

<F16>ATHENS</F16>

<L7></F16>Basic Information</F16>

Documents Required: United States and EC citizens require only a valid passport for visits not exceeding three months.

American Consulate: 91 Vasilissis Sofias, 1/721-2951.

Currency: The unit of currency is the drachma (Dr).

Banks: Business hours are Monday-Thursday 8 A.M.-2 P.M., Friday until 1:30 P.M.

Customs: No antiques may be exported without first receiving permission from the offices of Archeological Service, 3 Od—s Polygn—tou.

Climate: Athens has a mild climate similar to that of San Francisco. Daytime temperatures in the winter average 53 degrees, while summer temperatures average 78 degrees.

Tipping: Service is often included in restaurants and hotels. Where it isn't, only a ten percent tip is expected. For taxis round up the metered fare.

Tourist Information: In Athens, contact the Greek Tourist Organization, Syntagma Square, 1/ 322-2545.

Airports: At Ellinik—n Airport international flights on overseas carriers use the east terminal; while Olympic Airways (Greece's national airline) uses the west terminal. Some hotels provide shuttle service for the 20-minute ride to Athens's city center; otherwise, taxis are inexpensive.

Getting Around: Public transportation is inexpensive and reliable, but downtown Athens is best explored on foot.

By subway: One line cuts across the city, from Piraeus to the suburb of Kifissia. Buy tickets at stations.

By trolley and bus: Main routes crisscross the city. You must buy tickets before you board from kiosks displaying ticket-seller signs.

By taxi: Taxis in Athens are allowed to pick up additional passengers going in the same direction as you, so you can hail cabs that are already occupied. Taxi stands are scattered throughout the city, but you'll have more luck hailing one in the street.

Postal and Telephone Service: The main post office is at 100 Aioulou, near Om—nia Square. Mail boxes are painted yellow. Blue phone booths are for local calls; orange phones allow you to make long distance direct calls. To call Greece from the Unites States, dial 011-30, the city code (Athens is 1), and the local number.

Public Holidays: New Year's Day, Epiphany (January 6), Greek Independence Day (March 25), Good Friday, Easter Monday, May Day, Assumption (August 15), St. Dionysios Day (October 3), Ochi Day (October 28), Christmas Day, and St. Stephen's Day (December 26).

Electric Current: Plugs are standard European, with two round pins. The current is 220V.
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Time Line

Ancient History (B.C.)

3000

Settlements on the southern slopes of the Acropolis.

2000

First Greek-speaking people, of Indo-European decent, move to the Aegean mainland.

1400

Epic adventures of Jason and the Argonauts, Oedipus and Theseus.

1225

The Trojan War.

Evolution of Hellenism (B.C.)

1100

Dark Ages begin and last for 300 years, marked by migration and Mycenaean autocratic rule.

776

First Olympic games.

620

Drakon codifies the laws of Attica, Athens's first written codes.

594

Solon introduces democratic social and political changes in Athens.

508

Cleisthenes introduces democracy.

499

Aeschylus, known as the founder of Greek tragedy, has his first play produced.

477

Athens establishes Delian League, and thus the Athenian Empire.

438

Parthenon is completed.

Classical Greece (B.C.)

387

Plato establishes the Academy in Athens.

335

Alexander the Great becomes ruler after father is assassinated.

Roman Rule

146 B.C.

Greece falls under Roman rule.

50 A.D.

The apostle Paul preaches in Athens.

128

Emperor Hadrian rebuilds the city.

313

Edict of Milan legitimizes Christianity.

330

Constantine rules; Constantinople is the center of power. Beginning of the Byzantine Empire, which lasts more than 1,000 years.

Ottoman Rule

1456

Athens falls to Sultan Mehmet II and the Turks, beginning four centuries of Ottoman rule. The Parthenon becomes a mosque.

Return of the Greeks

1821

Greek War of Independence is fought for 11 years. Athens is taken by Greek rebel forces.

1833

Otto of Bavaria becomes the first king of Greece, with Athens the capital.

