

Greece

# Understand & Survival (Chapter)

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**Coverage includes:** Understand Greece, Greece Today, History - from early days to the 21st century, Ancient Greek Culture: Mythology, The Ancient Pantheon, The Golden Age of Drama, Philosophy, Sculpture and The Oracle of Delphi, The Greek Way of Life: Social & Family Life, The Greek Character, Civil Society, The New Greeks, and Faith & Identity, Architecture: Minoan Magnificence, Mycenaean Engineering, Classic Compositions, Hellenistic Citizens, Byzantine Zeal, Frankish Keeps & Venetian Strongholds, Ottoman Offerings, Neoclassical Splendour and Modern Ideas, Greek Cuisine: The Greek Kitchen, Mayirefta, Greek Grills, Fish & Seafood, Greek Salad, Regional Cuisine, Sweet Treats, Festive Food, Vegetarian-Friendly and Eating with Kids, Music & Dance: Traditional Folk Music, Rembetika, Laïka & Entehna, Contemporary & Pop Music, and Greek Dance, Art & Literature: Modern Greek Art, Modern Greek Literature and Contemporary Writers, Nature & Wildlife: Experiencing the Outdoors, Greek Geography, Wildflowers, Forests and Watching for Wildlife, Survival Guide, Directory, Transport, Language and Glossary.

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# Understand Greece

## **GREECE TODAY..... 710**

The Greek psyche remains spirited and passionate but is laced with anxiety as the government responds to an ailing economy and religious scandal.

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Greece's cultural influence, physical prowess and athleticism of mind have left deep historical footprints. Follow them through the ages.

## **ANCIENT GREEK CULTURE ..... 733**

Ancient Greece is the grandfather of philosophy, the keeper of classical sculpture and the wellspring of stories and myths.

## **THE GREEK WAY OF LIFE ..... 738**

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Contemporary chefs add tasty twists to traditional home cooking.

## **MUSIC & DANCE..... 755**

Spirited, high-kicking laps around the dance floor plus club music, jazz, rock and rap – Greek-style.

## **ART & LITERATURE ..... 759**

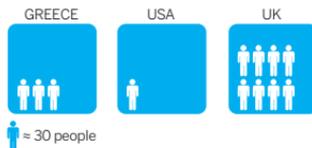
Read all about Greece's contemporary page-turners and thought-provoking modern art scene.

## **NATURE & WILDLIFE..... 762**

With mountainous interiors tumbling down to unending ribbons of coastline, the great Greek outdoors offers everything from birds to turtles and orchids to oregano.



## population per sq km



# Greece Today

## Spirit of Rebellion

Personal freedom and democratic rights are sacrosanct to Greeks, and a residual mistrust of authority and disrespect of the state is integral to the national psyche. This spirited characteristic has recently been evident, with many Greeks resisting Prime Minister George Papandreou's economic reforms to help curb Greece's soaring national debt.

In June 2011, as the world watched to see whether Mr Papandreou could achieve a majority vote in parliament for his austerity measures and the next EU/IMF bailout, the streets of Athens were red with riot. The vote went through and the rescue package for the ailing economy was put in motion. The drama is far from over though, as the current leadership navigates between incremental recovery and further recession.

Population: 10.7 million

Percentage of women: 50%

Life expectancy: 80 years

Inhabitants per sq km: 82

Tourists: 15 million

## The Winds of Change

Greeks are steadily increasing their awareness of the issues regarding local environmental degradation – cue recycling and a cap on sprawling tourist developments.

Another hot potato of debate is immigration, with an influx of people from Afghanistan, Iraq, Africa and Albania flooding into the country, despite Greece having the lowest acceptance rate of any EU country for asylum requests. Not surprisingly these new arrivals disappear as 'illegals' into the fringes of Greek society.

## The Church

Seismic faults have begun appearing in the once unblemished image of the Greek Orthodox Church after a number of scandalous stories – from sexual indecency to narcotics – emerged in recent times. However,

## Dos & Dont's

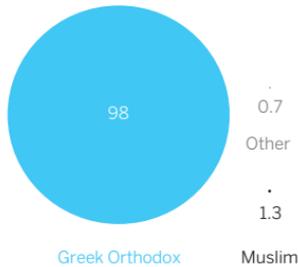
- » Do cover your arms and legs when visiting a church.
- » Do ensure your holiday insurance covers you for moped accidents.
- » Don't pick up any loose stones at archaeological sites.

## Essential Reads

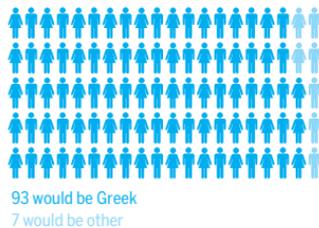
- » **The 'Odyssey'** (8th century BC; Homer) Plagued by Poseidon, Odysseus struggles to return home to Ithaca.
- » **Zorba the Greek** (1946; Nikos Kazantzakis) A spiritual bible to many; one man's unquenchable lust for life.
- » **The Magus** (1966; John Fowles) Creepy mind games set on fictional island Phraxos.
- » **Falling For Icarus: A Journey among the Cretans** (2004; Rory MacLean) A travel writer fulfills his ambition to build his own plane in the land of Icarus.

## belief systems

(% of population)



## if Greece were 100 people



the church is still a key element of Greek life even taking into account the drop off in the younger generation's footfalls to the local house of worship.

## National Psyche

Greeks are passionate, loyal and fiery. Issues are debated with strong will in the local *kafeneio*, and rather than living to work, Greek people work to live, with an emphasis on fun and shared company rather than slaving all hours in an office.

In 2011 the average Athenian saw their wage severely cut, some say as much as 15%, while living costs were soaring. All this with a rising rate of around 16% unemployment, with one in four public-sector jobs planned to be shelved to cut the deficit. No surprise then that the Greek psyche has shifted from relaxed to anxious, 'A state,' one Athenian told us, 'that we're just not used to.'

Greeks pride themselves on their *filotimo* (dignity and sense of honour) and their *filoxenia* (hospitality). Despite their current fiscal problems, the average Greek will still lavish you with free drinks, fresh cake from their kitchen, and the warmth they have always been famous for. Curious by nature, nothing is off limits for conversation, and you may find yourself quizzed as to why you haven't got children, why you're not married and how much you earn.

Greek society remains dominated by 'the family', and while many men may appear soaked with machismo, the matriarchal domestic model is still very much a commonplace, with women subtly pulling the strings in the background.

GDP: €232 billion  
(US\$318 billion)

Per capita  
income: €22,210  
(US\$29,600)

Inflation: 1.57%

Unemployment:  
16.2%

External debt:  
€389 billion  
(US\$532 billion)

## Top Films

» **300** (2007) Testosterone-fuelled retelling of the Spartans' epic stand (Battle of Thermopylae, 480 BC) against the might of the Persian army.

» **Mamma Mia** (2008) The island of Skopelos shines to the soundtrack of Abba.

» **Guns of Navarone** (1961) Compelling boys-own thriller, Allied soldiers enter Nazi-occupied Greece.

» **Shirley Valentine** (1989) Classic Greek island romance on Mykonos.

» **Captain Corelli's Mandolin** (2001) Lavish retelling of Louis de Bernières' novel, awash with romance in occupied Greece.



# History

In ancient and modern times, Greece has been doomed or blessed with its position on the map – a doorstep between Asia Minor and Europe – and often tied to the rising and waning fortunes of its neighbours. In the 5th century BC Greece was almost devoured by the unstoppable spread of the Persian Empire, only reversed by Alexander. Later still the Roman Empire overwhelmed old Hellas, but again the nation revived once more under the Byzantine Empire.

Greece's ability to make swift travel across water to distant lands contributed to its significant expansion of the country's mental and geopolitical horizons. In the process the Greeks were to learn much from the Phoenicians, Egyptians, Syrians and Hebrews. The genius of the ancient Greeks was their ability to adapt elements of other cultures' architecture and craft, then take it to new heights, be it the alphabet from the Phoenicians, or the unique beauty of their lifelike sculptures, enhancing upon the statues of Egypt (see also p736). Even the Romans were in awe of the Greeks' culture, their physical prowess and mental athleticism. But where did it all start?

## Early Days

The discovery of a Neanderthal skull in a cave on the Halkidiki peninsula of Macedonia confirmed the presence of humans in Greece 700,000 years ago. People from the Palaeolithic times (around 6500 BC) left bones and tools in the Pindos Mountains, while pastoral communities emerged during neolithic times (7000–3000 BC), primarily in the fertile region that is now Thessaly. Agriculturally sophisticated, they grew crops, bred sheep and goats, and used clay to produce pots, vases and stylised representations of idols as figures of worship.

By 3000 BC settlements had developed into streets, squares and mud-brick houses. Adding to this momentum, Indo-European migrants

Greek is Europe's oldest written language, second only to Chinese in the world. It is traceable back to the Linear B script of the Minoans and Mycenaeans. For more on Linear B script, try [www.ancientscripts.com/linearb.html](http://www.ancientscripts.com/linearb.html).

The web portal [www.ancientgreece.com](http://www.ancientgreece.com) is great for all things ancient and Greek.

## TIMELINE

### 7000–3000 BC

For 4000 years the early inhabitants of the Greek peninsula live a simple agrarian life, growing crops and herding animals. Communities with housing and planned streets begin to appear by around 3000 BC.

### 3000–1100 BC

The discovery of blending copper and tin into a strong alloy gives rise to the Bronze Age. Trade gains traction; increased prosperity sees the birth of the Cycladic, Minoan and Mycenaean civilisations.

### 2000 BC

Minoan civilisation reaches its peak in Crete: architectural advances lead to the first palaces in Knossos, Phaestos, Malia and Zakros, while pottery-making improves and Crete's first script emerges.

introduced the processing of bronze into Greece and from there began three remarkable civilisations: Cycladic, Minoan and Mycenaean.

## Artistic & Cultural Legacies

### Ancient Civilisations

#### Cycladic Civilisation

The Cycladic civilisation was a cluster of fishing and farming island communities with a sophisticated artistic temperament. The most striking legacy of this civilisation is the carving of the statuettes from Parian marble – the famous Cycladic figurines. Cycladic sculptors are also renowned for their impressive, life-sized *kouroi* (marble statues), carved during the Archaic period.

Scholars divide the Cycladic civilisation into three periods: Early (3000–2000 BC), Middle (2000–1500 BC) and Late (1500–1100 BC).

#### Minoan Civilisation

Named after King Minos, the mythical ruler of Crete (and stepfather of the Minotaur) – the Minoans were Europe's first advanced civilisation. Around 1900 BC the splendid complex of Knossos was first built (allegedly by Icarus' father, Daedalus), its frescoes, ventilation shafts, sewerage systems and ambitious designs marking an abrupt acceleration from neolithic life. Through their use of bronze the Minoans were able to build great sea vessels establishing a formidable profile as sailors and traders, whose reach extended across Asia Minor and North Africa.

The jury is out on what happened to trigger the demise of this great civilisation. Was it the tsunami and ash fallout caused by the volcanic eruption in Thira, Santorini in 1500 BC? Or perhaps the invading force of Mycenae?

#### Mycenaean Civilisation

The decline of the Minoan civilisation coincided with the rise of Mycenae (1600–1100 BC), which reached its peak between 1500 and 1200 BC with mainland city-states like Corinth, Tiryns (where Heracles was forced to report to collect his famous labours) and Mycenae. Warrior kings who measured their wealth in weapons, now ruled from imposing palaces heavily fortified upon hills. The interiors featured impressive frescoes, and commercial transactions were documented on tablets in Linear B (a form of Greek language 500 years older than the Ionic Greek used by Homer). The Mycenaean's most impressive legacy is their magnificent gold masks, refined jewellery and metal ornaments, the best of which are in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.

#### 1700–1550 BC

Santorini erupts with a cataclysmic volcanic explosion, causing a Mediterranean-wide tsunami that scholars suggest contributed to the destruction of Minoan civilisation.

#### 1500–1200 BC

The authoritarian Mycenaean culture from the Peloponnese usurps much of the Cretan and Cycladic cultures. Goldsmithing is a predominant feature of Mycenaean life.

#### 1400 BC

The Mycenaean colonise Crete, building cities such as Kydonia (Hania) and Polyrrinia. Weapons manufacture flourishes; fine arts fall into decline. Greek gods replace worship of the Mother Goddess.

#### 1200–800 BC

The Dorians herald 400 years of obscurity in terms of international trade, but excel in the use of iron weaponry and ironwork in architecture, and develop striking geometric designs on pottery.

Homer's classic work, the 'Iliad', written in the 8th century BC, relates in poetic epithet a mythical episode of the Trojan War. Its sequel, The 'Odyssey', recounts the epic adventures of Odysseus and his companions in their journey home from the Trojan War.

## Geometric & Archaic Ages

The Dorians were an ancient Hellenic people who settled in the Peloponnese by the 8th century BC. In the 11th or 12th century BC these warrior-like people fanned out to occupy much of the mainland, seizing control of the Mycenaean kingdoms and enslaving the inhabitants. The following 400-year period is often referred to as Greece's 'dark age', however in their favour the Dorians introduced iron and developed a new intricate style of pottery, decorated with striking geometric designs. Significantly they were to introduce the practice of polytheism (the worship of many gods), paving the foundations for Zeus and his pantheon of 12 principal deities.

During the following Archaic period, about 1000–800 BC, Greek culture developed rapidly; many of the advancements in literature, sculpture, theatre, architecture and intellectual endeavour began. This revival overlapped with the Classical age (the two eras are often classified as the Hellenic period). Advances included the Greek alphabet, the verses of Homer (the 'Odyssey' was possibly the world's first epic work of literature), the founding of the Olympic Games (p714), and central sanctuaries such as Delphi. These common bonds gave Greeks a sense of national identity and intellectual vigour.

By about 800 BC Greece had been divided into a series of independent city-states, the most powerful being Argos, Athens, Corinth, Elis, Sparta and Thiva (Thebes). Most abolished monarchic rule and aristocratic monopoly, establishing a set of laws that redistributed wealth and allowed the city's citizens to regain control over their lands.

### THE OLYMPIA OLYMPICS

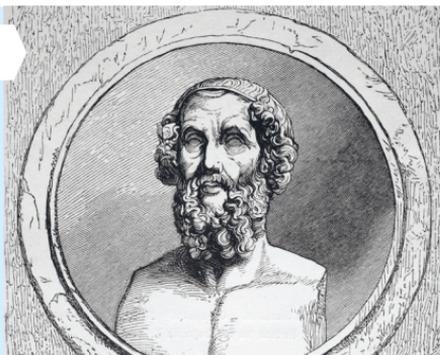
The Olympic tradition emerged around the 11th century BC as a paean to Zeus, in the form of contests, attended initially by notable men – and women – who assembled before the sanctuary priests and swore to uphold solemn oaths. By the 8th century attendance had grown from a wide confederacy of city-states, and the festival morphed into a male-only major event lasting five days at the site of Olympia. First prize might have been a simple laurel wreath, but it was the esteem of the people that most mattered, for Greek olympiads were as venerated as Roman gladiators. A ceremonial truce was enforced for the duration of the games. Crowds of spectators lined the tracks, where competitors vied for an honourable (and at times dishonourable) victory in athletics, chariot races, wrestling and boxing (back then there were no gloves but simple leather straps). Three millennia later, while the scale and scope of the games may have expanded considerably, and the fact that the ancient games were always held in Olympia, the basic format is essentially unchanged. To visit the original site, with its still extant track and fallen columns, is amazingly evocative.

#### 1100 BC

The Dorians overran the Mycenaean cities in Crete. They reorganise the political system, dividing society into classes. A rudimentary democracy replaces monarchical government.

#### 800–700 BC

Homer composes the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey' around this time. The two epic poems are Greece's earliest pieces of literary art, and are still praised for their poetic genius.



» Woodcut of Homer

## THE SPARTANS

Maybe you saw the gory but brilliant film *300*, imaginatively based on the battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC; one of the most talked about battles in history. Three hundred elite Spartan soldiers held an entire Persian army (whose force numbered several thousand) at bay at the pass ('hot gates') of Thermopylae (near today's Lamia). For three days, wave upon wave of Persian soldiers fell upon their deadly spears and unbridgeable tortoise-shell formation. What kind of soldiers could display such bravery? Ones raised in the war-mongering/honour-based regime of Sparta.

The Spartans were held in mythic awe by their fellow Greeks for their ferocious, self-sacrificing martial supremacy, marching into battle in a disciplined, lock-stepped phalanx, living (and very often dying) by the motto 'return with your shield or on it'. The product of harsh ideology, every male Spartan was by definition a soldier (hoplite), who began his training almost from birth. Poor recruits were weeded out early – a citizens' committee decided which newborn babies did not pass muster (they would then be left on the Taygetos Mountains to die). The surviving children, from the age of seven, endured 13 years of training to foster supreme physical fitness, and suffered institutionalised beating 'competitions' to toughen them up. Sparta, fearing no one, was without city walls or fortification. Gold and silver coins, in an antimercenary measure to throttle any sign of material greed, were corrupted with lead to render them useless for trade with passing merchants. The same could be said about interactions with outsiders: intermarriage with other tribes was equally forbidden, particularly the Athenians, who the Spartans considered morally corrupt and too lavish. Spartan women on the other hand, were accorded with more equality and respect than anywhere else in Greece at the time. But it was Sparta's inward, xenophobic character – along with the exhausting Peloponnesian Wars – that ultimately led to the decline and genetic weakening of this master race. The Battle of Leuctra in 371 BC was the first major defeat of the Spartans in open battle and marked the beginning of the collapse of their power.

## Democracy

The seafaring city-state of Athens was still in the hands of aristocrats when Athens' greatest reformist, Solon, was appointed chief magistrate in 594 BC. His mandate was to defuse the mounting tensions between the haves and have-nots. In a high-risk strategy Solon cancelled all debts, liberating those who'd become enslaved because of them. Declaring all free Athenians equal by law, Solon abolished inherited privileges and restructured political power, establishing four classes based on wealth. Although only the first two classes were eligible for office, all four could elect magistrates and vote on legislation. Solon's reforms have become regarded as a blueprint of the ideological democratic system aspired to in most of today's Western societies.

### 800–650 BC

Independent city-states begin to emerge in the Archaic Age as the Dorians develop. Aristocrats rule these ministates while tyrants occasionally take power by force. The Greek alphabet emerges from Phoenician script.

### 700–500 BC

Having originated around 1000 BC in the Peloponnese, the Spartans come to play a decisive role in Greek history. Politically and militarily, the Spartans dominate for around 200 years.

### 594 BC

Solon, a ruling aristocrat in Athens, introduces rules of fair play to his citizenry. His radical rule-changing – in effect creating human and political rights – is credited as being the first step to real democracy.

### 490 BC

Athens invokes the ire of the Persians by supporting insurgencies within Persian territorial domains. Seeking revenge, the Persian king Darius sends an army to teach Greece a lesson but is defeated at Marathon.

## Classical Age

An explosion in form and light, Greece's Golden Age, from the 6th to 4th centuries BC, saw a renaissance in cultural creativity. Literature and drama blossomed as many city-states enjoyed increased economic reform, political prosperity and a surge in mental agility, led by the noble works of Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles who contributed dramatic tragedies, and Aristophanes who inspired political satire with his comedies. Today the potency of this fertile era still resonates – many ideas discussed today were debated by these great minds. And that's not forgetting the journalistic blogs of historians Herodotus – widely regarded as the father of history – and Thucydides.

Athens reached its zenith after the monumental defeat of the Persians at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC (see The Persian Wars), founding the Delian League, a naval alliance formed to liberate city-states still occupied by Persia. Many Aegean and Ionian city-states swore an allegiance to Athens, making an annual contribution to the treasury of ships, bringing it fantastic wealth unrivalled by its poor neighbour, Sparta, and also turning it into something of an empire.

When Pericles became leader of Athens in 461 BC, he moved the treasury from Delos to the Acropolis, reappropriating funds to construct grander temples upon it, including the majestic Parthenon, and elsewhere, including the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. It was also during this Classical period that sculptors developed a more naturalistic, aesthetic style for marble pieces and bronze casts, and it was Pericles who commissioned the Athenian sculptor Pheidias to create the enduring marble friezes of the Parthenon and the sculpture of the city's patroness, Athena.

With the Aegean Sea safely under its wing, Athens began to look westwards for further expansion, bringing it into conflict with the Sparta-dominated Peloponnesian League. A series of skirmishes and provocations subsequently led to the Peloponnesian Wars.

## War & Conquest

### The Persian Wars

Athens' rapid growth as a major city-state also meant heavy reliance on food imports from the Black Sea; and Persia's imperial expansion westward threatened strategic coastal trade routes across Asia Minor. Athens' support for a rebellion in the Persian colonies of Asia Minor sparked the Persian drive to destroy the city. Persian emperor Darius spent five years suppressing the revolt and remained determined to succeed. A 25,000-strong Persian army reached Attica in 490 BC, but was defeated when an Athenian force of 10,000 outmanoeuvred it at the Battle of Marathon.

*The Histories*, written by Herodotus in the 5th century BC, chronicles the conflicts between the ancient Greek city-states and Persia. The work is considered to be the first narrative of historical events ever written.

*Persian Fire*, by Tom Holland, is a compelling account of the warring city-states of Athens and Sparta and how they had to finally pull together to face the Persian threat.

#### 480 BC

Darius' son and heir Xerxes seeks revenge for the defeat at Marathon. The enormous forces sent to crush Greece defeat Leonidas at Thermopylae and then sack Athens, but are routed at sea off Salamis (Salamina).

#### 479 BC

The Greeks pay back their defeat at the hands of Xerxes by smashing the Persian army of Mardonius at the decisive Battle of Plataea under the Spartan leader Pausanias. The Persian Wars are finally over.

#### 477 BC

Seeking security while building a de facto empire, the Athenians establish a political and military alliance called the Delian League. Many city-states and islands join the new club.

#### 461–32 BC

New Athenian leader Pericles shifts power from Delos to Athens and uses the treasury wealth of the Delian League to fund massive works, including the construction of the magnificent Parthenon, an enduring legacy.

When Darius died in 485 BC, his son Xerxes resumed the quest to conquer Greece. In 480 BC Xerxes gathered men from every nation of his empire and launched a massive, coordinated invasion by land and sea. Some 30 city-states met in Corinth to devise a defence (others, including Delphi, sided with the Persians). This joint alliance, the Hellenic League, agreed on a combined army and navy under Spartan command, with the strategy provided by the brilliant Athenian leader, Themistocles. The Spartan king Leonidas led the army to the pass at Thermopylae, near present-day Lamia, the main passage into central Greece from the north. This bottleneck was easy to defend and, although the Greeks were greatly outnumbered, they held the pass – until a traitor showed the Persians another way over the mountains, from where they turned to attack the Greeks. The Greeks retreated, but Leonidas, along with 300 of his elite Spartan troops, fought to the death in a heroic last stand (see also *The Spartans*, p175).

The Spartans and their Peloponnesian allies fell back on their second line of defence, an earthen wall across the Isthmus of Corinth, while the Persians advanced upon Athens. Themistocles ordered his people to flee the city, the women and children to seek refuge at Salamis (today's Salamina) and the men to sea with the Athenian naval fleet, while the Persians razed Athens to the ground. The Persian naval campaign, however, was not successful. By skilful manoeuvring, the Greek warships trapped the larger Persian ships in the narrow waters off Salamis, where the smaller, more agile Greek vessels carried the advantage. Xerxes returned to Persia in disgust, leaving his general Mardonius to subdue Greece. The result was quite the reverse: a year later the Greeks, under the command of the Spartan general Pausanias, obliterated the Persian army at the Battle of Plataea.

## The Peloponnesian Wars

The Peloponnesian League was essentially a military coalition governed by the iron hand of Sparta, who maintained political dominance over the Peloponnesian region. Athens' growing imperialism threatened Spartan hegemony; the ensuing power struggle was to last almost 30 years.

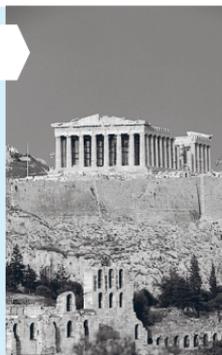
### First Peloponnesian War

One of the major triggers of the first Peloponnesian War (431–421 BC) was the Corcyra incident, in which Athens supported Corcyra (present-day Corfu) in a row with Corinth, its mother city. Corinth called on Sparta to help and the Spartans, whose power depended to a large extent on Corinth's wealth and allegiance, duly rallied to the cause.

Athens knew it couldn't defeat the Spartans on land, so it abandoned Attica and withdrew behind its mighty walls, opting to rely on its navy to put pressure on Sparta by blockading the Peloponnese. Athens suffered badly during the siege; plague broke out in the overcrowded city, killing a

*The Trial of Socrates* by IF Stone frames in a contemporary investigative light Plato's version of events surrounding the philosopher Socrates' life and death.

In *The Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides sets out a historical narrative of the quarrels and warfare between Athens and Sparta.



ANDREAS BLOMQUIST / LONELY PLANET IMAGES ©

» Acropolis, Athens

### 431–21 BC

The military might of Sparta runs afoul of the commercial and artistic clout of Athens over an alliance with Corcyra. The spat becomes a full-blown war of attrition, with Athens barricaded and the Peloponnese embargoed.

### 431–386 BC

Crete also sees internal strife: Knossos against Lyttos, Phaestos against Gortyna, Kydonia against Apollonia and Itanos against Ierapitna. An earthquake wreaks havoc in 386.

### 413–404 BC

A second war between Sparta and Athens breaks out over the distant colony of Sicily, ending an eight-year truce. The Spartans break the Athenian siege and Sparta assumes total dominance.

third of the population – including Pericles – but the defences held firm. The blockade of the Peloponnese eventually began to hurt and the two cities negotiated an uneasy truce.

## Second Peloponnesian War

The truce lasted until 413 BC, when the Spartans went to the aid of the Sicilian city of Syracuse, which the Athenians had been besieging for three years. The Spartans ended the siege, and destroyed the Athenian fleet and army in the process.

Despite this, Athens fought on for a further nine years before it finally surrendered to Sparta in 404 BC. Corinth urged the total destruction of Athens, but the Spartans felt honour-bound to spare the city that had saved Greece from the Persians. Instead, they crippled it by confiscating its fleet, abolishing the Delian League and tearing down the walls between the city and Piraeus.

## The Hellenistic Age

In the century following the Peloponnesian Wars (431–404 BC) between Athens and Sparta, the battle-weary city-states came under the rule of the Macedonian warrior king, Philip II. But it would be his extraordinary young son and successor, Alexander the Great, who would extend the Hellenistic idea across a vast empire. Alexander was obsessed with carrying the ideal of Hellenism to as far a horizon as his genius and his horse, Bucephalus, would take him. However, in Alexander's unstoppable blaze of glory, Athens and its counterparts began to feel they were again ruled by a king. The city-states felt disempowered by the loss of autonomy under the monarch. The Greeks now perceived themselves as part of a larger empire, and it is this concept that characterises the Hellenistic society. Contemporary arts, drama, sculpture and philosophy reflected growing awareness of a new definition of Greek identity.

Hellenism would continue to prosper even under Roman rule. As the Roman province of Achaëa, Greece experienced an unprecedented period of peace for almost 300 years, known as the Pax Romana. The Romans had always venerated Greek art, literature and philosophy, and aristocratic Romans sent their offspring to the many schools in Athens. Indeed, the Romans adopted most aspects of Hellenistic culture, from its dress to its gods, spreading its unifying traditions throughout their empire.

The Romans were also the first to refer to the Hellenes as Greeks, derived from the word *graikos* – the name of a prehistoric tribe.

## The Rise of Macedon & Alexander the Great

By the late 4th century BC, the Greeks were engineering their own decline. Sparta began a doomed campaign to reclaim the cities of Asia Mi-

Philip II engaged the philosopher Aristotle to tutor the teenage Alexander, who was greatly inspired by Homer's 'Iliad'. Alexander retained a strong interest in the arts and culture throughout his life.

### 399 BC

Socrates stands trial, accused of corrupting the young with pedagogical speeches. A jury condemns him to death. Rather than appealing for voluntary exile, Socrates defiantly accepts a cup of hemlock.



» Statue of Socrates

### 371–62 BC

Thiva (Thebes), a small city-state, is in ascendancy and gains control after it wins against Sparta.

But nine years of Theban dominance ends at the hands of a Spartan-Athenian alliance.

## ALEXANDER

Alexander the Great is considered to be one of the best military leaders of all time; was never beaten in battle, and by the age of 30 reigned over one of the largest ancient empires stretching from Greece to the Himalayas.

nor from Persian rule, bringing the Persians back into Greek affairs where they found willing allies in Athens and an increasingly powerful Thebes (Thiva). The rivalry between Sparta and Thebes culminated in the decisive Battle of Leuctra in 371 BC, where Thebes, led by Epaminondas, inflicted Sparta's first defeat in a pitched land battle. Spartan influence collapsed and Thebes filled the vacuum. In a surprise about-turn, Athens now allied itself with Sparta, and their combined forces met the Theban army at Mantinea in the Peloponnese in 362 BC. Thebes won the battle, but Epaminondas was killed; and without him, Theban power soon crumbled.

However, the political influence of the major city-states had by now been significantly eroded. Their strength waning, they were unable to combat the new power in the north, Macedon – geographically the modern *nomós* (prefecture) of Macedonia – which was gathering strength under its aggressive monarch, Philip II.

In 338 BC, Philip II marched into Greece and defeated a combined army of Athenians and Thebans at the Battle of Chaeronea. In a move that signalled the beginning of the end of the autonomous city-state structure, Philip called together all the city-states (except Sparta who resisted alliance) at Corinth and persuaded them to swear allegiance to Macedonia by promising to campaign against Persia. But before the monarch could realise those ambitions, a Macedonian noble assassinated Philip in 336 BC. His 20-year-old son, Alexander – brilliantly talented as a fighter and scholar – became king.

Philip II's death had been the signal for rebellions throughout the budding empire, but Alexander wasted no time in crushing them, making an example of Thebes by razing it to the ground. Upon his black stallion he was always the first into battle ahead of his men, and was renowned for his valour, cunning and recklessness. After restoring order in Thebes, he turned his attention to the Persian Empire and marched his seasoned army of 40,000 men into Asia Minor in 334 BC.

After a few bloody battles with the Persians, most notably at Issus (333 BC), Alexander succeeded in conquering Syria, Palestine and Egypt – where he was proclaimed pharaoh and founded the city of Alexandria. One of Alexander's tactics to minimise future resistance from his new subjects was to interbreed his soldiers with his new subjects, which forced a union between former foes. After Alexandria he maniacally pursued the Persian king, Darius III, defeating his army in 331 BC. Alexander continued his reign east into what is now Uzbekistan, Balkh in Afghanistan and northern India. His ambition was now to conquer the world, which he believed ended at the sea beyond India, but his now aged soldiers grew weary and in 324 BC forced him to return to Mesopotamia, where he settled in Babylon. The following year, at the age of 33, he fell ill suddenly and died. There had never been a leader like him, achieving

**359 BC**

In the north, the Macedonians are on the rise as King Philip II seizes the initiative in the power vacuum. He seeks alliances with Sparta and Athens on a promise to wage war again on Persia.

**336 BC**

Philip's son Alexander assumes leadership of Macedonia following the untimely murder of his father. Within a few years the new king takes up the challenge against Persia laid down by the slain Philip.

**334–23 BC**

Alexander the Great sets out to conquer the known world. Thebes (Thiva) is the first victim, followed by the Persians, the Egyptians and finally the peoples of today's central Asia. He dies in 323 BC.

**86 BC–AD 224**

Roman expansion includes Greek territory. First defeating Macedonia at Pydna in 168 BC, the Romans ultimately overtake the mainland and establish the Pax Romana. It lasts 300 years.

such reach in such a short space of time. However, despite this powerful, expanded dynasty, his generals swooped like vultures on the empire and, when the dust settled, Alexander's empire was carved up into fractious, independent kingdoms.

Macedonia lost control of the Greek city-states to the south, which banded together into the Aetolian League, centred on Delphi, and the Achaean League, based in the Peloponnese. Athens and Sparta joined neither.

## Foreign Rule

### Roman Era

While Alexander the Great was forging his vast empire in the east, the Romans had been expanding theirs to the west, and now they were keen to start making inroads into Greece. After several inconclusive clashes, they defeated Macedon in 168 BC at the Battle of Pydna.

