

Best of Greece

10 Days | Athens to Santorini



SEMI-INDEPENDENT TOUR:

Travel from Athens to Santorini enjoying the historic temples and monuments which make Greece such a wonderful destination. Discover the ancient sanctuary of Delphi, admire the hidden monasteries in Meteora, and take in the majestic beauty of Santorini.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Athens - discover one of the world's oldest cities, from the ancient Acropolis to the modern Panathenaic Stadium
- Delphi - follow the Sacred Way in the footsteps of pilgrims who sought the oracle's advice at this holy sanctuary
- Meteora - admire the stunning, UNESCO-listed rock formations and cliff-top monasteries
- Thermopylae - relive the Spartans' famous last stand against the Persians on this narrow pass
- Mykonos - lounge on sandy beaches and enjoy the nightlife in this Aegean hotspot for the rich and famous
- Santorini - relax on one of Greece's most beautiful islands, where whitewashed villages perch on volcanic cliffs and

breathtaking sunsets can be witnessed at Oia.

What's Included

- 9 nights 3-4 star hotels
- 9 breakfasts and 1 dinner
- One arrival transfer on Day 1 (Athens) and One departure transfer on Day 10 (Santorini) included per booking
- Two ferry tickets - Piraeus – Mykonos (regular ferry) and Mykonos – Santorini (high-speed ferry), economy class
- Guided sightseeing in Athens, Delphi, and Meteora
- Entrance fees for all included sites
- Services of an English-speaking tour guide for scheduled sightseeing on days 2 - 4.
- All transfers and transportation in modern air conditioned vehicles.
- Note: You will join travellers who booked through other operators for sightseeing on days 2-4, some staying in different hotels. The group size on these days can vary in size from 20 - 45 persons and guiding may be in an additional language to English. Travel unescorted from days 5 - 10.

What's Not Included

- International flights and visas
- Tipping - an entirely personal gesture

- A hotel tax of €3.00 per room per night to be paid directly to the hotel at time of check in. Please budget Euro 27, for the duration of the tour. See Trip Notes for details.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Welcome to Greece



Arrival at the Athens airport, welcome assistance and transfer to the hotel. Rest of the day at leisure. **Overnight - Athens**

Day 2 : Athens City Tour



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The day is dedicated to exploring the city of Athens. We begin with a panoramic tour to the most important monuments and landmarks of the city including the Panathinaikon stadium, the Zappeion, the temple of Olympian Zeus, Hadrian's Arch, Syntagma square, the Parliament, the tomb of the unknown soldier, Schliemann's house, the Academy, the University, the National Library, and the old Parliament. Next we head for our guided visit to the Acropolis, including the Propylae, the temple of Athena Nike, the Parthenon, the Erechtheion. Later, we continue with a guided visit to the Acropolis museum voted one of the best museums in the world. Afternoon at leisure to explore Plaka, the picturesque old part of the city, and why not, some shopping at Ermou street

Overnight - Athens (B)

Day 3 : Delphi



Athens - Delphi - Kalabaka. After our breakfast we depart northwards towards Delphi, which used to be the most sacred place in the world and a pilgrimage center for many centuries in antiquity. You will admire the Sanctuary of Apollo, walk the Sacred way, and visit the temple of Apollo, home of Pythia (the oracle). In the afternoon we will be crossing the mountains of central Greece to arrive in Kalambaka for dinner and overnight.

Overnight - Kalambaka (B, D)

Day 4 : Meteora & Thermopylae



Kalambaka - Athens. This morning we will be visiting Meteora. Amazing rock formations, like towers of sandstone, stand ageless, and have provided sacred retreat for monks over the centuries. A number of monasteries are hidden on top of Meteora. The view over the plain is breathtaking. Meteora is considered among the most beautiful areas of mainland Greece and belongs to Unesco's list of world heritage monuments.

After our visit, we will have a break for lunch before beginning the long drive back to Athens. On the way, we will make a short stop at Thermopylae, to admire the statue of Leonidas king of Sparta.

Overnight - Athens (B)

Day 5 : Towards the Cyclades



Athens - Mykonos. This morning we transfer to the port of Piraeus where you'll catch a ferry to Mykonos, a beautiful island famous for its windmills and jet set lifestyle. The ferry takes about 5 hours and once on the island you will be met and transferred to your hotel where the rest of the day is at leisure.

Overnight - Mykonos (B)

Day 6 : Mykonos

At leisure to explore the famous island, a meeting point of the international "jet set".

