per hour.

- **Arcade Internet Café** (Map p524; Stadiou 5, Syntagma; per hr €3; 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat) Offers dedicated DSL, laptop connections.
- **Internet Cyberzone** (Map p522; Sotirosiou 7, Omonias Sq; per hr €2.50; 7am-11pm) Prices drop after midnight.
- **MocaFé” (Map p522; cnr Mamp & Venizelou 7, Omonia; per hr €3; for laptops €2; 8am-1am) Handily placed near the Victor Hugo youth hostel; with wi-fi.

**Money**

- **Acropolis Foreign Exchange** (Map p524; 210 331 2765; Kydathineon 23, Plaka; 11.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) Also offers Western Union services and has a Citibank ATM.
- **Eurochange** (Map p522; 210 523 4816; Plateia Omonias 10; 9am-9pm) Exchanges Thomas Cook travellers cheques without commission.

**Getting to Town**

From the airport, bus X94 (25 minutes, every 10 minutes) operates from 7.30am to 11.30pm between the airport Metro Line 3 at Ethnikhi Amyng. Bus X95 (60 to 90 minutes, every 30 minutes) operates 24 hours between the airport and Plateia Syntagmatos. The Syntagma stop is on Othonos St. Bus X96 (60 to 90 minutes, every 20 minutes) operates 24 hours between the airport and Plateia Karaiskaki in Piraeus. Tickets for all these services cost €2.90.

Line 3 of the metro links the airport to the city centre in around 30 minutes from Monastiraki (from 5.30am to 10.30pm) and from the airport (from 6.30am to 11.30pm). Tickets are €6. Taxi fares vary according to the time of day and level of traffic, but you should expect to pay €20 to €30 from the airport to the city centre, and €20 to €25 from the airport to Piraeus, depending on traffic conditions. Both trips can take up to an hour.

If your arriving in Piraeus, line 1 of the metro (€0.60, 24 minutes, every 3 to 10 minutes) is the fastest and easiest way to get to the city centre; it operates from 5am to midnight.

**Post**

Athens’ Central Post Office (Map p522; Eolou 100, Omonia; 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) All poste restante is sent here unless specified otherwise.

**Parcel post office** (Map p524; Stadiou 4, Syntagma; 7am-2pm Mon-Fri) Parcels over 2kg going abroad must be taken here, unwrapped for inspection.

**Syntagma post office** (Map p524; 210 331 9500; cnr Mitropoleos & Plateia Syntagmatos; 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 7am-2pm Sat, 9am-1.30pm Sun) If staying in Plaka, get poste restante sent here.

**Tourist Information**

City of Athens Info Line (☎ 195) Info booths in Plateia Syntagmatos during summer.

**EOT/Greek National Tourist Organisation Head Office** (Map p522; 210 870 7000; www.gnto.gr; Tsaha 7; 9am-2pm Mon-Fri; EOT tourist office (Map p524; 210 331 0392; Leoforos Vasilissis Amalias 26; 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun; EOT info desk (☎ 210 353 0445; Arrivals Hall, Eleftherios Venizelos International Airport; 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun)

**SIGHTS**

**Acropolis**

Athens most iconic symbol, the Acropolis (Map p524; 210 321 0291; sites & museum adult/concession)

**CHEAPER BY THE HALF DOZEN**

The €12 admission charge to the Acropolis gets you a collective ticket (valid for 48 hours) that allows entry to all the other significant ancient sites: the Ancient Agora, the Roman Agora, the Keramikos, plus the Temple of Olympian Zeus and the Theatre of Dionysos.
€12/6, free on Sunday; 8am-7.30pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-3pm Nov-Mar) is arguably the most important ancient monument in the Western world – something not lost on the multitudes of tourists who converge on it every day, so visit early morning or late afternoon.

The entrance is through the Beule Gate, a Roman arch added in the 3rd century AD. Beyond this is the Propylaia, the monumental gate that marked the city’s entrance in ancient times, and south of here is the small, graceful Temple of Athena Nike (not accessible).

The Parthenon epitomises the glory of ancient Greece. Completed in 438 BC, it’s unsurpassed in grace and harmony. Above its columns are the remains of a Doric frieze. The best surviving pieces are the controversial Elgin Marbles, carted off to Britain in 1801 by Lord Elgin. To the north is the Erechtheion and its much-photographed Caryatids, the six maidens who support its southern portico. These are plaster casts – the originals (except for the one taken by Lord Elgin) are in the Acropolis Museum.

South of the Acropolis

The importance of theatre in the everyday lives of Athenians is evident from the dimensions of the enormous Theatre of Dionysos (Map p524, 210 322 4625; adult/concession €2/1; 8am-7pm Apr-Oct, 8am-3pm Nov-Mar), south of the Acropolis. Built between 340–330 BC on the site of an earlier theatre (dating to 6th century BC), it once held 17,000 people. The Stoa of Eumenes (Map p522), built as a shelter and promenade for theatre audiences, runs west to the Roman-era Theatre of Herodes Atticus (Map p524).

Ancient Agora

The agora (Map p522; 210 321 0185; Adrianou 24; adult/concession €4/2; 8am-7pm Apr-Oct, 8am-5pm Nov-Mar) was ancient Athens’ marketplace and focal point of civic and social life. Socrates spent time here expounding his philosophy. Check out the well-preserved Temple of Hephaestus (Map p522), the 11th-century Church of the Holy Apostles (Map p524) and the reconstructed Stoa of Attalos (Map p524).

Roman Agora

The Romans built their agora (Map p524; 210 324 5220; cnr Pelopida Eolou & Markou Aureliou; adult/concession €2/1; 8am-7pm Apr-Oct, 8am-5pm Nov-Mar) west of its ancient counterpart. The wonderful Tower of the Winds (Map p524) was built in the 1st century BC by a Syrian astronomer, Andronicus.

Temple of Olympian Zeus

Begun in the 6th century BC, Greece’s largest temple (Map p522; 210 922 6330; adult/concession €2/1; 8am-7pm Apr-Oct, 8am-5pm Nov-Mar), behind Hadrian’s Arch (Map p522), took more than 700 years to build, with Emperor Hadrian overseeing its completion in AD 131. It’s impressive for the sheer size of its 104 Corinthian columns – 17m high with a base diameter of 1.7m.
Museums
One of the world’s great museums, the National Archaeological Museum (Map p522; 210 821 7717; www.culture.gr, 28 Patission 44; adult/concession €5/2.50; 12:30-7pm Mon, 8am-7pm Tue–Fri, 8:30am-3pm Sat & Sun Apr–Oct, 11am-5pm Mon, 8am-5pm Tue–Fri, 8am-3pm Sat & Sun Nov–Mar) houses finds from major sites, including exquisite gold artefacts from Mycenae, spectacular Minoan frescoes from Santorini (Thira) and intricate Cycladic figurines.

The superb Benaki Museum (Map p522; 210 367 1000; www.benaki.gr; cnr Leoforos Vasilissis Sofias & Koumbari 1, Kolonaki; adult/concession €6/3; 9am–5pm Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat, 9am–midnight Thu, 9am–3pm Sun) contains a sumptuous collection of ancient sculpture, Persian, Byzantine and Coptic objects, Chinese ceramics, El Greco paintings and traditional costumes.

The wonderful Goulandris Museum of Cycladic & Ancient Greek Art (Map p522; 210 722 8321; www.cycladic.m.gr; NeofytouDouka 4; adult/concession €5/2.50; 10am-4pm Mon & Wed–Fri, 10am–3pm Sat) displays an extraordinary collection of graceful Cycladic art, acknowledged as influencing the art of Modigliani and Picasso.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS
The annual Hellenic Festival (www.greekfestival.gr) is the city’s most important cultural event, running from mid-June to August. It features a line-up of international music, dance and theatre at venues across the city. The programme is available online and tickets can be booked at the festival box office (bookings 210 327 2000, information 210 928 9000; info@greekfestival.gr).

SLEEPING
Athenians go out late and like to party, so most of these sleeping options are close to the action but quiet. Plaka is popular due to its proximity to the sights, but Omonia’s cheap sleeps are still close enough to keep travellers happy. Book well ahead for July and August. Most hotels give good discounts during the low season and for longer stays.

Athens Camping (210 581 4114, fax 210 582 0333; Leoforos Athison 198; camp sites per adult/tent €7/5; Apr–Oct) Located 7km west of the city centre, this camping ground has OK facilities, but little else going for it.

Athens Backpackers (Map p522; 210 922 4044; www.backpackers.gr; Makri 12, Makriyianii; dm with bathroom €18-25, 2-4 person studios with kitchen €100-120) This popular hostel has a rooftop party bar with Acropolis views, sports bar, café, kitchen, daily movies and its Aussie management hosts (free!) barbecues. Breakfast/drinks are included. Long-term storage, airport pick-up and tours available.

Student & Travellers’ Inn (Map p524; 210 324 4808; www.studenttravellersinn.com; Kydathineon 16, Plaka; dm €15, 4-bed dm with/without bathroom €28/24, d with/without bathroom €70/65) Travellers like to chill in the courtyard of this well-situated hostel. Rooms are spartan, but extras (breakfast/sandwiches, laundry, left luggage, travel service and free pick-up) make up for them.

Marble House Pension (Map p522; 210 922 8294; www.marblehouse.gr; Zini 35, Koukaki; s/d/tr €42/48/55, d/tr with shared bathroom €42/49) A long-standing Athens favourite, just 10 minutes’ walk to Plaka, with rooms with fridge and fans. Breakfast is €5.

Tempi Hotel (Map p524; 210 321 3175; www.traveling.gr/tempihotel; Eolou 29, Monastiraki; s/d with shared bathroom €60/54, d/tr €60/75) The communal kitchen and proximity to the markets makes this friendly hotel ideal for self-caterers.

Elysium Design Hotel (Map p522; 210 523 4601; info@elysium-hotels.com; Aristotelous 3, Omonia; s/d from €80/85; www.elysium-hotels.com) Rooms at this ‘cheap and chic’ boutique hotel may be tiny, but they come with free wi-fi/ADSL, coffee makers, TV and fridge.

Hotel Adonis (Map p524; 210 324 9737; www.hotelandonis.gr; Kodrou 3, Plaka; s/d €55/65) Guests return for the great location and Acropolis views from the rooftop breakfast room–bar. Rooms have TV and rates include breakfast and tours upon request.

OUT & ABOUT

SPURGE

Spondi (Map p522; 210 752 0658; www.spondi.gr; Pyronos 5, Pangrati; mains €20-35; 8pm-midnight) This restaurant offers a fine dining experience worthy of its Michelin star but in a relaxed atmosphere, either in the courtyard in summer or its vaulted cellar during the rest of the year. The chef utilises local Greek ingredients and imported produce to create a cuisine that stays true to French technique but embodies Greek flavours. Dress up and enjoy the attentive service.

EATING

For travellers, eating in Athens has been traditionally associated with a taverna meal in Plaka, yet the city’s eating scene is now more diversified. Locals on the run tend to stick to gyros or pitta breads. The fruit and vegetable market (Map p522) on Athinas, opposite the meat market (Map p522), has good fresh produce. The main supermarkets are Marisopoulo (Map p522; Athinas 60, Omonia) and Vasilopoulo (Map p524; Stadium 19, Syntagma).

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favourite. Popular with a young local Greek crowd, who come here to socialise over juicy gyros and generous serves of mezedes (literally, ‘tastes’; meze for short), salads, mixed grills and ouzo, it’s situated on what has become one of Athens’ most atmospheric pedestrian areas, particularly late at night with the glorious ruins glowing near you.