The Achaean League was defeated in 146 BC and the Roman consul Mummius made an example of the rebellious Corinthians by destroying their city. In 86 BC Athens joined an ill-fated rebellion against the Romans in Asia Minor staged by the king of the Black Sea region, Mithridates VI. In retribution, the Roman statesman Sulla invaded Athens and took off with its most valuable sculptures. Greece now became the Graeco-Roman province of Achaea. Although officially under the auspices of Rome, some major Greek cities were given the freedom to self-govern to some extent. As the Romans revered Greek culture, Athens retained its status as a centre of learning. During a succession of Roman emperors, namely Augustus, Nero and Hadrian, Greece experienced a period of relative peace, the Pax Romana, which was to last until the middle of the 3rd century AD.

### The Byzantine Empire & the Crusades

The Pax Romana began to crumble in AD 250 when the Goths invaded Greece, the first of a succession of invaders spurred on by the 'great migrations' of the Visigoths and then the Ostrogoths from the middle Balkans.

In an effort to resolve the conflict in the region, in AD 324 the Roman Emperor Constantine I, a Christian convert, transferred the capital of the empire from Rome to Byzantium, a city on the western shore of the Bosphorus, which was renamed Constantinople (present-day İstanbul). While Rome went into terminal decline, the eastern capital began to grow in wealth and strength as a Christian state. In the ensuing centuries, Byzantine Greece faced continued pressure from the Persians and Arabs, but it managed to retain its stronghold over the region.

It is ironic that the demise of the Byzantine Empire was accelerated by fellow Christians from the west – the Frankish Crusaders. The stated

#### Best Historical Site

The epic Battle of Thermopylae, near today's Lamia, saw the Spartans redefine 'valour' as they held out outnumbered against king Xerxes' Persian force.

#### 67 BC

The Romans finally conquer Crete after invading two years earlier at Kydonia.

Gortyna becomes the capital and most powerful city. The 'Pax Romana' ends internal wars.



» Tower of the Winds, Athens

#### 27 BC

Crete is united with eastern Libya to form the Roman province of Creta et Cyrenaica, reorganising population centres and ushering in a new era of prosperity.

#### AD 63

Christianity emerges after St Paul visits Crete and leaves his disciple, Titus, to convert the island. St Titus becomes Crete's first bishop.

mission of the Crusades was to liberate the Holy Land from the Muslims, but in reality they were driven as much by greed as by religious zeal. The first three Crusades passed by without affecting the area, but the leaders of the Fourth Crusade (in the early part of the 13th century) decided that Constantinople presented richer pickings than Jerusalem and struck a deal with Venice, who had helped prop up the Crusades.

Constantinople was sacked in 1204 and much of the Byzantine Empire was partitioned into fiefdoms ruled by self-styled 'Latin' (mostly Frankish or western-Germanic) princes. The Venetians, meanwhile, had also secured a foothold in Greece. Over the next few centuries they acquired all the key Greek ports, including Methoni, Koroni and Monemvasia in the Peloponnese (then known as the Morea), and the island of Crete, and became the wealthiest and most powerful traders in the Mediterranean.

Despite this sorry state of affairs, Byzantium was not yet dead. In 1259 the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Palaeologos recaptured the Peloponnese and made the city of Mystras his headquarters. Many eminent Byzantine artists, architects, intellectuals and philosophers converged on the city for a final burst of Byzantine creativity. Michael VIII managed to reclaim Constantinople in 1261, but by this time Byzantium was a shadow of its former self.

## Ottoman Rule

Constantinople was soon facing a much greater threat from the east. The Seljuk Turks, a tribe from central Asia, had first appeared on the eastern fringes of the empire in the middle of the 11th century. The Ottomans (the followers of Osman, who ruled from 1289 to 1326) supplanted the Seljuks as the dominant Turkish tribe. The Muslim Ottomans began to expand rapidly the areas under their control and by the mid-15th century were harassing the Byzantine Empire on all sides.

On 29 May 1453, Constantinople fell under Turkish Ottoman rule (referred to by Greeks as *turkokratia*). Once more Greece became a battleground, this time fought over by the Turks and Venetians. Eventually, with the exception of the Ionian Islands (where the Venetians retained control), Greece became part of the Ottoman Empire.

Ottoman power reached its zenith under Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, who ruled between 1520 and 1566. His successor, Selim the Sot, added Cyprus to their dominions in 1570, but his death in 1574 marked an end to serious territorial expansion. Although they captured Crete in 1669 after a 25-year campaign, the ineffectual sultans that followed in the late 16th and 17th centuries saw the empire go into steady decline.

Venice expelled the Turks from the Peloponnese in a three-year campaign (1685–87) that saw Venetian troops advance as far as Athens.

Greece is home to the oldest mosque in Europe. The Bayezit's Mosque at Didymoticho was built by Ottoman Sultan Bayazit I in the late 14th century.

### 250

The first Christian martyrs, the so-called Agii Deka (Ten Saints) are killed in the Cretan village of the same name, as Roman officials begin major Christian persecutions.

### 324

The AD 250 invasion of Greece by the Goths signals the decline of Pax Romana and in 324 the capital of the Roman empire is moved to Byzantium (later renamed Constantinople). Christianity gains traction.

### 394

Christianity is declared the official religion. All pagan worship of Greek and Roman gods is outlawed. Christian theology supplants classical philosophy.

### 395

The Roman Empire splits and Crete is ruled by Byzantium. Crete becomes a self-governing province; Gortyna is its administrative and religious centre. Piracy decreases; trade flourishes; many churches are built.

During this campaign, Venetian artillery struck gunpowder stored inside the ruins of the Acropolis and badly damaged the Parthenon.

The Ottomans restored rule in 1715, but never regained their former authority. By the end of the 18th century pockets of Turkish officials and aristocrats had emerged throughout Greece as self-governing cliques that made cursory gestures of obligation to the sultan in Constantinople. Also, some Greeks had gained influence under the sultan's lax leadership or enjoyed privileged administrative status; they were influential church clerics, wealthy merchants, landowners or governors, ruling over the provincial Greek peasants. But there also existed an ever-increasing group of Greeks, including many intellectual expatriates, who aspired to emancipation.

Russia campaigned to liberate its fellow Christians in the south, and sent Russian agents to foment rebellion, first in the Peloponnese in 1770 and then in Epiros in 1786. Both insurrections were crushed ruthlessly – the latter by Ali Pasha (1741–1822), the Ottoman governor of Ioannina (who would proceed to set up his own power base in defiance of the sultan).

## Independence

In 1814 businessmen Athanasios Tsakalof, Emmanuel Xanthos and Nikolaos Skoufas founded the first Greek independence party, the Filiki Eteria (Friendly Society). The underground organisation's message spread quickly. Supporters believed that armed force was the only effective means of liberation, and made generous financial contributions to the Greek fighters.

Ali Pasha's private rebellion against the sultan in 1820 gave the Greeks the impetus they needed. On 25 March 1821, the Greeks launched the War of Independence. Uprisings broke out almost simultaneously across most of Greece and the occupied islands. The fighting was savage and atrocities were committed on both sides; in the Peloponnese 12,000 Turkish inhabitants were killed after the capture of the city of Tripolitsa (present-day Tripoli), while the Turks retaliated with massacres in Asia Minor, most notoriously on the island of Chios.

The campaign escalated, and within a year the Greeks had captured the fortresses of Monemvasia, Navarino (modern Pylos) and Nafplio in the Peloponnese, and Messolongi, Athens and Thebes. The Greeks proclaimed independence on 13 January 1822 at Epidavros.

Regional differences over national governance twice escalated into civil war (in 1824 and 1825). The Ottomans took advantage and by 1827 the Turks (with Egyptian reinforcements) had recaptured most of the Peloponnese, as well as Messolongi and Athens. The Western powers intervened and a combined Russian, French and British naval fleet sunk the Turkish-Egyptian fleet in the Battle of Navarino in October 1827. Sultan Mahmud II defied the odds and proclaimed a holy war, prompting Russia to send troops into the Balkans to engage the Ottoman army.

The poet Lord Byron was one of a large group of philhellenic volunteers who played an active role in fanning the independence cause. Byron's war effort was cut short when he died in 1824.

**529**

Athens' cultural influence is dealt a fatal blow when Emperor Justinian outlaws the teaching of classical philosophy in favour of Christian theology, by now regarded as the ultimate form of intellectual endeavour.

**960**

Byzantine General Nikiforos Fokas launches the 'Expedition to Crete', liberating the island. Coastal defences are fortified, and Chandax becomes capital. A powerful land-holding class emerges.

**1204**

Marauding Frankish Crusaders sack Constantinople. Trading religious fervour for self-interest, the Crusaders strike a blow that sets Constantinople on the road to a slow demise.

**1209**

Geoffrey de Villehardouin parcels out the Peloponnese into fiefs; he paves the way for his nephew, another Geoffrey, who appoints himself Prince of Morea (the name given to medieval Peloponnese).

Fighting continued until 1829 when, with Russian troops at the gates of Constantinople, the sultan accepted Greek independence with the Treaty of Adrianople (independence was formally recognised in 1830).

## The Modern Greek Nation

The Greeks, meanwhile, had been busy organising the independent state they had proclaimed several years earlier. In April 1827 the Greeks elected Ioannis Kapodistrias, a Corfiot and former diplomat of Russian Tsar Alexander I, as the first president of the republic; and chose Nafplio, in the Peloponnese, as the capital.

However, there was much dissension within Greek ranks. Kapodistrias was assassinated in 1831 after he had ordered the imprisonment of a Maniot chieftain, part of a response to undermine rising discontent and rebellion among the many parties (including leaders of the independence movement) whose authority had been weakened by the new state.

Amid the ensuing anarchy, Britain, France and Russia declared Greece a monarchy. They set on the throne a non-Greek, 17-year-old Bavarian Prince Otto, who arrived in Nafplio in January 1833. The new kingdom (established by the London Convention of 1832) consisted of the Peloponnese, Sterea Ellada, the Cyclades and the Sporades.

After moving the capital to Athens in 1834, King Otto proved to be an abrasive ruler who had alienated the independence veterans by giving the most prestigious official posts to his Bavarian court. However, by the

### A FEMALE FORCE

Greek women have played a strong role in Greek resistance movements throughout history and Laskarina Bou Boulina (1771–1825), a celebrated seafarer, is one such woman. She became a member of Filiki Eteria (Friendly Society), a major organisation striving for independence against Ottoman rule. Originally from Hydra, she settled in Spetses from where she commissioned the construction of and commanded – as a lady admiral – several warships that were used in significant naval blockades (the most famous vessel being the *Agamemnon*). She helped maintain the crews of her ships and a small army of soldiers, and supplied the revolutionaries with food, weapons and ammunition, using her ships for transportation. Her role in maritime operations significantly helped the independence movement. However, political factionism within the government led to her postwar arrest and subsequent exile to Spetses, where she died.

Distinguished as a national heroine, streets across Greece bear her name and her image appeared commemoratively on the (now-disused) one-drachma coin. Moreover, her great-granddaughter, Lela Karagiannis, also fought with the resistance in WWII. There are statues dedicated to both women in Spetses Town, and Bou Boulina's home is now a private museum.

#### 1453

Greece becomes a dominion of the Ottoman Turks after they seize control of Constantinople, sounding the death knell for the Byzantine Empire.

#### 1460

By 1460 the Morea falls to the Turks and centuries of power struggles between the Turks and Venetians follows.

#### 1541

Dominikos Theotokopoulos, later known as 'El Greco', is born in Candia; his subsequent creations in Italy and Spain are marked by both Cretan School influence and bold personal innovation.

#### 1684–87

The Venetians expel the Turks from the Peloponnese in a campaign that sees Venetian troops advance as far as Athens.

end of the 1850s most of the stalwarts of the War of Independence had been replaced by a new breed of university graduates (Athens University was founded in 1817).

## The Great Idea

Greece's foreign policy (dubbed the 'Great Idea') was to assert sovereignty over its dispersed Greek populations. Set against the background of the Crimean conflict, British and French interests were nervous at the prospect of a Greece alliance with Russia against the Ottomans, especially as in 1862 Otto had been ousted in a bloodless coup.

British influence in the Ionian Islands had begun in 1815 (following a spell of political ping-pong between the Venetians, Russians and French). The British did improve the islands' infrastructure and many locals adopted British customs (such as afternoon tea and cricket). But, Greek independence put pressure on Britain to give sovereignty to the Greek nation, and in 1864 the British left. Meanwhile, Britain simultaneously eased onto the Greek throne the young Danish Prince William, crowned King George I in 1863. His 50-year reign eventually brought some stability to the country, beginning with a new constitution in 1864 that established the power of democratically elected representatives.

In 1881 Greece acquired Thessaly and part of Epiros as a result of a Russo-Turkish war. But Greece failed miserably when, in 1897, it tried to attack Turkey in the north in an effort to reach *enosis* (union) with Crete (who had persistently agitated for liberation from the Ottomans). The bid drained much of the country's resources and timely diplomatic intervention by the great powers prevented the Turkish army from taking Athens.

Crete was placed under international administration, but the government of the island was gradually handed over to the Greeks, and in 1905 the president of the Cretan assembly, Eleftherios Venizelos, announced Crete's union with Greece (although this was not recognised by international law until 1913). Venizelos went on to become prime minister of Greece in 1910 and was the country's leading politician until his republican sympathies brought about his downfall in 1935.

## Balkan Wars

Although the Ottoman Empire was in its death throes at the beginning of the 20th century, it had still retained Macedonia. This was a prize coveted by the newly formed Balkan countries of Serbia and Bulgaria, as well as by Greece, and led to the outbreak of the Balkan Wars (1912 and 1913). The outcome was the Treaty of Bucharest (August 1913), which greatly expanded Greek territory (and with it its fertile agricultural resources). Its borders now took in the southern part of Macedonia (which included Thessaloniki, the vital cultural centre strategically positioned on the

Eugène Delacroix' oil canvas *The Massacre at Chios* (1824) was inspired by the events in Asia Minor during Greece's War of Independence in 1821. The painting hangs in the Louvre Museum in Paris

### 1770s & 1780s

Catherine the Great of Russia dislodges the Turks from the Black Sea coast and assigns several towns with Ancient Greek names. She offers Greeks financial incentives and free land to settle the region.

### 1814

The underground Hellenic Independence organisation known as the Filiki Eteria (Friendly Society) is established in the town of Odessa on the Black Sea coast. Its influence spreads throughout Greece.

### 1821

On 25 March, Bishop Germanos of Patra (a member of the Filiki Eteria) signals the beginning of the War of Independence on the mainland. Greece celebrates this date as its national day of Independence.

### 1822–29

Independence is declared at Epidavros on 13 January 1822, but fighting continues for another seven years. The Ottomans capitulate and accept the terms of the Treaty of Adrianople.

Balkan trade routes), part of Thrace, another chunk of Epiros, and the northeastern Aegean Islands, as well as recognising the union with Crete.

## WWI & Smyrna

In March 1913 a man assassinated King George, and his son Constantine became the monarch. King Constantine, who was married to the sister of the German emperor, insisted that Greece remain neutral when WWI broke out in August 1914. As the war dragged on, the Allies (Britain, France and Russia) put increasing pressure on Greece to join forces with them against Germany and Turkey, promising concessions in Asia Minor in return. Prime Minister Venizelos favoured the Allied cause, placing him at loggerheads with the king. The king left Greece in June 1917, replaced by his second-born son, Alexander, who was more amenable to the Allies.

Greek troops served with distinction on the Allied side, but when the war ended in 1918 the promised land in Asia Minor was not forthcoming. Venizelos then led a diplomatic campaign to further the case and, with Allied acquiescence, landed troops in Smyrna (present-day İzmir in Turkey) in May 1919, under the guise of protecting the half a million Greeks living in the city. (However, the occupation of Smyrna stirred internal resentments and helped spark a series of sanguinary reprisals against its local Muslim population.) With a seemingly viable hold in Asia Minor, Venizelos ordered his troops to march ahead, and by September 1921 they'd advanced as far as Ankara. But by this stage foreign support for Venizelos had ebbed and Turkish forces, commanded by Mustafa Kemal (later to become Atatürk), halted the offensive. The Greek army retreated but Smyrna fell in 1922, and tens of thousands of its Greek inhabitants were killed.

The outcome of these hostilities was the Treaty of Lausanne in July 1923, whereby Turkey recovered eastern Thrace and the islands of Imvros and Tenedos, while Italy kept the Dodecanese (which it had temporarily acquired in 1912 and would hold until 1947).

The treaty also called for a population exchange between Greece and Turkey to prevent any future disputes. Almost 1.5 million Greeks left Turkey and almost 400,000 Turks left Greece. The exchange put a tremendous strain on the Greek economy and caused great bitterness and hardship for the individuals concerned. Many Greeks abandoned a privileged life in Asia Minor for one of extreme poverty in emerging urban shanty towns in Athens and Thessaloniki.

Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, was part of the Greek royal family – born on Corfu as Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark in 1921. Former king of Greece, Constantine, is Prince William's godfather and Prince Charles' third cousin.

## The Republic of 1924–35

The arrival of the Greek refugees from Turkey coincided with, and compounded, a period of political instability unprecedented even by Greek standards. In October 1920 King Alexander died from a monkey bite and his father Constantine was restored to the throne. But the ensuing

### 1827

British, French and Russian forces sink the combined Turkish-Egyptian naval fleet in the Battle of Navarino (at Pylos, in the Peloponnese), a decisive action in the War of Independence.

### 1827–31

Ioannis Kapodistrias is appointed prime minister of a fledgling government with its capital in the Peloponnesian town of Nafplio. Discontent ensues and Kapodistrias is assassinated.

### 1833

The powers of the Entente (Britain, France and Russia) decree that Greece should be a monarchy and dispatch Prince Otto of Bavaria to Greece to be the first appointed monarch in modern Greece.

### 1862–63

The monarchy takes a nosedive and King Otto is deposed in a bloodless coup. The British return the Ionian Islands (a British protectorate since 1815) to Greece in an effort to quell Greece's expansionist urges.

## RESISTANCE

*Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44*, by Mark Mazower, is an intimate and comprehensive account of Greece under Nazi occupation and the rise of the resistance movement.

political crisis deepened and Constantine abdicated (again) after the fall of Smyrna. He was replaced by his first son, George II, who was no match for the group of army officers who seized power after the war. A republic was proclaimed in March 1924 amid a series of coups and counter-coups.

A measure of stability was attained with Venizelos' return to power in 1928. He pursued a policy of economic and educational reform, but progress was inhibited by the Great Depression. His antiroyalist Liberal Party began to face a growing challenge from the monarchist Popular Party, culminating in defeat at the polls in March 1933. The new government was preparing for the restoration of the monarchy when Venizelos and his supporters staged an unsuccessful coup in March 1935. Venizelos was exiled to Paris, where he died a year later. In November 1935 King George II reassumed the throne (by a likely gerrymander of a plebiscite) and he installed the right-wing General Ioannis Metaxas as prime minister. Nine months later, Metaxas assumed dictatorial powers with the king's consent, under what many believed to be the pretext of preventing a communist-inspired republican coup.

## WWII

Metaxas' grandiose vision was to create a utopian Third Greek Civilisation, based on its glorious ancient and Byzantine past, but what he actually created was more like a Greek version of the Third Reich. He exiled or imprisoned opponents, banned trade unions and the recently established Kommounistiko Komma Elladas (KKE, the Greek Communist Party), imposed press censorship, and created a secret police force and fascist-style youth movement. But Metaxas is best known for his reply of *ohi* (no) to Mussolini's ultimatum to allow Italians passage through Greece at the beginning of WWII, thus maintaining Greece's policy of strict neutrality. The Italians invaded Greece, but the Greeks drove them back into Albania.

A prerequisite of Hitler's plan to invade the Soviet Union was a secure southern flank in the Balkans. The British, realising this, asked Metaxas if they could land troops in Greece. He gave the same reply as he had given the Italians, but then died suddenly in January 1941. The king replaced him with the more timid Alexandros Koryziz, who agreed to British forces landing in Greece. Koryziz committed suicide when German troops invaded Greece on 6 April 1941. The Nazis vastly outnumbered the defending Greek, British, Australian and New Zealand troops, and the whole country was under Nazi occupation within a few weeks. The civilian population suffered appallingly during the occupation, many dying of starvation. The Nazis rounded up more than half the Jewish population and transported them to death camps.

Numerous resistance movements sprang up. The dominant three were Ellinikos Laikos Apeleftherotikos Stratos (ELAS), Ethnikon Ape-

### 1863-64

The British engineer the ascension to the Greek throne of Danish Prince William, later crowned King George I. His 50-year reign begins with a new constitution in 1864.

### 1883

Greece completes construction of the Corinth Canal that cuts through the Isthmus of Corinth. The engineering feat opens a link between the Aegean and Ionian Seas.

### 1883

Greece's most famous writer, Nikos Kazantzakis, is born in Iraklio. He becomes famous for works like *Zorba the Greek* and *The Last Temptation of Christ* in the mid-20th century.

### 1896

The staging of the first modern Olympic Games in Athens marks Greece's coming of age. Winners receive a silver medal and olive crown, and second and third places receive a bronze medal and a laurel branch, respectively.

leftherotikon Metopon (EAM) and the Ethnikos Dimokratikos Ellinikos Syndesmos (EDES). Although ELAS was founded by communists, not all of its members were left-wing, whereas EAM consisted of Stalinist KKE members who had lived in Moscow in the 1930s and harboured ambitions of establishing a postwar communist Greece. EDES consisted of right-wing and monarchist resistance fighters. These groups fought one another with as much venom as they fought the Germans, often with devastating results for the civilian Greek population.

The Germans began to retreat from Greece in October 1944, but the communist and monarchist resistance groups continued to fight one another.

## Civil War

By late 1944 the royalists, republicans and communists were polarised by interparty division and locked in a serious battle for control. The British-backed provisional government was in an untenable position: the left was threatening revolt, and the British were pushing to prevent the communists from further legitimising their hold over the administration – influence the communists gained during the German occupation – in an effort to augment British hopes to reinstate the Greek monarchy.

On 3 December 1944 the police fired on a communist demonstration in Plateia Syntagmatos (Syntagma Sq) in Athens, killing several people. The ensuing six weeks of fighting between the left and the right, known as the Dekemvriana (events of December), marked the first round of the Greek Civil War. British troops intervened and prevented an ELAS-EAM coalition victory.

In February 1945 formal negotiations for reconciliation between the government and the communists fell flat, and the friction continued. Many civilians on all political sides were subjected to bitter reprisals at the hands of leftist groups, the army or rogue right-wing vigilantes, who threatened political enemies with widespread intimidation and violence. The royalists won the March 1946 election (which the communists had unsuccessfully boycotted), and a plebiscite (widely reported as rigged) in September put George II back on the throne.

In October the left-wing Democratic Army of Greece (DSE) was formed to resume the fight against the monarchy and its British supporters. Under the leadership of Markos Vafiadis, the DSE swiftly occupied a large swath of land along Greece's northern border with Albania and Yugoslavia.

In 1947 the USA intervened and the civil war developed into a setting for the new Cold War theatre. Communism was declared illegal and the government introduced its notorious Certificate of Political Reliability (which remained valid until 1962), which declared that the document bearer was not a left-wing sympathiser; without this certificate Greeks could not vote and found it almost impossible to get work. US aid did

On 25 November 1942 a coalition of Greek resistance groups, aided by the British, blew up the Gorgopotamos railway bridge near Lamia in Sterea Ellada, sabotaging for weeks German supply routes through the country.

### 1900

Sir Arthur Evans begins excavations at Knossos, quickly unearthing the palace and stunning the archaeological world with the discovery of the advanced Minoan civilisation.

### 1912–13

The Balkan Wars erupt when Greece and Serbia initially side with Bulgaria against Turkey over Macedonia. Then Greece and Serbia fight for the same territory against Bulgaria. Greece's territory expands.

### 1914

The outbreak of WWI sees Greece initially neutral but eventually siding with the Western Allies against Germany and Turkey on the promise of land in Asia Minor.

### 1919–23

Greece embarks on the 'Great Idea' to unite the former Hellenic regions, including those in Asia Minor. It fails and leads to a population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1923, referred to as the Asia Minor catastrophe.

The best-seller *Eleni*, written by Nicholas Gage, tells the gripping personal account of his family's life in the village of Lia, and the events leading to the execution of Gage's mother by communist guerrillas during the Greek Civil War.

little to improve the situation on the ground. The DSE continued to be supplied from the north (by Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and indirectly by the Soviets through the Balkan states), and by the end of 1947 large chunks of the mainland were under its control, as well as parts of the islands of Crete, Chios and Lesbos.

In 1949 the tide began to turn when the forces of the central government drove the DSE out of the Peloponnese; but the fighting dragged on in the mountains of Epiros until October 1949, when Yugoslavia fell out with the Soviet Union and cut the DSE's supply lines.

The civil war left Greece politically frayed and economically shattered. More Greeks had been killed in three years of bitter civil war than in WWII, and a quarter of a million people were homeless.

The sense of despair became the trigger for a mass exodus. Almost a million Greeks headed off in search of a better life elsewhere, primarily to countries such as Australia, Canada and the USA.

## Reconstruction & the Cyprus Issue

After a series of unworkable coalitions, the electoral system was changed to majority voting in 1952 – which excluded the communists from future governments. The November 1952 election was a victory for the right-wing *Ellinikos Synagermos* (Greek Rally) party, led by General Alexander Papagos (a former civil-war field marshal). General Papagos remained in power until his death in 1955, when he was replaced by Konstandinos Karamanlis.

Greece joined NATO in 1952, and in 1953 the USA was granted the right to operate sovereign bases. Intent on maintaining support for the anticommunist government, the USA gave generous economic and military aid.

Cyprus resumed centre stage in Greece's foreign affairs. Since the 1930s Greek Cypriots (four-fifths of the island's population) had demanded union with Greece, while Turkey had maintained its claim to the island ever since it became a British protectorate in 1878 (it became a British crown colony in 1925). Greek public opinion was overwhelmingly in favour of union, a notion strongly opposed by Britain and the USA on strategic grounds.

In 1956 the right-wing Greek Cypriot National Organisation of Cypriot Freedom Fighters (EOKA) took up arms against the British. In 1959, after extensive negotiations, Britain, Greece and Turkey finally agreed on a compromise solution whereby Cyprus would become an independent republic the following August, with Greek Cypriot Archbishop Makarios as president and a Turk, Faisal Küçük, as vice president. The changes did little to appease either side. EOKA resolved to keep fighting, while Turkish Cypriots clamoured for partition of the island.

Back in Greece, Georgios Papandreou, a former Venizelos supporter, founded the broadly based Centre Union (EK) in 1958, but elections in 1961 returned the National Radical Union (ERE), Karamanlis' new name

### 1924–34

Greece is proclaimed a republic and King George II leaves Greece. The Great Depression counters the nation's return to stability. Monarchists and parliamentarians under Venizelos tussle for control of the country.

### 1935

The monarchy is restored and King George II is reappointed to the throne. Right-wing General Ioannis Metaxas adopts the role of prime minister while introducing dictatorial measures of governance.

### 1940

On 28 October Metaxas famously rebuffs the Italian request to traverse Greece at the beginning of WWII. The Italians engage Greek forces and are driven back into Albania.

### 1941–44

Germany invades and occupies Greece. Monarchists, republicans and communists form resistance groups that, despite infighting, drive out the Germans after three years.

for Greek Rally, to power for the third time in succession. Papandreou accused the ERE of ballot rigging, and the political turmoil that followed culminated in the murder, in May 1963, of Grigoris Lambrakis, the deputy of the communist Union of the Democratic Left (EDA). All this proved too much for Karamanlis, who resigned and went to live in Paris.

The EK finally came to power in February 1964 and Papandreou wasted no time in implementing a series of radical changes. He freed political prisoners and allowed exiles to come back to Greece, reduced income tax and the defence budget, and increased spending on social services and education.

## Colonels, Monarchs & Democracy

The political right in Greece was rattled by Papandreou's tolerance of the left, and a group of army colonels, led by Georgios Papadopoulos and Stylianos Patakos, staged a coup on 21 April 1967. They established a military junta with Papadopoulos as prime minister. King Constantine tried an unsuccessful counter-coup in December, after which he fled to Rome, then London.

The colonels declared martial law, banned political parties and trade unions, imposed censorship and imprisoned, tortured and exiled thousands of dissidents. In June 1972 Papadopoulos declared Greece a republic and appointed himself president.

On 17 November 1973 tanks stormed a building at the Athens Polytechnio (Technical University) to quell a student occupation calling for an uprising against the US-backed junta. While the number of casualties is still in dispute (more than 20 students were reportedly killed and hundreds injured), the act spelt the death knell for the junta.

Shortly after, the head of the military security police, Dimitrios Ioannidis, deposed Papadopoulos. In July 1974 Ioannidis tried to impose unity with Cyprus by attempting to topple the Makarios government in Cyprus; Makarios got wind of an assassination attempt and escaped. The junta replaced him with the extremist Nikos Sampson (a former EOKA leader) as president. Consequently, mainland Turkey sent in troops until they occupied northern Cyprus, partitioning the country and displacing almost 200,000 Greek Cypriots who fled their homes for the safety of the south (reportedly more than 1500 Cypriots remain missing).

The junta dictatorship collapsed. Karamanlis was summoned from Paris to take office and his New Democracy (ND) party won a large majority at the November elections in 1974 against the newly formed Panhellenic Socialist Union (PASOK), led by Andreas Papandreou (son of Georgios). A plebiscite voted 69% against the restoration of the monarchy and the ban on communist parties was lifted. (The exiled former royal family still lives in London, where it continues to use its royal titles.

The 1963 political assassination of Grigoris Lambrakis is described in Vassilis Vassilikos' novel *Z*, which later became an award-winning film.

### 1944–49

The end of WWII sees Greece descend into civil war, pitching monarchists against communists. The monarchists recover in 1946, but the civil war takes its toll and many Greeks emigrate in search of a better life.

### 1967–74

Right- and left-wing factions continue to bicker, provoking in April 1967 a right-wing military coup d'état by army generals who establish a junta. They impose martial law and abolish many civil rights.

### 1973

On 17 November tanks ram the gates of the Athens Polytechnio (Technical University) and troops storm the school buildings in a bid to quash a student uprising against the junta. More than 20 students die.

### 1974

A botched plan to unite Cyprus with Greece prompts the invasion of Cyprus by Turkish troops and results in the fall of the military junta. This acts as a catalyst for the restoration of parliamentary democracy in Greece.

The Green Line separating Greece and Turkey in modern-day Cyprus is a ghost town, a desert of silence where the clock stopped in 1974. Greeks still peer through the barb-wire partition to the place they were born and banished from, but are unlikely to return to.

A dispute between the former king, Constantine, and the government over the family's assets was settled in 2002 and the royal family members now often return to Greece as private citizens.)

## The 1980s & 1990s

When Greece became the 10th member of the EU in 1981, it was the smallest and poorest member. In October 1981, Andreas Papandreou's PASOK party was elected as Greece's first socialist government. PASOK ruled for almost two decades (except for 1990–93). PASOK promised ambitious social reform, to close the US air bases and to withdraw from NATO. US military presence was reduced, but unemployment was high and reforms in education and welfare were limited. Women's issues fared better: the dowry system was abolished, abortion legalised, and civil marriage and divorce were implemented.

Economic scandal, a series of general strikes and fundamental policy wrangling over the country's education system damaged PASOK, and in 1990 Konstandinos Mitsotakis led the ND back to office. Intent on redressing the country's economic problems – high inflation and high government spending – the government imposed austerity measures, including a wage freeze for civil servants and steep increases in public-utility costs and basic services.

By late 1992 corruption allegations were being levelled against the government. By mid-1993 Mitsotakis supporters had abandoned the ND for the new Political Spring party; the ND lost its parliamentary majority and an early election in October returned Andreas Papandreou's PASOK party.

Papandreou stepped down in early 1996 due to ill health and he died on 26 June. His departure produced a dramatic change of direction for PASOK, with the party abandoning Papandreou's left-leaning politics and electing experienced economist and lawyer Costas Simitis as the new prime minister (who won a comfortable majority at the October 1996 polls).