Discover its amazing beaches, and enjoy the unique night-life.

Overnight - Mykonos (B)

Day 7 : Santorini



Mykonos - Santorini. After breakfast, transfer to Mykonos port and catch a local high-speed ferry to the magical island of Santorini. The journey takes about 3 hours and you'll be transferred to our hotel upon arrival. Enjoy the rest of the day at leisure.

Overnight - Santorini (B)

Days 8-9 : Santorini



At leisure to explore the magical island of Santorini. Discover Fira and Oia with the breathtaking views to the volcano, and enjoy one of the best sunsets in the Aegean. Explore the unique black-sanded beaches or take a boat tour to the islands of the caldera.

Overnight - Santorini (B:2)

Day 10 :

Morning at leisure until the time to transfer to the airport for a short domestic flight, connecting with your international return flight home.(B)

HOTELS

Highlighted below are some of the hotels which we frequently use on this tour, though we reserve the right to substitute these hotels to ones of a similar standard.

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Please refer to your Tour Voucher for your confirmed arrival hotel and further arrival information.

Polis Grand

In the heart of Athens, the Polis Grand is a contemporary hotel with excellent facilities. Guest rooms are well appointed with elegant furniture and all modern conveniences. Some rooms are equipped with a balcony with fantastic views over to the Acropolis. The hotel benefits from a number of eateries which serve up an array of Greek and international cuisine as well as tasty coffee and delicious pies. Definitely head for a cocktail in the evening at the roof garden bar for amazing views across the city.



Titania Hotel

Nestled in the historic centre of Athens, the Titiana offers beautiful accommodation all classically designed. The ensuite guest rooms are furnished to a high standard with neutral tones and wooden flooring. Breakfast is served in the impressive rooftop Olive Garden restaurant which affords amazing views across the city including the Acropolis. The hotel also benefits from complimentary Wi-Fi and a fitness centre.



El Greco Resort & Spa

Conveniently located just minutes from the centre of Fira, El Greco is a beautiful white washed complex in the classic Santorini style. All guest rooms are air conditioned and reflect the Cycladic style whilst including all mod-cons and exception ensuite facilities. The resort benefits from an outdoor pool, on

site restaurant and adult-only Spa Centre for guests.



Orizontes Hotel & Villas Santorini

Located in the village of Pyrgos, the Orizontes Hotel was recently renovated and is surrounded by vineyards. Guest rooms have private balconies looking out to the sea or the garden and are equipped with lots of modern conveniences. The hotel also has a couple of restaurants serving local and international cuisine. Plus there is a lovely outdoor pool to cool down in and lots of sunbeds.



Our Partners

This tour is operated in conjunction with our trusted partner and you will join travellers who booked through different operators, not solely On The Go.

Style of Tour

This is an semi independent tour, which combines escorting touring in mainland Greece with free time in Mykonos and Santorini, where you will not be accompanied by a guide or travel as part of a group.

Our tours of mainland Greece are modular, meaning that you may join people who are on a longer tour and the people you are with on your Athens city tour may not be the same people that you will travel with to Delphi and Meteora. This also means that the group size can vary during your tour. You will enjoy guided sightseeing during the daytime and spend your evenings at leisure, staying in 4 star (First Class) hotels. There

will some people on your tour who booked through different operators and will be staying in a lower standard of (Tourist Class) hotels. Please note that dependent upon the group demographic, the guiding sightseeing may be in French as well as English.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Greece Country Guide

Greece Visas

UK, AUS, NZ, USA and CAN passport holders do not require a visa at present to enter Greece for touristic purposes, for a stay of up to 90 days in any 180-day period.

For passport holders of other nationalities not included here, please check the <http://www.projectvisa.com/visainformation/Greece> website for more information.

South African Residents

Greece is part of the borderless region known as the Schengen Area and South African passport holders require a Schengen visa in order to enter Greece. A passport valid for at least three months from your departure is required and a visa will only be issued if blank pages are available.

Requirements for the procurement of a visa are subject to change but application requirements include round-trip travel itinerary specifying entry and exit dates from the Schengen state and proof of funds to support yourself during your stay, ask your bank for this, it should include your name too. R600 per person per day is required with a minimum of R3600

You'll need to contact the consulate general in Johannesburg directly for inquiries and questions regarding visa regulations and passport requirement at <http://www.mfa.gr/johannesburg>.