1911

Balkan Wars begin when Greece takes control of Epirus, Macedonia, Crete, and Samos.

1941

Germany occupies Greece until 1944. The exiled government resides in London.

1949

Greek Civil War ends with the defeat of the Communists.

Today

1951

Greece becomes a member of NATO.

1967

A military putsch occurs bringing Papadopoulos to power.

1974

Constantine Karamanlis returns as Prime Minister.

1981

Greece joins the European Community.

<L6>Hotels

Astir Palace Athens Hotel \$\$\$

Syntagma Square

1/364-3112

Lavish rooms in the center of town.

Andromeda Hotel \$\$\$

2 Od—s V†ssou

1/643-7302

Small and luxurious, on a quiet street.

Esperia Palace \$\$

22 Od—s Stad'ou

1/323-8001

Rooms are comfortable, but sparsely furnished.

Athens Gate Hotel \$\$

10 Leof—ros Syngroæ

1/923-8302

Across from the temple of Olympian Zeus; many rooms have terraces.

Omiros Hotel \$

15 Od—s Ap—llonos

1/323-5486

Near Syntagma Square, with balconies.

Hotel Hera \$

9 Od—s Fal'rou

1/923-6682

Compact, clean rooms and a rooftop view of the Acropolis.

Restaurants

Myrtia \$\$\$

32-34 Trivonianou

1/924-7175

Well-known taverna serving traditional Greek dishes.

Boschetto \$\$\$

Alsos Evangelismou

1/721-0893

Specializes in northern Italian cuisine.

Fortuna \$\$

22 Anapiron Polemou

1/722-1282

Fresh seafood.

Xynou \$\$

4 Angelou Geronta

1/322-1065

Favored by locals for authentic Greek meals.

Attalos \$

16 Erechtheos

1/325-0353

Taverna fare in a roof-top garden.

5 Brothers \$

3 E—lou

1/325-0088

Lamb and veal dishes in the shade of the Acropolis.

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<L1>**Sites**

Acropolis

1/321-0219

The Acropolis, which comprises the Parthenon (temple of the goddess of Athens), Erechtheum, and Propylaea, dates from the fifth century B.C. Resting on a rock 515 feet above sea level, it was first an ancient fortress, then a temple.

Agora

Base of the Acropolis, northwest side

1/321-0185

The principal marketplace of the ancient Athenians. The nearby temple is one of the best preserved in Athens.

Temple of the Olympian Zeus

Olgas and Amal'as Avenue

1/922-6330

Fifteen Corinthian columns remain of what was the largest temple ever built in ancient Greece.

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<L2>**Museums and Culture**

National Archaeological Museum

44 Patission

1/821-7717

Masterpieces of ancient art dating back 7,000 years.

Benaki Museum

1 Koumbari

1/361-1617

Greek and Byzantine art, jewelry, and tapestries.

National Gallery of Painting

50 Konstantinou

Modern Greek paintings, and works by El Greco, Picasso, and Utrillo.

Theater**Dora Stratou Theater**

Classics performed November through Easter.

Athens Festival

Herodes Atticus Theater

early June and mid-September

Local and international opera, ballet, plays, and concerts.

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<L5>Shopping

Most shops are open 8:30 A.M.-3 P.M. on Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday; on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday stores open for two shifts separated by a siesta, usually 8:30 A.M.-2 P.M. and 5 P.M.-8 P.M.

Fabric

Argaliou Brailas

7 Od—s Filell'non

Top-quality, hand-woven silks.

Tsantilis

23-25 Od—s Ermoce

1/323-9401

Colorful cottons and ready-made clothing.

Jewelry

Petra Nova

19 Voukourest'ou
Semi-precious stones.

Maria Antoniadis
6 Ap—llonos
Museum replicas and contemporary designs.

Markets

Pandr—ssou Flea Market
Od—s Pandr—ssou
1930 Victrolas to second-hand clothing.

Rugs

Karamichos-Mazarakis Flokati
Voul's and Ap—llonos
1/322-4932
Wool rugs in natural tones, bold patterns, and even Salvador Dal' replicas.