Savas (Map p524; 210 324 3048; Mitropoleos 86-88, Monastiraki; gyros €1.60) Serves the tastiest gyros and enormous souvlaki and grilled meat plates in Athens. You can take away or sit down in what is one of the city’s busiest eat streets late at night.

O Platanos (Map p524; 210 320 0666; Diogenous 4, Plaka; mains €7; noon-4.30pm & 7.30pm-midnight Mon-Sat, noon-4.30pm Sun) Layback O Platanos (“The Plane Tree”) serves tasty home cooked–style Greek food in a leafy courtyard.

Noodle Bar (Map p524; 210 331 8585; Apollonos 11, Plaka; mains €8) The pick of several Asian restaurants around Plaka, Noodle Bar does tasty noodles and soups (we love the laska) at honest prices.

Taverna tou Psiri (Map p524; 210 321 4922; Eshylou 12, Psyrri; mains €5-12) Tucked away off Plateia Iroon this atmospheric taverna is popular with locals who come for the daily specials.

Pica Pica: Tapas Stories (Map p524; 210 325 1663; Ag Anargyron, Psyrri; mains €2.50-20) If you’re tired of Greek food, head here for tasty authentic Spanish tapas, including tortilla, patatas bravas (spicy potatoes), gambas (prawns) and pulpo (octopus).

Taverna tou Psarra (Map p524; 210 321 8734; Eretheos 16, Plaka; mains €5-18) On a path leading up towards the Acropolis, the lush garden of a taverna is one of Plaka’s best, serving scrumptious mezedes and excellent fish and meat classics, on a terrace under the plane trees.

Byzantino (Map p524; 210 322 7368; Kydathineon 18, Plaka; mains €3-16) Rather touristy, but still a good Plaka choice for hearty traditional cuisine, and it’s in a pleasant shady spot that’s great for people-watching.

 Eden Vegetarian Restaurant (Map p524; 210 324 8858; Lyssiaiou 12, Plaka; mains €4-10) Expect vegetarian versions of Greek classics, and organic wine and beer.

DRINKING

Athens has more than its fair share of drinking establishments, from casual, grungy student hang-outs to stylish bars. Do what the locals do: grab the best seats for people-watching and sit on a frappe (frothy ice coffee) or drink for hours as you wonder why the locals never seem to go back to work. Outside summer, the bars of Psyrri are the most popular, although during summer most of the action heads to the islands. Some bars open from morning until late, while others (noted where applicable) don’t open until late.

Bretos (Map p524; 210 323 2110; Kydathineion 41, Plaka) This distillery, bottle shop and bar is dark and dingy, but once the sun goes down, its eye-catching, back-lit collection of coloured bottles give the place a certain magic. Watch those shots of Brettos-brand spirits – they’re lethal.

Mooi (Map p524; 210 321 2624; cn Miaoulis & Themisios, Psyrri; Tue-Sun) Formerly known as Bee, cool Mooi is mellow by day but late at night attracts a party crowd that spills out onto the street.

Sobar (Map p524; 210 322 2205; Navarhou Apostoli 5, Psyrri; 10pm-3.30am Sun-Thur, 10pm-6am Fri & Sat) This funky bar is low-key until around 1am but then attracts the most interesting acts.

Wonderbar (Map p524; 210 381 8577; Themistokleous 80, Exarchia) Relaxated by day, packed by night, this lounge bar attracts hip young Athenians who come for some of Athens’ best DJs.

Live Music

Get tickets for concerts at Ticket House (Map p522; 210 360 8366; Panepistimiou 42). The following are popular venues:

Rodon Club (Map p522; 210 524 7427; Mami 24, Omonia; from 10pm) The city’s main venue for rock and metal.

Gagarin 205 Club (Map p522; 210 854 7601; Liossion 205; from 9.30pm) The city’s coolest space attracts the most interesting acts.

Half Note Jazz Club (Map p522; 210 921 3310; Tritonia 17, Mets; from 10.30pm) The main venue for serious jazz.

Megeron Mousikis (Athens Concert Hall; Map p522; 210 728 2333; www.megeron.gr; Leoforos Vasillisis Sofias; tickets €10-60) Tickets can be purchased online for performances by local and international artists at this superb concert venue.

Rembetika Stoa Athanaton (Map p522; 210 321 4261; Voulgaroktonous 19; 3.30-7pm & 11pm-midnight Mon-Sat) Located in the market, this is a venue for rembetika. Hard to catch during summer when most of the authentic venues shut, you can also listen to it at tavernas in Psyrri.

CLUBBING

Athens don’t head to clubs until after midnight. Cover charges apply late and when there’s a guest DJ (although they often include a free drink), and drinks are more expensive than at bars.

Decadence (Map p522; 210 882 5544; cn Poullierias & Voulgaroktonou 69, Lofos Strefi; admission €6-8) For indie and alternative music lovers, Decadence has two levels, with a quieter bar scene on the lower floor and club upstairs.

Lava Bore (Map p524; 210 324 3335; Filippion 25, Plaka) This fun dance club is popular with a young international globetrotting crowd.

Gay & Lesbian Venues

The greatest number of gay bars and clubs are in Makrigianni, south of the Temple of Olympian Zeus, and Exarchia. Most don’t get moving until midnight. Check out gay.gr: the Greek Gay Portal (www.gay.gr). Aroma (Map p522; 210 381 9615; Tsamadou 15, Exarchia) Athens’ most popular lesbian dance club plays both mainstream and Greek music.

Kirkis (Map p522; 210 346 6900; Apostolou Pavlou 31, Thissia) Head to this hip gay and lesbian hang-out to find out what’s hot in Athens when you’re visiting.

Lamda Club (Map p522; 210 942 4202; Lembesi 15, Makrigianni) Athens’ best gay dance club gets crowded late.

ENTERTAINMENT

The Kathimerini supplement inside the International Herald Tribune has daily event listings and a cinema guide.

Most cinemas show recent releases in English and admission prices are around €8. In central Athens, try the Apollon (Map p524; 210 323 6811; Stadiou 19) or the Astor (Map p524; 210 323 1297; Stadiou 28).

Dora Stratou Dance Company (Map p524; 210 921 6650; www.grdance.org; Filopappos Hill; tickets €15) puts on colourful performances of traditional folk dancing and music using over 75 dancers and musicians. Performances are held at 9.30pm Tuesday to Saturday and at 8.15pm Sunday from May to September.

SHOPPING

Athens is the place to shop for cool jewellery, hippy-chic clothes and leather shoes, as well as souvenirs, like backgammon sets, textiles, traditional blouses, olive-oil skin products, worry beads and ceramics. You’ll find fashion boutiques on Ermou, from Syntagma to Monastiraki, and souvenirs, folk art and leather in Plaka and Monastiraki. The Sunday market (Map p524; 7am-2pm) and the Athens’ Monastiraki flea market (Map p524) starting at Plateia Monastiraki are a must.

Stavros Melissinos’ Store (Map p524; 210 321 9247; Aghias Theklas 2, Monastiraki) You can get some custom–made sandals and poetry from the poet sandal maker here.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Athens is served by Eleftherios Venizelos International Airport (code ATH; 210 353 0000; www.aia.gr) at Spata, 27km east of central Athens. For transport details, see Getting into Town (p521).

Most domestic flights are handled by Olympic Airlines (toll free 8011 144 444, flight information 210 966 6666; www.olympicairlines.com; Syntagma (Map p524; 210 926 4444; Filellinon 15). Crete-based Aegean Airlines (Map p524; 210 331 5502, reservations 8011 120 000; www.aegeanair.com; Othonos 10, Syntagma) offers flights to many of the same destinations as Olympic.

Bus

Athens has two main intercity KTEL (www.ktel.org) bus stations, about 5km to 7km north of Omonia. KTEL timetables are online. EOT (www.gnto.gr) also has online schedules.

Kifisos Terminal A (210 512 4910; Kifisos 100) has buses to the Peloponnese, Igoumenitsa, Ioannina, Kastoria, Edessa and Thessaloniki, among other destinations. Get here on bus 015 from the junction of Zimonos and Menandrou, near Plateia Omonia.

Liosion Terminal B (210 831 7153; Liossion 260) has departures to Trikala (for Meteora),
Delphi, Larissa, Thiva, Volos and other destinations. To get here take bus 024 from outside the main gate of the National Gardens on Leforos Vasillis Amalias. Get off at Liossion 260, turn right onto Gousiou and you'll see the terminal.

**Hitching**
Hitching is never entirely safe (Lonely Planet doesn't recommend it) and Athens can be difficult to hitchhike from. Ask the truck drivers at the Piraeus cargo wharves. Otherwise, for the Peloponnese, take a bus from Panepistimiou to Dafini, where National Rd 8 begins. For northern Greece, take the metro to Kifissia, then a bus to Nea Kifissia and walk to National Rd 1.

**Train**
Larisis Train Station is Athens's main train station. Suburban and intercity train services pass through here. More information is available from OSE offices Omilia (Map p522; 210 524 0647; Karolou 1; 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-3pm Sat); Syntagma (Map p522; 210 362 4402; Sina 6; 8am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-3pm Sat). Both offices handle advance bookings.

**GETTING AROUND**
The metro system makes getting around central Athens and to Piraeus easy, but Athens' road traffic is still horrendous. A 24-hour travel pass (€2.90) is valid for all forms of public transport.

**Bus & Trolleybus**
Blue-and-white suburban buses operate every 15 minutes from 5am to midnight. Route numbers and destinations are listed on the free EOT map. Timetables can be obtained from the GONO (www.goton.gr) at EOT tourist offices, or the Athens Urban Transport Organisation (OASA; 210 883 6076; www.oasa.gr). The EOT map identifies the routes of the yellow trolleybuses, which also run from 5am to midnight.

Special buses to Piraeus operate 24 hours, running every 20 minutes from 6am to midnight, and then hourly until 6am. Bus 040 leaves from the corner of Syntagma and Filionlinon, and bus 049 leaves from the Omonia end of Athinas.

Tickets for all services cost €0.45 and must be purchased before boarding, from a ticket booth or a periptero (kiosk). The same tickets can be used on either buses or trolleybuses and must be validated as you board.

**Metro**
The metro operates from 5am to midnight. Trains run every three minutes during peak periods and every 10 minutes at other times. For metro timetables visit Attiko Metro (www.attiko metro.gr). Travel within one section costs €0.60 and a journey covering two or more sections costs €0.75. Tickets must be validated at the machines at platform entrances before travelling.

**Taxi**
Athenian taxis are yellow. The flag fall is €0.75, and there's an additional surcharge of €0.60 from ports and train and bus stations, as well as a €1.18 surcharge from the airport. After that, the day rate (tariff 1 on the meter) is €0.23 per kilometre. The rate doubles between midnight and 5am (tariff 2 on the meter). Baggage is charged at the rate of €0.30 per item heavier than 10kg. The minimum fare is €1.50, which covers most journeys in central Athens.

**FERRY**
The following information is a guide to ferry departures between June and mid-September. There are fewer ferries running in April, May and October, and services are radically reduced in winter – especially to smaller islands. The main branch of EOT in Athens (see p521) has reliable schedules that are updated weekly. All ferry companies provide timetables online (see p518). The departure points for ferry destinations are shown on the Piraeus map (below). When buying your ticket, confirm the departure point. See the Getting There & Away sections for each island for more details.

**Crete** Two ferries daily to Hania and Iraklio, a daily service to Rethymno, and three weekly to Agios Nikolaos and Sitia.

**Cyclades** Daily ferries to Amorgos, Folegandros, Ios, Kimolos, Kythnos, Milos, Mykonos, Naxos, Paros, Santorini (Thira), Serifos, Sifnos, Skiros, Syros and Tinos; and two or three weekly to Iraklia, Shinnoussa, Donousa and Anafi.