## The 21st Century

The new millennium saw Greece join the eurozone in 2001, amid rumblings from existing members that Greece was not ready economically to join – its public borrowing was too high, as was its inflation level. Membership had already been denied them in 1999, and many Greeks were keen to ditch the drachma and nestle under the stable umbrella of the euro. In hindsight, many look back on that year and bemoan the mis-calibration of the drachma against the euro, claiming Greece's currency was undervalued, and that, overnight, living became disproportionately more expensive. That said, billions of euros poured into large-scale infrastructure projects across Greece, including the redevelopment of Athens – spurred on largely by its hosting of the 2004 Olympic Games, which was a tremendous boost

### 1981

Greece joins the EU, effectively removing protective trade barriers and opening up the Greek economy to the wider world for the first time. The economy grows smartly.

### 1981–90

Greece acquires its first elected socialist government (PASOK) under the leadership of Andreas Papandreou. The honeymoon lasts nine years. The conservatives ultimately reassume power.

### 1999

Turkey and Greece experience powerful earthquakes within weeks of each other that result in hundreds of deaths. By pledging mutual aid and support, the two nations initiate a warming of diplomatic relations.

### 2004

Greece successfully hosts the 28th Summer Olympic Games amid much muffled rumour that infrastructure would not be complete in time. Greece also wins the European football championship.

## SINK OR SWIM

In 2009 a lethal cocktail of high public spending and widespread tax evasion, combined with the credit crunch of global recession, threatened to cripple Greece's economy. In 2010 Greece's fellow eurozone countries agreed to a US\$145 billion package (half of Greece's GDP) to get the country back on its feet, though with strict conditions – the ruling government, PASOK, still lead by Georgios Papandreou, would have to impose austere measures of reform to receive these handouts and reduce Greece's bloated deficit. Huge cuts followed, including 10% off public workers' salaries, but it was too little too late and foreign creditors continued to demand ever higher interest rates for their loans. Greece was stuck between a real-life Scylla and Charybdis – to receive yet another bailout which was absolutely essential to stop them toppling the euro as a credible currency, they had to effect reforms that penalised the average Greek even further (pushing formerly non-political citizens towards revolution). Some longed for a return to the drachma (the former currency); however, many believe that Greece would still be saddled with massive debt and a monetary system with absolutely no standing, if this was the case.

(At the time this book went to press, Georgios Papandreou asked the people for a referendum on the EU bailout, then failed to form a coalition government and stepped down from office. In November 2011, Lucas Papademos – a former vice president of the European Central Bank – took on the poisoned chalice of steering Greece's economy and prime ministerial duties.)

for the city. However, rising unemployment, ballooning public debt, slowing inflation and the squeezing of consumer credit took their toll. Public opinion soured further in 2007 when Kostas Karamanlis' (the nephew of Konstandinos Karamanlis) conservative government (who had come to power in 2004) was widely criticised for its handling of the emergency response to severe summer fires, which were responsible for widespread destruction throughout Greece. Nevertheless, snap elections held in September 2007 returned the conservatives, albeit with a diminished majority.

Over recent years, a series of massive general strikes and blockades highlighted mounting electoral discontent. Hundreds of thousands of people protested against proposed radical labour and pension reforms and privatisation plans that analysts claim would help curb public debt. The backlash against the government reached boiling point in December 2008, when urban rioting broke out across the country, led by youths outraged by the police shooting of a 15-year-old boy in Athens following an alleged exchange between police and a group of teenagers. Youths hurled stones and firebombs at riot police who responded with tear gas. Concern continues over political tangles in



» Peace & Friendship Stadium, Athens

### 2007

Vast forest fires devastate much of the western Peloponnese as well as parts of Evia and Epiros, causing Greece's worst ecological disaster in decades. Thousands lose their homes and 66 people perish.

### 2007

General elections are held in September and the conservative government of Kostas Karamanlis returns to power for a second consecutive term.

an ongoing investigation regarding alleged corruption among state executives (on both sides of the political fence) in connection with the Siemens Hellas group. This follows another controversy that involved land-swap deals between a monastery and the government, which some commentators believe to have gone heavily in the monastery's favour, at the expense of taxpayers. A general election held in October 2009, midway through Karamanlis' term, saw PASOK (under Georgios Papandreou) take back the reins in a landslide win against the conservatives.

### Neighbourly Relations

Greece continues to face the challenge of resolving its abrasive relationship with its Balkan neighbour, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), over the contentious issue of it adopting the nomenclature of Macedonia (a topic negotiated between the two nations via UN-mediated dialogue). Despite the fact Alexander's home of Pella still stands in the province of Macedonia in northern Greece, FYROM is still insisting Greece's favourite son is from their country. Relations with Turkey these days are more neighbourly. Greece supports Turkey's steps towards EU-ascension, and is urging joint action between the two nations to manage illegal immigration across Greece's borders. However, Turkey is expressing concerns over Greece's intentions of drilling for hydrocarbons in Cypriot waters, sparking a diplomatic headache.

#### 2008

Police shoot and kill a 15-year-old boy in Athens following an alleged exchange between police and youths. This sparks a series of urban riots nationwide.

#### 2009

Kostas Karamanlis calls an early election. Socialist PASOK, under Georgios Papandreou, wins with a landslide result against the conservatives and inherits a can of worms regarding national debt.

#### 2010

Greece is granted the biggest financial bailout in history with its fellow EU countries committing €110 million. Strict austerity measures by the Greek government to cut the bloated deficit are met with civil protest.

#### 2011

Despite loans the economy continues to shrink with rising unemployment and riots in Athens. A second EU and IMF bailout is granted to prop up the economy amid fears of a second Greek recession.



# Ancient Greek Culture

When the Roman Empire assimilated Greece it did so with considerable respect and idealism. The Romans in many ways based themselves on the Ancient Greeks, absorbing their deities (and renaming them), literature, myths, philosophy, fine arts and architecture. So what made the Ancient Greeks so special?

## Mythology

Ancient Greece revolved around a careful worship of 12 central gods and goddesses, all of which played a major role in the mythos (mythology). Each city-state had its own patron god or goddess, to be appeased and flattered, while on a personal level a farmer might make sacrifice to the goddess Demeter to bless his crops, or a fisherman to Poseidon to bring him fish and safe passage on the waves.

Greece is as dripping in myth as it is classical history. For many of us the fantastical stories of Heracles and Odysseus we heard as kids still linger in our imagination. Standing in the ancient ruins of an acropolis peering across the watery horizon, it's not difficult to picture the Kraken (Poseidon's pet monster) rising from the Aegean, nor to imagine that fishing boat you see heading into the sunset as Jason's *Argo* en route to Colchis for the Golden Fleece. The average Greek is fiercely proud of their myths and will love entertaining you with a list of the gods, but they'll love it even more if you know a few of them yourself. Following is a quick guide to the gods and the myths (and for more information, see also *A Dodecanese Guide to Mythology*, p518).

## The Ancient Pantheon

- » **Zeus (Jupiter)** Heavyweight champ of Mt Olympus, lord of the skies and master of disguise in pursuit of mortal maidens. Wardrobe includes shower of gold, bull, eagle and swan.
- » **Poseidon (Neptune)** God of the seas, master of the mists and younger brother of Zeus. He dwelt in a glittering underwater palace.
- » **Hera (Juno)** Protector of women and family, the queen of heaven is also the embattled wife of Zeus. She was the prototype of the jealous, domineering wife.
- » **Hades (Pluto)** God of death, he ruled the underworld, bringing in newly dead with the help of his skeletal ferryman, Charon. Serious offenders were sent for torture in Tartarus, while heroes enjoyed eternal R&R in the Elysian Fields.
- » **Athena (Minerva)** Goddess of wisdom, war, science and Guardian of Athens. The antithesis of Ares, Athena was deliberate and, where possible, diplomatic in the art of war. Heracles, Jason (of Jason and the Argonauts fame) and Perseus all benefited from her patronage.

*The World of the Ancient Greeks* (2002), by archaeologists John Camp and Elizabeth Fisher, is a broad and in-depth look at how the Greeks have left their imprint on politics, philosophy, theatre, art, medicine and architecture.



Poseidon

» **Aphrodite (Venus)** Goddess of love and beauty. The curvy lady of the shell was said to have been born whole on the waves. When she wasn't cuckolding her unfortunate husband, Hephaestus, she and her cherubic son Eros (Cupid) were enflaming hearts and causing trouble (cue the Trojan War).

» **Apollo** God of music, the arts and fortune-telling. Apollo was also the god of light and an expert shot with a bow and arrow. It was his steady hand which guided Paris' arrow towards Achilles' only weak spot – his heel – thus killing him.

» **Artemis (Diana)** The goddess of the hunt and twin sister of Apollo was, ironically, patron saint of wild animals. By turns spiteful and magnanimous, she was closely associated with the sinister Hecate, patroness of witchcraft.

» **Ares (Mars)** God of war. Zeus' least favourite of his progeny. Not surprisingly, Ares was worshipped by the bellicose Spartans and may today have felt at home among soccer hooligans.

» **Hermes (Mercury)** Messenger of the gods, patron saint of travellers, the handsome one with a winged hat and sandals. He was always on hand to smooth over the affairs of Zeus, his father.

» **Hephaestus (Vulcan)** God of craftsmanship, metallurgy and fire, this deformed and oft derided son of Zeus made the world's first woman of clay, Pandora, as a punishment for man. Inside that box of hers were the evils of mankind.

» **Hestia (Vesta)** Goddess of the hearth, she protected state fires in city halls from where citizens of Greece could light their brands. She remained unmarried, inviolate.

## The Myths, the Myths!

Some of the greatest stories of all time – and some say the wellspring of story itself – are to be found in the Greek myths; even today contemporary writers reinterpret them for children's books and films. Here are a few of the most famous heroes and their stories to refresh your memory, but this is only the start of that rich, fantastical tapestry, that stretches all the way from the mists of Mt Olympus down to the farthest reaches of Hades.

### HERACLES (HERCULES)

The most celebrated, endearing hero of ancient Greece. The bearded one was set 12 labours of penitence for mistakenly killing his family (Hera blinded him with madness). These included slaying the Nemean Lion and the Lernaian Hydra; capturing the Ceryneian Hind and the Erymanthian Boar; cleaning the Augean Stables in one day; slaying the Stymphalian Birds; capturing the Cretan Bull; stealing the man-eating Mares of Diomedes; obtaining the Girdle of Hippolyta and the oxen of Geryon; stealing the Apples of the Hesperides; and capturing Cerberus (see p736).

### THESEUS

The Athenian hero volunteered himself as a one of seven men and maidens in the annual sacrifice to the Minotaur (p736), the crazed half-bull-half-man offspring of King Minos of Crete. Once inside its forbidding labyrinth (from which none had returned) Theseus, aided by Princess Ariadne (who had a crush on him courtesy of Aphrodite's dart), loosened a spool of thread to find his way out once he'd killed the monster. (Daedalus is said to be the legendary architect of King Minos' Cretan labyrinth, the Palace of Knossos (see the colour section, p454).

### ICARUS

Along with Daedalus (his father and a brilliant inventor), Icarus flew off the cliffs of Crete pursued by King Minos and his troops. Using wings made of feathers and wax, his father instructed him to fly away from the midday sun. Boys will be boys, Icarus thinks he's Jonathan Livingston



Hera



Athena

Seagull...glue melts, feathers separate, bird-boy drowns. And the moral is: listen to your father.

## PERSEUS

Perseus' impossible task was to kill the gorgon, Medusa (p736). With a head of snakes she could turn a man to stone with a single glance. Armed with an invisibility cap and a pair of flying sandals from Hermes, Perseus used his reflective shield to avoid Medusa's stare. Having cut off her head and secreted it in a bag, it was shortly unsheathed to save Andromeda, a princess bound to a rock in her final moments before being sacrificed to a sea monster. Medusa turns the sea monster to stone, Perseus gets the girl.

## OEDIPUS

You can run but you can't hide...having been abandoned at birth, Oedipus learned from the Delphic oracle that he would one day slay his father and marry his mother. On the journey back to his birthplace, Thiva (Thebes), he killed a rude stranger and then discovered the city was plagued by a murderous Sphinx (a winged lion with a woman's head). The creature gave unsuspecting travellers and citizens a riddle; if they couldn't answer it they were dashed on the rocks. Oedipus succeeded in solving the riddle, felled the Sphinx and so gained the queen of Thiva's hand in marriage. On discovering the stranger he'd killed was his father and that his new wife was in fact his mother, Oedipus ripped out his eyes and exiled himself.

## The Golden Age of Drama

In the 5th century BC Athens had a cultural renaissance that has never been equalled - in fact modern classical scholars refer to it as 'the miracle'; such was the diversity of its achievements. The era started with a vastly outnumbered Greek army defeating the Persian horde in the battles of Marathon and Salamis and ended with the beginning of the inevitable war between Athens and Sparta. It's often said that Athens' Golden Age is the bedrock of Western civilisation and had the Persians won, Europe today would have been a vastly different place. Some historians also call this era 'the age of Pericles', after the statesman and patron of the arts who dominated for some 40 years and fiercely encouraged free speech and free thought. Like Paris in the 1930s, Athens magnetised a hotbed of talent. Any artist or writer worth their salt left their hometown and travelled to the great city of wisdom to share their thoughts and hear the great minds of the day express themselves. The great dramatists like Aeschylus (*the Oresteia*), Aristophanes, Euripides and Sophocles (*Oedipus Rex*) had redefined theatre from religious ritual to become a compelling form of entertainment. They were to be found at the Theatre of Dionysos at the foot of the Acropolis (see also the colour section of the Acropolis, p76), and their comedies and tragedies reveal a great deal about the psyche of the ancient Greeks.

Across the country large open-aired theatres were built on the sides of hills, with increasingly sophisticated backdrops and props, choruses and themes, designed to maximise sound so even the people on the back row might hear the actors on stage. The dominant genres of theatre were tragedy and comedy. The first known actor was a man called Thespis from which we derive the word thespian.

## Philosophy

While the dramatists were cutting their thespian cloth, late 5th- and early-4th-century BC philosophers Aristotle, Plato and Socrates were introducing new trains of thought rooted not in the mysticism of the myths, but rather in rationality, as the new Greek mind focused on logic



Aphrodite



Apollo



Hermes

and reason. Athens' greatest, most noble citizen, Socrates (469–399 BC), was forced to drink hemlock for his disbelief in the old gods, but before he died he left behind a school of hypothetical reductionism that is still used today. Plato (427–347 BC), his star student, was responsible for documenting his teacher's thoughts, and without his work in books like the *Symposium*, they would have been lost to us. Considered an idealist, he wrote 'The Republic' as a warning to the city-state of Athens that unless its people respected law, leadership and educated its youth sufficiently, it would be doomed. His student Aristotle (384–322 BC), at the end of the Golden Age, was the personal physician to Philip II, King of Macedon, and the tutor of Alexander the Great and focused his gifts on astronomy, physics, zoology, ethics and politics. The greatest gift of the Athenian philosophers to modern-day thought is their spirit of rational inquiry, without which we might still be in the shadows of conscience.

## Sculpture

Classical sculpture began to gather pace in Greece in the 6th century BC with the renderings of nudes in marble. Most statues were created to revere a particular god or goddess and many were robed in grandiose garments. Formerly the statues of the preceding Archaic period, known as *kouroi*, had focused on symmetry and form, but in the early 5th century BC, artists sought to create expression and animation. As temples demanded elaborate carvings, sculptors were called upon to create large reliefs upon them. During the 5th century BC the craft became yet more sophisticated, as sculptors were taught to successfully map a face and create a likeness of their subject in marble busts, catering to the vanity of politicians and rich men. Later still the Romans adopted this perfectionist school of sculpture and continued the tradition. Perhaps the most famous Greek sculptor was Pheidias, whose reliefs upon the Parthenon depicting the Greek and Persian Wars – now known as the Parthenon Marbles – are celebrated as among the finest from the Golden Age.

## The Oracle of Delphi

Near the modern-day village of Delphi is the site of the Delphic oracle, the most important oracle in ancient Greece. Its beginnings are shrouded in myth; some say Apollo, when looking for an earthly abode, found a home here but not before doing battle with the python who guarded the entrance to the centre of the earth. After he slew and threw it into the chasm it began to rot, producing noxious vapours. From this fissure came intoxicating fumes that the sibyl, or Pythia (a clairvoyant crone, or seer) would sit above on a tripod, fall into a trance, and allow herself to be possessed by Apollo. While in this state the sibyl raved and her mumblings were interpreted by attendant priests. Citizens, politicians and kings – for a fee – consulted the sibyl on personal affairs and matters

### TOP FIVE MYTHICAL CREATURES

**Medusa** She of the bad hair day, punished by the gods for her inflated vanity. Even dead, her blood is lethal.

**Cyclops** One-eyed giant. Odysseus and his crew were trapped in the cave of one such cyclops, Polyphemus.

**Cerberus** The three-headed dog of hell, he guards the entrance to the underworld – under his watch no-one gets in or out.

**Minotaur** This half-man-half-bull mutant leads a life of existential angst in the abysmal labyrinth, tempered only by the occasional morsel of human flesh.

**Hydra** Cut one of its nine heads off and another two will grow in its place. Heracles solved the problem by cauterising each stump with his burning brand.

## MUST-SEE THEATRES

- » **Argos** (p145) Dating from Classical times; could seat up to 20,000 people.
- » **Ancient Delphi** (p207) A well-preserved 4th-century-BC theatre.
- » **Odeon of Herodes Atticus** (p77) Built in AD 161 by Roman Herodes Atticus.
- » **Theatre of Dionysos** (p76) Once held seating for 17,000 spread over 64 tiers.
- » **Theatre of Dodoni** (p307) A colossal, 3rd-century-BC ancient site.
- » **Theatre of Epidavros** (p155) One of the best-preserved Classical Greek structures.

of state: be it whether to go to war, whether to colonise a new country or subjects more prosaic. City-states like Sparta and Athens made generous contributions to the oracle, as did nations like Persia, with some even establishing treasuries on the site. For more than six centuries, until it was destroyed by a Christian emperor, Delphi shaped the history of the world with its often eerily prescient prophecies.

Visiting today is a magical experience, not least because the accompanying modern village high up in the mountains is so pretty (see p205). Best seen early morning before the day-trippers arrive, or late afternoon, climb up past the temple of Apollo, and on past the place the Pythia used to receive her Apollonian messages; weaving your way through the still-standing treasuries to the site of the Pythian games higher up the mountain. Strangely preserved, there's still something enigmatic and otherworldly about Delphi.



# The Greek Way of Life

The Greek way of life came under unprecedented international scrutiny in the wake of Greece's 2011 sovereign debt crisis. As Greece negotiated its way out of a default that threatened to rock the EU, the blame game turned personal (and occasionally nasty), with the Greeks painted as lazy, reckless, free-spending and corrupt.

The reality of Greece and Greeks today is far more complex. For every grain of hard and inconvenient truth exposed about Greece's chronic dysfunctionality, there were as many populist cultural stereotypes and unfair assassinations of the national character. For every tax evading lawyer or lazy public-sector official, there are hard-working Greek families struggling to make ends meet.

But there is no denying that the crisis engulfing Greece is not just political and economic, but social and, even, cultural. After his election as Prime Minister, George Papandreou conceded his beleaguered nation had been mired in corruption, cronyism and clientelistic practices, and warned that Greece's problems would be solved by restructuring the country, not just its debt.

Growing social unrest, massive demonstrations and violent clashes with police in Athens (see p730) have shaken a deeply divided Greek society.

The standard of living for the average Greek improved beyond all recognition in the 30 years since Greece joined the EU (see p730). But increasingly aspirational lifestyles seemed to be out of sync with average incomes and rising living costs, and ultimately unsustainable on easy credit and *dosis* (instalment schemes). Like their government, many Greeks were living beyond their means.

Most Greek workers have been affected by the EU-sanctioned austerity measures, from cuts to pensions and wages to indirect tax hikes. Shops are closing and spending on entertainment has been curtailed. As Greece undertakes a massive privatisation drive, drastic public-sector cuts and fundamental tax and structural reforms, Greeks are facing a difficult and uncertain future and once again their resilience is being tested.

## Social & Family Life

Greek society remains dominated by the family and kinship. Greeks are gregarious and enjoy a rich communal life, eating out regularly and filling the country's myriad cafes and bars. They travel and socialise in packs, with family or their *parea* (companions).

In the early evenings, especially in summer, people of all ages take their *volta* (evening walk), walking along seafront promenades or through town centres, dressed up and refreshed from an afternoon siesta (albeit a dying institution). Many visitors are struck by Greece's

Greece has become a largely urban society, with more than two-thirds of the 10.7 million population living in cities and less than 15% living on the islands. A third live in the Greater Athens area.

SOCIETY

## GENERATION – €700

Greece's disaffected and disillusioned youth looks set to bear the brunt of years of overspending and economic mismanagement by previous generations.

Dubbed the €700 generation – after the average net monthly starting salary for graduates – many Greeks in their 20s and early 30s feel cheated out of a future, and accuse the country's politicians of selling out their dreams.

Despite talk of opportunity in crisis, the country's financial distress has wiped the optimism and sense of possibility engendered by the resounding success of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games and Greece's euphoric European Cup football triumph that same year.

Overeducated and underemployed middle-class youth face less jobs, lower pay and declining living standards.

While some blame 'spoilt' young people and Greek society for breeding an entitlement culture where graduates lack initiative and refuse demeaning jobs, the cafes teeming with seemingly carefree youth belie some fundamental systemic failings.

The crisis has exacerbated Greece's chronic youth unemployment problem, which by April 2011 was close to 40% for 16 to 24-year olds and 22.3% for 25 to 34-year-olds.

Universities have long been seen as out of touch with labour market needs, producing graduates in already saturated fields (such as doctors and lawyers). Greece has the highest number of students in the EU studying abroad – and the highest graduate unemployment in Europe. The brain drain of recent years is on the rise as more graduates are leaving Greece.

Young people remain highly dependent on family – about half of women under 27 and half of men under 30 years still live with their parents.

A 2008 survey (conducted for the Greek General Confederation of Labour) found that about a quarter of the working population was part of the €700 generation – nearly 70% of those aged 18 to 34. Many young people work for even less in part-time jobs with no social-security benefits.

Many young people have become increasingly radicalised and involved in demonstrations that have turned violent (see p730). On a more lighthearted note, the phenomenon even inspired a television sit-com, though by the time it went into production the show was renamed the €592 Generation, as austerity measures cut the minimum youth wage further to boost youth employment.

vibrant street life and relaxed dining scene. People of all ages live it up at nightclubs, while children stay up late socialising with their parents or playing nearby.

The vast majority of Greek businesses are small, often family-run operations. Parents strive to provide homes for their children when they get married, with many families building apartments for each child above their own (thus the number of unfinished buildings you see).

Extended family plays an important role in daily life, with grandparents often looking after grandchildren while parents work or socialise. The trade-off is that children look after their elderly parents, rather than consign them to nursing homes, though foreign women are brought in to look after elderly parents in villages.

Greeks retain strong regional identities and affiliations, despite the majority having left their ancestral villages for cities or abroad. Even the country's remotest villages are bustling during holidays, elections and other excuses for homecomings. One of the first questions Greeks will ask a stranger is what part of Greece they come from.

Greeks attach great importance to education, sending children to after-school *frontistiria* (tutoring schools) for languages and university entrance subjects to make up for the perceived inadequacy of the state education system.

Debunking the myth of the lazy Greek, Eurobarometer research suggests Greeks actually work longer hours than their European counterparts. Greek wages and salaries are amongst Europe's lowest and living costs amongst the highest.

Summer holidays are the year's highlight and Athens virtually shuts down mid-August when many family-run businesses shut up shop, and people head to the islands, beaches or their ancestral villages.

Stark economic and social disparities are a reality in Greece, with a profound void between the haves and have-nots.

It's uncommon for Greek children to move out of home before they are married, unless they are going to university or to find work in another city. While this is changing among professionals and people marrying later, low wages are also keeping young people at home.

The male-female dynamic throws up some interesting paradoxes. Despite the machismo, it is very much a matriarchal society. Men love to give the impression that they rule the roost but, in reality, it's the women who often run the show both at home and in family businesses.

Greek women (at least the older generation) are famously house-proud and take pride in their culinary skills. It's still relatively rare for men to be involved in housework or cooking, and boys are waited on hand and foot. Girls are more involved in domestic chores, though young Athenian women are more likely to be found in the gym or beauty salon than in the kitchen.

In the face of fast-tracked social changes, Greeks are still delicately balancing cultural and religious mores.

Social problems are on the rise, with an increase in unemployment, homelessness and once-rare violent crime in Athens, one of the safest European capitals.

## The Greek Character

Greeks are known for their independent spirit. They have a work-to-live attitude and an enviable capacity to enjoy life. They are generous hosts and pride themselves on their *filotimo* (dignity and sense of honour), and their *filoxenia* (hospitality, welcome, shelter), which you will find in even the poorest household.

Forthright and argumentative, most Greeks will freely state their opinions and talk about personal matters rather than engage in polite small-talk. Few subjects are off limits, from your private life and why you don't have children, to how much you earn or what you paid for your house or shoes. Unlike many Western cultures where people avoid eye contact with strangers, Greeks are unashamed about staring and blatantly observing (and commenting on) the comings and goings of people around them.

They thrive on news, gossip and political debate and, while they will mercilessly malign their governments and society, they are defensive about external criticism and can be fervently patriotic, nationalistic and ethnocentric. While their ancestry can give them a smug sense of cultural superiority, they remain insecure about their underdog status in the new Europe and wary of outside forces.

Greeks have taken to consumerism with gusto, flaunting their new-found wealth with designer clothes, the latest mobile phones and new cars. They are prone to displays of excess, especially in spending on food and entertainment, and have a live-for-today outlook. (However, the hedonistic lifestyle of the Athenian elite taking weekend jaunts to Mykonos bears no resemblance to struggling pensioners or workers in rural Greece.)

## GOOD WISHES

Well-wishing expressions are one of the endearing features of daily life. Whether it stems from superstition or an excess of good will, Greeks seem to have a wish for every occasion. They won't just wish you *kali orexi* (*bon appetit*), but also *kali honepsi* (good digestion) and *kali xekourasi* (good rest) or *kali diaskedasi* (good entertainment). On the first day of the week they'll wish you *kali evdomada* (good week), each month *kalo mina* (good month), while the start of summer brings *kalo kalokeri* (good summer) and the end of the holidays *kalo himona* (good winter). When you purchase something it's *kaloriziko* (good fate) and a new business is greeted with *kales doulies* (good work) and challenges with *kali dynami* (good strength). A favourite for farewells is *me to kalo* (go with the good).

## THE MEDIA CIRCUS

Given they invented democracy, it's no surprise Greeks are political animals who gorge on news and current affairs. You will often see people standing outside *periptera* (street kiosks) reading the day's juicy front-page headlines from the gallery of daily papers displayed. Greece has a disproportionate number of newspapers and TV stations given its population – 30 national dailies (including 10 sports dailies) and seven national TV networks. Newspapers, like most Greeks, are mostly openly partisan, with papers representing the gamut of political views from conservative to communist. The line between news and opinion is often blurred, with more reams dedicated to commentators and diatribe than news. With the exception of the more straight-shooting public broadcasters, TV news leans towards sensationalism and parochialism. TV is dominated by society scandals and punctuated by dramatic music and multiple screens with talking heads (usually shouting at the same time).

The contentious entangled relationship between media owners, journalists, big business and the government, coined *diaplekomena* (intertwined), regularly raises its head.

Greeks prefer spontaneity to making plans and are notoriously late (turning up on time is often referred to as 'being English').

The renowned Greek hospitality and generosity seems to extinguish in the public sphere, where your typical surly civil servants lack conventional notions of customer service. This is one of the many paradoxes of the Greek psyche. The pride Greeks have in their homes rarely extends to public spaces. The notion of the greater good often plays second fiddle to personal interests, and there is little sense of collective responsibility – a point one politician tried to drive home during the outcry over measures to address Greek debt, when he proclaimed 'We all ate it together'. Yet many also saw the crisis as an opportunity for much-needed cultural change and supported moves to eliminate entrenched patronage and make Greece more competitive, transparent and efficient.

## Civil Society

Greeks have long had a residual mistrust of authority and politicians and little respect for the state and its institutions, deriving from years of foreign masters and meddlers, civil war and political instability that only ended in the 1970s, when the last dictatorship collapsed and the monarchy was abolished. By this time, a weak civil society based on tax evasion and reliance on personal networks had become entrenched, patronage and nepotism an accepted state of affairs. The black-market economy is estimated by various studies at up to 30% of the country's GDP.

Making headway with Greece's bloated bureaucracy often requires *meson* (the help of a friend or family member working within the system). Merit has taken second place to political connections and interest groups for coveted public-sector jobs or EU fund distributions. The infamous *fakelaki* (little envelope of cash) remains a common way to cut red tape, from jumping the queue for surgery to dealing with the tax office or building permits (Transparency International found 13% of Greeks had given bribes to grease the wheels of the system in 2008).

Personal freedom and democratic rights are almost sacrosanct and there is an aversion to the perceived over-regulated approach of Western nations. An undercurrent of civil disobedience extends to lax attitude to road rules. Despite hefty fines, wearing a seatbelt is treated as an optional inconvenience; creative and inconsiderate parking is the norm; dangerous overtaking is rife; and you'll often see people riding motorbikes, carrying their helmets as they chat on their mobile phones.

De-stressing *komboloi* (worry beads) are not just an enduring tradition but a fashion statement and a skill to master. Some *komboloi* are worth more than €10,000 and rare ones are collector's items.

Greece has compulsory 12-month military service for males aged 19 to 50. Women are accepted into the Greek army, though are not obliged to join and rarely do.

## SPORTING PASSIONS

If the streets have gone quiet, you can't get a taxi or you hear a mighty roar coming from cafes across Greece, chances are there's a football (soccer) game underway. Football is Greece's most popular spectator sport (followed by basketball) and inspires local passions and frequently unedifying fan hooliganism.

Football's first division is dominated by the big clubs of the league: Olympiakos of Piraeus and arch rivals Panathinaikos of Athens, along with AEK Athens and Thessaloniki's PAOK. Greece usually fields two teams in the European Champions League. Olympiakos, AEK, Aris and PAOK have all won European championships.

Since Greece's astounding football victory in the 2004 European Cup, it has remained in the shadow of Europe's soccer heavyweights. A major shake-up was expected after Greek football was rocked by a match-fixing scandal that led to charges against high-profile officials and a two-week halt to all football in June 2011.

Greece basketball is in better shape, with Panathinaikos firmly one of the powerhouses of European basketball, winning its sixth Euroleague title in 2011.

It's taken several attempts at banning smoking in public places to make any impact. Creative measures to tackle endemic tax-dodging included using satellite images of northern Athens' neighbourhoods to locate undeclared swimming pools – in one swoop in 2011 they located more than 16,000 of them (only 324 swimming pools had been declared for tax purposes).

Protesting is ingrained in the national psyche, with trade-union activism, mass demonstrations and rolling and often crippling strikes a routine part of life. Police bear the brunt of the anti-establishment sentiment, which in recent years has escalated to the violent clashes sparked by fringe anarchist groups that have made news footage around the world (see p730).

## The New Greeks

In the 1990s, Greece changed from a nation of emigration to one of immigration. What was a largely homogenous society has since become inadvertently multicultural. Greece is home to more than one million migrants (legal, illegal and of indeterminate status), the majority are economic migrants from Albania, the Balkans and Eastern Europe. Almost half have settled in Athens. Bulgarian women look after the elderly in remote villages, Polish kitchen-hands work on the islands, Albanians dominate the manual-labour force, Chinese businesses have sprung up all over Greece, African hawkers flog fake designer bags and CDs on the streets and Pakistanis gather for weekend cricket matches in Athens car parks.

Greece has also become the main illegal gateway to Europe, with people streaming over the Turkish border or arriving on Greece's remote islands on rickety boats (many have drowned in the process). Greece's inadequate and painfully slow asylum processes and immigration system has drawn international criticism.

Economic migrants exist on the social fringe, but as they seek Greek citizenship and try to integrate into mainstream society, community tolerance, prejudice, xenophobia and notions of Greek identity and nationality are being tested. As with countries such as Germany, citizenship is not a birthright, raising issues for the Greek-born children of migrants.

While there is still a long way to go before migrants are accepted into the community, there is recognition that they keep the economy going. Mixed marriages are becoming common, especially in rural areas where Eastern European brides fill the void left by Greek women

More than five million people of Greek descent live abroad in 140 countries, including about three million in the US and Canada. Melbourne, Australia, is the third-largest city of Greeks (300,000), after Athens and Thessaloniki.

moving to the cities. Greece's illegal immigration problems have sparked anti-immigrant rallies and hostility from far-right fringe groups.