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<L3>Children

Athens is not a kids' city, but younger children will enjoy climbing ruins. Anyone will have fun on Greece's beaches.

Funicular up Lykavitt—s Hill

northeast of the Acropolis
Take a cable car to the top, then walk down.

Night Spots

Nightclubs

Clubs which feature *bouzouki* music and popular Greek singers are only open in winter, and only in the city center. Places along the coast are popular during the summer.

Cafés

Tavernas are found throughout Athens. You can relax outside, people-watch, and enjoy traditional Greek *mezedes* (appetizers).

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<L4>Excursions

Epidaurus

60 miles south of Athens

In the sixth century, people traveled to Epidaurus to pray in the sanctuary of Asclepius, the god of healing. Also visit the ancient theater, built in the fourth century B.C., able to hold 14,000 spectators. Performances are still given here during the Epidaurus Festival in June and July. Contact the Greek Tourist Organization, Syntagma Square (1/322-2545) for details.

Mycenae

60 miles southwest of Athens

Agamemnon's mountain palace/fortress. Climb among the remains of the Lion Gate, granaries, and reservoirs. Just outside the fortress walls are nine beehive tombs; one is said to contain Agamemnon.

<L9>Sunshine Guide To Athens, Greece

SEASONS: Athens has the three-season year typical of the Mediterranean lands. Spring (March through mid-May) is the season of mild temperatures and renewed vegetative growth. Summer (mid-May through the first serious rains in October) is the hot dry season, with dusty landscapes under blazing skies. Winter (sometime in October through the end of February) is the cool rainy season. It starts with the first heavy rains of October and ends with the burgeoning of new growth. Since the perennial vegetation is almost entirely evergreen, and most crops grow throughout the year, there is no "fall" as such.

SUNNIEST MONTHS: Early March through late November. This is when you can expect to get the sunniest weather of the year. In general, 62% of the year's daylight hours will be sunny--from a high of 85% in August, to a low of 40% in January and February. From June through September, more than four days out of five will be clear. On the other hand, from November through March, about one day in ten will see no sunshine at all.

WARMEST MONTHS: Late June through the middle of August. During these months, the afternoon temperatures will hit 90° and higher on close to (but less than) half the days. Low afternoon humidities keep these temperatures from feeling hotter than they already are. Still, summer afternoons are good times to avoid physical stress. My own policy is to take a nap during the afternoon, and then stay up into the late hours. Morning is the best time of day for any strenuous activity. The hottest actual temperature of the year will be around 101° (it will only feel like 98°), and will probably occur in July.

However, from May through October, many nights will be hot enough in the city center that you will sleep better with some sort of room-cooling.

COOLEST MONTHS: December through March, though they are not really all that cold. Below-freezing temperatures will occur only three or four times a winter during these months, and the afternoons always warm up considerably. The coldest temperature

of the year will be around 29°, and will probably occur during a January cold spell-- while the rest of Europe is really in the deep freeze. Snowfalls are pretty much restricted to flurries, and snow rarely remains on the ground for long. However, the nearby mountains (Hymettus at 3,366' and Pendeli at 3,638') are often snow-capped on winter days.

DRIEST MONTHS: June through September. Some 75% of the year's days will get no measurable precipitation; that is, they will get less than a hundredth of an inch. July will have 94% such days, whereas wet December and January will get only 56%. A "dry day" in the table, however, is one with less than a tenth of an inch--a more useful measure. It takes at least that much to wet the ground under the trees.

Almost all of the rain comes from the series of frontal systems that pass from west to east across the Mediterranean basin during the cooler months. These can be expected at three-to-five-day intervals, and the resulting precipitation shows no preference for any particular time of day.

THINGS TO KNOW: That particular Greek brilliance and lucidity of the atmosphere that artists and poets have celebrated for centuries is now badly obscured by smog and atmospheric pollution within the city. It's still around, but you have to get out of Athens and go to a non-industrialized rural area or some of the smaller islands to find it.

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