**Dodecanese** Daily ferries to Kalymnos, Kos, Leros, Patmos and Rhodes; three weekly to Karpathos and Kassos; and weekly services to the other islands.

**Northeastern Aegean Islands** Daily ferries to Chios, Lesvos (Mytilini), Ikaria and Samos; and twice weekly to Limnos.

Piraeus

**PIRAEUS ΠΕΙΡΑΙΑΣ**

Greece's main port, Piraeus is the hub of the Aegean ferry network. It takes around 25 minutes to get here from central Athens by metro (avoid taking a bus or taxi – the streets are even more clogged than they are in Athens), so there's no reason to stay in shabby Piraeus.

**Orientation & Information**
Piraeus is a peninsula surrounded by three harbours. The largest is the Megas Limin (Great Harbour), on the western side, where all the ferries leave from, along with hydrofoil and catamaran services to Aegina and the Cyclades. Zea Marina (Zalin Zeas) and Mikrolimano (Small Harbour), on the eastern side of the peninsula, are for private yachts. There are also some good seafood tavernas and cafés on Koumoundourou. Trolleybus 20 runs past the harbour.

**Getting There & Away**

**BUS**
Two 24-hour bus services operate between central Athens and Piraeus. Bus 049 runs from Omonia to the bus station at the Megas Limin,
Saronic Gulf Islands Daily ferries to Aegina, Hydra, Poreos and Spetses year-round.

HYDROFOIL & CATAMARAN
Hellenic Seaways (www.hellenicseaways.gr) operates high-speed hydrofoils and catamarans to the Cyclades from early April to the end of October, and year-round services to the Saronic Gulf Islands. All services to the Cyclades and Aegina leave from Megas Limin. Some services to Poreos, Hydra and Spetses also leave from here, but most leave from Zea Marina.

GETTING AROUND
Local buses 904 and 905 run between the Megas Limin and Athens is the metro (€0.60, 24 minutes). The station is close to the ferry terminal, but it’s the only budget option, while buses to Corinth to Leon are available.

The PELOPONNESE ΠΕΛΟΠΟΝΝΗΣΟΣ

The Peloponnese is ruggedly beautiful, breathtaking at its best. Home to Olympia, birthplace of the Olympic Games, the ancient archaeological site of Mycenae, Epidaurus and Corinth, the ruined Byzantine city of Mystras and ancient Sparta, it has played a significant role in Greek history. Two of Greece’s most gorgeous towns grace its shores – pretty Salamis and Patras, 7km southwest of Corinth’s modern town. There is little left standing except the imposing Temple of Apollo, although the ruins of an ancient citadel, Acrocorinth, towers over it on a massive outcrop.

Blue Dolphin Camping (27410 25766; www.camping-blue-dolphin.gr; camping site per adult/teen/60; a), at Lechon, about 4km west of Corinth, is close to the Ancient Corinth turn-off. It has a beach, diving facilities and buses from Corinth to Lechon stop here.

The friendly Hotel Apollon (27410 22587; www.hotelaollahong.com; Damaskinou 2; s/d €50/60; h) is handily situated near the Corinth bus and train stations, and offers good discounts when it’s quiet.

One of the world’s most exhilarating spots to bungy jump is over the Corinth canal, operated by Zulu Bungy (210 514 7051; www.zulubungy.com; per person €60) in Athens.

Buses to Athens (€6, 1½ hours, half-hourly), Lechon and Ancient Corinth (€0.90, 20 minutes, hourly) leave from KTEL Korinthos bus station (27410 75425; Dimotiria 4) opposite the train station, while buses to Nafplio leave from Argolis bus station (Erikhtis Anestaseis & Atou). There are daily trains to Kalamata (€6, 4½ hours, three daily) via Argos (for Nafplio; €2, one hour, daily) and Tripoli (€3, 2½ hours, daily).

NAFPLIO ΝΑΥΠΛΙΟ

Pop 14,500

Breezy lanes lined with elegant Venetian houses dripping with crimson bougainvillea make Nafplio one of Greece’s prettiest towns. Add to that a lively waterfront café scene and buzzy nightlife, and you have a great place to hang out for a few days.

The friendly Kastelli Travel and Tourist Agency (27520 27935; Vass Konstantinou; 9am-2pm & 6-8pm in summer, 9am-2pm rest of year) books rooms and sells ferry tickets.

The old town is the place to stay. Cheaper rooms can be found on the road to Argos and Tolo, but you’ll have transport to the old town. Hotel Economou (27520 27271; Argonanfla 22; dm €10, d/tr €35) is a bit of a walk out of town, but it’s the only budget option, while Hotel...
GREECE

Canadian family, serves good Greek stand-

ings and fresh fish. For its clean rooms with balcony and TV,

and Comet, has good facilities, and buses travelling to

aeologou running north–south through the

see, but makes a good base from which to visit

8am-5pm Nov-Mar) was described by Homer as

was separated from mainland Gefyra by an

earthquake in AD 375.

The ruggedly beautiful Mani occupies the

central peninsula of the southern Pelopon-

and separated from the mainland by a causeway, is said to be ancient Cra-

Monemvasia occupies one side of a great rock,

Church of Agia Sophia

Hotel Byzantion

Hotel Meltemi

Hotel Aktion ( 27330 227719; s/d €25/35/40), opposite Marathonisi, has clean rooms and kitchen access, but if you can’t get in

here, there are a dozen places nearby of similar quality, while elegant old Hotel Aktion ( 27330 235001; fax 27330 222939; Vasileos Pavlou 39; s/d €40/60) has rooms with balconies and sea views.

The waterfront is lined with excellent fish
tavernas and cafés. For tasty Greek standards and tables on the sea, head to Gonia ( 27330 24024; Vasileos Pavlou; mains €8–14), on the corner opposite the port.

The KTEL Lakonias bus station ( 27330 22228; fax 27330 22229; Vassilis Pavlou 39; s/d €40/60) has rooms with balconies and sea views.

For more information, see "Kardamyli in the south and Messinian (outer) Mani in the north towards Kalamata.

Lakonian Mani

The wild and remote Lakonian Mani is dotted

with striking stone-tower houses, and is

loveliest in spring when the barren countryside bursts

into life with spectacular wild flowers.

Areopoli, 30km southwest of Gythio, has

lovely towers on the narrow, cobbled streets of

the old town. Nearby are the stunning Diros

Caves ( 27330 52222; adult/concession €12/6; 8am-

5.30pm Jun-Sep, 8am-3pm Oct-May), Gerolimenas, 20km further south, is a tranquil fishing village on a

sheltered bay.

Tsimova Rooms ( 27330 51301; Kapetan Matopan, Areopoli; s/d €50/80, apt €65) has cozy rooms in a

renovated tower tucked behind the Church of

Taxiarhes, while Nicola’s Corner Taverna ( 27330 51366; Plateia Athanaton, Areopoli; mains €6–9), on the central square, is a favourite with locals for its
delicious Greek classics.

The bus station ( 27330 51229; Plateia Athanaton, Areopoli) serves Gythio (€2, 30 minutes, daily), Itilo (for the Messinian Mani; €1, 20

minutes, three daily) and the Diros Caves (€1, 15 minutes, one daily).

Messinian Mani

The Messinian Mani runs along the coast

from Kalamata to Itilo and has some of Greece’s most dramatic countryside: beautiful aquamarine swimming coves surrounded by

silver olive groves and set against the Taygetos

Mountains.

Enchanting Kardamyli, 37km south of Kal-
amata, was made famous by travel writer

Sir Patrick Leigh Fermor, who wrote about

his rambles in Mani: Travels in the Southern Peloponnese. Trekkers come for magnificent

Vynos Gorge.

Kardamyli has domatia (B&B) to suit all
budgets: all well signposted and easy to find, but

book ahead for summer. Olympia Koumou

akou rooms ( 27210 73623; s/d €50/30) are popular with

backpackers who like the communal kitchen.

Lela’s Taverna ( 27210 73310; s/d €50/30, "s", run by the former housekeeper to Patrick Leigh Fermor, who lived in Kardamyli for many years, has

charming rooms, while Lela’s Taverna ( 27210 73541) serves tasty home-

style cooking with sea views.

Kardamyli is on the main bus route from

Itilo to Kalamata, and two to three buses stop

daily at the central square.

To Kanoni

bcrafts village, serves good Greek stand-

All text is extracted from the image.
GREECE

OLYMPIA ΟΛΥΜΠΙΑ
pop 1286
In ancient times Olympia was a sacred place of temples, priests’ dwellings and public buildings, as well as being the venue for the quadrennial Olympic Games. Ancient Olympia (26240 22517; adult/concession €6/3, combined site & museum €9/5; 8am-7.30pm May-Oct, 8am-3pm Nov-Apr) is dominated by the immense ruined Temple of Zeus, to whom the games were dedicated.

Camping Diana (26240 22314; fax 26240 22425; camp sites per adult/tent €6/4; Y: year-round; ) is the best situated of Olympia’s camping grounds (2500m west of town), in lovely leafy grounds with good facilities. The only thing the Youth Hostel (26240 22580; Praeiteinos Kondyli 18; dm €8) has going for it is its price. Pension Position (26240 22567; Stefanopoulo 9; s/d/tr €30/40/50) has a sparkling clean, family-run place, while Pension Achilleys (26240 22562; Stefanopoulo 4; s/d/tr €25/35/40) is a little more worn around the edges.

Taverna Gefis Melathron (26240 22916; ant.xri@yahoo.gr; George Douma 3; mains €2.95-6.75) which is clean and around the port. Try and few travellers stay here longer than it takes meh-

The west-coast port of Igoumenitsa (ih-goo-men-ih-tah) has great facilities and is close to the village. Taverna Gardenia (26240 22504; kastriko; s/d/tr €9, seven hours and five, Trikalas (€10, 3½ hours, two daily).

ZAGORIA VILLAGES & VIKOS GORGE ΤΑ ΖΑΓΟΡΙΟΧΩΡΙΑ & ΧΑΠΑΜΠΑ ΤΟΥ ΒΙΚΟΥ
The spectacular Zagoria region, with its deep gorges, raging rivers, dense forests and snow-capped mountains, covers a large expanse of the Pindos Mountains north of Ioannina. Some 46 charming villages, famous for their grey-slate architecture, and known collectively as the Zagorohoria, are sprinkled across the mountains.

Delightful Monodendri is the main departure point for treks through dramatic Vikos Gorge, with its sheer limestone walls. It’s a strenuous 7½-hour walk along well-marked paths from here to the atmospheric twin villages of Megalo Papigo and Miko Papigo. Get information on the walks of the walls from Ioannina’s EOT office.

The atmospheric Archontiko Zarkada (2630 71305; www.monodendri.com; s/d €35/45 incl breakfast) is one of Greece’s best small hotels, with friendly service and spacious, comfortable rooms with TV, DVD/CD player, mini-bar, spa showers and valley views. Its taverna serves delicious regional specialities.

There are two buses from Ioannina to Megalo Papigo and Miko Papigo (€5, two hours, three weekly) and to Monodendri (€3, one hour, two daily).

METEORA ΜΕΤΕΡΟΑ
Magical Meteora (mez-teh-o-rah), with its magnificent late-14th-century monasteries perched atop enormous rocky pinnacles, is one of Greece’s most extraordinary sights. The best sites are the monasteries on each of the 24 pinnacles, only six are still occupied: Megalou Meteorou (Grand Meteoron; 9am-5pm Wed-Mon); Varlaam (9am-2pm & 3.30-6pm Fri-Wed); Agiou Stefanou (9am-2pm & 3.30-6pm Tue-Sun); Agios Triados (9am-12.30pm & 3-5pm Fri-Wed); Agiou Nikolaou Anapafseis (9am-12.30pm Sat-Thu); and Agiass Varvaras Roussanou (9am-6am). Admission is €2 for each monastery and strict dress code applies (women must wear skirts below the knees, and men long trousers and sleeves).