Until recently Greece's only recognised ethnic minority were the 300,000 Muslims in western Thrace (mostly ethnic Turks exempt from the 1923 population exchange), who continue to have a difficult time.

Very small numbers of Vlach and Sarakatsani shepherds live a semi-nomadic existence in Epiros, while you will come across Roma (Gypsies) everywhere, especially in Macedonia, Thrace and Thessaly. More than 150,000 people of Greek descent repatriated from the former Soviet Union and Balkan states after the fall of communism. Many post-war Greek emigrants have also repatriated or retired in Greece, along with a small wave of second- and third-generation Greeks from America, Canada, Australia and the wider Greek diaspora.

## Faith & Identity

The Orthodox faith is the official religion of Greece and a key element of Greek identity, ethnicity and culture. The prevailing view is that to be Greek is to be Orthodox. While younger people aren't generally devout nor attend church regularly, most observe the rituals and consider their faith part of their identity. Between 94% and 97% of the Greek population belong at least nominally to the Greek Orthodox Church, though migrants are changing the dynamic.

Religion was the most important criterion in defining a Greek during consecutive foreign occupations, and under Ottoman rule the Church was the principal upholder of Greek culture, language and traditions, helping to maintain a sense of unity. The Church still exerts significant

The Greek year is centred on saints' days and festivals of the church calendar. Name days (celebrating your namesake saint) are considered more important than birthdays. Most people are named after a saint, as are boats, suburbs and train stations.

### GREECE ON SCREEN

Greek cinema received a much-needed boost in 2011, when writer-director Yorgos Lanthimos' quirky *Dogtooth* (*Kynodontia*) was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, the first time a Greek film has been nominated since Mihalis Cacoyannis' *Ifigenia* in 1977 – and only the fifth-ever Greek nomination. Lanthimos also won the best screenplay award at the 2011 Venice Film Festival for his third feature, *Alps*. One of Greece's promising new-generation filmmakers, Lanthimos came into the international spotlight in 2009 when he won the new talent award at Cannes for *Dogtooth*.

Since the 1990s, Greek film has achieved moderate commercial successes domestically with hit comedies such as *Safe Sex* (2000) and *Sirens in the Aegean* (2005), and the high-budget *El Greco* (2007). Tasos Boulmetis' *A Touch of Spice* (*Politiki Kouzina*; 2003) and Pantelis Voulgaris' 2004 hit *Brides* (*Nyfes*), were the first films in many years to gain cinematic releases abroad, while Yorgos Noussias' first Greek zombie flick (*Evil*) was such a cult hit, Billy Zane wanted a role in the prequel.

But Greece's most internationally acclaimed film remains the classic 1964 film *Zorba the Greek*, which was nominated for seven Oscars, including Best Picture, Director (Cacoyannis) and Actor (Anthony Quinn), but won three for Best Art Direction, Cinematography and Supporting Actress (Lila Kedrova). Greece's only other Oscar nominations also came from the 1960s heydays of Greek cinema, with Cacoyannis' *Electra* (1962), and Vasilis Georgiadis' *The Red Lanterns* (1963) and *Blood on the Land* (1965). The late Melina Mercouri, who went on to become Greece's culture minister, is the only Greek actor ever nominated for an Oscar, for her memorable role as a prostitute in the 1960 film *Never on a Sunday*, which also won her the Best Actress award at Cannes (and Best Music Oscar for Manos Hatzidakis).

Greece's best known art-house filmmaker is Theo Angelopoulos, winner of the Golden Palm award at Cannes in 1998 for *Eternity and a Day*. Considered one of the few remaining 'auteur' filmmakers, he is renowned for long takes and slow pans.

Greece's most prestigious film event is the annual Thessaloniki International Film Festival.

The sexual liberation of Greek society (and HIV/AIDS) have virtually killed off the infamous Greek lover known as the *kamaki* (literally a fishing trident) who courted foreign women on the islands in the 1970s and '80s.

social, political and economic influence. Greece doesn't have the same Church-state separation as other Western countries (priests are paid by the state) and until relatively recently religious affiliation appeared on national identity cards. Non-Orthodox Greeks can still have a hard time joining the civil service or military; civil marriages were only recognised in the early 1980s; and cremation was only legalised in 2006, after much controversy.

Religious rituals are part of daily life. You will notice taxi drivers, motorcyclists and people on public transport making the sign of the cross when they pass a church; compliments to babies and adults are followed by the '*fou fou*' (spitting) gesture to ward off the evil eye. Many Greeks will go to a church when they have a problem, to light a candle or leave a votive offering to the relevant saint. Hundreds of small chapels dotted around the countryside have been predominantly built by individual families and dedicated to particular saints. The tiny *iconostases* (chapels) you see on roadsides are either shrines to people who died in road accidents or similar dedications to saints. If you wish to look around a church or monastery, you should always dress appropriately. Arms should be covered, women should wear skirts that reach below the knees and men should wear long trousers.

While religious freedom is part of the constitution, the only other legally recognised religions in Greece are Judaism and Islam; non-Orthodox faiths do not have the same legal status.

With Greece's Muslim population estimated to be close to 500,000, many makeshift mosques operate in Athens, which closed all mosques after Independence. Though approved at the official level, construction of an official mosque remains mired in controversy and delays.

Greek Jews number about 5000, with small Jewish communities in Ioannina, Larisa, Halkida and Rhodes (dating back to the Roman era) and Thessaloniki, Kavala and Didymoticho (mostly descendants of 15th-century exiles from Spain and Portugal).

Greece also has more than 50,000 Catholics, mostly of Genoese or Frankish origin and living in the Cyclades, especially on Syros, where they make up 40% of the population.



# Architecture

Cast your eyes around most major Western cities and you'll eventually find a reinterpretation of classical Greek architecture. The Renaissance was inspired by the ancient style as was the neoclassical movement and the British Greek Revival. For those of you with an eye to the past, part of the allure of Greece is the sheer volume of its well-preserved temples. Stand in the ruins of the extraordinary Parthenon, and with a little effort of the imagination, it's easy to transport yourself back to classical 5th-century Greece.

It's also an exciting time for modern Greece: visitors can track the country's transition from fugly modern high-rise to exciting modern hi-tech, and heritage gurus are restoring neoclassical glamour with sassy retrofits. Much of Greece is moving forward, including its past.

## Minoan Magnificence

Most of our knowledge of Greek architecture proper begins at around 2000 BC with the Minoans, who were based in Crete but whose influence spread throughout the Aegean to include the Cyclades. Minoan architects are famous for having constructed technologically advanced, labyrinthine palace complexes. The famous site at Knossos is one of the largest. Usually characterised as 'palaces', these sites were in fact multifunctional settlements that were the primary residences of royalty and priests, but housed some plebs, too. Large Minoan villages, such as those of Gournia and Palekastro in Crete, also included internal networks of paved roads that extended throughout the countryside to link the settlements with the palaces. More Minoan palace-era sophistication exists at Phaestos, Malia and Ancient Zakros

### GRANDEUR OF KNOSSOS

According to myth, the man tasked with designing a maze to withhold the dreaded Minotaur was famous Athenian inventor Daedalus, father of Icarus. He also designed the palace of Knossos for King Minos.

First discovered by a Cretan, Milos Kalokirinos, in 1878, it wasn't until 1900 that the ruins of Knossos were unearthed by an Englishman, Sir Arthur Evans. The elaborate palace complex at Knossos (p452) was originally formed largely as an administrative settlement surrounding the main palace, which comprised the main buildings arranged around a large central courtyard (1250 sq metres). Over time the entire settlement was rebuilt and extended. Long, raised causeways formed main corridors; narrow labyrinthine chambers flanked the palace walls (this meandering floor plan, together with the graphic ritual importance of bulls, inspired the myth of the labyrinth and the Minotaur). The compound featured strategically placed interior light wells, sophisticated ventilation systems, aqueducts, freshwater irrigation wells, and bathrooms with extensive plumbing and drainage systems. The ground levels consisted mostly of workshops, cylindrical grain silos and storage magazines.

also in Crete, and at the Minoan outpost of Ancient Akrotiri on the south of Santorini.

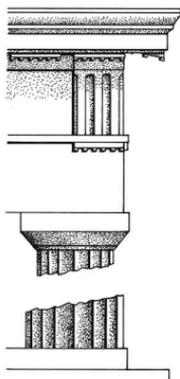
Several gigantic volcanic eruptions rocked the region in the mid-15th century BC, causing geological ripple-effects that at the very least caused big chunks of palace to fall to the ground. The Minoans resolutely rebuilt their crumbling palaces on an even grander scale, only to have more natural disasters wipe them out again. The latter effected an architectural chasm that was filled by the emerging Mycenaean rivals on mainland Greece.

## Mycenaean Engineering

The Mycenaean had a fierce reputation as builders of massive masonry. These war-mongering people roamed southern mainland Greece, picking off the choice vantage points for their austere palaces, fenced within formidable citadels. The citadels' fortified Cyclopean-stone walls were on average an unbreachable 3m (10ft) to 7m (25ft) thick. The immense royal beehive tomb of the Treasury of Atreus (aka Tomb of Agamemnon) at Mycenae was constructed using tapered limestone blocks weighing up to 120 tonnes. The palace at Tiryns has stupendous corbel-vaulted galleries and is riddled with secret passageways; and the incredibly well-preserved Nestor's Palace, near modern Pylos, also illustrates the Mycenaean's structural expertise.

## Classic Compositions

The classical age (5th to 4th centuries BC) is when most Greek architectural clichés converge. This is when temples became characterised by the famous orders of columns, particularly the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian.



*Doric style*



*Ionic style*



*Corinthian style*

### KNOW YOUR DORIC FROM YOUR CORINTHIAN

**Doric** The most simple of the three styles. The shaft (the main part of the column) is plain and has 20 sides, while the capital (the head) is formed in a simple circle. Also there's no base. An obvious example of this is the Parthenon.

**Ionic** Look out for the ridged flutes carved into the column from top to bottom. The capital is also distinctive for its scrolls, while the base looks like a stack of rings.

**Corinthian** The most decorative and popular of all three orders. The column is ridged, however the distinctive feature is the capital's flowers and leaves, beneath a small scroll. The base is like the Ionic.

The mother of all Doric structures is the 5th-century-BC Parthenon, the ultimate in architectural bling: a gleaming, solid marble crown. To this day, it's probably *the* most obsessively photographed jewel in all of Greece.

In the meantime, the Greek colonies of the Asia Minor coast were creating their own Ionic order, designing a column base in several tiers and adding more flutes. This more graceful order's capital (the head) received an ornamented necking, and Iktinos fused elements of its design in the Parthenon. This order is used on the Acropolis' Temple of Athena Nike and the Erechtheion, where the famous Caryatids regally stand.

Towards the tail end of the classical period, the Corinthian column was in limited vogue. Featuring a single or double row of ornate leafy scrolls (usually the very sculptural acanthus), the order was subsequently adopted by the Romans and used only on Corinthian temples in Athens. The Temple of Olympian Zeus, completed during Emperor Hadrian's reign, is a grand, imposing structure. Another temple design, the graceful, circular temple *tholos* (dome) style, was used for the great Sanctuary of Athena Pronaia at Delphi.

The Greek theatre design is a hallmark of the classical period (an example is the 4th-century BC theatre at Epidavros) and had a round stage, radiating a semicircle of steeply banked stone benches that seated many thousands. Cleverly engineered acoustics meant every spectator could monitor every syllable uttered on the stage below. Most ancient Greek theatres are still used for summer festivals, music concerts and plays.

The distinctive blue-and-white Cycladic-style architecture most associated with the Greek islands was pragmatic and functional. The cuboid flat-roofed houses, huddled together along labyrinthine alleys, were designed to guard against the elements: strong winds and pirates.

## Hellenistic Citizens

In the twilight years of the classical age (from about the late 4th century BC), cosmopolitan folks started to weary of temples, casting their gaze towards a more decadent urban style. The Hellenistic architect was in hot demand for private homes and palace makeovers as wealthy citizens, dignitaries and political heavyweights lavishly remodelled their abodes in marble, and striking mosaics were displayed as status symbols (read *more* bling). The best Hellenistic ancient home displays are the grand houses at Delos.

## Byzantine Zeal

Church-building was particularly expressive during Byzantium in Greece (from around AD 700). The original Greek Byzantine model features a distinctive cross-shape; essentially a central dome supported by four arches on piers and flanked by vaults, with smaller domes at the four corners and three apses to the east. Theologian architects opted for spectacular devotional mosaics and frescoes instead of carvings for the stylistic religious interiors. In Athens, the very appealing 12th-century Church of Agios Eleftherios incorporates fragments of a classical frieze in Pentelic marble; the charming 11th-century Church of Kapnikarea sits stranded, smack bang in the middle of downtown Athens – its interior flooring is of coloured marble and the external brickwork, which alternates with stone, is set in patterns. Thessaloniki's 8th-century Church of Agia Sofia, with her 30m-high dome, is a humble version of her sister namesake in Istanbul. There are numerous Byzantine chapels in Mystras, many of which were originally private chapels attached to enchanting 17th- and 18th-century *arhontika* (mansions once owned by *arhons*, wealthy bourgeoisie merchants).

Several Byzantine monastic sites have made it to the Unesco World Heritage register, including the *katholikon* (main churches) of

Agios Loukas, significant for their late-Byzantine multidomed style, and the 11th-century Moni Dafniou, which stands on the site of an ancient Sanctuary of Apollo.

## Frankish Keeps & Venetian Strongholds

After the sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204, much of Greece became the fiefdoms of Western aristocrats. The Villehardouin family punctuated the Peloponnesian landscape with Frankish castles, such as at Kalamata and at Mystras, where they also built a palace that ended up a court of the Byzantine imperial family for two centuries. When the Venetians dropped by to seize a few coastal enclaves, they built the impenetrable 16th-century Koules fortress in Iraklio, the very sturdy fortress at Methoni, and the imposing 18th-century Palamidi fortress at Nafplio. The rambling defence at Acrocorinth is studded with imposing gateways, and the rock-nest protecting the enchanting Byzantine village at Monemvasia commands spectacular ocean views.

## Ottoman Offerings

Interestingly, remarkably few monuments are left to catalogue after four centuries of Ottoman Turkish rule (16th to 19th centuries). Though many mosques and their minarets have sadly crumbled or are in serious disrepair, some terrific Ottoman-Turkish examples still survive. These include the prominent pink-domed Mosque of Süleyman in Rhodes' Old Town, which still bears many legacies of its Ottoman past, as does the walled quarter of Ioannina and its restored Fetiye Cami (Victory Mosque). The Fethiye Mosque and Turkish Baths are two of Athens' few surviving Ottoman reminders, and the architect for the 16th-century Koursoum Tzami in Trikala also designed the Blue Mosque in İstanbul. The Turkish quarter of Varousi in Trikala, and the streets of Thessaloniki and of Didymoticho, near the Turkish border, showcase superb Turkish-designed homes with stained-glass windows, wooden overhangs on butresses, decorated plasterwork and painted woodwork.

Greeks are becoming acutely aware that their 400-year-long Ottoman dossier is worth preserving. One good restoration job is the 18-domed Imaret in Kavala, which incorporates a mosque, college and *hammam* (Turkish bath).

### BEST FUTURISTIC ATHENS

**Acropolis Museum** This new space houses Greece's antiquities. Designed by Bernard Tschumi, the museum features an internal glass cella (inner room) mirroring the Parthenon with the same number of columns (clad in steel) and a glass floor overlooking excavated ruins in situ.

**Stavros Niarchos Foundation's Cultural Park** The Pritzker Prize-winning architect Renzo Piano is designing the SNFCP. Plans include new venues for the National Library of Greece, the National Opera and the National Ballet School, to be set amid natural surroundings that will also feature an *agora* (market) and a canal that will link the park (at the old horse-racing tracks in Faliro) with the sea. Completion is due in 2015.

**Planetarium** This is the world's largest digital hemispherical dome, providing 360-degree 3D virtual rides through the galaxy.

**Athens Olympic Complex** (OAKA) Notable for Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava's striking ultramodern glass-and-steel roof, which is suspended by cables from large arches.

## TOP FIVE PROVINCIAL ORIGINALS

**Pyrgi** See the medieval, labyrinthine, vaulted island village of Pyrgi in Chios, for its unique Genoese designs of intricate, geometric, grey-and-white facades.

**Zagorohoria** Gaze at the slate mansions of the Zagorohoria: schist-slab roofs, stone-slab walls and fortified courtyards.

**Vathia** Watch out for the lovely Vathia in Mani, for its startling meercat-esque stone tower houses with round turrets as sentry posts.

**Oia** Squint at the volcanic rock-hewn cliff-top village of Oia in Santorini, with its dazzling whitewashed island streetscapes and homes.

**Lefkada Town** Discover the strangely attractive wooden-framed houses of Lefkada Town; the lower floors are panelled in wood; the upper floors are lined in painted sheet metal or corrugated iron.

## Neoclassical Splendour

Regarded by experts as the most beautiful neoclassical building world-wide, the 1885 Athens Academy reflects Greece's post-Independence yearnings for grand and geometric forms, and Hellenistic detail. Renowned Danish architect Theophile Hansen drew inspiration from the Erechtheion to design the Academy's Ionic-style column entrance (guarded over by Apollo and Athena); the great interior oblong hall is lined with marble seating, and Austrian painter Christian Griepenkler was commissioned to decorate its elaborate ceiling and wall paintings. In a similar vein, the Doric columns of the Temple of Hephaestus influenced Theophile's solid marble National Library, while Christian Hansen (Theophile's brother) was responsible for the handsome but more sedate Athens University, with its clean lines.

Meticulously restored neoclassical mansions house notable museums, such as the acclaimed Benaki Museum and the Ernst Ziller-built Numismatic Museum, which contains beautiful frescoes and mosaic floors.

Many provincial towns also display beautiful domestic adaptations of neoclassicism. In Sympi, the harbour at Gialos is flanked by colourful neoclassical facades (still striking even if a little derelict) and Nafplio is also embellished with neoclassical buildings.

## Modern Ideas

Athens today is embracing a sophisticated look-both-ways architectural aesthetic by showcasing its vast collection of antiquities and archaeological heritage in evolutionary buildings (see Best Futuristic Athens), and by beautifying landscapes for pedestrian zones to improve the urban environment. Examples include the well-designed facelift of the historic centre, including its spectacular floodlighting (designed by the renowned Pierre Bideau) of the ancient promenade, and the cutting-edge spaces emerging from once-drab and derelict industrial zones, such as the Technopolis gasworks arts complex in Gazi.



# Greek Cuisine

Simple, nutritious and flavoursome, Greek food is one of the pleasures of travelling through Greece. In the 5th century BC, Archestratus wrote one of the earliest Greek cookbooks, *Gastronomia*, giving rise to the term 'gastronomy'. But Greek cuisine has taken a while to come to the fore as one of the healthiest and tastiest, with far more to offer than the familiar souvlaki and grills.

Greece's rich culinary heritage draws from a fusion of mountain village food, island cuisine, flavours introduced by Greeks from Asia Minor, and influences from various invaders and historical trading partners.

Rustic Greek cooking reflects the bounty of its diverse regions and relies on fresh, seasonal, sun-drenched local produce. Subsistence living during hard times made Greeks adept at using every edible morsel to make a delicious meal, making the most of the fruits of the sea and whatever grew wild.

Greek food traditions have emanated from home cooks rather than restaurant kitchens. Those fortunate to have eaten in a Greek home would often lament that the cuisine was never done justice in a restaurant setting, let alone at generic or 'tourist' tavernas. More recent efforts at nouvelle-Greek cuisine with fancy foams and takes on international trends were hit-and-miss affairs.

But a welcome culinary awakening has been taking place, with a new-found appreciation for traditional cuisine, regional specialities and produce with a designation of origin. Changing lifestyles have led to people cooking less at home, fuelling nostalgia for the familiar flavours of *yiayia's* (grandmother's) cooking. Classic, home-style cooking or reinterpreted Greek dishes can now be found on the trendiest restaurant menu, while the creative new generation of chefs in Greece (and abroad) is taking their culinary heritage up a notch, adding modern flare and challenging perceptions of Greek food.

## The Greek Kitchen

The essence of traditional Greek cuisine lies in fresh, seasonal home-grown produce and generally simple, unfussy cooking that brings out the rich flavours of the Mediterranean.

Greek dishes are simply seasoned. Lemon juice, garlic, pungent Greek oregano and extra virgin olive oil are the quintessential flavours, along with tomato, parsley and dill, and spices such as cinnamon, allspice and cloves.

Olive oil is the elixir of Greece, with extra virgin oil used liberally in cooking and salads, making vegetables, pulses and legumes – key elements of the healthy Mediterranean diet – tastier. Olive oil is produced commercially and in family-run groves all over the country and many tavernas use their own oil.

Meat was once reserved for special occasions but has become more prominent in the modern diet. Grilled and spit-roasted meats are fa-

Greek coffee is traditionally brewed in a *briki* (narrow-top pot) on a hot-sand apparatus called a *hovoli* – and served in a small cup. It should be sipped slowly until you reach the mudlike grounds at the bottom (don't drink them) and is best drunk *metrios* (medium, with one sugar).

voured when eating out and are the centrepiece of celebrations. Local free-range lamb and pork dominate, though kid goat is also a favourite (beef is largely imported).

Traditional tavernas normally offer a selection of appetisers, food cooked *tis oras* (to order) such as grilled meat and seafood, and dishes known as *mayirefta* (ready-cooked meals), which reflect what Greeks eat at home.

Soups such as *fasolada* (bean soup), *fakes* (lentils) or chicken soup with rice and *avgolemono* (egg and lemon) make a hearty meal, but are not often found in restaurants.

Bread is a mandatory feature of every meal and fresh loaves of crusty bread are bought daily, the most common being the white crusty village loaf. Sliced bread is only available in supermarkets and used for toast.

## Mayirefta

*Mayirefta* is a catch-all term for a variety of home-style, one-pot, baked or casserole dishes. Some *mayirefta*, mostly braised vegetable dishes, are also referred to as *ladhera* (oven-baked or one-pot dishes), or 'oily' dishes, because of the liberal use of olive oil. *Mayirefta* are usually prepared early and left to cool, which enhances the flavour (they are often better served lukewarm). Common *mayirefta* include Greece's signature dish, *moussakas* (baked layers of eggplant or zucchini, minced meat and potatoes topped with cheese and béchamel sauce) and the summer favourite, *yemista* (tomatoes and seasonal vegetables stuffed with rice and herbs).

Pasta is widely used, from *pastitsio* (a thick spaghetti and meat bake) to the hearty *youvetsi*, slow-cooked lamb or beef in a tomato sauce with *kritharaki* (orzo or rice-shaped pasta).

Staple meat dishes include tasty tomato-based stews (*kokkinista*), roast lamb or chicken *lemonato* (with lemon and oregano) with baked potatoes, rabbit or beef *stifadho* (sweet stew cooked with tomato and onions), *soutzoukakia* (spicy meatballs in tomato sauce) and pork or lamb *fricassee* (braised with celery, lettuce and *avgolemono*).

## Greek Grills

Greeks are the master of the charcoal grill and spit-roasted meats. The aromas of meat cooking fills the air of every neighbourhood *psistaria* (grill house) and restaurant strips.

The souvlaki – arguably the national dish – comes in many forms, from cubes of grilled meat on a skewer to the pita-wrapped snack with pork or chicken *gyros* (kebab-style meat cooked on a vertical rotisserie).

*Vefa's Kitchen* is a weighty 750-page bible of Greek cooking from TV cooking matron Vefa Alexiadou, with 650 recipes, including some from leading Greek chefs around the globe.

## MEZEDHES

Sharing a range of mezedhes (appetisers) is a social and fun way to dine. Beyond the classic dips of *tzatziki* (yoghurt, cucumber and garlic), *melitzanosalata* (aubergine) and pink or white *taramasalata* (fish roe), you should also try *fava*, a creamy split pea purée originating from Santorini, served with lemon juice and finely cut red onions. Named after the pan it is cooked in, *saganaki* is a wedge of fried hard cheese, but you will also come across *saganaki* mussels and prawns, cooked in tomato sauce with cheese.

Popular meat mezedhes include *bekri mezēs* (spicy meat pieces cooked in tomato and red wine), *keftedhes* (meatballs), *loukaniko* (pork sausage), village sausage and *spetsofai*, a spicy sausage and pepper stew. Seafood dishes include crispy fried or grilled calamari, whitebait (eaten whole like fries), marinated or grilled *gavros* (white anchovies), octopus and *lakerda* (cured fish). Among the vegetarian options, try *dolmadhes* (vine-wrapped rice parcels), *yigantes* (giant lima beans in tomato and herb sauce), *kolokythokeftedhes* (zucchini fritters) and Cycladic specialties, *revythokeftedhes* (chick-pea fritters) and *domatokeftedhes* (tomato fritters).

At tavernas, tasty *païdakia* (lamb cutlets) and *brizoles* (pork chops) are usually ordered by the kilo.

In some places you may also find the delicacy *kokoretsi*, a spicy, spit-roasted or baked seasoned lamb or goat offal, wrapped in intestines.

## Fish & Seafood

With such an expanse of coastline and island living, it's no surprise fish and seafood feature prominently in Greek cooking. Fish from the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas are incredibly tasty and cooked with minimum fuss – grilled whole and drizzled with *ladholemono* (a lemon and oil dressing). Flavoursome smaller fish such as *barbounia* (red mullet) and *maridha* (whitebait) are ideal lightly fried.

Unfortunately, fresh local fish is not plentiful or cheap, due to over-fishing in the Mediterranean and high demand in summer. Smaller fish such as sardines, whitebait and anchovies are still good value. On the islands, the best way to avoid imports is to seek out tavernas run by local fishing families.

Octopus hung out to dry like washing outside tavernas is one of the iconic images of Greece. Grilled or marinated, it makes a fine mezes (appetiser), it is stewed in a wine sauce with macaroni.

Other popular seafood dishes include grilled *soupiēs* (cuttlefish), calamari or squid stuffed with cheese and herbs or rice, and a winter favourite: fried salted cod served with *skordalia* (a lethal garlic and potato dip). Island tavernas will often have *psarosoupa* (fish soup) with vegetables or a delectable *kakavia* (a bouillabaisse-style speciality laden with various fish and seafood; usually made to order). Greek *avgotaraho* (botargo), a distinctive fish roe (usually grey mullet) preserved in beeswax is a delicacy exported from Messolongi, on the west coast.

## Greek Salad

The ubiquitous Greek salad (*horiatiki* or 'village salad') is the summer salad, made of fresh tomatoes, cucumber, onions, feta and olives (sometimes garnished with purslane, peppers or capers). Lettuce and cabbage salads are served outside the summer; while beetroot is also a popular salad, occasionally garnished with feta and walnuts. *Horta* (wild or cultivated greens) are delicious warm or cold, drizzled with olive oil and lemon, and go particularly well with fish.

## Regional Cuisine

Provincial Greek cuisine is invariably influenced by local produce and microclimates, from the oil-rich foods of the Peloponnese and sweet red peppers of Florina, to the giant lima beans of Prespa in the north and the foraged wild greens and herbs of the barren Cyclades.

While in some areas you will find only subtle variations of the staples, others make dishes unheard of elsewhere, such as *kavourma*, the smoked water buffalo of Serres, or pies made with nettles in northern Greece.

The cuisine of northern Greece, influenced by the eastern flavours introduced by Asia Minor refugees, uses less olive oil and more peppers and spices. Thessaloniki and its mezes culture has long had the gastronomic upper hand over Athens, while northern coastal towns like Volos are known for seafood mezedhes such as fried mussels or mussel pilaf. Ioannina's specialities include crayfish, frogs' legs and *kokoretsi* (coarsely chopped lamb offal wrapped in lamb's intestine's and grilled with oregano and lemon juice).

The Peloponnese is known for simpler herb-rich, one-pot dishes. As the biggest producers of olive oil, the Peloponnese and Crete also have the biggest variety of *ladhera*.

Feta, the national cheese, has been produced for about 6000 years from sheep's and/or goat's milk. Only feta made in Greece can be called feta, an EU ruling giving it the same protected status as Parma ham and Champagne.

FETA

## TASTES OF THE ISLANDS

Each Greek island group – and sometimes each island – has its own specialities.

Fertile Crete produces the richest bounty and has the most distinctive regional cuisine. You'll find spiky, wild artichokes, and herb-rich dishes such as *soupies* (cuttlefish) with wild fennel, wild greens with rabbit or *anthoi* (stuffed zucchini flowers). A Cretan delicacy is *hohlii bourbouristoi* (snails with vinegar and rosemary). Lamb or goat is cooked *tsigariasto* (sautéed) or *ofto* (grilled upright around hot coals), or stewed with *stamnagathi* (wild mountain greens) or artichokes. *Boureki* (a cheese, zucchini and potato bake) is a speciality of the Hania region, while *kalitsounia* are the tasty local version of the *pita* (filled with *myzithra*, sheep's milk cheese, or wild greens). Celebrations invariably involve spit-roasted and boiled lamb, the stock of which is used to make *pilafi*, known as *gamopilaf* (wedding rice).

The Venetian influence is reflected in the food of the Ionian Islands, as seen in Corfu's spicy braised beef or rooster *pastitsada*, served with pasta and in a red sauce, and *sofrito* (braised veal with garlic and wine sauce). Grilled pancetta (pork spare ribs) is popular in Zakynthos.

Islanders in the arid Cyclades relied on beans and pulses as the foundation of their winter diet. Santorini is renowned for *fava* (split pea purée served with lemon juice and finely cut red onions), fritters made from its unique waterless tomatoes and wild capers. Sifnos trademark *revythadha* (chick-pea stew) is slow-cooked overnight in a specially shaped clay pot. Spaghetti with lobster is another speciality of the Cyclades, while Mykonos makes a mean sausage, as well as *kopanisti* (spicy creamy cheese).

The preservation of food was integral to survival during the winter, especially on the isolated islands where sun-dried and cured fish is a speciality. Excellent cured meats include vinegar-cured pork *apaki* in Crete, olive-oil stored *pasto* (the Mani), spicy wine-marinated and smoked *louza* (pork) in Tinos and Mykonos and *siglino* (Crete and Peloponnese).

Barley, rye or wheat *paximadhia* (hard rusks), double-baked to keep for years, are moistened with water and topped with tomato and olive oil (and feta or *myzithra* cheese in the Cretan *dakos*).

Greece's regions produce many different types of cheeses, most using goat's and sheep's milk, with infinite variations in taste. Apart from feta, local cheeses include *graviera*, a nutty, mild Gruyère-like sheep's-milk cheese (the best is made in Crete, Naxos and Tinos), *kaseri*, similar to provolone, the ricotta-like whey cheese *myzithra* (also dried and hardened for pastas), and creamy *manouri* from the north. *Saganaki* is made from firm, sharp cheeses such as *kefalotyri* or *kefalograviera*.

Every region also has variations of the *pita* (pie), from the pastry to the choice of fillings, though cheese, and cheese and spinach, are the most common.

## Sweet Treats

Greeks traditionally serve fruit rather than sweets after a meal, but there's no shortage of delectable Greek sweets and cakes, as the proliferation of *zaharoplasteia* (sweet shops) attests.

Traditional sweets include baklava, *loukoumadhes* (ball-shaped doughnuts served with honey and cinnamon), *kataifi* (chopped nuts inside shredded angel-hair pastry), *rizogalo* (rice pudding) and *galaktoboureko* (custard-filled pastry). Syrupy fruit preserves, *ghlika kutalyu* (spoon sweets), are served on tiny plates as a welcome offering, but are also delicious as a topping on yoghurt or ice cream.

Look out for regional specialities such as almond *amygdhalota* from Andros and Mykonos or Syros' renowned 'Grecian delight' (aka Turkish delight). *Mastiha* – mastic-flavoured *ypovryhio* or 'submarine' sugar confectionery from Chios is served on a spoon dipped in a glass of

For the largest collection of Greek recipes online try [www.greek-recipe.com](http://www.greek-recipe.com) or [www.gourmed.com](http://www.gourmed.com), or check out Diane Kochilas' Greek Food TV segments on YouTube.

