

contents

	Alb	Cro	Fre	Gre	Ital	Mac	Por	Sln	Spa	Tur
chapter contents	9	49	89	129	169	209	249	289	329	369

introduction	11	51	91	131	171	211	251	291	331	371
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pronunciation

vowel sounds	12	52	92	132	172	212	252	292	332	372
word stress	12	52	93	132	172	212	252	292	332	372
consonant sounds	12	53	93	133	172	212	253	293	332	373

basics

language difficulties	14	54	94	134	174	214	254	294	334	374
numbers	15	55	95	135	175	215	255	295	335	375
time & dates	15	55	95	135	175	215	255	295	335	375
weather	17	57	97	137	177	217	257	297	337	377
border crossing	17	57	97	137	177	217	257	297	337	377

transport

tickets & luggage	18	58	98	138	178	218	258	298	338	378
getting around	19	59	99	139	179	219	259	299	339	379
car, motorbike & bicycle hire	20	60	100	140	180	220	261	300	340	381
directions	21	61	101	141	181	221	261	301	341	381

accommodation

finding accommodation	23	63	103	143	183	223	263	303	343	383
requests & queries	24	64	104	144	184	224	264	304	344	384
checking out	25	65	105	145	185	225	265	305	345	385

communications & banking

the internet	26	65	105	145	185	226	266	305	346	385
mobile/cell phone	26	66	106	146	185	226	266	306	346	386
telephone	26	66	106	146	186	226	266	306	346	386
post office	27	67	107	147	186	227	267	307	347	387
bank	28	67	107	147	187	227	268	307	348	387

sightseeing

getting in	29	68	108	148	188	228	269	308	348	388
tours	29	69	108	149	188	229	269	308	349	389

shopping

enquiries	30	70	109	150	189	230	270	309	350	390
paying	31	71	110	151	190	231	271	310	351	391
clothes & shoes	32	71	111	151	191	231	272	311	351	391
books & music	32	72	111	152	191	232	272	311	352	392
photography	32	72	112	152	191	232	272	311	352	392

meeting people

greetings, goodbyes & introductions	33	73	112	153	192	233	273	312	353	393
occupations	34	74	113	154	193	234	274	313	354	394
background	34	74	114	154	194	234	274	313	354	394
age	35	74	114	154	194	234	275	314	354	394
feelings	35	75	114	155	194	235	275	314	355	395

entertainment

going out	35	75	115	155	195	235	275	315	355	395
interests	36	76	115	155	195	236	276	315	356	396

food & drink

finding a place to eat	36	76	116	156	196	236	276	316	356	396
ordering food	37	76	116	156	196	236	276	316	356	396
drinks	37	77	117	157	197	237	277	316	357	397
in the bar	37	77	117	157	197	237	277	317	357	397
self-catering	38	78	118	158	198	238	278	318	358	398
special diets & allergies	38	78	118	158	198	238	278	318	358	398
menu decoder	39	79	119	159	199	239	279	319	359	399

emergencies

basics	41	81	121	161	201	241	281	321	361	401
police	41	81	121	161	201	241	281	321	361	401

health

medical needs	42	82	122	162	202	242	282	322	362	402
symptoms, conditions & allergies	43	83	123	163	203	243	283	323	363	403

dictionary

	44	84	124	164	204	244	284	324	364	404
--	----	----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

index

409

festivals

415

Mediterranean Europe



- Albanian
- Croatian
- French
- Greek

- Italian
- Macedonian
- Portuguese
- Slovene



mediterranean europe – at a glance

One of the most rewarding things about travelling around Mediterranean Europe is the rich variety of cuisine, customs, architecture and history. The flipside of course is that you'll encounter a number of very different languages. Most languages spoken in Mediterranean Europe belong to what's known as the Indo-European language family, believed to have originally developed from one language spoken thousands of years ago. Luckily for English speakers, most of these languages also use Roman script.

The Romance languages (French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese) all developed from Vulgar Latin, which spread through Western Europe during the rule of the Roman Empire. The freedom with which English has borrowed Latin-based vocabulary means you'll quickly recognise many words from these languages. The Slavic languages are a branch of the Indo-European language family and share a large amount of basic vocabulary. Macedonian and Serbian which were traditionally associated with the Orthodox Church use the Cyrillic alphabet, while Croatian and Slovene, which were influenced by the Catholic Church, use the Roman alphabet. Albanian and Greek both form single branches of the Indo-European language family. Finally, Turkish is part of the Ural-Altaic language family, which includes languages spoken from the Balkan Peninsula to northeast Asia. Arabic script was replaced by Roman script for Turkish in the early 20th century.

did you know?

- The European Union (EU) was established by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. It developed from the European Economic Community, founded by the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Since the 2007 enlargement, it has 28 member states and 24 official languages.
- The EU flag is a circle of 12 gold stars on a blue background – the number 12 representing wholeness.
- The EU anthem is the 'Ode to Joy' from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.
- Europe Day, 9 May, commemorates the 1950 declaration by French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, which marks the creation of the European Union.
- The euro has been in circulation since E-Day, 1 January 2002. The euro's symbol (€) was inspired by the Greek letter epsilon (ε) – Greece being the cradle of European civilisation and ε being the first letter of the word 'Europe'.
- The Eurovision Song Contest, held each May, has been running since 1956. For the larger part of the competition's history, the performers were only allowed to sing in their country's national language, but that's no longer the case.

Albanian

INTRODUCTION	11
PRONUNCIATION	12
BASICS	14
TRANSPORT	18
ACCOMMODATION	23
COMMUNICATIONS & BANKING	26
SIGHTSEEING	29
SHOPPING	30
MEETING PEOPLE	33
ENTERTAINMENT	35
FOOD & DRINK	36
EMERGENCIES	41
HEALTH	42
ENGLISH-ALBANIAN DICTIONARY	44