The tranquil village of Kastrika, 2km from Kalambaka, is the best base for visiting Meteora. Vrachos Camping (24320 22293; camping-kastrikk@kmp.forethnet.gr; camp sites per adult/tent €5; ) has great facilities and is close to the village. Taverna Gardenia (24320 22504; Kastrikou 2; mains €3-8) not only serves the freshest Greek food with Meteora views and the scent of gardenias, but it also has good-value, spacious rooms (some, with views) at Pliagias (24320 22504; s/d/tr €30/45/55).

Local buses shuttle between Kalambaka and Kastrika. Hourly buses from Kalambaka go to the transport hub of Trikala (€1.50, 30 minutes), from where there are buses to Ioannina (€9, three hours, two daily) and Athens (€21, 5¾ hours, eight daily). From Kalambaka, there are express trains to Athens (€20, five hours, two daily), and Thessaloniki via Paliosfarsalos (€11, four hours, two daily).
8am-6pm Tue-Sun) is the city’s most prominent landmark. The adventurous Thessaloniki Centre of Contemporary Art (☎ 23105 46683; 11am-7pm) and small Museum of Photography (☎ 23105 66716; 11am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-9pm Sat & Sun) beside the port are worth an hour of your time.

Sleeping
Acropol Hotel (☎ 23105 36170; fax 23105 38492; Tan-dalidou 6; s/d with shared bathroom €18/26) The best budget option in town, with Spartan but clean rooms.

Hotel Pella (☎ 23105 24221; pellahot@otenet.gr; Ionos Dragoumi 63; s/d with shared bathroom €35/50) A simple family-run place, with spotless rooms.

Hotel Tourist (☎ 23102 70501; fax 23102 26865; Mitropoleos 21; s/d €55/70) In an old neoclassical hotel, Hotel Tourist has comfortable rooms with TV. Rates include breakfast.

Eating & Drinking
O Arhontis (☎ 23102 80202; Ermou 26; mains €4; 10am-8pm) Eat delicious grilled sausages, potatoes and salad off butcher’s paper at this popular working-class eatery in Modiano market.

Toboorlka (☎ 23105 48193; Naomha Limbou 14; mains €6) An authentic ouzeri, decorated with musical instruments, that gets packed with locals who come for the fresh seafood and to watch the two cousin-owners perform rabeloutika.

Zythos (☎ 23105 40284; www.zythos.gr; Katouni 5; mains €6) The friendly staff dish up delicious Greek and Italian dishes.

Thermaikos (☎ 23102 39842; Leoforos Nikis 21; noon-late) This retro-cool bar attracts a young arty crowd with its funk, jazz and alternative beats.

Suki (☎ 23102 34027; Plateia Aristotelous 4; noon-3am) Whimsically decorated Suki is the choice bar of clubbers – it goes off on Sunday afternoons in summer.

Self-caters should visit Modiano market for fruit, vegies, cheeses and olives, or nearby Lipatos (☎ 23108 55666; Plateia Aristotelous 23) for the best selection of pittas, breads and biscuits hot out of the oven.

Getting There & Away
From Thessaloniki’s Macedonia International Airport (code SKG; ☎ 231 047 7000, 16km southeast of the city centre, both Olympic Airlines (☎ 2310 68666; Koumoundouli 3) and Aegean Airlines (☎ 23102 80050; Veneziou 2) have several flights daily to Athens. Between them they fly to Ioanna, Lesvos, Limnos, Corfu, Ikaria, Mykonos, Chios, Hania, Samos, Crete, Rhodes and Santorini.

The main bus station (☎ 23105 95408; Monastiriou 319) serves Athens (€32, seven hours, 12 daily) and Ioannina (€23, six hours, five daily), among other destinations. Buses to the Halkidiki Peninsula leave from the smaller bus terminal (☎ 23109 24454; Karakasi 68).

Weekly ferries go to Lesvos (€32, 13 hours), Limnos (€21, eight hours) and Chios (€32, 18 hours) throughout the year. Karaharis Travel & Shipping Agency (☎ 23105 24544; fax 23105 32289; Navarhou Koundouriou 8) handles tickets for all ferries and hydrofoils.

From the train station (☎ 23105 17517; Monastirio) there are seven express services daily to Athens (€28, six hours) and two fast trains daily to Alexandroupolis (€17, 5½ hours). International trains from Athens stop at Thessaloniki. Get schedules directly from the OSE (☎ 23105 98120; www.ose.gr; Aristotelou 18) or its website, or the train station.

Bus 78 plies the airport bus route (slowly), while a taxi to/from the airport costs around €15 and takes about 20 minutes.

**MT OLYMPUS ΌΛΥΜΠΟΣ ΟΡΟΣ**

Greece’s highest mountain, Mt Olympus, was the ancient home of the gods. The highest of its eight peaks is Mytikas (2917m), popular with trekkers, who use Litohoro (5km inland from the Athens–Thessaloniki highway) as their base. The EOS office (☎ 23520 84544; Plateia Kentriki; 9:30am-12:30pm & 6-8pm Mon-Sat Jan-Sep) has information on various treks. The main route to the top takes two days, with a stay overnight at one of the refuges (open May to October). Good protective clothing is essential, even in summer. If you trek outside the official season, you do so at your own risk.

Olympos Beach Camping (☎ 23520 22111/2; www.olympos-beach.gr; Platia Kandanos; camp sites per adult/tent 66/7; Apr-Oct) is an excellent camping ground, with decent bungalows, a good taverna, a funky waterfront lounge bar/disco and a pleasant beach. Hotel Aphroditi (☎ 23520 81415; fax 23520 83646; Plateia Kentriki; d/tr €30/40 incl breakfast) is an atmospheric old hotel with a cozy bar with fireplace. Its rooms have four-poster beds and balconies with views of Mt Olympus.

Gastrodromio El Olympio (☎ 23520 21300; www.gastrodromio.gr; Plateia Kentriki; mains €4-11) has scrumptious specialties, such as souzouka-kia (minced meat with cumin and mint), and views of Olympus.
From the bus stop (23520 81277) there are 18 buses daily to Thessaloniki via Katerini (€7, 1½ hours) and three to Athens (€25, 5½ hours).

**CYCLADES**

**ΚΥΚΛΑΔΕΣ**

pop 110,000

The Cyclades (kīh-klah-dez) are the islands you picture in your mind’s eye when you think of the Greek Islands – rugged outcrops of rock in the azure Aegean, speckled with white cubist buildings and blue-domed Byzantine churches. Throw in sun-blasted golden beaches and a fascinating culture, and it’s easy to see why many find the Cyclades irresistible.

**MYKONOS**

pop 9300

Sophisticated Mykonos shamelessly survives on tourism, but does it well. The maze of white-walled streets in Mykonos Town was designed to confuse pirates, and it certainly manages to captivate and confuse the crowds that consume the island’s capital in summer.

**Orientation & Information**

There is no tourist office, but at the old port, the Hoteliers Association of Mykonos (22890 24540; www.mykonosgreece.com; 8am-midnight) can book accommodation. Island Mykonos Travel (22890 22232; www.discovergreece.org), on Taxi Sq, where the port meets the town, is helpful for travel information.

**Angelo’s Internet Café** (Xenia; per hr €3.50) is on the road between the southern bus station and the windmills.

**Sights & Activities**

Little Venice, where the sea laps up to the edge of the restaurants and bars, and Mykonos’ famous hill-top row of windmills should be included in a stroll.

The island’s most popular beaches are away from town on the southern coast. Platys Gialos has wall-to-wall sun lounges, while nudity is not uncommon at Paradise Beach, Super Paradise, Agrari and gay-friendly Elia.

A 25-minute boat ride southwest of Mykonos takes you to the ancient island of Delos, which makes for an excellent daytrip.

**Sleeping**

Rooms in town fill up quickly in the high season. However, outside July and August, they are as cheap as chips.

**Paradise Beach Camping** (22890 22852; www.paradisebeachkythnos.com; camp sites per person/tent €8/4)

There are lots of options here out of town on the south coast, including camping, beach cabins and apartments. It is skin-to-skin mayhem in summer with a real party atmosphere. Minibuses meet the ferries and buses go regularly into town.

**Hotel Apollon** (22890 22223; fax 22890 24237; Paralia; s/d with shared bathroom €50/65)

Prepare for some old-world Mykonian charm in the middle of the main waterfront. Rooms are traditional and well kept, and the owner is friendly.

**Hotel Philosophos** (22890 22294; chriko@otenet.gr; 25 Kalogeris; s/d €60/75)

In the heart of the Hora, Philosophos has spacious, bright clean rooms with a Mythos.

**Nelson’s** (22890 22081; www.campingkoula.gr; camp sites per person/tent €6/4)

A lush garden.

**Ftelia Hotel** (22890 23072; fax 22890 24237; Agion Anargion)

A local hang-out with standard, but reliable Greek food, Antonini’s offers a different view from its terrace overlooking Taxi Sq.

**Kastro** (22890 23072; Agion Anargion) In Little Venice, this is the spot to start the night with cocktails as the sun sets.

**Piero’s** (22890 22177)

A popular dance club, near Taxi Sq, for rounding off the night.

**Cavo Paradiso** (22890 27205; www.cavoparadiso.gr; admission from €20) For those who want to go the whole hog, this club 300m above Paradise Beach boasts a pool in the shape of Mykonos. A bus transports clubbers from town in summer.

**Getting There & Around**

There are daily flights connecting Mykonos (JMK) to Athens (€94).

Daily ferries arrive from Piraeus (€23.60, six hours). From Mykonos, there are daily ferries and hydrofoils to most major Cycladic islands.

The southern bus station, a 300m walk up from the windmills, serves Agios Ioannis, Psarou, Platys Gialos, Ornos and Paradise Beach. In summer caiques (small fishing boats) from Mykonos town and Platys Gialos putter to Paradise, Super Paradise, Agrari and Elia beaches.

**PAROS**

pop 12,850

Paros is an attractive laid-back island with an interesting main town and good swimming beaches. It has long been prosperous, thanks to an abundance of pure white marble from which the Venus de Milo and Napoleon’s tomb were sculpted.

**Orientation & Information**

Paros’ main town and port is Parikia, on the west coast. Opposite the ferry terminal is Platea Mavrogenous, the main square. Agora, also known as Market St, the main commercial thoroughfare, runs southwest from the far end of the square.

There is no tourist office, but Santorineos Travel (22840 24245; bookings@santorineos-travel.gr) on the waterfront oblige with information. Near the ferry quay, Memphist (per 15min €1; 9am-midnight) provides internet access.

**Sights & Activities**

Known for its beautiful ornate interior, Panagia Ekatontapylaion (Our Lady of the Hundred Gates; 22840 21743; 7.30am-9.30pm) is an impressive church dating from AD 326.

A great option is to hire a scooter and ride around the island, exploring villages such as Naoussa, Manissa and Aliki, and swimming at beaches such as Logaras, Pounda and Golden Beach.

**Sleeping**

The Rooms Association (22840 22727; 9am-1am) has a helpful kiosk on the quay.

**Koula Camping** (22840 22081; www.campingkoula.gr; camp sites per person/tent €6/4) At Livadia beach, about 500m north of Parikia’s waterfront, this camping ground has a restaurant and mini-market.