## GREEK WINE

While the wine god Dionysos was tramping the vintage before the Bronze Age, it's only relatively recently that the Greek wine industry began producing world-class wines. New-generation, internationally trained winemakers are leading Greece's wine renaissance, producing fine wines from age-old indigenous varieties with unique flavours. White wines include *moschofilero*, *assyrtiko*, *athiri*, *roditis*, *robola* and *savatiano*. Greek reds include *xynomavro*, *agjorgitiko* and *kotsifali*. A rosé *agjorgitiko* is the perfect summer wine.

Greek wines are produced in relatively small quantities, making many essentially boutique wines (and priced accordingly). House or barrel wine can vary dramatically in quality (white wine is often the safer bet), and is ordered by the kilo/carafe. Few places serve wine by the glass.

Greek dessert wines include excellent muscats from Samos, Limnos and Rhodes, Santorini's Vinsanto, Mavrodafne wine (often used in cooking) and Monemvasia's Malmsey sweet wine.

Retsina, the resin-flavoured wine that became popular in the 1960s, retains a largely folkloric significance with foreigners. It does go well with strongly flavoured food (especially seafood) and you can still find some fine homemade retsina, as well as new-age bottled retsina.

water, or try the chilled liqueur. Thessaloniki's famous *bougatsa* (baked creamy semolina custard-filled pastry sprinkled with icing sugar) can be found around Greece.

## Festive Food

In Greece, religious rituals and cultural celebrations inevitably involve a feast and many have their own culinary treats.

The 40-day Lenten fast has spawned *nistisima*, foods without meat or dairy (or oil if you go strictly by the book). Lenten sweets include *halva*, both the Macedonian-style version (sold in delis) made from tahini and the semolina dessert served in some tavernas after a meal.

Red-dyed boiled Easter eggs decorate the *tsourekaki*, a brioche-style bread flavoured with *mahlepi* (mahaleb cherry kernels) and mastic. Saturday night's post-Resurrection Mass supper includes *mayiritsa* (offal soup), while on Easter Sunday you will see whole lambs cooking on spits all over the countryside.

A golden-glazed *vasilopita* cake (with a coin inside) is cut at midnight on New Year's Eve, giving good fortune to whoever gets the lucky coin.

## Vegetarian-friendly

Vegetarians may be an oddity in Greece, but they are well catered for. Vegetables feature prominently in Greek cooking – a legacy of lean times and the Orthodox faith's fasting traditions.

Look for popular vegetable dishes, such *fasolakia yiahi* (braised green beans), *bamies* (okra), *briam* (oven-baked vegetable casserole) and vine-leaf *dolmadhes*. Of the nutritious wild greens, *vlita* (amaranth) are the sweetest, but other common varieties include wild radish, dandelion, stinging nettle and sorrel.

## Eating with Kids

Greeks love children and tavernas are very family-friendly, where it seems no one is too fussed if children run amok between the tables and outside. You might find a children's menu in some tourist areas, but local kids mostly eat what their parents eat. Most tavernas will accommodate menu variations for children. For more information on travelling with children, see p57.

Greece's exceptional tangy, thick-strained yoghurt, usually made from sheep's milk, is rich and flavourful and ideal for a healthy breakfast, topped with aromatic thyme honey, walnuts and fruit.



# Music & Dance

For most people, Greek music and dance evokes images of spirited, high-kicking laps around the dance floor to the tune of the bouzouki (musical instrument in the lute family), as seen at weddings, tourist hotels and Greek tavernas around the world.

The sound of the bouzouki has been synonymous with Greece since the 1960s, when it was introduced to international audiences in Manos Hadzidakis' theme to the film *Never on Sunday* and immortalised in Mikis Theodorakis' soundtrack to *Zorba the Greek*.

Yet Greece's strong and enduring musical tradition dates back to antiquity, and encompasses a diverse range of musical influences and styles. Music remains an evolving and integral part of Greek culture, identity and self-expression.

All of the different Greek musical genres are still heard today, with most leading performers at some stage in their careers drawing on *laika* (popular urban folk) and *rembetika* (blues or regional music). Greece's music scene is also pumping out its share of mindless pop, club music, and even jazz, rock and rap, albeit Greek-style.

## Traditional Folk Music

Greece's regions have distinct musical style, steeped in local traditions and history. Regional folk music is generally divided into *tonisiotika* (the lighter, more upbeat music of the islands), and the more grounded *dimotika* (regional folk music) of the mainland – where the *klarino* (clarinet) is prominent and lyrics refer to hard times, war and rural life. The music of Crete, a world-music scene genre in its own right, remains the most dynamic traditional form, with a strong local following and regular performances and new recordings.

Traditional folk music was shunned by the Greek bourgeoisie during the period after Independence, when they looked to Europe – and classical music and opera – rather than their Eastern or 'peasant' roots. While urban folk music is heard throughout Greece, traditional folk is still popular in rural areas, especially at celebrations.

## Rembetika

Often referred to as the Greek 'blues', *rembetika* is one of the most enduring and internationally recognised forms of Greek music. With its underground roots, its themes cover heartache, hardship, drugs, crime and the grittier elements of urban life.

Markos Vamvakaris, acknowledged as the greatest *rembetis* (musician who plays *rembetika*), became popular with the first bouzouki group in the early 1930s, revolutionising the sound of popular Greek music.

*Rembetika's* anti-authoritarian themes made the genre popular among political exiles and left-wing activists during the junta years.

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Ancient Greek vases depict a circle of dancers performing a dance similar to the *syrtos*, which is still danced today.

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The memorable opening-credits track from the 1994 film *Pulp Fiction* was based on surf guitar legend Dirk Dale's 1960s version of 'Misirlou' – originally recorded by a Greek *rembetika* band around 1930.

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## SOUNDS OF GREECE

Greece's musical tradition dates back at least to the 2000 BC Cycladic figurines found holding musical instruments resembling harps and flutes. Music was an integral part of ancient life and theatre. The 4th-century-BC Mantinea Marble (at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens) depicts a muse seated on a rock playing a three-string (*trichordo*) bouzouki-like *pandouris*, the first known fretted instrument and a forerunner to many stringed instrument families.

Other ancient musical instruments included the *lyra* (lyre) *piktis* (pipes), *kroupeza* (a percussion instrument), *kithara* (a stringed guitarlike instrument), *avlos* (a wind instrument), *barbitos* (similar to a cello) and the *magadio* (similar to a harp).

The ubiquitous bouzouki, the six- or eight-stringed (tuned in pairs) long-necked lute-like instrument most associated with contemporary Greek music, is a relative newcomer to the scene. Reintroduced into Greece in the 1900s by immigrants from Asia Minor, it became the central instrument of *rembetika* (blues music; and later *laïka*, urban popular music), along with the *baglama* (baby version) and *tzoura* (half way between the two).

In contemporary and traditional Greek music, you may also hear the plucked strings of the bulbous *outi* (oud), the strident sound of the Cretan *lyra*, the staccato rap of the *toumberleki* (lap drum), the *mandolino* (mandolin) and the *gaida* (bagpipe), which share many characteristics with instruments all over the Middle East, along with the flat multistringed *santouri* and *kanonaki*.

Interest in genuine *rembetika* was revived in the late 1970s to early '80s – particularly among students and intellectuals – and it continues to be rediscovered by new generations of Greeks.

*Rembetika* ensembles perform seated in a row and traditionally play acooustically. A characteristic feature is improvised introductions called *taximis*.

## Laïka & Entehna

*Laïka* (popular or urban folk music) is Greece's most popular music genre. A mainstream musical offshoot of *rembetika*, *laïka* emerged in the late '50s and '60s, when the clubs in Athens became bigger and glitzier, and the music more commercial. The bouzouki went electric and reigned supreme, while the sentimental tunes about love, loss, pain and emigration came to embody the nation's culture and spirit. The late Stelios Kazantzidis was the big voice of this era, along with Grigoris Bithikotsis.

During this period another style of popular music emerged, led by outstanding classically trained composers Mikis Theodorakis and Manos Hatzidakis. Known as *entehni mousiki* or 'artistic' music, they drew on *rembetika* and instruments such as the bouzouki, but had more symphonic arrangements. They also brought poetry to the masses by creating popular hits from the works of Seferis, Elytis, Ritsos and Kavadias.

Composer Yiannis Markopoulos continued this new wave by introducing rural folk-music and traditional instruments such as the *lyra*, *santouri*, violin and *kanonaki* into the mainstream and bringing folk performers such as Crete's legendary Nikos Xylouris to the fore.

During the junta years Theodorakis' and Markopoulos' music became a form of political expression (Theodorakis' music was banned and the composer jailed).

## Contemporary & Pop Music

Contemporary Greek popular music merges elements of traditional *laïka* with western influences, but the music emerging from Greece today also includes local takes on folk rock, heavy metal, rap and electronic dance music.

A mini-bouzouki of sorts, the tiny *baglamas* was the instrument of choice for persecuted *rembetes* and prisoners, as it could be easily carried or concealed under clothing, or assembled out of materials smuggled into prison cells. It usually supports the bouzouki and is pitched about an octave higher.

While few Greek performers have made it big internationally – 1970s genre-defying icons Nana Mouskouri and kaftan-wearing Demis Roussos remain the best known – there is a strong local music industry.

Big names include veteran George Dalaras, who has covered the gamut of Greek music and collaborated with Latin and Balkan artists as well as Sting, and Dionysis Savopoulos, dubbed the Dylan of Greece. Distinguished women of Greek music include Haris Alexiou, Glykeria, Dimitra Galani and Eleftheria Arvanitaki.

Cypriot-born ‘modern troubadour’ Alkinoos Ioannides, with his rocky folk-inspired songs and ballads, is one of the stand-out new-generation artists, along with singer-songwriters Thanasis Papakonstantinou, Dimitris Zervoudakis and Miltiadis Pashalidis.

Acclaimed vocal artist Savina Yannatou, ethnic jazz fusion artists Kristi Stasinopoulou and Mode Plagal, are making a mark on the world-music scene, while other notable fusion bands include the Cretan-inspired Hainides.

On the pop scene, Greece’s answer to Madonna is Anna Vissi, while idol Mihalis Hatziyiannis and Greek-Swedish singer Elena Paparizou (who claimed Greece’s first-ever Eurovision Song Contest win in 2005) have the youth vote. Headline modern *laika* performers include Yiannis Ploutarhos, Antonis Remos and Thanos Petrelis.

Road to Rembetika: Music of a Greek Sub-Culture: Songs of Love, Sorrow and Hashish by Gail Holst-Warhaft is a fine account of the genre, as is Ed Emery’s translation of Elias Petropoulos’ Songs of the Underworld: The Rembetika Tradition.

## Greek Dance

Dancing has been part of Greek social life since the dawn of Hellenism. Some folk dances derive from the ritual dances performed in ancient

### THE GREEK BLUES

Two styles make up what is broadly known as *rembetika*. *Smyrneika* or Café Aman music first emerged in the mid- to late-19th century in the thriving port cities of Smyrna and Constantinople, which had large Greek populations, and in Thessaloniki, Volos, Syros and Athens. Characterised by a rich vocal style, with haunting *amanedhes* (vocal improvisations) and occasional Turkish lyrics, it had a more oriental sound. The predominant instruments were the violin, *outi* (oud), guitar, mandolin, *kanonaki* and *santouri* (flat multistringed instrument).

The second style evolved in Piraeus, where *rembetika* was the music of the underclass, and the six-stringed bouzouki (musical instrument in the lute family) and *baglamas* (a baby bouzouki) dominated. With the influx of refugees from Asia Minor in

Piraeus after the 1922 population exchange (many also went to America where *rembetika* was recorded in the 1920s), the styles somewhat overlapped and *rembetika* became the music of the ghettos. Infused with defiance, nostalgia and lament, the lyrics reflected the bleaker themes of life. The protagonists of *rembetika* songs were often *manges*, the smartly dressed (often hashish-smoking and knife-carrying), street-wise outcasts who sang and danced in the *tekedhes* (hash dens that inspired many songs).

Although hashish was illegal, the law was rarely enforced until the mid-1930s when Metaxas attempted to wipe out the subculture through censorship, police harassment and raids on *tekedhes*. People were arrested for carrying a bouzouki (and apparently had half their slick moustaches cut off or pointy shoes lopped). Many artists stopped performing and recording, though the music continued clandestinely.

After WWII a new wave of *rembetika* performers and composers emerged, essentially eliminating its seedy side, including Vasilis Tsitsanis, one of the most prolific and beloved composers, Apostolos Kaldaras, Yiannis Papaioannou, Georgos Mitsakis, Apostolos Hatzihristou, Sotiria Bellou, who was one of the great *rembetika* songstresses, and Marika Ninou, whose life inspired Costas Ferris’ 1983 film *Rebetiko*.

The music later morphed into lighter *laika* (urban popular music) with the lyrics reflecting more social and sentimental themes. It was played in bigger clubs with electrified bands, losing much of the original essence.

## GREEK GIG GUIDE

During summer you can see Greece's leading acts in outdoor concerts around the country. In winter they perform in clubs in Athens and Thessaloniki, as well as the larger regional towns.

Authentic folk music is hard to find. The best bet is at regional *panigyria* (open-air festivals) around Greece during summer. Crete's vibrant music scene is easier to tap into – look for posters at tavernas and pasted around telephone and power poles or ask around.

Athens' live music scene includes many intimate *rembetika* (blues) clubs and glitzy, expensive, cabaret-style venues known as *bouzoukia*. Second-rate *bouzoukia* clubs are referred to as *skyladhika* or doghouses – apparently because the crooning singers resemble a whining dog. These are the venues for seeing the flower-throwing (plate-smashing is rare these days), wanton (and expensive) displays of exuberance, excess and *kefi* (good spirits or mojo). *Opa!*

Greek temples. The *syrtos* is depicted on ancient Greek vases and there are references to dances in Homer's works. Many Greek folk dances are performed in a circular formation; in ancient times, dancers formed a circle in order to seal themselves off from evil influences or would dance around an altar, tree, figure or object. Dancing was part of military education; in times of occupation it became an act of defiance and a covert way to keep fit.

Dance styles often reflect the climate of the region or disposition of the participants, and dance is a way of expressing sorrow and joy.

In Epiros, the stately *tsamikos* is slow and dignified, reflecting the often cold and insular nature of mountain life. The Pontian Greeks, on the contrary, have vigorous and warlike dances such as the *kotsari*, reflecting years of altercations with their Turkish neighbours. In Crete you have the graceful and slow *syrtos*, the fast and triumphant *maleviziotiko* and the dynamic *pentozali*, with its agility-testing high kicks and leaps.

The bright and cheery atmosphere of the islands gave rise to light, springy dances such as the *ballos* and the *syrtos*, while the graceful and most widely known Kalamatianos, originally from Kalamata, reflects years of proud Peloponnese tradition. The so-called 'Zorba dance' (as immortalised in *Zorba the Greek*), or *syrtaki*, is a stylised dance for two or three men or women with linked arms on each other's shoulders, though the modern variation is danced in a long circle with an ever-quickenning beat.

Women and men traditionally danced separately (or often used handkerchiefs to avoid skin contact) and had their own dances, while courtship dances such as the *sousta* were danced together.

The often spectacular solo male *zeimbekiko*, with its whirling, meditative improvisations, has its roots in *rembetika*, where it was often danced while drunk or high on hashish. Women have their own sensuous *tsifteteli*, a svelte, sinewy show of femininity evolved from the Middle Eastern belly dance.

A modern take on the *tsifteteli* is the dance most commonly seen on tables and dance floors these days. The best place to see traditional dancing is at festivals around Greece and at the Dora Stratou Dance Theatre in Athens. Contemporary dance in Greece is gaining prominence, with leading local dance troupes taking their place among the international line-up at the prestigious Kalamata International Dance Festival and the Athens International Dance Festival.

Byzantine music is mostly heard in Greek churches these days, though Byzantine hymns are performed by choirs in concerts in Greece and abroad, and the music has influenced folk music.



# Art & Literature

## Modern Greek Art

Works by leading Greek contemporary artists take pride of place in the Athens metro, but 'modern' art is relatively new to Greece. Until the start of the 19th century, Byzantine religious painting was the primary art form. There was little artistic output during Ottoman rule, during which Greece was essentially shielded from the Renaissance.

Byzantine church frescoes and icons were usually decorated with scenes from the life of Christ and figures of the saints; later centuries saw more detailed narratives such as scenes from the miracles of Christ. The 'Cretan school' of icon painting, influenced by the Italian Renaissance and artists fleeing to Crete after the fall of Constantinople, combined technical brilliance and dramatic richness.

Modern Greek art per se started after Independence, when painting became more secular in nature. Artists focussed on portraits, nautical themes and representations of the War of Independence. Major 19th-century painters included Dionysios Tsokos, Theodoros Vryzakis, Nikiforos Lytras and Nicholas Gyzis, a leading artist of the Munich school (where many Greek artists of the day went).

From the first decades of the 20th century, artists such as Konstantinos Parthenis, Fotis Kontoglou, Konstantinos Kaleas and, later, the expressionist George Bouzianis used their heritage and incorporated developments in modern art.

Significant artists of the '30s generation were cubist Nikos Hatzikyriakos-Ghikas, surrealist artist and poet Nikos Engonopoulos, Yiannis Tsarouhis and Panayiotis Tetsis.

Other leading 20th-century artists include Yannis Moralis, Dimitris Mytaras, Yannis Tsoklis and abstract artists Yannis Gaitis and Alekos Fassianos, the latter's work fetches record prices for a living Greek artist. Yiannis Kounellis is a pioneer of the Arte Provera movement, while Giorgos Zongolopoulos is best known for his trademark umbrella sculptures.

The marble sculpture tradition endures on Tinos, the island that gave rise to two of the foremost modern Greek sculptors, Dimitrios Filippotis and Yannoulis Halepas.

Byzantine churches were usually decorated with frescoes on a dark blue background with a bust of Christ in the dome, the four Gospel writers in the pendentives supporting the dome and the Virgin and Child in the apse.

BYZANTINE

## GREEK ART SCENE

Athens' burgeoning contemporary arts scene exhibits local and international artists at galleries centred mostly in Psyri, Kolonaki and Metaxourghio. The National Art Gallery has the most extensive collections of Greek 20th-century art, along with the National Museum of Contemporary Art and the National Sculpture Gallery. The Municipal Gallery of Rhodes has one of the most extensive collections of 20th-century Greek art outside Athens.

## EL GRECO

Renaissance painter El Greco ('The Greek' in Spanish), nee Dominikos Theotokopoulos, was born in Crete. He got his grounding in the tradition of late-Byzantine fresco painting during a time of great artistic activity on the island, following the arrival of painters fleeing Ottoman-held Constantinople.

In his early 20s, El Greco went to Venice but came into his own after moving to Spain in 1577, where his highly emotional style struck a chord with the Spanish. He lived in Toledo until his death in 1614. His fight for art and freedom was the subject of the €7 million biopic *El Greco* (2007).

El Greco's *Concert of Angels*, *The Burial of Christ* and *St Peter* can be seen in Athens at the National Art Gallery, two signed works hang in the Benaki Museum, also in Athens, while *View of Mt Sinai*, *The Monastery of St Catherine* and *Baptism of Christ* are in Iraklio's Historical Museum of Crete.

International interest in modern Greek art is on the rise, with works by 19th- and 20th-century artists setting new records in London's leading auction houses, and modern and contemporary Greek art exhibitions being held abroad.

## Modern Greek Literature

One of the most important works of early Greek literature is the 17th-century epic romantic 10,000-line poem 'Erotokritos', by Crete's Vitsenzos Kornaros. Many of the 15-syllable rhyming verses are recited in Crete's famous *mantinadhes* (rhyming couplets) and put to music by generations of musicians.

Greece's most celebrated (and translated) novelist of the early 20th century is the controversial Nikos Kazantzakis, whose novels are full of drama and larger-than-life characters, such as the magnificent title character in *Alexis Zorbas* (Zorba the Greek) and the tortured Captain Michalis in *Freedom and Death*.

Another great novelist of the time, Stratis Myrivilis, wrote the classics *Life in the Tomb*, *Vasilis Arvanitis* and *The Mermaid Madonna*.

The first modern Greek poets were Andreas Kalvos and Dionysios Solomos, whose *Hymn to Freedom* became the Greek national anthem. Greece's eminent 20th-century poets include Nobel-prize laureates George Seferis and Odysseus Elytis, awarded in 1963 and 1979 respectively.

Prominent post-war literary figure Iakovos Kambanellis, whose *Mauthausen* novel about his experience as a concentration camp survivor was set to music by Mikis Theodorakis, wrote more than 20 plays and 12 film scripts, including *Stella*. Alexandros Papadiamantis, Kostis Palamas and poet-playwright Angelos Sikelianos rank among Greece's literary giants, while distinguished playwrights such as Yiorgos Skourtis and Pavlos Matessis have been translated and their plays performed abroad.

## Contemporary Writers

Greece's prolific publishing industry includes many small, independent publishing houses, but little contemporary fiction is translated locally into English. Greek writers are, however, making small inroads into foreign markets, such as Apostolos Doxiadis with his international bestseller *Uncle Petros and Goldbach's Conjecture* and award-winning children's writer and criminologist Eugene Trivizas, who has more than 100 books, including the hit *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig*.

Enjoy an insight into crime and corruption in Athens through the eyes of the quirky Rebus-like Inspector Haritos in Petros Markaris' popular crime series. *Che Committed Suicide* (2010) is his latest novel to be translated into English, following *The Late Night News* (2005) and *Zone Defence* (2007).

Leading contemporary Greek writers in translation include Ersi Sotiropoulou, who wrote the acclaimed 1999 *Zigzagging Through the Bitter Orange Trees*, Thanassis Valtinos, Rhea Galanaki, Ziranna Ziteli and Ioanna Karystiani, who also wrote the screenplays for *Brides* and *With Heart and Soul*.

Kedros' modern literature translation series includes Dido Sotiriou's *Farewell Anatolia*, Maro Douka's *Fool's God* and Kostas Mourselas' bestselling *Red-Dyed Hair*, later made into a popular TV series.

The current cosmopolitan generation of authors is taking a global approach. After his well-received novel *The Maze*, Panos Karnezis bypassed the translation issue by writing *The Birthday Party* in English, while best-selling author Soti Triandafyllou, also wrote *Poor Margo*, in English.

Alexis Stamatis represents a new generation of authors basing their stories outside Greece, with *Bar Flaubert* and *American Fugue*. Other contemporary voices include author and newspaper columnist Amanda Mihalakopoulou and Vangelis Hatziyannidis, author of award-winning *Four Walls* and *Stolen Time*.

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For Greek book reviews and author profiles check out the Ithaca Online journal ([www.ekebi.gr](http://www.ekebi.gr)) on the Greek Book Centre's website, while a comprehensive Greek book database can be found at [www.biblionet.gr](http://www.biblionet.gr).

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# Nature & Wildlife

While Greece is a perfect place to rub shoulders with ancient statues, it's equally ideal for getting up close to nature by hiking through the wildflowers, coming eye-to-eye with a loggerhead turtle or simply stretching out on a beach. Greece has something for everyone who wants to get out and explore.

Greece is the most seismically active country in Europe, with more than half of the continent's volcanic activity.

## Experiencing the Outdoors

### Greek Geography

No matter where you go in Greece, it's impossible to be much more than 100km from the sea. Rugged mountains, indigo water and seemingly innumerable islands dominate the Greek landscape which was shaped by submerging seas, volcanic explosions and mineral-rich terrain. The mainland covers 131,944 sq km, with an indented coastline stretching for 15,020km. Mountains rise over 2000m and occasionally tumble down into plains, particularly in Thessaly and Thrace. Meanwhile, the Aegean and Ionian Seas flow between and link together the country's 1400 islands, with just 169 of them inhabited. These islands fill 400,000 sq km of territorial waters.

For those with a penchant for geography, Greece rocks. During the Triassic, Jurassic, Cretaceous and even later geological periods, Greece was a shallow oxygen-rich sea. The continuous submerging of land created large tracts of limestone through the whole submarine land mass. Later, as the land emerged from the sea to form the backbone of the current topography, a distinctly eroded landscape with crystalline rocks and other valuable minerals began to appear, marking the spine that links the north and south of the mainland today. Limestone caves are a major feature of this karst landscape, shaped by the dissolution of a soluble layer of bedrock.

Volcanic activity once regularly rocked Greece with force – one of the world's largest volcanic explosions was on Santorini around 1650 BC. Today earthquakes continue to shake the country on a smaller scale but with almost predictable frequency. In 1999, a 5.9-magnitude earthquake near Athens killed nearly 150 people and left thousands homeless. In 2008, three separate quakes of 6.5-magnitude shook the Peloponnese but caused little damage. To check out Greece's explosive past, visit the craters of Santorini, Nisyros and Polyvotis.

Greece is short on rivers, with none that are navigable, although they've become popular locations for white-water rafting. The largest rivers are the Aheloös, Aliakmonas, Aoös and Arahthos, all of which have their source in the Pindos Mountains of Epiros.

The long plains of the river valleys, and those between the mountains and the coast, form Greece's only lowlands. The mountainous terrain, dry climate and poor soil leave farmers at a loss and less than

The Greek Orthodox Church is the second-largest landowner in Greece.

a quarter of the land is cultivated. Greece is, however, rich in minerals, with reserves of oil, manganese, bauxite and lignite.

## Wildflowers

Greece is endowed with a variety of flora unrivalled elsewhere in Europe. The wildflowers are spectacular, with more than 6000 species, some of which occur nowhere else, and more than 100 varieties of orchid. They continue to thrive because most of the land is inadequate for intensive agriculture and has therefore escaped the ravages of chemical fertilisers.

The regions with the most wildflowers are the Lefka Ori mountains in Crete and the Mani area of the Peloponnese. Trees begin to blossom as early as the end of February in warmer areas and the wildflowers start to appear in March. During spring the hillsides are carpeted with flowers, which seem to sprout even from the rocks. By summer the flowers have disappeared from everywhere but the northern mountainous regions. Autumn brings a new period of blossoming.

Herbs grow wild throughout much of Greece and you'll see locals out picking fresh herbs for their kitchen. Locally grown herbs are also increasingly sold as souvenirs and are generally organic.

*Herbs in Cooking* is an illustrative book by Maria and Nikos Psilakis that can be used as both an identification guide and a cookbook for Greek dishes seasoned with local herbs.

## NATIONAL PARKS

National Parks were first established in Greece in 1938 with the creation of Mt Olympus National Park and followed quickly by the establishment of Parnassos National Park. There are now 10 national parks and two marine parks which aim to protect the unique flora and fauna of Greece.

Facilities for visitors are often basic; abundant walking trails are not always maintained and the clutch of basic refuges is very simple. To most, the facilities matter little when compared to nature's magnificent backdrop.

Most of the parks are surrounded by buffer zones protecting an inner wilderness area. Some activities, such as grazing, woodcutting, camping and fish farms, are permitted in the buffer areas, but no activities other than walking are allowed in the protected area. If you have the opportunity, it's well worth experiencing the wild side of Greece in one of these settings.

- » **Mt Olympus National Park** (p276) – Home to Greece's tallest mountain, rich flora and considered the home of the gods
- » **Mt Parnitha National Park** (p134) – Very popular wooded parkland north of Athens; home to the red deer
- » **National Marine Park of Alonnisos** (p651) – Covers six islands and 22 islets in the Sporades and is home to monk seals, dolphins and rare birdlife
- » **Parnassos National Park** (p212) – Towering limestone and scenic views down to Delphi
- » **Prespa Lakes** (p282) – One of Europe's oldest lakes, steeped in wildlife and tranquillity
- » **Samaria Gorge** (p477) – Spectacular gorge in Crete and a refuge for the *kri-kri* (Cretan goat)
- » **Cape Sounion** (p131) – A cape with panoramic views and home to the Temple of Poseidon
- » **Vikos-Aoös National Park** (p308) – Excellent hiking with caves, canyons and dense forest
- » **Bay of Laganas** (see At Loggerheads, p701) – An Ionian refuge for loggerhead turtles
- » **Iti National Park** (p221) – Tranquil stretches of forest, meadows and pools. Home to eagles, deer and boar

## DON'T BE A BOAR

Greece's relationship with its wildlife has not been a happy one. Hunting of wild animals is a popular activity with Greeks as a means of providing food. This is particularly true in mountainous regions where the partisanship of hunters is legendary. Despite signs forbidding hunting, Greek hunters often shoot freely at any potential game. While this can include rare and endangered species, the main game is often wild boars which have been around since antiquity. Considered destructive and cunning animals, the number of wild boars has increased in recent decades, likely due to a lower number of predators. Many argue that hunting is an important means of culling them. There is also an increasing number of wild boar breeding farms and you will find boar on many menus.

## Forests

It seems as if every village on the mainland has a plane tree shading its central square, however the lush forests that once covered ancient Greece are increasingly rare. Having been decimated by thousands of years of clearing for grazing, boat building and housing, they've more recently suffered from severe forest fires (see the boxed text, Green Issues). Northern Greece is the only region that has retained significant areas of native forest and here you can experience mountainsides covered with dense thickets of hop hornbeam (*Ostrya carpinifolia*), noted for its lavish display of white-clustered flowers. Another common species is the Cyprus plane (*Platanus orientalis insularis*), which thrives wherever there is ample water.

## Watching for Wildlife

### On The Ground

In areas widely inhabited by humans, you are unlikely to spot any wild animals other than the odd fox, weasel, hare or rabbit scurrying out of your way. The more remote mountains of northern Greece continue to support a wide range of wildlife, including wild dogs and shepherds' dogs with bad attitudes which often roam the higher pastures on grazing mountains and should be given a wide berth if encountered.

The brown bear, Europe's largest land mammal, still manages to survive in very small numbers in the Pindos Mountains, the Peristeri Range that rises above the Prespa Lakes, and in the mountains that lie along the Bulgarian border. If you want to see a bear in Greece nowadays you're better off heading for the Arcturos Bear Sanctuary ([www.arcturos.gr](http://www.arcturos.gr)) in the village of Nymfeio in Macedonia as it's extremely rare to see one in the wild.

The grey wolf, which is protected under the European Bern Convention, is officially classified as stable. However, at last count, there were only an estimated 200 to 300 surviving in the wild and it's believed that up to 100 are killed annually by farmers' indiscriminate (and illegal) use of poison baits in retaliation for the occasional marauding and mauling of their flocks. The Greek Government and insurance companies pay compensation for livestock lost to wolves but it doesn't appear to slow the killings. The surviving wolves live in small numbers in the forests of the Pindos Mountains in Epiros, as well as in the Dardia Forest Reserve area. Head to the Wolf Sanctuary ([www.arcturos.gr](http://www.arcturos.gr)) near Aetos in Macedonia for a better chance to see one.

The golden jackal is a strong candidate for Greece's most misunderstood mammal. Although its diet is 50% vegetarian (and the other 50% is made up of carrion, reptiles and small mammals), it has tradition-

### Nature Conservation

- » Pelicans and pygmy cormorants ([www.spp.gr](http://www.spp.gr))
- » Birdlife ([www.ornithologiki.gr](http://www.ornithologiki.gr))
- » Wildflowers ([www.greekmountainflora.info](http://www.greekmountainflora.info))
- » Sea turtles ([www.archelon.gr](http://www.archelon.gr))
- » Going green ([www.cleanupgreece.org.gr](http://www.cleanupgreece.org.gr))

ally shouldered much of the blame for attacks on stock and has been hunted by farmers as a preventative measure. Near the brink of extinction, it was declared a protected species in 1990 and now survives only in the Fokida district of central Greece and on the island of Samos.

Greece has an active snake population and in spring and summer you will inevitably spot these wriggling reptiles on roads and pathways all over the country. Fortunately the majority are harmless, though the viper and the coral snake can cause fatalities. Lizards are in abundance and there is hardly a dry-stone wall without one of these curious creatures clambering around.

The Hellenic Wildlife Hospital ([www.ekpazp.gr](http://www.ekpazp.gr)) is the oldest and largest wildlife rehabilitation centre in Greece and southern Europe.

