

# 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 "fallas" 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 of some of the smaller islands to find it.

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