**Rooms Mike** (22840 23156; roomkime@otenet.gr; s/d/tr €65/35/45) A popular place with backpackers, Mike’s offers good value, a shared kitchen,
The beach of Agios Georgios is a 10-minute walk south from the main waterfall. Beyond it, wonderful sandy beaches stretch as far south as Pyrgaki Beach. Agia Anna Beach, 6km from town, and Plaka Beach are lined with accommodation and packed in summer.

A hire car or scooter will help reveal Naxos’ dramatic landscape. The Tragea region has tranquil villages, churches atop rocky crags and huge olive groves. Filoti, the largest inland settlement, perches on the slopes of Mt Zeus (1004m), the highest peak in the Cyclades.

Sleeping
Camping Maragas (☎ 22850 42552; www.maragas.camping.gr/naxos-camping.htm; camp sites per person/tent €6/4) On Agia Anna Beach, 6km from town, this camping ground has all sorts of options, including camping, rooms and studios, and there is a restaurant and minimarket on site.

Pension Sofi (☎ 22850 23077; www.pensionsofi.gr; d & tr €30-60) and Studios Panos (☎ 22850 26078; www.studiospanos.com; Agios Georgios Beach; d & tr €30-60) are run by members of the friendly Koufopoulos family. All guests are met with a glass of family-made wine or ouzo, and rooms are immaculate, with bathroom and kitchen. Rates are half price outside the high season.

Eating & Drinking
Naxos’ waterfront is lined with eating and drinking establishments.

Meze 2 (☎ 22850 26401; Paralia; dishes €2-50) An excellent old-style mezedopoleio-ouzeri (restaurant specialising in appetisers and ouzo) that is popular with locals and serves superb seafood dishes.

Picasso Mexican Bistro (☎ 22850 25408; dishes from €4.75) A stylish and popular place that does sensational Tex-Mex. It’s 20m off Court Sq, a few minutes’ walk south of the main waterfront.

Ocean (☎ 22850 26766; from 11.30pm) At the southern end of the waterfront, this place goes wild after midnight, featuring guest DJs and modern Greek music.

Getting There & Around
Naxos’ airport (code JNX) has daily flight connections with Athens (€56). There are daily ferries (€23.10, five hours) and catamarans (€39.10, 3½ hours) to Piraeus, and good ferry and hydrofoil connections to most Cycladic islands.

Buses travel to most villages regularly from the bus terminal in front of the port.

Apart from the nightlife, it’s the beaches that lure travellers to Ios. While Gialos Beach near the port gets crowded, Koubara Beach, 1.3km west of Gialos, is less so. Milopotas has everything a resort beach could ask for and parties hard from noon until midnight. Beautiful but isolated, Manganari Beach on the south coast is reached by bus or excursion boat in summer.

Sleeping
Francesco’s (☎ 2260 91223; www.francescos.net; Hora; dm/s/d €31/30/40) A lively meeting place in ‘the village’ with superlative views from its terrace bar, Francesco’s is convenient for party-going and rates halve outside the high season. The party spirit rules here.

Far Out Beach Club (☎ 2260 91468; www.faroutclub.com; Milopotas; camp sites per person €7; bungalows €15; r €25-60) Right on Milopotas Beach, this place has tonnes of facilities, including camp sites, bungalows and hotel rooms, and its four pools are open to the public.

Eating & Drinking
There are numerous places to get cheap eats like gyros in ‘the village’.

IOS 105 pop 18,200
While some would like to see Ios shake off its ‘Party Island’ tag, for others partying is the prime reason for going there. There are wall-to-wall bars and nightclubs in ‘the village’ that thump all night, and fantastic fun facilities at Milopotas Beach that entertain all day.

Orientation & Information
Ios’ three population centres are all close together on the west coast. Ormos is the port where ferries arrive. Two kilometres inland and up from the port is the capital, Hora (also known as ‘the village’), while 2km down from Hora to the southeast is Milopotas Beach.

There is no tourist office, but helpful Acteon Travel (☎ 22860 91343; www.acteon.gr) has offices in Ormos, the village and Mylopotas. It also has internet access (per hour €5).

Sights & Activities
The village has an intrinsic charm with its labyrinth of white-walled streets, and it’s very easy to get lost, even if you haven’t had one too many.

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GREECE

blocks south of the main square.

The stunning caldera views from Fira are

Sights & Activities

Getting There & Around

Ios has daily ferry connections with Piraeus (€21, seven hours), and there are frequent

SANTORINI (THIRA)

The capital, Fira, perches on top of the caldera,

Sleeping

Fira has spectacular views, but is miles from the

Eating & Drinking

Cheap eateries are in abundance around the

Orientation & Information

The capital, Fira, perches on top of the caldera,

Getting There & Around

Santorini’s black-sand beaches of Perissa and

AROUND THE ISLAND

Santorini’s black-sand beaches of Perissa and

Porky’s (22680 91143; Hora) Just off the main

Ali Baba’s (22680 91558; Hora; dishes 65-10) Long

Getting There & Around

Ios has daily ferry connections with Piraeus (€21, seven hours), and there are frequent

Full Moon Bar (22680 81177; 9pm-late) On

Getting There & Around

Santorini’s international airport (code JTR)

Orientation & Information

IRAKLIO

people have enthusiastically embraced mass

CRETE

pop 540,000

Greece’s largest and most southerly island of

CRETE (IRAKLIO)

pop 131,000

Iraklio (ee-rah-klie-oh; often spelt Heraklion), Crete’s capital, is a bustling modern
city, 500m south of the Old Harbour, up 25

Saintes

Either as a day trip or staying in Fira, it is not

Porky’s (22680 91143; Hora) Just off the main

As it is protected by the old Venetian fortress.

The old port of Fira, now a major ferry port,

Stelios’s Place (22680 81860; www.steliosplace.com;

A path from Fira to Oia along the top of the
caldera that takes about three hours to walk.

Excellent excursions can take you to the

The massive

There are daily ferries (€27.80, nine hours)

There are daily flight connections with Athens (€94),

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Ios has daily ferry connections with Piraeus (€21, seven hours), and there are frequent

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Iraklio is directly below Fira and accessed by

There is no official tourist office, but KTEL

Iraklio’s Old Harbour is instantly recognisable

As it is protected by the old Venetian fortress.

There are daily ferry connections with Athens (€94),

There are daily ferries (€27.80, nine hours)

Both as a day trip or staying in Fira, it is not

The island’s proud, friendly and hospitable

lonelyplanet.com
and hires cars. **Gallery Games** ([www.gallerygames.net](http://www.gallerygames.net); Koral 14; per hr €1.50; 24hr) has high-speed internet access.

**Sights**

Iraklio’s **archaeological museum** ([28102 26092]; Xanthsoudiou 2; adult/student €6/3; 12.30-7pm Mon, 8-7pm Tue-Sun) has an outstanding Minoan collection, second only to the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.

The **Battle of Crete Museum** ([28103 46554; cor Doukos Beaufort & Hatzidaki; admission free; 8am-3pm]) chronicles the historic WWII battle with photographs, letters, uniforms and weapons.

**Sleeping**

**Rent Rooms Hellas** ([28102 88851]; Handakos 24; dm/d/tr with shared bathroom €10/30/40) A popular budget choice, this place has a lively atmosphere, packed dorms, a rooftop bar and a bargain breakfast.

**Hotel Mirabelo** ([28102 85052]; www.mirabelo-hotel.gr; Theotokopoulou 20; s/d €37/40; ![)] A pleasant, relaxed budget hotel on a quiet street in the centre of town, this place is run by an ex-sea captain who has travelled the world.

**Eating & Drinking**

There’s a congregation of cheap eateries in the Plateia Venizelou and El Greco Park area, as well as a bustling, colourful market all the way along Eleftheriou Venizelou, is convenient and packed with youths and maidens.

In 1900 Arthur Evans uncovered the ruins of Knossos. Although archaeologists tend to disparage Evans’ reconstruction, the buildings give a reasonable idea of what a Minoan palace might have looked like.

A whole day is needed to see the site and a guidebook is essential. Evate early to avoid the crowds. From Iraklio, local bus 2 goes to Knossos (€0.95) every 10 minutes from Bus Station A.

**RETHYMNO**

**pop 29,000**

Rethymno (re-thim-no) is one of Crete’s architectural treasures, due to its stunning fortress and mix of Venetian and Turkish houses in the old quarter, on a peninsula that juts out into the Sea of Crete. The fortress sits at the head of the peninsula, while the Venetian Harbour, ferry quay and beach are on its eastern side.

The **municipal tourist office** ([28310 29148]; Eleftheriou Venizelou; 9am-2pm Mon-Fri), on the beach side of El Venizelou, is convenient and helpful.

**Eloita Tours** ([28310 24933]; eloitataret.forthnet.gr; Arkadou 161) will answer all transport, accommodation and tour inquiries.

**Galero Café** ([28310 54345; per hr €3]), beside the Rimondi fountain, has low-key music and a good ambience. The outside tables fill up after eating at a sidewalk table or on the promenade.

**Café Beaufort** ([28310 26092; Akroleondos 7; 8am-7pm Tue-Sun) is a pleasant, gay-friendly place has low-key music and a good ambience. The outside tables fill up after sundown.

**Peistos** ([28310 88101; Paleokastro Hill; admission €3; 8am-3pm Mon-Fri) is the inspiration for the myth of the Minotaur, a half-man half-bull who lived in a labyrinth beneath the king’s palace, munching on youths and maidens.

The **archaeological museum** ([28310 90314; Halidon 30; admission €2; 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) is in a 16th-century Venetian Church that the Turks made into a mosque.
If you’re interested in activities like trekking or mountain biking in Crete’s rugged Lefka Ori (‘White Mountains’) south of Hania, contact Alpine Travel (☎ 28210 50939; www.alpine.gr; Bouniali 11-19, Hania; 9am-2pm Mon-Fri) or Trekking Plan (☎ 28210 60861; www.cycling.gr).

Sleeping
Camping Hania (☎ 28210 31338; www.camping-hania.com; camp sites per person/ tent €5/3.50) Take the Ka lamaki beach bus from the southeast corner of Plateia 1866 to get to this popular spot, 3km west of town on the beach. There is a restaurant, bar and minimarket. Pension Lena (☎ 28210 86860; www.travelling-crete.com/lena; Ritou 5; s/d €32/50; ✈) A friendly pension in an old Turkish building near the mouth of the Old Harbour, Lena’s has an old-world feel and a cozy atmosphere. Help yourself to a room if Lena isn’t there.

Hotel Manos (☎ 28210 94156; www.manoshotel.gr; Zambelou 24; s/d €45/55; ✈) One of the oldest small waterfront hotels, Manos has great views from its harbour-facing rooms. The rooms are clean and spacious, and there is an internet café.

Eating & Drinking
The entire waterfront of the Old Harbour is lined with restaurants and tavernas. For cheap traditional cuisine, the tavernas in Hania’s covered food market offer excellent quality and prices.

Amphora Restaurant (☎ 28210 93224; Akti Koundouri- oti 49; mains €4.50-7) On the waterfront and under the hotel of the same name, Amphora serves Cretan specialities and excellent pasta dishes, and has a fine reputation.

Tama (☎ 28210 58639; Zambelou 49; mains €4- 6.50; 2pm-12.30am) A taverna in an old converted Turkish bathhouse, this place has tasty soups and a superb selection of vegetarian specialities.

Café Kriti (☎ 28210 58661; Kalergon 22; 8am-late) Also known as Lyraikia, Café Kriti is the best place in Hania to hear live Cretan music. It’s rough-and-ready, but a fine place to have a drink.