## In The Air

Birdwatchers have a field day in Greece as the country is on many north-south migratory paths. Lesvos (Mytilini) in particular draws a regular following of birders from all over Europe who come to spot some of more than 279 recorded species that stop off at the island annually. Storks are more visible visitors, arriving in early spring from Africa and returning to the same nests year after year. These are built on electricity poles, chimney tops and church towers, and can weigh up to 50kg; keep an eye out for them in northern Greece, especially in Thrace in Macedonia. Thrace has the richest colony of fish-eating birds in Europe, including species such as egrets, herons, cormorants and ibises, as well as the rare Dalmatian pelican - Turkey and Greece are now the only countries in Europe where this large bird is found. The

## GREEN ISSUES

Environmental awareness is beginning to seep into the fabric of Greece society, leading to slow but positive change. Environmental education has begun in schools, recycling is more common in cities, and even in the smallest villages you may find organic and environmentally sustainable restaurants and businesses. However, long-standing problems such as deforestation and soil erosion date back thousands of years. Live cultivation and goats have been the main culprits, while firewood gathering, shipbuilding, housing and industry have all taken their toll.

Forest fires are a major problem, with many thousands of hectares destroyed annually, often in some of the most picturesque areas of Greece. The increasing scale of recent fires is blamed on rising Mediterranean temperatures and high winds. Massive fires on Mt Parnitha and in the Peloponnese in the summer of 2007 destroyed large tracts of vegetation, as well as entire villages, and changed the face of the landscape. Many locals argue that the government is ill-prepared and that its attempts to address the annual fires are slow.

Illegal development of mainly coastal areas and building in forested or protected areas has gained momentum in Greece since the 1970s. Despite attempts at introducing laws and protests by locals and environmental groups, corruption and the lack of an infrastructure to enforce the laws means little is done to abate the land-grab. The issue is complicated by population growth and increased urban sprawl. The developments often put a severe strain on water supplies and endangered wildlife. A few developments have been torn down in recent years; however in more cases, the illegal buildings have been legalised, deemed necessary due to social need, whereby demolition would leave residents with no alternative affordable housing.

Global warming is playing havoc with the Greek thermometer and it's believed that by the end of the century the average temperature in Athens will rise by 8°C, while some 560 sq km of coastal land will be flooded. Areas at greatest risk include the Evros Delta, Corfu, Crete and Rhodes.

Loggerhead turtle hatchlings use the journey from the nest to the sea to build up their strength. Helping the baby turtles to the sea can actually lower their chances of survival.

wetlands at the mouth of the Evros River, close to the border with Turkey, are home to two easily identifiable wading birds – the avocet, which has a long curving beak, and the black-winged stilt, which has extremely long pink legs.

Upstream on the Evros River in Thrace, the dense forests and rocky outcrops of the 72-sq-km Dadia Forest Reserve play host to the largest range of birds of prey in Europe. Thirty-six of the 38 European species can be seen here, and it is a breeding ground for 23 of them. Permanent residents include the giant black vulture, whose wingspan reaches 3m, the griffon vulture and the golden eagle. Europe's last 15 pairs of royal eagle nest on the river delta.

About 350 pairs of the rare Eleonora's falcon (60% of the world's population) nest on the island of Piperi in the Sporades and on Tilos, which is also home to the very rare Bonelli's eagle and the shy, cormorant-like Mediterranean shag.

## Under the Sea

As Europe's most endangered marine mammal, the monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) ekes out an extremely precarious existence in Greece. Approximately 200 to 250 monk seals, about 90% of Europe's minuscule population, are found in both the Ionian and Aegean Seas. Small colonies also live on the island of Alonnisos and there have been reported sightings on Tilos. Pervasive habitat encroachment is the main culprit for their diminished numbers.

The waters around Zakynthos, are home to the last large sea turtle colony in Europe, that of the endangered loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*). The loggerhead also nests in smaller numbers in the Peloponnese and in Crete. Greece's turtles have many hazards to dodge – fishing nets, boat propellers, rubbish, sun-loungers and beach umbrellas. It doesn't help that the turtles' nesting time coincides with the European summer holiday season.

There is still the chance that you will spot dolphins from the ferry deck, however a number of the species are now considered vulnerable. The number of common dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*) has dropped from 150 to 15 in the past decade. The main threats to dolphins are a diminished food supply and entanglement in fishing nets.



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# Directory A-Z

## Accommodation

There is a range of accommodation available in Greece to suit every taste and pocket. All places to stay are subject to strict 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 price charged in each season. It's difficult to generalise accommodation prices in Greece as rates depend entirely on the season and location. Don't expect to pay the same price for a double on one of the islands as you would in central Greece or Athens.

Other points to note when considering hotel prices:

- » Prices include a 4.5% community tax and 8% VAT.
- » A 10% surcharge may be added for stays of less than three nights, but this is not mandatory.
- » A mandatory charge of 20% is levied for an additional bed (although this often is waived if the bed is for a child).
- » During July and August accommodation owners will charge the maximum price.

- » In spring and autumn prices can drop by 20%.
- » Prices can drop even further in winter.
- » Rip-offs are rare; if you suspect that you have been exploited make a report to the tourist or the regular police, and they will act swiftly.

## Camping

Camping is a good option, especially in summer. There are almost 350 campgrounds in Greece, found in the majority of regions and islands (with the notable exception of the Saronic Gulf Islands). Standard facilities include hot showers, kitchens, restaurants and minimarkets – and often a swimming pool.

Most camping grounds are open only between April

and October. The **Panhellenic Camping Association** (☎/fax 210 362 1560; www.panhellenic-camping-union.gr; Solonos 102, Exarhia, Athens) publishes an annual booklet listing all its campgrounds, their facilities and months of operation.

If camping in the height of summer, bring a silver fly sheet to reflect the heat off your tent (the dark tents that are all the rage in colder countries become sweat lodges). Between May and mid-September the weather is warm enough to sleep out under the stars. Many campgrounds have covered areas where tourists who don't have tents can sleep in summer; you can get by with a lightweight sleeping bag. It's a good idea to have a foam pad to lie on and a waterproof cover for your sleeping bag.

Some other points:

- » Camping fees are highest from mid-June through to the end of August.
- » Campgrounds charge €5 to €7 per adult and €3 to €4 for children aged four to 12.
- » There's no charge for children under four.
- » Tent sites cost from €4 per night for small tents, and from €5 per night for large tents.
- » Caravan sites start at around €6; car costs are typically €4 to €5.

## Domatia

Domatia (literally 'rooms') are the Greek equivalent of the British B&B, minus the breakfast. Once upon a time, domatia comprised little

## PRICE RANGES

Throughout this book we have divided accommodation into budgets based on the rate for a double room in high season (May to August). Unless otherwise stated, all rooms have private bathroom facilities.

- » € under €60 (under €80 in Athens)
- » €€ 60–150
- » €€€ over €150

## PRACTICALITIES

- » Greece uses the metric system for weights and measures.
- » To send post abroad, use the yellow post boxes labelled *exoteriko* (for overseas).
- » Greek current affairs available in the daily English-language edition of *Kathimerini* within the *International Herald Tribune*.
- » Be aware that Greece is region code 2 when buying DVDs to watch back home.

more than spare rooms in the family home that could be rented out to travellers in summer; nowadays, many are purpose-built appendages to the family house. Some come complete with fully equipped kitchens. Standards of cleanliness are generally high.

Domatia remain a popular option for budget travellers. Expect to pay from €25 to €50 for a single, and €35 to €65 for a double, depending on whether bathrooms are shared or private, the season and how long you plan to stay. Domatia are found throughout the mainland (except in large cities) and on almost every island that has a permanent population. Many domatia are open only between April and October.

From June to September domatia owners are out in force, touting for customers. They meet buses and boats, shouting 'room, room!' and often carrying photographs of their rooms. In peak season it can prove a mistake not to take up an offer – but be wary of owners who are vague about the location of their accommodation.

## Hostels

Most youth hostels in Greece are run by the [Greek Youth Hostel Organisation](#) (☎210 751 9530; [www.athens-yhostel.com](http://www.athens-yhostel.com); Damareos 75, Pangrati, Athens). There are affiliated hostels in Athens, Olympia, Patra and Thessaloniki on the mainland, and on the islands of Crete and Santorini.

Hostel rates vary from around €10 to €20 for a bed in a dorm and you don't have to be a member to stay in them. Few have curfews.

## Hotels

Hotels in Greece are divided into six categories: deluxe, A, B, C, D and E. Hotels are categorised according to the size of the rooms, whether or not they have a bar, and the ratio of bathrooms to beds, rather than standards of cleanliness, comfort of beds and friendliness of staff – all elements that may be of greater relevance to guests.

- » A- and B-class hotels have full amenities, private bathrooms and constant hot water; prices range from €50 to €85 for singles and from €90 and up for doubles.
- » C-class hotels have a snack bar and rooms with private bathrooms, but not necessarily constant hot water; prices range from €35 to €60 for a single in high season and €45 to €80 for a double.
- » D-class hotels generally have shared bathrooms and they may have solar-heated water, meaning hot water is

not guaranteed; prices are comparable with domatia.

- » E-class hotels have shared bathrooms and you may have to pay extra for hot water; prices are comparable with budget domatia.

## Mountain Refuges

There are 55 mountain refuges dotted around the Greek mainland, Crete and Evia. They range from small huts with outdoor toilets and no cooking facilities to very comfortable modern lodges. They are run by the country's various mountaineering and skiing clubs. Prices start at around €7 per person, depending on the facilities. The EOT (Greek National Tourist Organisation) publication *Greece: Mountain Refuges & Ski Centres* has details about each refuge; copies are available at all EOT branches (see p774).

## Pensions

Pensions are indistinguishable from hotels. They are categorised as A, B or C class. An A-class pension is equivalent in amenities and price to a B-class hotel, a B-class pension is equivalent to a C-class hotel, and a C-class pension is equivalent to a D- or E-class hotel.

## Rental Accommodation

A really practical way to save on money and maximise comfort is to rent a furnished apartment or villa. Many are purpose-built for tourists while others – villas in particular – may be owners' homes that they are not using. The main advantage is that you can accommodate a larger number of people

## BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews by Lonely Planet authors, check out [hotels.lonelyplanet.com/Greece](http://hotels.lonelyplanet.com/Greece). You'll find independent reviews, as well as recommendations on the best places to stay. Best of all, you can book online.

under one roof, and you can also save money by self-catering. This option is best for a stay of more than three days. In fact, some owners may insist on a minimum week's stay. A good site to spot prospective villas is [www.greekislands.com](http://www.greekislands.com).

If you're looking for long-term accommodation, it's worth checking the classified section of the *Athens News* ([www.athensnews.gr/classifieds](http://www.athensnews.gr/classifieds)) – although most of the places are in Athens. For rural areas and islands, local websites are a good place to start your search.

## Business Hours

While opening hours can vary depending on the season, day or mood of the proprietor, it is possible to make some generalisations. It's worth noting that while the government establishes opening hours for major sites, at the time of research these hours were inconsistent across many of the major sites due to issues with staffing and wages. Always try to double-check opening hours before visiting.

## Customs

There are no longer duty-free restrictions within the EU. Upon entering the country from outside the EU, customs inspection is usually cursory for foreign tourists and a verbal declaration is usually all that is required. Random searches are still occasionally made for drugs. Import regulations for medicines are strict; if you are taking medication, make sure you get a statement from your doctor before you leave home. It is illegal, for instance, to take codeine into Greece without an accompanying doctor's certificate.

It is strictly forbidden to export antiquities (anything over 100 years old) without an export permit. This crime is second only to drug smuggling in the penalties imposed. It is an offence to remove even the smallest article from an archaeological site. The place to apply for an export permit is the Antique Dealers and Private Collections section of the

**Athens Archaeological Service** (Polygnotou 13, Plaka, Athens).

## Vehicles

Cars can be brought into Greece for six months without a carnet; only a green card (international third-party insurance) is required. If arriving from Italy your only proof of entry into the country will be your ferry ticket stub, so don't lose it. From other countries, a passport stamp will be ample evidence. See also p782.

## Discount Cards

**Camping Card International** (CCI; [www.campingcardinternational.com](http://www.campingcardinternational.com)) Gives up to 25% savings in camping fees and third-party liability insurance while in the campground.

**Euro26** ([www.euro26](http://www.euro26)) Available for anyone up to the age of 30; provides discounts of up to 20% at sights, shops and for some transport. Also available from travel agencies in Athens with proof of age, a photo and €14. Visit [www.isic.org](http://www.isic.org) and [www.euro26.org](http://www.euro26.org) for more details.

**International Student Identity Card** (ISIC; [www.isic.org](http://www.isic.org)) Entitles the holder to half-price admission to museums and ancient sites, and discounts at some budget hotels and hostels. Available from travel agencies in Athens. Applicants require documents proving student status, a passport photo and €10.

**Senior Cards** Card-carrying EU pensioners can claim a range of benefits such as reduced admission to ancient sites and museums, and discounts on bus and train fares.

## STANDARD HOURS

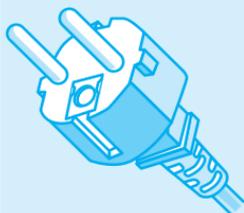
Reviews in this book do not contain business hours unless they differ from those listed here.

BUSINESS	OPENING HOURS
Banks	8am-2.30pm Mon-Thu, 8am-2pm Fri
Bars	8pm-late
Cafes	10am-midnight
Clubs	10pm-4am
Post offices	(rural areas) 7.30am-2pm Mon-Fri; (urban offices) 7.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-2pm Sat
Restaurants	11am-3pm & 7pm-1am
Shops	8am-3pm Mon, Wed & Sat; 8am-2.30pm & 5pm-8.30pm Tue, Thu & Fri (in Crete: 9am-2pm Mon-Sat. On Tue, Thu & Fri shops open again in the afternoon around 5.30pm & stay open until 8.30pm or 9pm; all day in summer in resorts)

## Electricity



220V/50Hz



220V/50Hz

## Embassies & Consulates

All foreign embassies in Greece are in Athens and its suburbs, with a few consulates in Thessaloniki.

**Albania** (☎210 687 6200; albem@ath.forthner.gr; Vekiareli 7, Athens GR-152 37)

**Australia** (☎210 870 4000; www.greece.embassy.gov.au; cnr Leoforos Alexandras & Leoforos Kifisias, Ambelokipi, Athens GR-115 23)

**Bulgaria** (☎210 674 8105; www.mfa.bg/en/79; Stratigou Kalari 33a, Psyhiko, Athens GR-154 52)

**Canada** (☎210 727 3400; www.greece.gc.ca; Genadiou 4, Athens GR-115 21)

**Cyprus** (☎210 723 7883; cyempl@hol.gr; Irodotou 16, Athens GR-106 75)

**France** (☎210 361 1663; www.ambafrance-gr.org; Leoforos Vasileiss Sofias 7, Athens GR-106 71)

**Germany** (☎210 728 5111; www.athen.diplo.de; Dimitriou 3, cnr Karaoli, Kolonaki, Athens GR-106 75)

**Ireland** (☎210 723 2771; www.embassyofireland.gr; Leoforos Vasileos Konstantinou 5-7, Athens GR-153 34)

**Italy** (☎210 361 7260; www.ambatene.esteri.it; Sekeri 2, Athens GR-106 74)

**Netherlands** (☎210 723 9701; www.dutchembassy.gr; Leoforos Vasileos Konstantinou 5-7, Athens GR-106 74)

**New Zealand** (☎210 687 4701; www.nzembassy.com; Kifisias 268, Halandri, Athens 152 26)

**Turkey** (turkbaskon@kom.forthnet.gr); Athens (☎210 724 5915; Leoforos Vasileos Georgiou 8, Athens GR-106 74); Thessaloniki (☎23102 48452; Agiou Dimitriou 151, Thessaloniki)

**UK** (www.ukingreece.fco.gov.uk/en); Athens (☎210 723 6211; Ploutarhou 1, Athens GR-106 75); Thessaloniki (☎23102 78006; Tsimiski 43, Thessaloniki)

**USA** (<http://athens.usembassy.gov>); Athens (☎210 721 2951; Leoforos Vasilissis Sofias 91, Athens GR-115 21); Thessaloniki (☎23102 42905; Tsimiski 43, Thessaloniki)

## Gay & Lesbian Travellers

In a country where the church still plays a prominent role in shaping society's views on issues such as sexuality, it comes as no surprise that homosexuality is generally frowned upon by many locals – especially outside the major cities. While there is no legislation against homosexual activity, it pays to be discreet.

Some areas of Greece are, however, extremely popular destinations for gay and lesbian travellers. Athens has a busy gay scene, but most gay and lesbian travellers head for the islands. Mykonos has long been famous for its bars, beaches and general hedonism, while Skiathos also has its share of gay hang-outs. The island of Lesbos (Mytilini), birthplace of the lesbian poet Sappho, has become something of a place of pilgrimage for lesbians.

The *Spartacus International Gay Guide*, published by Bruno Gmünder (Berlin), is widely regarded as the leading authority on the gay travel scene. The Greek section contains a wealth of information on gay venues everywhere from Alexandroupoli to Xanthi. Also check out **Gayscape** ([www.gayscape.com/gre.html](http://www.gayscape.com/gre.html)) for information and links.

## Health

### Availability & Cost of Health Care

Although medical training is of a high standard in Greece, the public health service is badly underfunded. Hospitals can be overcrowded, hygiene is not always what it should be and relatives are expected to bring in food for the patient – which can be a problem for a tourist. Conditions and treatment are much better in private hospitals, which are expensive. All this means

that a good health-insurance policy is essential.

- » If you need an ambulance in Greece call ☎166.
- » There is at least one doctor on every island and larger islands have hospitals.
- » Pharmacies can dispense medicines that are available only on prescription in most European countries.
- » Consult a pharmacist for minor ailments.

## Environmental Hazards

- » Dangerous snakes include the adder and the less common viper and coral snakes. To minimise the possibilities of being bitten, always wear boots, socks and long trousers when walking through undergrowth where snakes may be present.
- » Mosquitoes can be an annoying problem, though there is no danger of contracting malaria. The electric plug-in mosquito repellents are usually sufficient to keep the insects at bay at night. Choose accommodation that has flyscreen on the windows wherever possible. Some mosquitoes in northern Greece can provoke a severe reaction. The Asian tiger mosquito (*Aedes albopictus*) may be encountered in mountainous areas, can be a voracious daytime biter, and is known to carry several viruses, including Eastern equine encephalitis, which can affect the central nervous system and cause severe complications and death. Use protective sprays or lotion if you suspect you are being bitten during the day.

## Insurance

If you're an EU citizen, a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC; formerly the E111) covers you for most medical care but not emergency repatriation home or non-emergencies. It is available from health centres, and post offices in the UK. Citizens from other countries should find out if there is a reciprocal

arrangement for free medical care between their country and Greece. If you do need health insurance, make sure you get a policy that covers you for the worst possible scenario, such as an accident requiring an emergency flight home. Find out in advance if your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures.

Worldwide travel insurance is available at [www.lonelyplanet.com/travel\\_services](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services). You can buy, extend and claim online anytime – even if you're already on the road.

## Water

Tap water is drinkable and safe in much of Greece but not always in small villages and on some of the islands. Always ask locally if the water is safe and, if in doubt, drink boiled or bought water. Even when water is safe, the substances and microbacteria in it may be different than you are used to and can cause vomiting or diarrhoea. Bottled water is widely available.

## Internet Access

Greece has long since embraced the convenience of the internet. There has been a huge increase in the number of hotels and businesses using the internet, and internet cafes are everywhere. Many hotels also offer wi-fi access, although hot spots are often located in the lobby rather than in your room. You'll also find many cafes offering wi-fi.

## Legal Matters

### Arrests

It is a good idea to have your passport with you at all times in case you are stopped by the police and questioned. Greek citizens are presumed to always have identification on them; foreign visitors are similarly presumed to by the police. If you are arrested by

police insist on an interpreter (*the-lo dhi-ermi-nea*) and/or a lawyer (*the-lo dhi-ki-go-ro*).

## Drugs

Greek drug laws are the strictest in Europe. Greek courts make no distinction between possession and pushing. Possession of even a small amount of marijuana is likely to land you in jail.

## Maps

Unless you are going to hike or drive, the free maps given out by the EOT will probably suffice, although they are not 100% accurate. The best overall maps for coverage are published by the Greek company **Road Editions** (☎210 345 5575; [www.road.gr](http://www.road.gr); Kozanis 21, cnr Amfipoleos, Votanikos, Athens), whose maps are produced with the assistance of the Hellenic Army Geographical Service. Motorists should check out the company's 1:250,000 series covering Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly and Epiros, Central Greece, the Peloponnese and Crete. The company also produces a Greek island series and a Greek mountain series, which is essential for any serious hiking.

Hikers should also consider the *Topo* series published by **Anavasi** (☎210 321 8104; [www.mountains.gr](http://www.mountains.gr); Stoa Arsakiou 6a, Athens), with durable plasticised paper and detailed walking trails for many of the Aegean islands. **Emvelia** (☎210 771 7616; [www.emvelia.gr](http://www.emvelia.gr); Navarinou 12, Athens) publishes detailed maps, including some excellent plans of the region's main towns, each with a handy index booklet. All maps can be bought online or at major bookstores in Greece.

## Money

### ATMs

ATMs are found in every town large enough to support a bank and in almost all

## WITHDRAWALS

Be warned that many card companies can put an automatic block on your card after your first withdrawal abroad as an antifraud mechanism. To avoid this happening, inform your bank of your travel plans.

the tourist areas. If you've got MasterCard or Visa, there are plenty of places to withdraw money. Cirrus and Maestro users can make withdrawals in all major towns and tourist areas. Also be aware that many ATMs on the islands can lose their connection for a day or two at a time, making it impossible for anyone (locals included) to withdraw money. It's useful to have a backup source of money.

Automated foreign-exchange machines are common in major tourist areas. They take all the major European currencies, Australian and US dollars and Japanese yen, and are useful in an emergency, although they charge a hefty commission.

## Cash

Nothing beats cash for convenience – or for risk. If you lose cash, it's gone for good and very few travel insurers will come to your rescue. Those that will normally limit the amount to approximately US\$300. It's best to carry no more cash than you need for the next few days. It's also a good idea to set aside a small amount of cash, say US\$100, as an emergency stash.

Note that Greek shopkeepers and small-business owners have a perennial problem with having any small change. If buying small items it is better to tender coins or small-denomination notes.

## Credit Cards

Credit cards are now an accepted part of the commercial scene in Greece, although they're often not accepted on many of the smaller islands or in small villages. In larger places, credit cards can be used at top-end hotels, restaurants and shops. Some C-class hotels will accept credit cards, but D- and E-class hotels very seldom do.

The main credit cards are MasterCard and Visa, both of which are widely accepted in Greece. They can also be used as cash cards to draw cash from the ATMs of affiliated Greek banks in the same way as at home. Daily withdrawal limits are set by the issuing bank and are given in local currency only. American Express and Diners Club are widely accepted in tourist areas but unheard of elsewhere.

## Tipping

In restaurants a service charge is normally included in the bill, and while a tip is not expected (as it is in North America), it is always appreciated and should be left if the service has been good. Taxi drivers normally expect you to round up the fare, while bellhops who help you with your luggage to your hotel room or stewards on ferries who take you to your cabin normally expect a small gratuity of between €1 and €3.

## Travellers Cheques

The main reason to carry travellers cheques rather than cash is the protection they offer against theft. They are, however, losing popularity as more and more travellers opt to put their money in a bank at home and withdraw it at ATMs as they go.

American Express, Visa and Thomas Cook cheques are available in euros and are all widely accepted and have efficient replacement policies. Maintaining a record

of the cheque numbers and recording when you use them is vital when it comes to replacing lost cheques – keep this separate from the cheques themselves.

## Photography & Video

» Digital memory cards are readily available from camera stores.

» Film is still widely available, although it can be expensive in smaller towns.

## Restrictions & Etiquette

» Never photograph a military installation or anything else that has a sign forbidding photography.

» Flash photography is not allowed inside churches, and it's considered taboo to photograph the main altar.

» Greeks usually love having their photos taken, but always ask permission first.

» At archaeological sites you will be stopped from using a tripod as it marks you as a 'professional'.

## Public Holidays

» All banks and shops and most museums and ancient sites close on public holidays.

» Many sites (including the ancient sites in Athens) offer free entry on the first Sunday of the month, with the exception of July and August. You may also gain free entry on other locally celebrated holidays, although this varies across the country.

National public holidays:

**New Year's Day** 1 January

**Epiphany** 6 January

**First Sunday in Lent**  
February

**Greek Independence Day**  
25 March

**Good Friday** March/April  
**Orthodox Easter Sunday**  
15 April 2012, 5 May 2013,  
20 April 2014, 12 April 2015

**May Day (Protomagia)** 1 May  
**Whit Monday (Agiou Pnevmatos)** 50 days after Easter Sunday

**Feast of the Assumption**  
 15 August

**Ohi Day** 28 October

**Christmas Day** 25 December

**St Stephen's Day**  
 26 December

## Safe Travel

### Adulterated & Spiked Drinks

Adulterated drinks (known as *bombes*) are served in some bars and clubs in Athens and resorts known for partying. These drinks are diluted with cheap illegal imports that leave you feeling worse for wear the next day.

At many of the party resorts catering to large budget-tour groups, spiked drinks are not uncommon; keep your hand over the top of your glass. More often than not, the perpetrators are foreign tourists rather than locals.

### Tourist Police

The tourist police work in cooperation with the regular Greek police. Each tourist police office has at least one member of staff who speaks English. Hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, tourist shops, tourist guides, waiters, taxi drivers and bus drivers all come under the jurisdiction of the tourist police. If you have a complaint about any of these, report it to the tourist police and they will investigate. If you need to report a theft or loss of passport, then go to the tourist police first, and they will act as interpreters between you and the regular police.

## Smoking

In July 2009 Greece brought in antismoking laws similar to those found throughout most of Europe. Smoking is now banned inside public places, with the penalty being fines

placed on the business owners. Greece is home to some of the heaviest smokers in Europe, so it is a challenge for these laws to be enforced and they are often imposed in only a nominal way in remote locations.

## Telephone

The Greek telephone service is maintained by the public corporation known as OTE (pronounced *o-teh*; Organismos Tilepikoinonion Ellados). There are public telephones just about everywhere, including in some unbelievably isolated spots. The phones are easy to operate and can be used for local, long-distance and international calls. The 'i' at the top left of the push-button dialling panel brings up the operating instructions in English. Note that in Greece the area code must always be dialled when making a call (ie all Greek phone numbers are 10-digit).

### Mobile Phones

There are several mobile service providers in Greece, among which Panafon, CosmOTE and Wind are the best known. Of these three, CosmOTE tends to have the best coverage in remote areas. All offer 2G connectivity and pay-as-you-talk services by which you can buy a rechargeable SIM card and have your own Greek mobile number. The use of a mobile phone while driving in Greece is prohibited, but the use of a Bluetooth headset is allowed. For details on using your mobile in Greece see p16.

### Phonecards

All public phones use OTE phonecards, known as *telekarta*, not coins. These cards are widely available at *periptera* (street kiosks), corner shops and tourist shops. A local call costs around €0.30 for three minutes.

It's also possible to use payphones with the grow-

ing range of discount-card schemes. This involves dialling an access code and then punching in your card number. The OTE version of this card is known as 'Hronokarta'. The cards come with instructions in Greek and English and the talk time is enormous compared to the standard phonecard rates.

## Time

Greece maintains one time zone throughout the country. It is two hours ahead of GMT/UTC and three hours ahead on daylight-saving time – which begins on the last Sunday in March, when clocks are put forward one hour.

Daylight saving ends on the last Sunday in October.

## Toilets

» Most places in Greece have Western-style toilets, especially hotels and restaurants that cater for tourists. You'll occasionally come across Asian-style squat toilets in older houses, *kafeneia* (coffee houses) and public toilets.

» Public toilets are a rarity, except at airports and bus and train stations. Cafes are the best option if you get caught short, but you'll be expected to buy something for the privilege.

» The Greek plumbing system can't handle toilet paper; apparently the pipes are too narrow and anything larger than a postage stamp seems to cause a problem. Toilet paper etc should be placed in the small bin provided next to every toilet.

## Tourist Information

Tourist information is handled by the Greek National Tourist Organisation, known by the initials GNT0 abroad and EOT (Ellinikos Organismos Tourismou) within Greece. The quality of service

from office to office varies dramatically; in some you'll get info-a-plenty and in others you'll be hard-pressed to find anyone behind the desk. EOT offices can be found in major tourist locations, though they are increasingly being supplemented or even replaced by local municipality tourist offices (such as in the Peloponnese).

The tourist police (p774) also fulfil the same functions as the EOT and municipal tourist offices, dispensing maps and brochures, and giving information on transport. If you're really stuck, the tourist police can help to find accommodation.

## Travellers with Disabilities

Access for travellers with disabilities has improved somewhat in recent years, largely thanks to the Olympics. Improvements are mostly restricted to Athens, where there are more accessible sights, hotels and restaurants. Much of the rest of Greece remains inaccessible to wheelchairs, and the abundance of stones, marble, slippery cobbles and stepped alleys creates a further challenge. People who have visual or hearing impairments are also rarely catered to.

Careful planning before you go can make a world of difference. The British-based **Royal Association for Disability & Rehabilitation** (Radar; ☎020 7250 3222; [www.radar.org.uk](http://www.radar.org.uk); 12 City Forum, 250 City Rd, London EC1V 8AF) publishes a useful guide called *Holidays & Travel Abroad: A Guide for Disabled People*, which gives a good overview of facilities available to travellers with disabilities in Europe. Also check out [www.greecetravel.com/](http://www.greecetravel.com/) handicapped for links to local articles, resorts and tour groups catering to tourists with physical disabilities.

A couple of options:

**Sailing Holidays** ([www.charterayachtinggreece.com/DRYachting/index.html](http://www.charterayachtinggreece.com/DRYachting/index.html)) Two-day to two-week sailing trips around the Greek islands in fully accessible yachts.

**Sirens Resort** ([www.hotelsofgreece.com/central/loutraki/sirens-wheelchair-accessible-resort/index.html](http://www.hotelsofgreece.com/central/loutraki/sirens-wheelchair-accessible-resort/index.html); Skalama, Loutraki, Corinthia) Family-friendly resort with accessible apartments, tours and ramps into the sea.

## Visas

The list of countries whose nationals can stay in Greece for up to three months without a visa includes Australia, Canada, all EU countries, Iceland, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and the USA. Other countries included are the European principalities of Monaco and San Marino and most South American countries. The list changes – contact Greek embassies for the full list.

## Visa Extensions

If you wish to stay in Greece for longer than three months, apply at a consulate abroad or at least 20 days in advance at the **Aliens Bureau** (☎210 770 5711; Leoforos Alexandras 173, Ambelokipi, Athens; ☉8am-1pm Mon-Fri) in the Athens Central Police Station. Take your passport and four passport photographs along. You may be asked for proof that you can support yourself financially, so keep all your bank exchange slips (or the equivalent from a post office). These slips are not always automatically given – you may have to ask for them. Elsewhere in Greece apply to the local police authority. You will likely be given a permit that will authorise you to stay in the country for a period of up to six months.

Many travellers get around the need for an extension by visiting Bulgaria or Turkey briefly and then re-entering

Greece. If you overstay your visa, you will be slapped with a huge fine upon leaving the country.

## Women Travellers

Many women travel alone in Greece. The crime rate remains relatively low and solo travel is probably safer than in most European countries. This does not mean that you should be lulled into complacency; bag snatching and rapes do occur, particularly at party resorts on the islands.

The biggest nuisance to foreign women travelling alone is the guys the Greeks have nicknamed *kamaki*. The word means 'fishing trident' and refers to the *kamaki*'s favourite pastime: 'fishing' for foreign women. You'll find them everywhere there are lots of tourists: young (for the most part), smooth-talking guys who aren't in the least bashful about sidling up to women in the street. They can be very persistent, but they are usually a hassle rather than a threat. The majority of Greek men treat foreign women with respect.

## Working

EU nationals don't need a work permit, but they need a residency permit and a Greek tax file number if they intend to stay longer than three months. Nationals of other countries are supposed to have a work permit.

## Bar & Hostel Work

The bars of the Greek islands could not survive without foreign workers and there are thousands of summer jobs up for grabs every year. The pay is not fantastic, but you get to spend a summer in the islands. April and May are the times to go looking. Hostels and travellers hotels are other places that regularly employ foreign workers.

## English Tutoring

If you're looking for a permanent job, the most widely available option is to teach English. A TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) certificate or a university degree is an advantage but not essential. In the UK, look through the *Times* educational supplement or Tuesday's edition of the *Guardian* newspaper for opportunities; in other countries, contact the Greek embassy.