Getting There & Away
There are several flights daily between Hania (CHQ) and Athens (€86), and five flights weekly to Thessaloniki (€110). Daily ferries sail between Pira eus (€22, nine hours) and the port of Souda, 7km east of Hania.

Frequent buses run along Crete’s northern coast to the towns of Iraklio, Rethymno and Kastelli-Kissamos; buses run less frequently to Paleohora, Omalo s and Hora Sfakion.

SAMARIA GORGE ΦΑΡΑΓΓΙ ΤΗΣ ΣΑΜΑΡΙΑΣ
The Samaria Gorge (28250 67179; admission €5; 6am-3pm May-mid-Oct) is one of Europe’s most spectacular gorges and a ‘must-do’. Walkers should take rugged footwear, food, drinks and sun protection for this five- to six-hour hike.

You can do the walk as part of an excursion tour, or do it independently by taking the Omalos bus from the main bus station in Hania (€5, one hour) to the head of the gorge at Xyloskalo (1230m) at 6.15am, 7.30am, 8.30am or 4.30pm. It’s a 16.7km walk out (all downhill) to Agia Roumeli on the coast, from where you take a boat to Hora Sfakion (€5, one hour, three daily) and then a bus back to Hania (€5.40, two hours, four daily). You’re forbidden from spending the night in the gorge, so you need to complete the walk in a day.

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DODECANESAN ΔΩΔΕΚΑΝΗΣΑ
pop 190,000
Due to their geographic proximity to the coast of western Turkey, the 18 islands of the Dodecanese have suffered a turbulent past of invasions and occupations that has endowed them with a fascinating cultural diversity.

RHODES ΡΟΔΟΣ
pop 98,000
Rhodes (ro-dos in Greek) is the largest island in the Dodecanese. According to mythology, the sun god Helios chose Rhodes as his bride, and bestowed light, warmth and vegetation upon her. The blessing seems to have paid off, for Rhodes produces more flowers and sunny days than most Greek islands.

Rhodes City
pop 56,000
Rhodes’ capital and port is Rhodes City, on the northern tip of the island. Almost everything of interest lies in its amazing World Heritage-listed Old Town, the largest inhabited medieval town in Europe. The New Town to the north is a monument to packaging tourism.

The main port, Commercial Harbour, is east of the Old Town, and north of here is Mandraki Harbour.

INFORMATION
The tourist office (EOT; ☎ 22410 35226; cnr Makariou & Papagou; 7.30am-3pm Mon-Fri) has brochures, maps and Rodos News, a free English-language newspaper.

In the New Town, Triton Holidays (☎ 22410 21699; www.triton.gr; 1st fl, Plastira 9, Mandraki) is extremely helpful, handling accommodation bookings, ticketing and hire cars.

In the Old Town, Mango Café Bar (www.mango.gr; Plateia Dorieos 3; per hr €5; ✈ 9.30am-midnight) has internet access.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES
The Old Town is reputedly the world’s finest surviving example of medieval fortification, with 12km of thick walls.

The cobbled Odos Ippton (Avenue of the Knights) is lined with magnificent medieval buildings, the most imposing of which is the Palace of the Grand Masters (☎ 22410 23359; admission €6; 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun), which was restored, but never used, as a holiday home for Mussolini.

The 15th-century Knight’s Hospital now houses the archaeological museum (☎ 22410 27657; Plateia Mousiou; admission €3; ✈ 8am-4pm Tue-Sun) and has an impressive collection that includes the Aphrodite of Rhodes.

SLEEPING
Mango Rooms (☎ 22410 24877; www.mango.gr; Plateia Dorieos 3, Old Town; s/d €30/45; ✈ Mango has a restaurant, bar and internet café down below, six well-kept rooms above, and a superb sun terrace on top.

Pink Elephant Pension (☎ 22410 22469; www.pink elphantpension.com; Irodou 42, Old Town; €30-50) Down a side street at the back of the Old Town, this pension has cozy, compact and clean rooms around a communal courtyard.

Hotel Spot (☎ 22410 34737; www.spothotelrhodes.com; Perikleous 21, Old Town; s/d/tr incl breakfast €35/60/80; ✈) Convenient and exceptionally clean, the Spot offers tastefully decorated rooms, lift-luggage facilities and a small book exchange.

EATING & DRINKING
There are a lot of cheap places in the New Market, at the southern end of Mandraki Harbour.

Taverna Kostas (☎ 22410 26217; Pythagora 62, Old Town; mains €5-10) This good-value spot has stood the test of time and can’t be beaten for its quality grills and fish dishes.

Kafe Besara (☎ 22410 30363; Sofokleous 11, Old Town) This Aussie-owned establishment is one of the Old Town’s liveliest bars and a great spot to hang out.

Mango Café Bar (☎ 22410 24877; Plateia Dorieos 3, Old Town) Mango claims to have the cheapest drinks in town and is the preferred haunt of local expats and die-hard travellers.

Colorado Entertainment Centre (☎ 22410 75120; www.coloradoclub.gr; cnr Akti Miaouli & Orfanidou 57) This enormous palace of hype has six venues in one in the New Town street of Orfanidou, also known as ‘Bar Sf’.

GETTING THERE & AWAY
There are daily flights between Rhodes’ airport (RHO) and Athens (€75), Iraklio (Cret; €65) and Karpathos (€28).

There are daily ferries from Rhodes to Piraeus (€38, 15 to 18 hours). Most sail via the
Dodecanese north of Rhodes, but at least three times weekly there is a service via Karpathos, Crete and the Cyclades. There are also four ferries a week heading east to Kastelorizo (£17, four hours)

Between April and October there are daily boats from Rhodes to Marmaris in Turkey (one way/return €45/60)

GETTING AROUND
Rhodes City has two bus stations. The westside bus station, next to the New Market, serves the airport (£1.50, 25 minutes), Kamiros (£4.10, 55 minutes) and the west coast. The east-side bus station (Plateia Rimini) serves the east coast, Lindos (£4.60, 1½ hours) and the inland southern villages.

Around the Island
The Acropolis of Lindos (€2240 31258; admission €6; 8.30am-6pm Tue-Sun), 47km from Rhodes City, is an ancient city spectacularly perched atop a 116m-high rocky outcrop. Below is Lindos town, a tangle of streets with elaborately decorated 17th-century houses.

The extensive ruins of Kamiros (admission €4; 8am-5pm Tue-Sun), an ancient Doric city on the west coast, are well preserved, with the remains of houses, baths, a cemetery and a temple.

KOS KΩS
pop 17,900
A long, fertile island with a mountainous spine, Kos is only 5km from the Turkish peninsula of Bodrum. Package tours turn up in droves, and the main town and port of Kos Town almost exudes an aura of mini Las Vegas.

Orientation & Information
Kos Town is based around a circular harbour protected by the imposing Castle of the Knights. The ferry quay is north of the castle. Akti Koundourioti is the main drag around the harbour.

The helpful Municipal tourist office (€2240 22460; www.kosinfo.gr; Vasileos Georgiou 1; 8am-2.30pm & 3-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) is on the waterfront directly south of the port. Exas Travel (€2240 28545) handles schedules, ticketing and excursions.

Café Del Mare (www.cybercafe.gr; Megalou Alexandrou 4; per 30min €3; 9am-1am) is a well-equipped internet café near the harbour.

Sights & Activities
The focus of the archaeological museum (€2240 28326; Plateia Eleftherias; adult/student £3/2; 8am-2.30pm Tue-Sun) is sculpture from excavations around the island.

The ancient agora, with the ruins of the Shrine of Aphrodite and Temple of Hercules, is just off Plateia Eleftherias. North of the agora is the Hippocrates Plane Tree, under which the man himself is said to have taught his pupils.

On a pine-clad hill, 4km southwest of Kos Town, stand the extensive ruins of the renowned healing centre of Asklepion (€2240 28763; adult/student £4/3; 8.30am-6pm Tue-Sun), where Hippocrates practised medicine.

Sleeping
Kos Camping (€2240 23275; camp sites per adult/tent £4.50/2.50) This spot, 3km along the eastern waterfront, has good shade and a minimarket. Hop on any of the buses going to Agios Fokas from the harbour.

Pension Alexis (€2240 23789; fax 2240 25797; trodotus 05; s/d £25/30) This highly recommended place has long been a budget favourite with travellers. It has large rooms and shared facilities. It’s back behind Dolphin Sq.

Eating & Drinking
The central waterfront is lined with restaurants and bars.

Barbas (€2240 27856; Evripilou 6; mains £3-5) Opposite Hotel Afendoulis, Barbas specialises in grills and has a mouth-watering chicken pita. Sit at the streetside tables and watch the locals pass by.

Olympiada (€2240 23031; mains £3.50-4) Back in the ruins area, Olympiada serves reliable unpretentious Greek dishes.

Fashion Club (€2240 22592; Kanari 2) Off Dolphin Sq, this monster establishment has three bars and is a long-time favourite.

Getting There & Around
There are daily flights to Athens (£93) from Kos’ Ippokratis International Airport (code KGS).

There are frequent ferries from Rhodes to Kos that continue on to Piraeus (£38, 12 to 15 hours). Hydrofoils head north to Patmos and Samos daily. In summer ferries depart daily for Bodrum in Turkey (£34 return, one hour). By tourist office is a blue minitrain for Asklepion (return £3, hourly) and a green minitrain that does city tours (£3, 20 minutes).

NORTHEASTERN AEGEAN ISLANDS
TA ΝΗΣΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΒΟΡΕΙΟΑΝΑΤΟΛΙΚΟ ΛΙΚΟ ΑΙΓΑΙΟΥ
pop 205,000
One of Greece’s best-kept secrets, these far-flung islands are closer to Turkey than mainland Greece. Turkish influence is barely visible, despite the islands being part of the Ottoman Empire until 1912.

LESVOS (ΜΥΤΙΛΙΝΙ)
ΛΕΣΒΟΣ (ΜΥΤΙΛΗΝΗ)
pop 93,500
The third-largest of the Greek islands, Lesvos has always been a centre of philosophy and artistic achievement. The two main towns on the island are the capital of Mytilini on the northeast coast and attractive Mithymna on the north coast.

Mytilini Μυτιλήνη
pop 27,250
The regional and main port, Mytilini, is an attractive working town, with most of the action around its waterfront. With a large university campus, Mytilini is a lively place, even out of season.

The tourist office (€2250 42511; 6 Aristarchou; 9am-1pm Mon-Fri, 5pm up Aristarchou inland from the quay, offers brochures and maps. The tourist police (€2250 22786) are at the entrance to the quay and are helpful if you’re outside tourist office hours.

Samiotis Tours (€2250 45274; samiotistours@hotmail.com; Kountourioti 43), on the waterfront, handles flights, boat schedules, ticketing and excursions to Turkey.

Sponda (Kominakia; per hr £3), a block back from the waterfront, has internet access in a pool bar.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES
Mytilini’s excellent neoclassical archaeological museum (€2250 22087; 8 Noemvriou; adult/child £3/2; 8am-7.30pm) has a fascinating collection from Neolithic to Roman times.

A superb place for a stroll or a picnic is the pine forest surrounding Mytilini’s impressive fortress (adult/student £2/1; 8am-2.30pm Tue-Sun), which was built in early Byzantine times and enlarged by the Turks.

Five kilometres from Mytilini, on the Gulf of Yera, are the Thera Yera hot springs (€2250 24575; admission £2.50; 8am-6pm), where you can bathe in a steampy white room overlooking the water and mountains.

SLEEPING
Pension Thalia (€2250 24640; Kiniou 1; s/d £25/30) This pension has clean, bright rooms in a large house. It’s about a five-minute walk north of the main square, up Ermou. Follow the signs from the corner of Ermou and Adramytioi.

Pension Iren (€2250 22787; Komninaki 41; dr/tr incl breakfast £30/35) One block back from the waterfront and easy to find, rooms here are simple but clean. It’s not far from the ferry quay.

EATING & DRINKING
Restaurant Averof (€2250 22180; Ermou 52; mains from £4) Hearty Greek staples, such as patsas (tripe soup), are dished up at this no-nonsense traditional place just back from the main square.

Kalderimi (€2250 46577; Thassou 3; mains from £6) Popular with locals, Kalderimi has an excellent ambience with tables in a vine-covered pedestrian street just back from the Sappho statue.

Ocean Eleven Bar (Kountourioti 17) On the corner on the waterfront, this is a superb spot to relax with a drink and partake in some Mytilini people-watching.

GETTING THERE & AROUND
Written up on flight schedules as Mytilene, Lesvos’ airport (code MJT) has daily connections with Athens (£78) and Thessaloniki (£88), and two weekly to Chios (£28).

In summer there are daily boats to Piraeus (£27.90, 12 hours), some via Chios and Mykonos, and one boat a week to Thessaloniki (£30.20, 13 hours). There are four ferries a week to Aylavik in Turkey (one way/return £30/45). Mytilini has two bus stations. For local buses, head along the waterfront to the main square, where buses leave regularly for Thermi Yera. For long-distance buses, walk 500m from the ferry dock along the waterfront and turn right until you reach Agia Irini park. There are regular services in summer to Mithymna and Skala Eresou.
SAPPHO, LESBIANS AND LESVOS
One of Greece’s great ancient poets, Sappho, was born on the island of Lesvos during the 7th century BC, in the town of Eresos. Her lyrically evocative style and richly sumptuous imagery were devoted to love and desire – and the objects of her affection were often female. Owing to this last fact, her name and birthplace have come to be associated with female homosexuality.

These days Lesvos is visited by many lesbians paying homage to Sappho. The whole island is very gay-friendly, in particular the southwestern beach resort of Skala Eresou, which is built over ancient Eresos, Sappho’s birthplace. The village is well set up to cater to lesbian needs and has a Women Together festival held annually in September. Check out Sappho Travel (www.sappho.travel) for details.

There is an excellent statue of Sappho taking pride of place in the main square on the waterfront in Mytilini.

MITHYMINA ΜΙΘΥΜΝΑ
pop 1500
The gracious, preserved town of Mithymna (known by locals as Molyvos) is 62km north of Mytilini (€5, 1½ hours by bus). Cobbled streets canopied by flowering vines wind up the hill below the impressive castle.

From the bus stop, walk straight ahead towards the town for 100m to the helpful municipal tourist office (☎ 22530 71347; www.mithymna.gr; ☏ 8am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun), which has good maps. A further 50m on, the cobbled main thoroughfare of 17 Noemvriou heads up to the right. Alternatively, going straight at this point will take you to the colourful fishing port. Panatella Holidays (☎ 22530 71520; www.panatella-holidays.com) just before the fork, handles bookings and runs all kinds of local trips.

The noble Genoese castle (☎ 22530 71803; admission €2; ☏ 8am-7pm Tue-Sun) towers above the town and affords tremendous views out to Turkey. Pebbly Mithymna Beach is good for swimming. Don’t forget to stroll down to the harbour.

Eftalou hot springs (☎ 22530 71245; public/private baths per person €3.50/5; ☏ public baths 10am-2pm & 4-8pm, private baths 9am-6pm), 4km from town on the beach, is a superb bathhouse complex with private baths 9am-6pm, 4km from town on the waterfront, is a superb bathhouse complex with private baths 9am-6pm;

Pebbles, Mithymna Beach, is a superb bathhouse complex with private baths 9am-6pm);

Pension Panos (☎ 22530 71303, 69791 56019; www.skiathosinfo.com/accom/pension-panos; Paleokastro; ☏ s/d/q €30/45/60; P) Run by the enterprising Georgina, this family-run place is 10 minutes’ walk north of the quay. The spotless rooms have TV, kitchen and balconies.

Eating & Drinking
Skiathos is brimming with eateries. Nightlife sprawls along Polytehniou.

Taverna Dionysos (☎ 22470 22675; Panora) This well-run taverna has tasty three-course menus and some excellent beaches are on the hospitable south coast.

Orientation & Information
Skiathos Town’s main street is Papadiamanti, opposite which they were once joined, the 11 islands that make up the Sporades group have mountainous terrain and dense vegetation.

SKIATHOS ΣΚΙΑΘΟΣ
pop 6150
Lush and green, Skiathos has a beach-resort feel about it. An international airport has brought loads of package tourists, but the island still oozes enjoyment. Skiathos Town and some excellent beaches are on the hospitable south coast.

GETTING THERE & AROUND
In summer there is a daily flight from Skiathos’ airport (code JSI) to Athens (€53).

There are frequent daily hydrofoils to/from the mainland ports of Volos (€21.10, 1½ hours) and Skopelos (€35.30, 3½ hours). Attractive Alonnisos is at the end of the line and thereby the least visited of the Sporades’ main islands. The seas surrounding Alonnisos have been declared a marine park and reputedly have the cleanest waters in the Aegean.

The port village of Patitiri isn’t too appealing. Its concrete buildings were slapped together in 1965 after an earthquake destroyed the hill-top capital of Alonnisos Town. There are two main thoroughfares; facing inland from the ferry quay, Pelasgon is to the left and Ikion Dolopon is to the right.

There is no tourist office, but the post office, police and internet access at Techno Plus (☎ 22420 29100; per hr €3; 9am-2pm & 6-9pm) are on Ikion Dolopon. On the waterfront itself, Alonnisos Travel (☎ 22420 65188; www.alonnisostavel gr) handles boat scheduling and ticketing.

Alonnisos is ideal for walking. Waterfront travel agencies offer guided tours or there’s an excellent trail guide called Alonnisos on Foot: A Walking & Swimming Guide by Bente

Velanio Beach on the south coast is the island’s nudie spot. On the west coast, pebbled Panormos Beach, with its sheltered emerald bay surrounded by pine forest, is superb. The 2km stretch of Milia Beach, a few kilometres further on, is considered the island’s best for swimming.

In Skopelos Town, there is no tourist office, but Thalpos Leisure & Services (☎ 22420 22947; www.joakim.gr), on the waterfront, is handy for accommodation and tours.

SPORADES ΣΠΟΡΑΔΕΣ
Scattered to the southeast of the Pelion Peninsula, opposite which they were once joined, the 11 islands that make up the Sporades group have mountainous terrain and dense vegetation.

Skopelos Town's main street is Papadiamanti, opposite which they were once joined, the 11 islands that make up the Sporades group have mountainous terrain and dense vegetation.

SKOPELOS ΣΚΟΠΕΛΟΣ
pop 4700
A mountainous island, Skopelos is covered in pine forests, vineyards, olive groves and fruit orchards. The main port and capital of Skopelos Town, on the east coast, skirts a semi-circular bay and clammers in tiers up a hillside, culminating in a ruined fortress.

There is an excellent statue of Sappho taking pride of place in the main square on the waterfront in Mytilini.

GREECE
Keller and Elias Tsoukanas, which is available at newstands. The **Rooms to Let Service** (☎️ 2420 66188; fax 2420 65577; 9:30am-2pm & 6:30-10:30pm), opposite the quay, books accommodation all over the island. **Camping Rocks** (☎️ 2420 65410; camp sites per person €5) is a shady, basic camping ground. It is a steep signposted hike about 1.5km from the port. **Pension Pleiades** (☎️ 2420 65235; pleiades@internet.gr; s/d €35/50) looks out over the harbour and is visible from the quay. The rooms are immaculate, balconied, bright and cheerful.

To **Kamaki Ouzeri** (☎️ 2420 65245; Ikion Dolopon; mains €4-10) is a traditional island eatery. Check the ready-to-eat dishes out in the kitchen. Flying Dolphin hydrofoils provide the most regular schedules between the islands. They travel several times daily to Skopelos Town (€7.70, 20 minutes), Skiathos (€14.70, 1½ hours), Volos (€27.80, 2½ hours) and Agios Konstantinos (€31.30, 2¾ hours). The local bus (€1) runs to the **horia** (Alonnisos Town) every hour.

**IONIAN ISLANDS**

**TA ΕΙΣΑΝΗΣΑ**

The idyllic Ionian islands stretch down the western coast of Greece from Corfu in the north to Kythira, off the southern tip of the Peloponnese. Mountainous, with soft light, dramatic cliff-backed beaches and turquoise-coloured water, they're more Italian in feel, offering a contrasting experience to other Greek islands.

**CORFU**

**ΚΕΡΚΥΡΑ**

pop 109,540

Verdant Corfu is the second-largest and most important island in the group, and many consider it to be Greece’s most beautiful island.

**Orientation & Information**

The capital, Corfu Town, is built on a promontory and the Old Town is wedged between two fortresses. Ferries dock at the new port and the long-distance bus station on Avrami is inland from the port.

**National Bank of Greece** (cnr Voulgareos & Theotoki)

**Café Liston** (☎️ 26610 30680; P Wattli 5, Corfu Town; admission €3; ☎️ 8:30am-3pm Tue-Sun) houses a fascinating collection of finds from Mycenaean to classical times. The **Church of Agios Spiridon** has a richly decorated interior and displays the remains of St Spiridon, paraded through town four times a year.

The main resort on Corfu’s west coast is **Paleokastritsa**, set around a series of gorgeous cypress-backed bays. Further south, there are good beaches around the small village of **Agios Gordios**. Between Paleokastritsa and Agios Gordios is the hilltop village of **Pelekas**, a good place to watch the sunset.

**Sleeping & Eating**

**Hotel Hermes** (☎️ 26610 39268/39321; fax 26610 31747; G Markara 14, Corfu Town; s/d €30/40, s/d with shared bathroom €20/30) This hotel offers one of the best bases in Corfu Town and is popular with backpackers.

**Sunrock** (☎️ 26610 94637; www.geocities.com/sunrock_corfu; Pelekas Beach; per person with shared bathroom/full board €18/24; ☎️ [town]) A family-run resort with great facilities, activities and pick-up service.

**Pink Palace** (☎️ 26610 53103; www.thepinkpalace.com; Agios Gordios Beach; A-B-class room incl breakfast & dinner per person €30/18; ☎️ [town]). If you’re missing school camp, head to a wicked complex overlooking the sea, which offers a long list of organised activities, from wild beach parties and nude cliff diving to banana boating and table tennis!

**To Tispouzadiko** (☎️ 26610 82240; Old Port, Corfu Town; mains €3-8; ☎️ [town]). This big atmospheric place, with old 45 rembetika records on its walls, serves generous portions of fresh (cheap) Greek food. Its lovely garden terrace hums with old 45s - plonk down in a comfy seat and listen to the rolling discos.**

**La Famiglia** (☎️ 26610 30270; Maniarii Attoli 16; mains €6-14; ☎️ 8pm-late) An Italian eatery that’s equally as popular with tourists (who eat around 8pm) and locals (who pack the place late) because of its authentic pasta dishes, buzzy atmosphere and great music.

There’s nothing like starting the day with an espresso under the airy, elegant arcades of Corfu’s main coffeehouse, the **Café Liston** (☎️ 26610 45354; flotopanos 10), our pick for people-watching, although local frappe-drinking teens prefer roadside **Libro d’Oro** (The Liston).