Another possibility is to find a job teaching English once you are in Greece. You will see language schools everywhere. Strictly speaking, you need a licence to teach in these schools, but

many will employ teachers without one. The best time to look around for such a job is late summer.

The noticeboard at the Compendium in Athens (p120) sometimes has advertisements looking for private English lessons.

## Volunteer Work

**Earth Sea & Sky** ([www.earthseasky.org](http://www.earthseasky.org)) Conservation and research based in the Ionian Islands.

**Hellenic Society for the Study & Protection of the Monk Seal** (☎210 522 2888; fax 210 522 2450; Solomou 53, Exarhia, Athens) Volunteers are used for monitoring programs on the Ionian Islands.

## Hellenic Wildlife Hospital

(Elliniko Kentro Perithalpsis Agrion Zoön; ☎22970 28367; [www.ekpaz.gr](http://www.ekpaz.gr); ☀10am-7pm) Volunteers head (particularly during the winter months) to Aegina to this large wildlife rehabilitation centre. For more information see p325.

**Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece** (☎/fax 210 523 1342; [www.archelon.gr](http://www.archelon.gr); Solomou 57, Exarhia, Athens) Includes monitoring programs in the Peloponnese.

**WWOOF** (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms; [www.woof.org/independents.asp](http://www.woof.org/independents.asp)) Offers opportunities for volunteers at one of around 35 farms in Greece.

# Transport

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Flights, tours and rail tickets can be booked online at [www.lonelyplanet.com/travel\\_services](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services).

## Entering the Country

Visitors to Greece with EU passports are rarely given more than a cursory glance. If entering from another EU nation passports are rarely even checked, but customs and police may be interested in what you are carrying. EU citizens may also enter Greece on a national identity card.

Visitors from outside the EU may require a visa. This must be checked with consular authorities before you arrive. For visa requirements, see p775.

## Air

Most visitors to Greece arrive by air, which tends to be the fastest and cheapest option, if not the most environmentally friendly.

## Airports & Airlines

Greece has four main international airports that take chartered and scheduled flights.

**Athens** (Eleftherios Venizelos International Airport; code ATH; ☎210 353 0000; [www.aia.gr](http://www.aia.gr))

**Iraklio** (Nikos Kazantzakis International Airport, Crete; code HER; ☎2810 228401; [www.heraklion-airport.info](http://www.heraklion-airport.info))

**Rhodes** (Diagoras Airport, Dodecanese; code RHO; ☎22410 83222)

**Thessaloniki** (Makedonia Airport, Northern Greece; code SKG; ☎2310 473 700, 2310 473 212; [www.thessalonikiairport.gr](http://www.thessalonikiairport.gr))

Many of Greece's other international airports, including Corfu, Crete and Mykonos, have begun taking scheduled international flights with easyJet. Kos and Araxos also take direct flights from Germany. Other international airports across the country include Santorini (Thira), Karpathos, Samos, Skiathos, Hrysoupoli, Aktion, Kefallonia and Zakynthos. These airports are most often used for charter flights from the UK, Germany and Scandinavia.

## AIRLINES FLYING TO/FROM GREECE

**Olympic Air** (OA; ☎801 801 0101; [www.olympicair.com](http://www.olympicair.com)) is the country's national airline with the majority of flights to and from Athens. Olympic flies direct between Athens and destinations throughout Europe, as well as to Cairo, Istanbul, Tel Aviv, New York and Toronto. **Aegean Airlines** (A3; ☎801 112 0000; [www.aegeanair.com](http://www.aegeanair.com)) has flights to/from destinations in Spain, Germany and Italy as well as to Paris, London, Cairo and Istanbul. The safety record of both airlines is exemplary. The contact details for local Olympic and Aegean offices are listed throughout the book.

Other airlines with offices in Athens:

**Aeroflot** (SU; ☎210 322 0986; [www.aeroflot.ru/cms/en](http://www.aeroflot.ru/cms/en))

**Air Berlin** (AB; ☎210 353 5264; [www.airberlin.com](http://www.airberlin.com))

**Air Canada** (AC; ☎210 617 5321; [www.aircanada.ca](http://www.aircanada.ca))

**Air France** (AF; ☎210 353 0380; [www.airfrance.com](http://www.airfrance.com))

**Alitalia** (AZ; ☎210 353 4284; [www.alitalia.it](http://www.alitalia.it))

**American Airlines** (AA; ☎210 331 1045; [www.aa.com](http://www.aa.com))

**British Airways** (BA; ☎210 890 6666; [www.britishairways.com](http://www.britishairways.com))

**Cyprus Airways** (CY; ☎210 372 2722; [www.cyprusair.com.cy](http://www.cyprusair.com.cy))

**Delta Airlines** (DL; ☎210 331 1660; [www.delta.com](http://www.delta.com))

**easyJet** (U2; ☎210 967 0000; [www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com))

**EgyptAir** (MS; ☎210 353 1272; [www.egyptair.com.eg](http://www.egyptair.com.eg))

**EI AL** (LY; ☎210 353 1003; [www.elal.co.il](http://www.elal.co.il))

**Emirates Airlines** (EK; ☎210 933 3400; [www.emirates.com](http://www.emirates.com))

**Gulf Air** (GF; ☎210 322 0851; [www.gulfairco.com](http://www.gulfairco.com))

**Iberia** (IB; ☎210 323 4523; [www.iberia.com](http://www.iberia.com))

**Japan Airlines** (JL; ☎210 324 8211; [www.jal.co.jp](http://www.jal.co.jp))

**KLM** (KL; ☎210 353 1295; [www.klm.com](http://www.klm.com))

**Lufthansa** (LH; ☎210 617 5200; www.lufthansa.com)

**Qatar Airways** (QR; ☎210 950 8700; www.qatarairways.com)

**SAS** (SK; ☎210 361 3910; www.sas.se)

**Singapore Airlines** (SQ; ☎210 372 8000, 210 353 1259; www.singaporeair.com)

**Thai Airways** (TG; ☎210 353 1237; www.thaiairways.com)

**Turkish Airlines** (TK; ☎210 322 1035; www.turkishairlines.com)

**Virgin Express** (TV; ☎210 949 0777; www.virginxpress.com)

## Tickets

EasyJet offers some of the cheapest tickets between Greece and the rest of Europe and covers a huge range of destinations. If you're coming from outside Europe, consider a cheap flight to a European hub like London and then an onward ticket with easyJet. Some airlines also offer cheap deals to students. If you're planning to travel between June and September, it's wise to book ahead.

## Land

Travelling by land offers you the chance to really appreciate the landscape, as well as the many experiences that go along with train or bus travel. International train travel, in particular, has become much more feasible in recent years with speedier trains and better connections. You can now travel

from London to Athens by train and ferry in less than two days. By choosing to travel on the ground instead of the air, you'll also be reducing your carbon footprint. It's a win-win situation.

## Border Crossings

### ALBANIA

The main crossing at Kakavia can have interminably slow queues.

**Kakavia** 60km northwest of Ioannina (see p306)

**Krystallopigi** 14km west of Kotas on the Florina-Kastoria road

**Mertziani** 17km west of Konitsa

**Sagiada** 28km north of Igoumenitsa

### BULGARIA

As Bulgaria is part of the EU, crossings are usually quick and hassle-free.

**Exohi** a new 448m tunnel border crossing 50km north of Drama

**Ormenio** 41km from Serres in northeastern Thrace

**Promahonas** 109km north-east of Thessaloniki

### FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA (FYROM)

**Doirani** 31km north of Kilkis

**Ezoni** 68km north of Thessaloniki

**Niki** (p282), 16km north of Florina

### TURKEY

Kipi is more convenient if you're heading for Istanbul, but the route through

Kastanies goes via the fascinating towns of Soufli and Didymotiho in Greece, and Edirne (ancient Adrianoupolis) in Turkey.

**Kastanies** (p299) 139km northeast of Alexandroupoli.

**Kipi** 43km east of Alexandroupoli

## Bus

The Greek railways organisation **OSE** (Organismos Sidirodromon Ellados; www.ose.gr) operates the majority of international buses in Greece. However, the railway company's once-plaintful international buses were in limbo with the cessation of all international trains in 2011, so be sure to check ahead. See the relevant city's Getting There & Away sections for information on departure/arrival points and where to buy tickets. See also the boxed text, International Bus Routes, p780.

See Florina (p282) and Ioannina (p306) for alternative public transport options to Albania.

## Train

The Greek railways organisation **OSE** (Organismos Sidirodromon Ellados; www.ose.gr) has been seriously affected by the country's financial problems, with international trains eliminated in 2011 and domestic routes severely curtailed. The situation is fluid, so check ahead.

When services are operating, the destinations outlined in the boxed text Inter-

## CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Every form of transport that relies on carbon-based fuel generates CO<sub>2</sub>, the main cause of human-induced climate change. Modern travel is dependent on aeroplanes, which might use less fuel per kilometre per person than most cars but travel much greater distances. The altitude at which aircraft emit gases (including CO<sub>2</sub>) and particles also contributes to their climate change impact. Many websites offer 'carbon calculators' that allow people to estimate the carbon emissions generated by their journey and, for those who wish to do so, to offset the impact of the greenhouse gases emitted with contributions to portfolios of climate-friendly initiatives throughout the world. Lonely Planet offsets the carbon footprint of all staff and author travel.

## OVERLAND FROM WESTERN EUROPE

If you're keen to reach Greece without taking to the air, and enjoy the independence of a road trip, you can reach Greece by heading overland to an Italian port and hopping on a ferry. A high-speed ferry from Venice to Patra can be completed in around 26 hours. From Patra to Athens is a further 3½ hours' driving.

If you fancy a bit more convenience and speed than those offered by buses and cars, it's easily done. Overland enthusiasts can reach Greece on a fascinating rail route through the Balkan peninsula, passing through Croatia, Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Or head to the western coast of Italy (there are connections throughout most of Europe) and then take a ferry to Greece. Not only will you be doing your bit for the earth, but you'll see some gorgeous scenery from your window as well.

A sample itinerary from London would see you catching the Eurostar to Paris and then an overnight sleeper train to Bologna in Italy. From there, a coastal train takes you to Bari where there's an overnight boat to Patra on the Peloponnese. From Patra, it's a 4½-hour train journey to Athens. The journey will land you in Athens within two days of leaving London. See [www.raileurope.com](http://www.raileurope.com) for more routes and tickets.

Greece is part of the Eurail network ([www.eurail.com](http://www.eurail.com)). Eurail passes can only be bought by residents of non-European countries and are supposed to be purchased before arriving in Europe but can be bought in Europe if your passport proves that you've been here for less than six months. Greece is also part of the Inter-Rail Pass system ([www.interrailnet.com](http://www.interrailnet.com)), available to those who have resided in Europe for six months or more. See the websites for full details of passes and prices.

national Train Routes (p781), are within reach.

## Sea

Ferries can get very crowded in summer. If you want to take a vehicle across it's wise to make a reservation beforehand. The services indicated are for high season (July and August). Please note that tickets for all ferries to Turkey must be bought a day in advance and you will almost certainly be asked to turn in your passport the night before the trip, to be returned the next day before you board the boat. Port tax for departures to Turkey is around €15.

Another way to visit Greece by sea is to join one of the many cruises that ply the Aegean. See p40. For more details on fares and schedules for the services listed here, see the Getting There & Away section for the departure point. See also the boxed text, International Ferry Routes (p782).

## GETTING AROUND

Greece is an easy place to travel around thanks to a comprehensive public transport system. Buses are the mainstay of land transport, with a network that reaches out to the smallest villages.

Trains are a good alternative, where available. If you're in a hurry, Greece also has an extensive domestic air network. To most visitors, though, travelling in Greece means island hopping on the multitude of ferries that crisscross the Adriatic and the Aegean.

## Air

The vast majority of domestic mainland flights are handled by the country's national carrier, **Olympic Air** (☎801 801 0101; [www.olympicair.com](http://www.olympicair.com)), and its main competitor **Aegean Airlines** (☎801 112 0000; [www.aegeanair.com](http://www.aegeanair.com)). Both offer competitive rates. Olympic Air has offices wherever there are flights, as well as in other major towns.

The prices listed in this book are for full-fare economy, and include domestic taxes and charges. There are discounts for return tickets for travel between Monday and Thursday, and bigger discounts for trips that include a Saturday night away. You'll find full details on the airline's website, as well as information on timetables.

The baggage allowance on domestic flights is 15kg, or 20kg if the domestic flight is part of an international journey. Olympic Air offers a 25% student discount on domestic flights, but only if the flight is part of an international journey.

For details on specific domestic flights, see the relevant destinations throughout this guide. For more information on using domestic flights for island hopping, see p34.

## Bicycle

Cycling is not popular among Greeks; however, it's gaining kudos with tourists. You'll need strong leg muscles to tackle the mountains or you

can stick to some of the flatter coastal routes. Bike lanes are rare to nonexistent and helmets are not compulsory. The island of Kos is about the most bicycle-friendly place in Greece, as is anywhere flat, such as the plains of Thessaly or Thrace. See p54 for more details on cycling in Greece.

» You can hire bicycles in most tourist places, but they are not as widely available as cars and motorcycles. Prices range from €5 to €12 per day, depending on the type and age of the bike.

» Bicycles are carried free on ferries. You can buy decent mountain or touring bikes in Greece's major towns, though you may have a problem finding a ready buyer if you wish to sell it on. Bike prices are much the same as across the rest of Europe, anywhere from €300 to €2000.

## Boat

Greece has an extensive network of ferries which are the only means of reaching many of the islands. Schedules are often subject to delays due to weather and industrial action and prices fluctuate regularly. In summer, ferries are regular between all but the most out-of-the-way destinations however services seriously slow down in winter and, in some cases, stop completely.

See Island Hopping (p31) for more details on planning and buying tickets. For details on prices and schedules, see the relevant destinations throughout this guide.

## Domestic Ferry Operators

Ferry companies often have local offices on many of the islands; see the relevant destination chapter for details of these as well as small, local ferries and caïques.

**Aegean Flying Dolphins** (☎210 422 1766) Hydrofoils linking Samos with Kos and islands in between.

**Aegean Speed Lines** (☎210 969 0950; www.aegeanspeedlines.gr) Super-speedy boats between Athens and the Cyclades.

**Agoudimos Lines** (☎210 414 1300; www.agoudimos-lines.com) Ferries connecting the Cyclades and mainland. Also travels to Italy via Corfu.

**Aigaion Pelagos** (www.anek.gr) A subsidiary of ANEK Lines.

**Alpha Ferries** (☎210 428 4001/02; www.alphaferries.gr) Traditional ferries from Athens to the Cyclades.

**ANE Kalymnou** (☎22430 29384) Kalymnos-based hydrofoils and old-style ferry linking some of the Dodecanese and the Cyclades.

**ANEK Lines** (☎210 419 7420; www.anek.gr) Cretan-based long-haul ferries.

**ANES** (☎210 422 5625; www.anes.gr) Symi-based old-style ferries servicing the Dodecanese.

**Anna Express** (☎22470 41215; www.annaexpress-lipsi.services.officelive.com) Small, fast ferry connecting northern Dodecanese.

**Blue Star Ferries** (☎210 891 9800; www.bluestarferries.com) Long-haul high-speed ferries and Sea Jet catamarans between the mainland and the Cyclades.

**Cyclades Fast Ferries** (☎210 418 2005; www.fastferries.com.gr) Comfortable ferries to the most popular Cyclades.

**Dodekanisos Seaways** (☎22410 70590; www.12ne.gr) Runs luxurious catamarans in the Dodecanese.

**Euroseas** (☎210 413 2188; www.ferries.gr/euroseas) Linking the Saronics with services to the mainland.

**Evoikos Lines** (☎210 413 4483; www.ferriesglyfa.gr) Comfortable short-haul ferry services between Glyfa on the mainland and Agiokambos in northern Evia.

**GA Ferries** (☎210 419 9100; www.gafferries.gr) Old-style, long-haul ferries serving a huge number of islands.

**Hellenic Seaways** (☎210 419 9000; www.hellenicseaways.gr) Conventional long-haul ferries and catamarans from the mainland

## INTERNATIONAL BUS ROUTES

DESTINATION	DEPARTURE POINT	ARRIVAL POINT	DURATION	FREQUENCY
Albania	Athens	Tirana	overnight	1 daily
Albania	Thessaloniki	Korça (Korytsa)	6hr	3 daily
Bulgaria	Athens	Sofia	15hr	6 weekly
Bulgaria	Thessaloniki	Sofia	7½hr	4 daily
Bulgaria	Alexandroupoli	Plovdiv	6hr	2 weekly
Bulgaria	Alexandroupoli	Sofia	7hr	2 weekly
Turkey	Athens	Istanbul	22hr	6 weekly
Turkey	Thessaloniki	Istanbul	7hr	6 weekly
Turkey	Alexandroupoli	Istanbul	13hr	6 weekly

## INTERNATIONAL TRAIN ROUTES

DESTINATION	DEPARTURE POINT	ARRIVAL POINT	DURATION	FREQUENCY
Bulgaria	Athens	Sofia	18hr	1 daily
Bulgaria	Thessaloniki	Sofia	9hrs	1 daily
FYROM	Thessaloniki	Skopje	5hr	2 daily
Russia	Thessaloniki	Moscow	70hr	1 weekly (summer only)
Turkey	Thessaloniki	Istanbul	11½hr	2 daily

to Cyclades and between the Sporades and Saronic islands.

**Ionian Ferries** (☎210 324 9997; www.ionianferries.gr) Large ferries serving the Ionian Islands.

**LANE Lines** (☎210 427 4011; www.ferries.gr/lane) Long-haul ferries.

**Minoan Lines** (☎210 414 5700; www.minoan.gr) High-speed luxury ferries between Piraeus and Iraklio, and Patra, Igoumenitsa and Corfu.

**NEL Lines** (☎22510 26299; www.nel.gr) High-speed, long-haul ferries with services between Northern Greece and Limnos, Lesvos, Chios, Samos and the Sporades.

**SAOS Lines** (☎210 625 0000; www.saos.gr) Big, slow boats calling in at many of the islands.

**Sea Jets** (☎210 412 1001; www.seajets.gr) Catamarans calling at Athens, Crete, Santorini (Thira), Paros and many islands in between.

**Sea Star** (☎22460 44000; www.net-club.gr/tilosseastar.htm) High-speed catamaran connecting Tilos with Rhodes, Halki and Nisyros.

**Skyros Shipping Company** (☎22220 92164; www.sne.gr) Slow-boat between Skyros and Kymi on Evia.

**Strintzis Ferries** (☎26102 40000; www.strintzisferries.gr) Larger, older ferries in the Sporades.

**Superfast Ferries** (www.superfast.com) As the name implies, speedy ferries from

the mainland to Crete, Corfu and Patra.

**Ventouris Sea Lines** (☎210 41 14911; www.ventourissealines.gr) Big boats from the mainland to the Cyclades.

**Zante Ferries** (☎26950 49500; www.zanteferries.gr) Older ferries connecting the mainland with the western Cyclades.

## Bus

The bus network is comprehensive. All long-distance buses, on the mainland and the islands, are operated by regional collectives known as **KTEL** (Koino Tamio Eispraxeon Leoforion; www.ktel.org). Details of inter-urban buses throughout Greece are available by dialling ☎14505. Bus fares are fixed by the government and bus travel is very reasonably priced. A journey costs approximately €5 per 100km.

## Services

Every prefecture on the mainland has a KTEL, which operates local services within the prefecture and to the main towns of other prefectures. With the exception of towns in Thrace, which are serviced by Thessaloniki, all the major towns on the mainland have frequent connections to Athens. The islands of Corfu, Kefallonia and Zakyntos can also be reached directly from Athens by bus – the fares include the price of the ferry ticket.

Most villages have a daily bus service of some sort, although remote areas may have only one or two buses a week. They operate for the benefit of people going to town to shop, rather than for tourists, and consequently leave the villages very early in the morning and return early in the afternoon.

## Practicalities

» It is important to note that big cities like Athens, Iraklio, Patra and Thessaloniki may have more than one bus station, each serving different regions. Make sure you find the correct station for your destination. In small towns and villages the 'bus station' may be no more than a bus stop outside a *kafeneio* (coffee house) or taverna that doubles as a booking office.

» In remote areas, the timetable may be in Greek only, but most booking offices have timetables in both Greek and Roman script. Timetables give both the departure and return times and are listed using the 24-hour clock system.

» It's best to turn up at least 20 minutes before departure to make sure you get a seat, and buses have been known to leave a few minutes before their scheduled departure.

» When you buy a ticket you may be allotted a seat number, which is noted on the ticket. The seat number is indicated on the *back* of each seat of the bus, not on the back of the seat in front;

this causes confusion among Greeks and tourists alike.

» You can board a bus without a ticket and pay on board but, on a popular route or during high season, this may mean that you have to stand.

» The KTEL buses are safe and modern, and these days most are air conditioned – at least on the major routes. In more-remote rural areas they tend to be older and less comfortable. Buses on less-frequented routes do not usually have toilets on board and stop about every three hours on long journeys.

» Smoking is prohibited on all buses in Greece.

## Car & Motorcycle

No one who has travelled on Greece's roads will be surprised to hear that the country's road fatality rate is the highest in Europe. More than 2000 people die on the roads every year,

with overtaking listed as the greatest cause of accidents. Ever-stricter traffic laws have had little impact on the toll; Greek roads remain a good place to practise your defensive-driving techniques.

Heart-stopping moments aside, your own car is a great way to explore off the beaten track. The road network has improved enormously in recent years; many roads marked as dirt tracks on older maps have now been asphalted, particularly in more remote parts of Epiros and the Peloponnese. It's important to get a good road map (for more information, see p772).

There are regular (if costly) car-ferry services to almost all islands. For more information, see p31.

## Practicalities

**Automobile Association** Greece's domestic automobile association is **ELPA** (Elliniki Leschi Aftokinitou kai Perigeison; ☎210 606 8800;

www.elpa.gr in Greek; Leoforos Mesogion 395, Agia Paraskevi, Athens).

**Entry** EU-registered vehicles enter free for up to six months without road taxes being due. A green card (international third-party insurance) is required along with proof of date of entry (ferry ticket or your passport stamp). Non-EU-registered vehicles may be logged in your passport.

**Driving Licence** EU driving licences are valid in Greece. Drivers from outside the EU require International Driving Permits, which should be obtained before you leave home.

**Fuel** Available widely throughout the country, though service stations may be closed on weekends and public holidays. On the islands, there may be only one petrol station; check where it is before you head out. Self-service and credit-card pumps are not

## INTERNATIONAL FERRY ROUTES

DESTINATION	DEPARTURE POINT	ARRIVAL POINT	DURATION	FREQUENCY
Albania	Corfu	Saranda	25min	1 daily
Italy	Patra	Ancona	20hr	3 daily
Italy	Patra	Bari	14½hr	1 daily
Italy	Corfu	Bari	8hr	1 daily
Italy	Kefallonia	Bari	14hr	1 daily
Italy	Corfu	Bari	10hr	1 daily
Italy	Igoumenitsa	Bari	11½hr	1 daily
Italy	Patra	Brindisi	15hr	1 daily
Italy	Corfu	Brindisi	6hr	1 daily
Italy	Kefallonia	Brindisi	12hr	1 daily
Italy	Zakynthos	Brindisi	15hr	1 daily
Italy	Patra	Venice	30hr	12 weekly
Italy	Corfu	Venice	25hr	12 weekly
Turkey	Chios	Çeşme	1½hr	1 daily
Turkey	Kos	Bodrum	1hr	1 daily
Turkey	Lesvos	Dikeli	1hr	1 daily
Turkey	Rhodes	Marmaris	50min	2 daily
Turkey	Samos	Kuşadası	1½hr	2 daily



**Europcar** (☎210 960 2382; [www.europcar.gr](http://www.europcar.gr))

**Hertz** (☎210 626 4000; [www.hertz.gr](http://www.hertz.gr))

### Insurance

Always check what the insurance includes; there are often rough roads or dangerous routes that you can only tackle by renting a 4WD. If you want to take a hire car to another country or onto a ferry, you will need advance written authorisation from the hire company, as the insurance may not cover you. Unless you pay with a credit card, most hire companies will require a minimum deposit of €120 per day.

### MOTORCYCLE

Mopeds, motorcycles and scooters are available for hire wherever there are tourists to rent them. Most machines are newish and in good condition. Nonetheless, check the brakes at the earliest opportunity.

To hire a moped, motorcycle or scooter you must produce a licence that shows proficiency to ride the category of bike you wish to rent; this applies to everything from 50cc up. British citizens must obtain a Category A licence from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency ([www.dft.gov.uk/dvla](http://www.dft.gov.uk/dvla)) in the UK (in most other EU countries separate licences are automatically issued).

### Rates & Insurance

Motorcycles or scooters are a cheap way to travel around. Rates start from about €15 per day for a moped or 50cc motorcycle, to €30 per day for a 250cc motorcycle. Out of season these prices drop considerably, so use your bargaining skills. Most motorcycle hirers include third-party insurance in the price, but it's wise to check this. This insurance will not include medical expenses. Helmets are compulsory and rental agencies are obliged to offer one as part of the hire deal.

### Road Conditions

- » Main highways in Greece have been improving steadily over the years but many still don't offer smooth sailing.
- » Some main roads retain the two-lane/hard shoulder format of the 1960s which can be confusing, if not downright dangerous.
- » Roadwork can take years and years in Greece, especially on the islands where funding often only trickles in. In other cases, excellent new tarmac roads may have appeared that are not on any local maps.

### Road Hazards

- » Slow drivers – many of them unsure and hesitant tourists – can cause serious traffic events on Greece's roads.
- » Road surfaces can change rapidly when a section of road has succumbed to

subsidence or weathering. Snow and ice can be a serious challenge in winter, and drivers are advised to carry snow chains. Animals in rural areas may wander onto roads, so extra vigilance is required.

- » Roads passing through mountainous areas are often littered with fallen rocks that can cause extensive damage to a vehicle's underside or throw a bike rider.

### Road Rules

- » In Greece, as throughout Continental Europe, you drive on the right and overtake on the left.
- » Outside built-up areas, traffic on a main road has right of way at intersections. In towns, vehicles coming from the right have right of way. This includes roundabouts – even if you're in the roundabout, you must give way to drivers coming onto the roundabout to your right.
- » Seat belts must be worn in front seats, and in back seats if the car is fitted with them.
- » Children under 12 years of age are not allowed in the front seat.
- » It is compulsory to carry a first-aid kit, fire extinguisher and warning triangle, and it is forbidden to carry cans of petrol.
- » Helmets are compulsory for motorcyclists if the motorcycle is 50cc or more. Police will book you if you're caught without a helmet.
- » Outside residential areas the speed limit is 120km/h on highways, 90km/h on other roads and 50km/h in built-up areas. The speed limit for motorcycles up to 100cc is 70km/h and for larger motorcycles, 90km/h. Drivers exceeding the speed limit by 20% are liable to receive a fine of €60; exceeding it by 40% costs €150.
- » A blood-alcohol content of 0.05% can incur a fine of €150, and over 0.08% is a criminal offence.

## MOTORCYCLE WARNING

Greece is not the best place to initiate yourself into motorcycling. There are still a lot of gravel roads – particularly on the islands. Novices should be very careful; dozens of tourists have accidents every year. Scooters are particularly prone to sliding on gravelly bends. Try to hire a motorcycle with thinner profile tyres. If you are planning to use a motorcycle or moped, check that your travel insurance covers you for injury resulting from a motorcycle accident. Many insurance companies don't offer this cover, so check the fine print!

» If you are involved in an accident and no one is hurt, the police will not be required to write a report, but it is advisable to go to a nearby police station and explain what happened. A police report may be required for insurance purposes. If an accident involves injury, a driver who does not stop and does not inform the police may face a prison sentence.

## Hitching

Hitching is never entirely safe in any country in the world, and we don't recommend it. Travellers who decide to hitch should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk. People who do choose to hitch will be safer if they travel in pairs and should let someone know where they are planning to go. In particular, it is unwise for females to hitch alone; women are better off hitching with a male companion.

Some parts of Greece are much better for hitching than others. Getting out of major cities tends to be hard work and Athens is notoriously difficult. Hitching is much easier in remote areas and on islands with poor public transport. On country roads it is not unknown for someone to stop and ask if you want a lift, even if you haven't stuck a thumb out.

## Local Transport

### Bus

Most Greek towns are small enough to get around on foot. All the major towns have local buses, but the only places you're likely to need them are Athens, Patra, Kalamata and Thessaloniki. The procedure for buying tickets for local buses is covered in the Getting Around section of each city.

### Metro

Athens is the only city in Greece large enough to war-

rant the building of an underground system. For more details, see p125. Note that only Greek student cards are valid for a student ticket on the metro.

### Taxi

Taxis are widely available in Greece except on very small or remote islands. They are reasonably priced by European standards, especially if three or four people share costs. Many taxi drivers now have sat-nav systems in their cars, so finding a destination is a breeze as long as you have the exact address.

Yellow city cabs are metered, with rates doubling between midnight and 5am. Additional costs are charged for trips from an airport or a bus, port or train station, as well as for each piece of luggage over 10kg. Grey rural taxis do not have meters, so you should always settle on a price before you get in.

Some taxi drivers in Athens have been known to take unwary travellers for a financial ride. If you have a complaint about a taxi driver, take the cab number and report your complaint to the tourist police. For more information see p120. Taxi drivers in other towns in Greece are, on the whole, friendly, helpful and honest.

## Tours

Tours are worth considering if your time is very limited or if you fancy somebody else doing all of the organising. In Athens, you'll find countless day tours (p95), with some agencies offering two- or three-day trips to nearby sights. For something on a larger scale, try **Intrepid Travel** ([www.intrepidtravel.com](http://www.intrepidtravel.com)). With offices in Australia, the UK and the USA, Intrepid offers a 15-day tour of the Greek Islands (£1575/US\$2475/€1615) and an eight-day tour from Athens to Santorini (£870/US\$1370/€1045), including

everything except meals and flights. **Encounter Greece** ([www.encountergreece.com](http://www.encountergreece.com)) offers a plethora of tours; a 10-day tour across the country costs €1285 while three days on the mainland is €375. Flights to Greece are not included.

More adventurous tours include guided activities involving hiking, climbing, white-water rafting, kayaking, canoeing or canyoning. For more information on activity-based tours, see p51.

Some options:

**Alpin Club** ([www.alpinclub.gr](http://www.alpinclub.gr)) In Athens; operates out of Karitena in the Peloponnese.

**Robinson Expeditions** ([www.robinson.gr](http://www.robinson.gr)) Run tours from the centre and north of Greece.

**Trekking Hellas** ([www.trekking.gr](http://www.trekking.gr)) Another outfit that runs tours from the centre and north of Greece.

## Train

Trains are operated by the Greek railways organisation **OSE** (Organismos Sidirodromon Ellados; [www.ose.gr](http://www.ose.gr)). Due to financial instability, train services throughout Greece were in a very precarious state at the time of research and prices and schedules were in a state of flux. Details of schedules and fares within this guidebook were accurate at the time of research but should be double-checked on the OSE website. Information on domestic departures from Athens or Thessaloniki can also be sought by calling ☎1440.

The Greek railway network is limited with essentially only two main lines: the standard-gauge service from Athens to Alexandroupoli via Thessaloniki (p123), and the Peloponnese network (p141). Prior to the current financial crisis, train services that did exist were of a good standard and improving all the time and an excellent way to see the mainland. Fingers

crossed, this will also be the case in the near future.

## Classes

There are two types of service: regular (slow) trains that stop at all stations and faster, modern intercity (IC) trains that link most major cities. The slow trains represent the country's cheapest form of public transport: 2nd-class fares are absurdly cheap, and even 1st class is cheaper than bus travel.

The IC trains that link the major Greek cities are an excellent way to travel. The

services are not necessarily express – Greece is far too mountainous for that – but the trains are modern and comfortable. There are 1st- and 2nd-class tickets and a cafe-bar on board. On some services, meals can be ordered and delivered to your seat. The night service between Athens and Thessaloniki also offers a choice of couchettes, two-bed compartments and single compartments.

## Train Passes

» Eurail and Inter-Rail cards are valid in Greece, but it's

generally not worth buying one if Greece is the only place where you plan to use them. See p779 for more details. For IC and sleeper cars, you still require a costly supplement.

» On presentation of ID or passports, passengers over 60 years-old are entitled to a 25% discount on all lines except in July, August and over the Easter week.

» Whatever pass you have, you must have a reservation to board the train.

# Language

The Greek language is believed to be one of the oldest European languages, with an oral tradition of 4000 years and a written tradition of approximately 3000 years. Due to its centuries of influence, Greek constitutes the origin of a large part of the vocabulary of many Indo-European languages (including English), and many of the terms used in science.

Greek is the official language of Greece and co-official language of Cyprus (alongside Turkish), and is spoken by many Greek migrant communities throughout the world.

The Greek alphabet is explained on the next page, but if you read the blue pronunciation guides given with each phrase in this chapter as if they were English, you'll be understood. Note that **dh** is pronounced as 'th' in 'there'; **gh** is a softer, slightly throaty version of 'g'; and **kh** is a throaty sound like the 'ch' in the Scottish 'loch'. All Greek words of two or more syllables have an acute accent (´), which indicates where the stress falls. In our pronunciation guides, stressed syllables are in italics.

In Greek, all nouns, articles and adjectives are either masculine, feminine or neuter – in this chapter these forms are included where necessary, separated with a slash and indicated with 'm/f/n'.

## BASICS

<b>Hello.</b>	Γειά σας. Γειά σου.	<i>ya-sas</i> (polite) <i>ya-su</i> (informal)
<b>Good morning.</b>	Καλή μέρα.	<i>ka-li me-ra</i>
<b>Good evening.</b>	Καλή σπέρα.	<i>ka-li spe-ra</i>
<b>Goodbye.</b>	Αντίο.	<i>an-di-o</i>
<b>Yes./No.</b>	Ναι./Όχι.	<i>ne/o-hi</i>

## WANT MORE?

For in-depth language information and handy phrases, check out Lonely Planet's *Greek Phrasebook*. You'll find it at **shop.lonelyplanet.com**, or you can buy Lonely Planet's iPhone phrasebooks at the Apple App Store.

<b>Please.</b>	Παρακαλώ.	<i>pa-ra-ka-lo</i>
<b>Thank you.</b>	Ευχαριστώ.	<i>ef-ha-ri-sto</i>
<b>That's fine./</b>	Παρακαλώ.	<i>pa-ra-ka-lo</i>
<b>You're welcome.</b>		
<b>Sorry.</b>	Συγγνώμη.	<i>sigh-no-mi</i>

### What's your name?

Πώς σας λένε; *pos sas le-ne*

### My name is ...

Με λένε ... *me le-ne ...*

### Do you speak English?

Μιλάτε αγγλικά; *mi-la-te an-gli-ka*

### I (don't) understand.

(Δεν) καταλαβαίνω. *(dhen) ka-ta-la-ve-no*

## ACCOMMODATION

<b>campsite</b>	χώρος για κάμπινγκ	<i>kho-ros yia kam-ping</i>
<b>hotel</b>	ξενοδοχείο	<i>kse-no-dho-khi-o</i>
<b>youth hostel</b>	γιουθ χόστελ	<i>yuth kho-stel</i>
<b>a ... room</b>	ένα ... δωμάτιο	<i>e-na ... dho-ma-ti-o</i>
<b>single</b>	μονόκλινο	<i>mo-no-kli-no</i>
<b>double</b>	δίκλινο	<i>dhi-kli-no</i>
<b>How much is it ...?</b>	Πόσο κάνει ...;	<i>po-so ka-ni ...</i>
<b>per night</b>	τη βραδυά	<i>ti vra-dhya</i>
<b>per person</b>	το άτομο	<i>to a-to-mo</i>

## GREEK ALPHABET

The Greek alphabet has 24 letters, shown below in their upper- and lower-case forms. Be aware that some letters look like English letters but are pronounced very differently, such as **B**, which is pronounced 'v'; and **P**, pronounced like an 'r'. As in English, how letters are pronounced is also influenced by how they are combined, for example the **ou** combination is pronounced 'u' as in 'put', and **oi** is pronounced 'ee' as in 'feet'.

<b>A α</b>	a	as in 'father'	<b>Ξ ξ</b>	x	as in 'ox'
<b>B β</b>	v	as in 'vine'	<b>O ο</b>	o	as in 'hot'
<b>Γ γ</b>	gh	a softer, throaty 'g'	<b>Π π</b>	p	as in 'pup'
	y	as in 'yes'	<b>P ρ</b>	r	as in 'road', slightly trilled
<b>Δ δ</b>	dh	as in 'there'	<b>Σ σ, ς</b>	s	as in 'sand'
<b>E ε</b>	e	as in 'egg'	<b>T τ</b>	t	as in 'tap'
<b>Z ζ</b>	z	as in 'zoo'	<b>Υ υ</b>	i	as in 'feet'
<b>H η</b>	i	as in 'feet'	<b>Φ φ</b>	f	as in 'find'
<b>Θ θ</b>	th	as in 'throw'	<b>Χ χ</b>	kh	as the 'ch' in the Scottish 'loch', or like a rough 'h'
<b>I ι</b>	i	as in 'feet'			
<b>K κ</b>	k	as in 'kite'	<b>Ψ ψ</b>	ps	as in 'lapse'
<b>Λ λ</b>	l	as in 'leg'	<b>Ω ω</b>	o	as in 'hot'
<b>M μ</b>	m	as in 'man'			
<b>N ν</b>	n	as in 'net'			

Note that the letter **Σ** has two forms for the lower case – **σ** and **ς**. The second one is used at the end of words. The Greek question mark is represented with the English equivalent of a semicolon (;).

<b>air-con</b>	έρκοντίσιον	<i>er-kon-di-si-on</i>
<b>bathroom</b>	μπάνιο	<i>ba-nio</i>
<b>fan</b>	ανεμιστήρας	<i>a-ne-mi-sti-ras</i>
<b>TV</b>	τηλεόραση	<i>ti-le-o-ra-si</i>
<b>window</b>	παράθυρο	<i>pa-ra-thi-ro</i>

<b>behind</b>	πίσω	<i>pi-so</i>
<b>in front of</b>	μπροστά	<i>bro-sta</i>
<b>far</b>	μακριά	<i>ma-kri-a</i>
<b>near (to)</b>	κοντά	<i>kon-da</i>
<b>next to</b>	δίπλα	<i>dhi-pla</i>
<b>opposite</b>	απέναντι	<i>a-pe-nan-di</i>
<b>straight ahead</b>	ολο ευθεία.	<i>o-lo-ef-thi-a</i>

## DIRECTIONS

## Where is ...?

Πού είναι ...; *pu i-ne ...*

## What's the address?

Ποια είναι η διεύθυνση; *pia i-ne i dhi-ef-thin-si*

## Can you show me (on the map)?

Μπορείς να μου δείξεις  
(στο χάρτη); *bo-ris na mu dhik-sis  
(sto khar-ti)*

## Turn left.

Στρίψτε αριστερά. *strips-te a-ri-ste-ra*

## Turn right.

Στρίψτε δεξιά. *strips-te dhe-ksia*

## at the next corner

στην επόμενη γωνία *stin e-po-me-ni gho-ni-a*

## at the traffic lights

στα φώτα *sta fo-ta*

## EATING &amp; DRINKING

<b>a table for ...</b>	Ένα τραπέζι για ...	<i>e-na tra-pe-zi ya ...</i>
<b>(two) people</b>	(δύο) άτομα	<i>(dhi-o) a-to-ma</i>
<b>(eight) o'clock</b>	τις (οχτώ)	<i>stis (okh-to)</i>

<b>I don't eat ...</b>	Δεν τρώγω ...	<i>dhen tro-gho ...</i>
<b>fish</b>	ψάρι	<i>psa-ri</i>
<b>(red) meat</b>	(κόκκινο) κρέας	<i>(ko-ki-no) kre-as</i>
<b>peanuts</b>	φυστίκια	<i>fi-sti-kia</i>
<b>poultry</b>	πουλερικά	<i>pu-le-ri-ka</i>

**What would you recommend?**Τι θα σου συστήσεις; *ti tha si-ni-stu-ses***What's in that dish?**Τι περιέχει αυτό το φαγητό; *ti pe-ri-e-hi af-to to fa-ghi-to***That was delicious.**Ήταν νοστιμότατο! *i-tan no-sti-mo-ta-to***Cheers!**Είς υγείαν! *is i-yi-an***Please bring the bill.**Το λογαριασμό, παρακαλώ. *to lo-ghar-ya-zmo pa-ra-ka-lo***Key Words**

<b>appetisers</b>	ορεκτικά	<i>o-rek-ti-ka</i>
<b>bar</b>	μπαρ	<i>bar</i>
<b>beef</b>	βοδινό	<i>vo-dhi-no</i>
<b>bottle</b>	μπουκάλι	<i>bu-ka-li</i>
<b>bowl</b>	μπωλ	<i>bol</i>
<b>bread</b>	ψωμί	<i>pso-mi</i>
<b>breakfast</b>	πρόγευμα	<i>pro-yev-ma</i>
<b>cafe</b>	καφετέρια	<i>ka-fe-te-ri-a</i>
<b>cheese</b>	τυρί	<i>ti-ri</i>
<b>chicken</b>	κοτόπουλο	<i>ko-to-pu-lo</i>
<b>cold</b>	κρυωμένος	<i>kri-o-me-nos</i>
<b>cream</b>	κρέμα	<i>kre-ma</i>
<b>delicatessen</b>	ντελικατέσεν	<i>de-li-ka-te-sen</i>
<b>desserts</b>	επιδόρπια	<i>e-pi-dhor-pi-a</i>
<b>dinner</b>	δειπνο	<i>dhip-no</i>
<b>egg</b>	αβγό	<i>av-gho</i>
<b>fish</b>	ψάρι	<i>psa-ri</i>
<b>food</b>	φαγητό	<i>fa-yi-to</i>
<b>fork</b>	πιρούνι	<i>pi-ru-ni</i>
<b>fruit</b>	φρούτα	<i>fru-ta</i>
<b>glass</b>	ποτήρι	<i>po-ti-ri</i>
<b>grocery store</b>	οπωροπωλείο	<i>o-po-ro-po-li-o</i>
<b>herb</b>	βότανο	<i>vo-ta-no</i>
<b>high chair</b>	καρέκλα για μωρά	<i>ka-re-kla yia mo-ro</i>
<b>hot</b>	ζεστός	<i>ze-stos</i>
<b>knife</b>	μαχαίρι	<i>ma-he-ri</i>
<b>lamb</b>	αρνί	<i>ar-ni</i>
<b>lunch</b>	μεσημεριανό φαγητό	<i>me-si-me-ria-no fa-yi-to</i>
<b>main courses</b>	κύρια φαγητά	<i>ki-ri-a fa-yi-ta</i>
<b>market</b>	αγορά	<i>a-gho-ra</i>
<b>menu</b>	μενού	<i>me-nu</i>
<b>nut</b>	καρύδι	<i>ka-ri-dhi</i>
<b>oil</b>	λάδι	<i>la-dhi</i>

**KEY PATTERNS**

To get by in Greek, mix and match these simple patterns with words of your choice:

**When's (the next bus)?**

Πότε είναι (το επόμενο λεωφορείο); *po-te i-ne (to e-po-me-no le-o-fo-ri-o)*

**Where's (the station)?**

Πού είναι (ο σταθμός); *pu i-ne (o stath-mos)*

**I'm looking for (Ampfilohos).**

Ψάχνω για (το Αμφίλοχος). *psakh-no yia (to am-fi-lo-khos)*

**Do you have (a local map)?**

Έχετε οδικό (τοπικό χάρτη); *e-he-te o-dhi-ko (to-pi-ko khar-ti)*

**Is there a (lift)?**

Υπάρχει (ασανσέρ); *i-par-hi (a-san-ser)*

**Can I (try it on)?**

Μπορώ να (το προβάρω); *bo-ro na (to pro-va-ro)*

**I have (a reservation).**

Έχω (κλείσει δωμάτιο). *e-kho (kli-si dho-ma-ti-o)*

**I'd like (to hire a car).**

Θα ήθελα (να ενοικιάσω ένα αυτοκίνητο). *tha i-the-la (na e-ni-ki-a-so e-na af-to-ki-ni-to)*

<b>pepper</b>	πιπέρι	<i>pi-pe-ri</i>
<b>plate</b>	πίατο	<i>pia-to</i>
<b>pork</b>	χοιρινό	<i>hi-ri-no</i>
<b>restaurant</b>	εστιατόριο	<i>e-sti-a-to-ri-o</i>
<b>salt</b>	αλάτι	<i>a-la-ti</i>
<b>spoon</b>	κουτάλι	<i>ku-ta-li</i>
<b>sugar</b>	ζάχαρη	<i>za-kha-ri</i>
<b>vegetable</b>	λαχανικά	<i>la-kha-ni-ka</i>
<b>vegetarian</b>	χορτοφάγος	<i>khor-to-fa-ghos</i>
<b>vinegar</b>	ξύδι	<i>ksi-dhi</i>
<b>with/without</b>	με/χωρίς	<i>me/kho-ris</i>

**Drinks**

<b>beer</b>	μπύρα	<i>bi-ra</i>
<b>coffee</b>	καφές	<i>ka-fes</i>
<b>juice</b>	χυμός	<i>hi-mos</i>
<b>milk</b>	γάλα	<i>gha-la</i>
<b>soft drink</b>	αναψυκτικό	<i>a-nap-sik-ti-ko</i>
<b>tea</b>	τσάι	<i>tsa-i</i>
<b>water</b>	νερό	<i>ne-ro</i>
<b>(red) wine</b>	(κόκκινο) κρασί	<i>(ko-ki-no) kra-si</i>
<b>(white) wine</b>	(άσπρο) κρασί	<i>(a-spro) kra-si</i>

## Question Words

<b>How?</b>	Πώς;	pos
<b>What?</b>	Τι;	ti
<b>When?</b>	Πότε;	po-te
<b>Where?</b>	Πού;	pu
<b>Who?</b>	Ποιος;	pi-os (m)
	Ποια;	pi-a (f)
	Ποιο;	pi-o (n)
<b>Why?</b>	Γιατί;	yi-a-ti

## EMERGENCIES

<b>Help!</b>	Βοήθεια!	vo-i-thya
<b>Go away!</b>	Φύγε!	fi-ye
<b>I'm lost</b>	Έχω χαθεί.	e-kho kha-thi
<b>There's been an accident.</b>	Εγινε ατύχημα.	ey-i-ne a-ti-hi-ma
<b>Call ...!</b>	Φωνάξτε ...!	fo-nak-ste ...
<b>a doctor</b>	ένα γιατρό	e-na yi-a-tro
<b>the police</b>	την αστυνομία	tin a-sti-no-mi-a

**I'm ill.**  
Είμαι άρρωστος. *i-me a-ro-stos*

**It hurts here.**  
Πονάει εδώ. *po-na-i e-dho*

**I'm allergic to (antibiotics).**  
Είμαι αλλεργικός/  
αλλεργική  
(στα αντιβιοτικά) *i-me a-ler-yi-kos/  
a-ler-yi-ki  
(sta an-di-vi-o-ti-ka) (m/f)*

## NUMBERS

1	ένας/μία ένα	e-nas/ mi-a (m/f) e-na (n)
2	δύο	dhi-o
3	τρεις τρία	tris (m&f) tri-a (n)
4	τέσσερις τέσσερα	te-se-ris (m&f) te-se-ra (n)
5	πέντε	pen-de
6	έξι	e-xi
7	επτά	ep-ta
8	οχτώ	oh-to
9	εννέα	e-ne-a
10	δέκα	dhe-ka
20	είκοσι	ik-o-si
30	τριάντα	tri-an-da
40	σαράντα	sa-ran-da
50	πενήντα	pe-nin-da

60	εξήντα	ek-sin-da
70	εβδομήντα	ev-dho-min-da
80	ογδόντα	ogh-dhon-da
90	ενενήντα	e-ne-nin-da
100	εκατό	e-ka-to
1000	χιλιοί/χιλίες χιλία	hi-li-i/hi-li-ez (m/f) hi-li-a (n)

## SHOPPING &amp; SERVICES

<b>I'd like to buy ...</b> Θέλω ν' αγοράσω ...	<i>the-lo na-gho-ra-so ...</i>
<b>I'm just looking.</b> Απλώς κοιτάζω.	<i>ap-los ki-ta-zo</i>
<b>May I see it?</b> Μπορώ να το δω;	<i>bo-ro na to dho</i>
<b>I don't like it.</b> Δεν μου αρέσει.	<i>dhen mu a-re-si</i>
<b>How much is it?</b> Πόσο κάνει;	<i>po-so ka-ni</i>
<b>It's too expensive.</b> Είναι πολύ ακριβό.	<i>i-ne po-li a-kri-vo</i>
<b>Can you lower the price?</b> Μπορείτε να κατεβάσετε την τιμή;	<i>bo-ris na ka-te-va-sis tin ti-mi</i>

<b>ATM</b>	αυτόματη μηχανή χρημάτων	<i>af-to-ma-ti mi-kha-ni khri-ma-ton</i>
<b>bank</b>	τράπεζα	<i>tra-pe-za</i>
<b>credit card</b>	πιστωτική κάρτα	<i>pi-sto-ti-ki kar-ta</i>
<b>internet cafe</b>	καφενείο διαδικτύου	<i>ka-fe-ni-o dhi-a-dhik-ti-u</i>
<b>mobile phone</b>	κινητό	<i>ki-ni-to</i>
<b>post office</b>	ταχυδρομείο	<i>ta-hi-dhro-mi-o</i>
<b>toilet</b>	τουαλέτα	<i>tu-a-le-ta</i>
<b>tourist office</b>	τουριστικό γραφείο	<i>tu-ri-sti-ko ghra-fi-o</i>

## TIME &amp; DATES

<b>What time is it?</b>	Τι ώρα είναι;	<i>ti o-ra i-ne</i>
<b>It's (2 o'clock).</b>	είναι (δύο η ώρα).	<i>i-ne (dhi-o i o-ra)</i>
<b>It's half past (10).</b>	(δέκα) και μισή.	<i>(dhe-ka) ke mi-si</i>
<b>today</b>	σήμερα	<i>si-me-ra</i>
<b>tomorrow</b>	αύριο	<i>av-ri-o</i>
<b>yesterday</b>	χθες	<i>hthes</i>
<b>morning</b>	πρωί	<i>pro-i</i>
<b>(this) afternoon</b>	(αυτό το) απόγευμα	<i>(af-to to) a-po-yev-ma</i>
<b>evening</b>	βράδυ	<i>vra-dhi</i>

<b>Monday</b>	Δευτέρα	<i>dhef-te-ra</i>
<b>Tuesday</b>	Τρίτη	<i>tri-ti</i>
<b>Wednesday</b>	Τετάρτη	<i>te-tar-ti</i>
<b>Thursday</b>	Πέμπτη	<i>pemp-ti</i>
<b>Friday</b>	Παρασκευή	<i>pa-ras-ke-vi</i>
<b>Saturday</b>	Σάββατο	<i>sa-va-to</i>
<b>Sunday</b>	Κυριακή	<i>ky-ri-a-ki</i>

<b>January</b>	Ιανουάριος	<i>ia-nu-ari-os</i>
<b>February</b>	Φεβρουάριος	<i>fev-ru-ari-os</i>
<b>March</b>	Μάρτιος	<i>mar-ti-os</i>
<b>April</b>	Απρίλιος	<i>a-pri-li-os</i>
<b>May</b>	Μάιος	<i>mai-os</i>
<b>June</b>	Ιούνιος	<i>i-u-ni-os</i>
<b>July</b>	Ιούλιος	<i>i-u-li-os</i>
<b>August</b>	Αύγουστος	<i>av-ghus-tos</i>
<b>September</b>	Σεπτέμβριος	<i>sep-tem-vri-os</i>
<b>October</b>	Οκτώβριος	<i>ok-to-vri-os</i>
<b>November</b>	Νοέμβριος	<i>no-em-vri-os</i>
<b>December</b>	Δεκέμβριος	<i>dhe-kem-vri-os</i>

## TRANSPORT

### Public Transport

<b>boat</b>	πλοίο	<i>pli-o</i>
<b>(city) bus</b>	αστικό	<i>a-sti-ko</i>
<b>(intercity) bus</b>	λεωφορείο	<i>le-o-fo-ri-o</i>
<b>plane</b>	αεροπλάνο	<i>ae-ro-pla-no</i>
<b>train</b>	τραίνο	<i>tre-no</i>

#### Where do I buy a ticket?

Πού αγοράζω εισιτήριο; *pu a-gho-ra-zo i-si-ti-ri-o*

#### I want to go to ...

Θέλω να πάω στο/στη ... *the-lo na pao sto/sti ...*

#### What time does it leave?

Τι ώρα φεύγει; *ti o-ra fev-yi*

#### Does it stop at (Iraklio)?

Σταματάει στο (Ηράκλειο); *sta-ma-ta-i-sto (i-ra-kli-o)*

#### I'd like to get off (at Iraklio).

Θα ήθελα να κατεβώ (στο Ηράκλειο). *tha i-the-la na ka-te-vo (sto i-ra-kli-o)*

<b>I'd like (a) ...</b>	Θα ήθελα (ένα) ...	<i>tha i-the-la (e-na) ...</i>
<b>one-way ticket</b>	απλό εισιτήριο	<i>a-plo i-si-ti-ri-o</i>
<b>return ticket</b>	εισιτήριο με επιστροφή	<i>i-si-ti-ri-o me e-pi-stro-fi</i>
<b>1st class</b>	πρώτη θέση	<i>pro-ti the-si</i>
<b>2nd class</b>	δεύτερη θέση	<i>def-te-ri the-si</i>

### Signs

ΕΙΣΟΔΟΣ	<b>Entry</b>
ΕΞΟΔΟΣ	<b>Exit</b>
ΠΛΗΡΟΦΟΡΙΕΣ	<b>Information</b>
ΑΝΟΙΧΤΟ	<b>Open</b>
ΚΛΕΙΣΤΟ	<b>Closed</b>
ΑΠΑΓΟΡΕΥΕΤΑΙ	<b>Prohibited</b>
ΑΣΤΥΝΟΜΙΑ	<b>Police</b>
ΑΣΤΥΝΟΜΙΚΟΣ ΣΤΑΘΜΟΣ	<b>Police Station</b>
ΓΥΝΑΙΚΩΝ	<b>Toilets (women)</b>
ΑΝΔΡΩΝ	<b>Toilets (men)</b>

<b>cancelled</b>	ακυρώθηκε	<i>a-ki-ro-thi-ke</i>
<b>delayed</b>	καθυστερήσε	<i>ka-thi-ste-ri-se</i>
<b>platform</b>	πλατφόρμα	<i>plat-for-ma</i>
<b>ticket office</b>	εκδοτήριο εισιτηρίων	<i>ek-dho-ti-ri-o i-si-ti-ri-on</i>
<b>timetable</b>	δρομολόγιο	<i>dho-mo-lo-gio</i>
<b>train station</b>	σταθμός τρένου	<i>stath-mos tre-nu</i>

### Driving & Cycling

<b>I'd like to hire a ...</b>	Θα ήθελα να νοικιάσω ...	<i>tha i-the-la na ni-ki-a-so ...</i>
<b>car</b>	ένα αυτοκίνητο	<i>e-na af-ti-ki-ni-to</i>
<b>4WD</b>	ένα τέσσερα επί τέσσερα	<i>e-na tes-se-ra e-pi tes-se-ra</i>
<b>jeep</b>	ένα τζιπ	<i>e-na tzip</i>
<b>motorbike</b>	μια μοτοσυκλέτα	<i>mya mo-to-si-klet-ta</i>
<b>bicycle</b>	ένα ποδήλατο	<i>e-na po-dhi-la-to</i>

#### Do I need a helmet?

Χρειάζομαι κράνος; *khri-a-zo-me kra-nos*

#### Is this the road to ...?

Αυτός είναι ο δρόμος για ... *af-tos i-ne o dho-mos ya ...*

#### Can I park here?

Μπορώ να παρκάρω εδώ; *bo-ro na par-ka-ro e-dho*

#### The car/motorbike has broken down (at ...).

Το αυτοκίνητο/η μοτοσυκλέτα χάλασε (στο ...). *to af-to-ki-ni-to/i mo-to-si-klet-ta kha-la-se (sto ...)*

#### I have a flat tyre.

Επαθα λάστιχο. *e-pa-tha la-sti-cho*

#### I've run out of petrol.

Εμεινα από βενζίνη. *e-mi-na a-po ven-zi-ni*

For culinary terms, see *Eat Like a Local* (p46) and *Greek Cuisine* (p750).

**Achaean civilisation** – see *Mycenaean civilisation*

**acropolis** – citadel, highest point of an ancient city

**agia (f), agios (m), agii (pl)** – saint(s)

**agora** – commercial area of an ancient city; shopping precinct in modern Greece

**amphora** – large two-handled vase in which wine or oil was kept

**Archaic period** – also known as the *Middle Age* (800–480 BC); period in which the city-states emerged from the *dark age* and traded their way to wealth and power; the city-states were unified by a Greek alphabet and common cultural pursuits, engendering a sense of national identity

**arhon** – leading citizen of a town, often a wealthy bourgeois merchant; chief magistrate

**arhontika** – 17th- and 18th-century AD mansions, which belonged to *arhons*

**askitiria** – mini-chapels or hermitages; places of solitary worship

**asklepiion** – ancient medical complex

**baglamas** – small stringed instrument like a mini bouzouki

**basilica** – early Christian church

**bouzouki** – long-necked, stringed lute-like instrument associated with *rembetika* music

**bouzoukia** – any nightclub where the *bouzouki* is played and low-grade blues songs are sung

**Byzantine Empire** – characterised by the merging of Hellenistic culture and Christianity and named after Byzantium, the city on the Bosphorus that became the capital of the

Roman Empire in AD 324; when the Roman Empire was formally divided in AD 395, Rome went into decline and the eastern capital, renamed Constantinople after Emperor Constantine I, flourished; the Byzantine Empire (324 BC–AD 1453) dissolved after the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453

**caïque** – small, sturdy fishing boat often used to carry passengers

**capital** – top of a column  
**Classical period** – era in which the Greek city-states reached the height of their wealth and power after the defeat of the Persians in the 5th century BC; the Classical period (480–323 BC) ended with the decline of the city-states as a result of the Peloponnesian Wars, and the expansionist aspirations of Philip II, King of Macedon (r 359–336 BC) and his son, Alexander the Great (r 336–323 BC)

**Corinthian** – order of Greek architecture recognisable by columns with bell-shaped capitals with sculpted elaborate ornaments based on acanthus leaves; see also *Doric* and *Ionic*

**Cycladic civilisation** – the civilisation (3000–1100 BC) that emerged following the settlement of Phoenician colonists on the Cycladic islands

**cyclops (s), cyclopes (pl)** – mythical one-eyed giants

**dark age** (1200–800 BC) – period in which Greece was under *Dorian* rule

**domatio (s), domatia (pl)** – room, often in a private home; a cheap form of accommodation

**Dorians** – Hellenic warriors who invaded Greece around 1200 BC, demolishing the city-states and destroying

the *Mycenaean civilisation*; heralded Greece's *dark age*, when the artistic and cultural advancements of the *Mycenaean* and *Minoan civilisations* were abandoned; the Dorians later developed into land-holding aristocrats, encouraging the resurgence of independent city-states led by wealthy aristocrats

**Doric** – order of Greek architecture characterised by a column that has no base, a fluted shaft and a relatively plain capital, when compared with the flourishes evident on *Ionic* and *Corinthian* capitals

**Ellada or Ellas** – see *Hellas*

**ELPA** – Elliniki Leschi Aftokinitou kai Periigiseon; Greek motoring and touring club

**ELTA** – Ellinika Tahydromia; Greek post office organisation

**EOS** – Ellinikos Orivatikos Syllogos; the association of Greek Mountaineering Clubs

**EOT** – Ellinikos Organismos Tourismou; main tourist office (has offices in most major towns), known abroad as *GNTO* (Greek National Tourist Organisation)

**estiatorio** – restaurant serving ready-made food as well as à la carte

**Filiki Eteria** – Friendly Society; a group of Greeks in exile; formed during Ottoman rule to organise an uprising against the Turks

**filoxenia** – hospitality  
**frourio** – fortress; sometimes also referred to as a *kastro*

**Geometric period** – the period (1200–800 BC) characterised by pottery decorated with geometric

designs; sometimes referred to as Greece's *dark age*

**GNTO** – Greek National Tourist Organisation; see also *EOT*

**Hellas** – the Greek name for Greece; also known as Ellada or Ellas

**Hellenistic period** – prosperous, influential period (323–146 BC) of Greek civilisation ushered in by Alexander the Great's empire-building and lasting until the Roman sacking of Corinth

**hora** – main town, usually on an island

**horio** – village

**Ionic** – order of Greek architecture characterised by a column with truncated flutes and capitals with ornaments resembling scrolls; see also *Doric* and *Corinthian*

**kastro** – walled-in town; also describes a fortress or castle

**katholikon** – principal church of a monastic complex

**kore** – female statue of the *Archaic period*; see also *kouros*

**kouros (s), kouroi (pl)** – male statue of the *Archaic period*, characterised by a stiff body posture and enigmatic smile; see also *kore*

**kri-kri** – endemic Cretan animal with large horns similar to a wild goat; also known as the *agrimi*

**KTEL** – Koino Tamio Eispraxeon Leoforion; national bus cooperative, which runs all long-distance bus services

**laïka** – literally 'popular (songs)'; mainstream songs that have either been around for years or are of recent origin; also referred to as urban folk music

**leoforos** – avenue; commonly shortened to 'leof'

**libation** – in ancient Greece, wine or food that was offered to the gods

**limenarhio** – port police

**Linear A** – Minoan script; so far undeciphered

**Linear B** – Mycenaean script; has been deciphered

**lyra** – small violin-like instrument or lyre, played on the knee; common in Cretan and Pontian music

**megaron** – central room or quarters of a Mycenaean palace

**meltemi** – dry northerly wind that blows throughout much of Greece in the summer

**mezehopoleio** – restaurant specialising in mezedhes

**Middle Age** – see *Archaic period*

**Minoan civilisation** – Bronze Age (3000–2000 BC) culture of Crete named after the mythical King Minos, and characterised by pottery and metalwork of great beauty and artisanship; it has three periods: Protopalatial (3400–2100 BC), Neopalatial (2100–1580 BC) and Postpalatial (1580–1200 BC)

**moni** – monastery or convent

**Mycenaean civilisation** – first great civilisation (1600–1100 BC) of the Greek mainland, characterised by powerful independent city-states ruled by kings; also known as the *Achaean civilisation*

**New Democracy** – Nea Dimokratia; conservative political party

**necropolis** – literally 'city of the dead'; ancient cemetery

**nisi** – island

**nymphaeum** – in ancient Greece, building containing a fountain and often dedicated to nymphs

**odeion** – ancient Greek indoor theatre

**odos** – street

**OSE** – Organismos Sidirodromon Ellados; the name of Greek Railways Organisation

**ouzerie** – place that serves ouzo and light snacks

**OTE** – Organismos Tilepikoinonion Ellados; Greece's major telecommunications carrier

**Panagia** – Mother of God or Virgin Mary; name frequently used for churches

**paralia** – waterfront

**panigyri (s), panigyria (p)** – festival; the most common festivals celebrate annual saints' days

**pediment** – triangular section, often filled with sculpture above the columns, found at the front and back of a classical Greek temple

**periptero (s), periptera (pl)** – street kiosk

**peristyle** – columns surrounding a building, usually a temple or courtyard

**plateia** – square

**pithos (s), pithoi (pl)** – large Minoan storage jar or urn

**propylon (s), propylaia (pl)** – elaborately built main entrance to an ancient city or sanctuary; a propylon had one gateway and a propylaia more than one

**prytaneion** – the administrative centre of the city-state

**rembetika** – blues songs, commonly associated with the underworld of the 1920s

**rhyton** – another name for a *libation vessel*

**rizitika** – traditional, patriotic songs of western Crete

**Sarakatsani** – Greek-speaking nomadic shepherd community from northern Greece

**stela (s), stelae (pl)** – upright stone (or pillar) decorated with inscriptions or figures

**stoa** – long colonnaded building, usually in an *agora*; used as a meeting place and shelter in ancient Greece

**taverna** – the most common type of traditional restaurant that serves food and wine

**tholos** – Mycenaean tomb shaped like a beehive

**Vlach** – traditional, semi-nomadic shepherds from Northern Greece who speak a Latin-based dialect

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