**Getting There & Away**

From Corfu’s **Ioannis Kapodistrias airport** (code CFU; ☎️ 26610 30180), both **Olympic Airlines** (☎️ 26610 38694; Pollia 11, Corfu Town) and **Aegean Airlines** (☎️ 26610 27100) offer several flights daily to Athens, while Olympic also flies to Thessaloniki a few times weekly.

There are hourly ferries to Igoumenitsa (€6, 1½ hours) and a daily ferry to Paxi (€5, one hour, and in summer there are daily services to Patra (€21 to €25, six hours) on the international ferries.

Daily buses to Athens (€30, 8½ hours) and Thessaloniki (€29, eight hours) leave from the Avrami bus terminal.

**Getting Around**

Buses for villages close to Corfu Town leave from Plateia San Rocco. Services to other destinations leave from Avrami bus terminal. A taxi from the airport to the Old Town costs around €10.

**ITHAKI**

**ΙΘΑΚΗ**

pop 3080

Odysseus’ long lost home in Homer’s Odyssey, Ithaki, or ancient Ithaca, is a verdant island blessed with cypress-covered hills and beautiful turquoise bays for swimming.

The tiny village of **Kioni** has a laidback vibe and magical waterfront, and is a wonderful place to chill for a few days. **Hamilton House** (☎️ 26740 31654; marina waterfront; €40) has a certain shabby (cluttered) charm and unbeatable sea views. Also on the waterfront, **Kalipso** (☎️ 26740 31066; mains €5-35) serves hearty traditional Greek dishes.

Four Island Ferries operate daily ferries between Fiskardo (Kefallonia), Frikes (Ithaki), and Nydri and Vasiliki (Lefkada). Most trips average 90 minutes and cost €5.

**KEFALONIA**

**ΚΕΦΑΛΛΟΝΙΑ**

pop 45,000

Tranquil cypress and fir-covered Kefallonia has colourful breezy rooms with TV, fridge and balconies, some with gorgeous bay views, and some with kitchenettes or access to a communal kitchen. Friendly Regina gives good discounts for long stays and when it’s quiet. It’s located on the car park, **Lagoudera** (☎️ 26740 41200; gyros €2) does delicious gyros and grills.

**Nautilus Travel** (☎️ 26740 41440; fax 26740 41470) sells ferry tickets. Four Island Ferries operate daily ferries between Fiskardo (Kefallonia), Frikes (Ithaki), and Nydri and Vasiliki (Lefkada). Most trips average 90 minutes and cost €5.

**Greece Directory**

**ACCOMMODATION**

There is a good range of budget accommodation in Greece, subject to price controls set by the tourist police. By law, a notice must be displayed in every room stating the category of the room and the seasonal price. If you think you’ve been ripped off, contact the tourist police. Prices quoted in this chapter are for the high season, unless otherwise stated. Prices are about 40% cheaper between October and May.

Greece has around 350 camping grounds, but many are only open between April and October. Standard facilities include hot showers, kitchens, restaurants and minimarkets – ers, kitchens, restaurants and minimarkets – and often a swimming pool. Prices vary according to facilities, but expect to pay €4.50 to €6 per adult, €3.50 for a small tent and €5 for a large one. Free camping is illegal in Greece.

You’ll find youth hostels in most major towns and on half a dozen islands. Most hostels are members of the Greek Youth Hostel Organisation (Map p52; ☎️ 21075 19530; g-y-hostels@etenet.gr; Damareos 75, Athens 116 33). Most charge €8 to €10 for a bed in a dorm, and you don’t have to be a member to stay in any of them.

**Domatia**, the Greek equivalent of a B&B (minus the breakfast), can represent good value. Expect to pay about €25 to €35 for a single and €40 to €50 for a double. Free advertising ‘Domatia’ (rooms)’ generally greet
ferries and buses. Just make sure that your room isn’t an hour’s walk from the action.

ACTIVITIES

Diving & Snorkelling
There is excellent snorkelling in Greece. Corfu, Mykonos and Santorini are popular with diving schools. Without certified supervision is forbidden in order to protect the many antiquities in the depths of the Aegean.

Sailing & Windsurfing
Sailing facilities are generally found at the same locations recommended for windsurfing. Hrysi Akti on Paros and Mylopotas Beach on Ios are two of the best locations. Hire charges for catamarans range from €20 to €25. Windsurfing sailboards are widely available for hire, priced at €12 to €15 per hour. The top spot is Vasiliki on the southern part of Lefkada.

Trekking
Greece has excellent trekking opportunities, but outside the main popular routes trails are generally overgrown and poorly marked. Several companies run organised treks; the biggest is Trekking Hellas (Map p524; 21033 10323; www.trekking.gr; Filletilor 7, Athens 105 57).

BUSINESS HOURS

Banks ❇ 8am to 2pm Monday to Thursday, and 8am to 1.30pm Friday (also afternoons and Saturday morning in large cities).

Bars ❇ generally after 8pm and close after midnight.

Clubs ❇ 11pm but don’t really get going until after midnight.

Restaurants ❇ lunch from 11am to 2pm and for dinner from 8pm to 1am. If you’re going to an upmarket restaurant, locals generally don’t make a booking for earlier than 10pm.

Shops ❇ 8am to 1.30pm and 5.30pm to 8.30pm Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 8am to 2.30pm Monday, Wednesday and Saturday.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Embassies & Consulates in Greece
All foreign embassies in Greece are in Athens and its suburbs.

Australia (Map p522; 210 645 0404; Dimitriou Soutou 37, GR-115 21)

Canada (Map p523; 210 727 3400; Genadiou 4, GR-116 21)

Cyprus (Map p522; 210 723 7883; Irodotou 16, GR-106 75)

France (Map p522; 210 361 1663; Leoforos Vasilissis Sofias 7, GR-106 71)

Germany (Map p522; 210 728 5111; cnr Dimitriou 3 & Karaili, GR-106 75)

Italy (Map p522; 210 361 7260; Sekeri 2, GR-106 74)

Japan (Map p522; 210 775 8101; Athens Tower, Leoforos Messogion 2-4, GR-115 27)

New Zealand (Map p522; 210 687 4701; Kifissias 268, Halandri)

South Africa (Map p522; 210 680 6645; Kifissias 60, Maroussi, GR-151 25)

Turkey (Map p522; 210 724 5915; Leoforos Vasilissis Georgiou 8, GR-106 74)

UK (Map p522; 210 723 6211; Ploutarhou 1, GR-106 75)

USA (Map p522; 210 721 2951; Leoforos Vasilissis Sofias 91, GR-115 21)

Greek Embassies & Consulates Abroad

Australia (02 6273 3011; 9 Suranna St, Yarralulma, ACT 2600)

Canada (613-238 6271; 76-80 Maclaren St, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 0K6)

Cyprus (02 680 670/671; Byron Blvd 8-10, Nicosia)

France (01 47 23 72 28; www.amb-greece.fr; 17 Rue Auguste Vaquerie, 75116 Paris)

Germany (030-20 62 60; www.griechische-botschaft.de; Jaegerstrasse 54-55, 10117 Berlin-Mitte)

Italy (06 853 7551; www.greekembassy.it; Viale G Rossini 4, Rome 00198)

Japan (03 3403 0871/2; www.greekembj.p; 3-16-30 Nishi Azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-0031)

New Zealand (09 473 7757; 5-7 Willeton St, Wellington)

South Africa (12 430 7351; 1003 Church St, Arcadia, Pretoria 0083)

Spain (01 546 4633; Ave Doctor Arce 24, Madrid 28002)

Turkey (312 448 0647; Ziya-ul-Rahman Cadde 9-11, Gaziosmanpasa 06000, Ankara)

UK (020-7229 3850; www.greekembassy.org.uk; 1a Holland Park, London W11 3TP)

USA (202-939 1300; www.greekembassy.org; 2221 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC 20008)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

In Greece, it’s probably easiest to list the dates when festivals and events are not on! Some are religious, some cultural and others seemingly just an excuse to party. It’s worth timing at least one as you’ll be warmly invited to join in the revelry. Check out Culture Guide (www.cultureguide.gr) for details.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Although there is no legislation against homosexuality, it’s wise to be discreet in Greece. Nevertheless it’s a popular destination for gay travellers, and Mykonos in the

Cyclades has long been famous for its bars, beaches and hedonism, while the town of Eresos on Lesvos has become a pilgrimage site for lesbians.

HOLIDAYS

New Year’s Day 1 January

Epiphany 6 January

First Sunday in Lent February

Greek Independence Day 25 March

Good Friday/Easter Sunday March/April

Spring Festival/Labour Day 1 May

Feast of the Assumption 15 August

Ohi Day 28 October

Christmas Day 25 December

St Stephen’s Day 26 December

INTERNET RESOURCES

Culture Guide (www.cultureguide.gr) Plenty of information about contemporary culture and the arts.

Greek Ferries (www.greekferries.org) Get all your ferry information from the source. Covers international and domestic ferries.

Greek National Tourist Organisation (www.gnto.gr) Concise tourist information.

Ministry of Culture (www.culture.gr) Information on ancient sites, art galleries and museums.

MONEY

Greece adopted the euro in 2002. Banks exchange cash or travellers cheques in all major currencies, along with Euro-cheques. Post offices charge less commission than banks, but won’t cash travellers cheques. Credit cards are not as widely accepted as you’d expect. Always have cash handy. ATMs are located everywhere, except the smallest villages.

Greece is still a cheap destination by northern European standards, but it’s no longer dirt cheap. A rock-bottom daily budget of €40 would entail staying in youth hostels or camping, staying away from bars, and only occasionally eating in restaurants or taking ferries. Your money will go further if you travel during the quieter months as accommodation is much cheaper outside the high season.

In restaurants the service charge is included in the bill, but it’s customary to leave a small tip – just round up the bill.

POST

Post offices (tajhydromia) are easily identified by the yellow sign outside. Regular post boxes are yellow, and red post boxes are for express mail. Postcards and airmail letters within the EU cost €0.60. To other destinations the rate is €0.65. Post within Europe takes five to eight days, and to the USA, Australia and New Zealand, nine to 11 days. Some tourist shops also sell stamps, but with a 10% surcharge. Parcels are not delivered in Greece – they must be collected from a post office.

TELEPHONE

The international access code is 00 and the country code is 30. Area codes are part of the 10-digit number within Greece and generally comprise the first five digits outside of Athens. The landline prefix is 2, the mobile prefix is 6. For local directory inquiries dial 131/13 and international directory inquiries 161/162.

The Greek telephone service is maintained by Organisms Tiplekoinonion Ellados, a public corporation always referred to by its acronym OTE (o-teh).

Public phones are easy to use and pressing the ‘i’ button brings up the operating instructions in English. Public phones are everywhere and all use OTE phonecards, sold at OTE offices and periporta (street kiosks). These cards are sold in €3, €5 and €9 versions, and a local call costs €0.30 for three minutes.

If you have a compatible GSM mobile phone from a country with a global roaming agreement with Greece, you should be able to use your phone in Greece. There are several mobile service providers in Greece; Cosmote (www.cosmote.gr) has the best coverage. You can purchase a Greek SIM card for around €20 and cards are available everywhere to recharge the SIM card.

VISAS

The list of countries whose nationals can stay in Greece for up to three months includes Australia, Canada, all EU countries, Iceland, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and the USA. For longer stays, apply at a consulate abroad or at least 20 days in advance to the Aliens Bureau (Map p522; 210 770 5 711; Leoforos Alexandras 173, Athens; 9am-1pm Mon-Fri) at Athens Central Police Station. Elsewhere in Greece, apply to the local police authority.

In the past evidence of a visit to Turkish-occupied Northern Cyprus has been problematic when entering Greece. If visiting Northern Cyprus, have officials stamp a piece of paper rather than your passport.