Greece Hotel Tax

From January 2018, a new "overnight stay" tax has been imposed by the Greek government. This tax amounts to €1.50 per room per night for 3 star hotels, €3.00 per room per night for

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4 star hotels and €4.00 per room per night for 5 star. This tax cannot be included in our tour price and you will need to pay this upon check in at each hotel so please budget accordingly.

Airport Transfers

An arrival transfer is included on day 1 and a departure transfer on the final day of your tour. Please note that only one complimentary transfer is offered per booking so if you are on different flights to your travelling companions a supplement will apply.

Climate

Summer in Greece

The climate in Greece is typical of the Mediterranean climate with two seasons - a warm and dry summer, and a mild and wet winter. Summer is a long season with temperatures climbing to a pleasant degree as early as late February. March and even April can be somewhat unpredictable months with the occasional rain shower and windy conditions though at this time of year the landscapes are decorated with beautiful wild flowers.

The shoulder months between May and June still offer lovely weather conditions but without the crowds. It's warm on the islands and the waters are nice enough for a swim. Peak tourist season doesn't start until mid-June and lasts until early September. During this time the islands are buzzing with people, both travellers and locals alike. If you're visiting during this time it's best to book hotels, flights and local ferries as far as in advance as possible to avoid disappointment and secure better prices.

Between September and mid-October the soft light and delicate colours are particularly suited to photography. The sea water retains the heat of the mid-summer months so swimming is definitely still on the cards.

Winter in Greece

By late-October many parts of Greece begin to experience stormy conditions with more frequent cloud cover and rain showers. The tourist season comes to an end and prices drop off considerably. Few international

travellers visit the Greek islands between November and February so crowds are thin.

Time & Voltage

Greece lies in the Eastern European Time Zone, which is 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT +2).

During summer, daylight-saving is observed in Greece, where the time is shifted forward by 1 hour so it becomes 3 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT +3). After summer the time in Greece is shifted back by 1 hour to Eastern European Time. In 2017, daylight savings takes place between 26th March and 29th October.

Standard voltage is 220-240 volts. Primary sockets generally require European plugs of the two round-pin variety. We recommend that you pack a universal travel adaptor. You will need a voltage converter and plug adaptor in order to use U.S. appliances.

Health Requirements

You should seek medical advice from your local health practitioner before travelling to Greece and ensure that you receive all of the appropriate vaccinations. Just make sure you're up to date for recommended vaccinations for your home country, including measles, mumps and polio. Other vaccines to consider are Tetanus and Tick-borne Encephalitis. Visit the NHS Fit to Travel page or the CDC Traveler's Health Page for more information.

Currency & Holiday Money

The official currency in Greece is the Euro. Check OANDA for latest exchange rates.

British Pounds, US Dollars and other major currencies can be easily exchanged locally in banks or bureau de change prior to departure. Credit cards such as Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted in most major hotels, restaurants and shops, but keep some cash on hand, especially on the islands and in smaller towns. Use of American Express is not as common.

Traveller's Cheques are not recommended as they're often difficult to exchange and incur high fees

Although Greece has become a hugely popular tourist destination in recent years, it remains relatively affordable. We recommend if you are on a budget that you avoid the often overpriced restaurants and cafes that line the main squares and chose places to eat a few streets back. A meal in an inexpensive restaurant with drinks will cost around USD \$12, and a pint of domestic beer costs about USD \$4.10, while a one way ticket on public transport will only set you back about USD \$1.65.

Shopping

Greece is a cultural haven, and you will find a wide range of arts and crafts wherever you go. Locally hand-crafted ceramics, textiles, wood carvings, and jewellery make for wonderful souvenirs, especially from the Greek islands. Many destinations pride themselves on specific products – for instance, the monasteries at Meteora are famed for hand-painted religious icons. If you are shopping for antiques, do beware of fakes and stick to reputable traders.

In Athens, the ancient tradition of the agora (public forum) continues today in spaces such as the Monastiraki market, where you will find souvenirs for all tastes, ranging from tailor-made leather sandals to mass-produced Parthenon replicas. Another popular shopping option nearby is Ermou Street, which offers a wide selection of local and international brands. The island of Thessaloniki also caters to shoppers with its boutique-filled main square and a variety of malls near the city centre.

If you are looking to bring a taste of Greece home with you, olive oil from the Peloponnese, honey from Attica, and wines from Santorini are excellent products to look out for.

Is bargaining acceptable in Greece?

Bargaining is generally not accepted in Greece - in most shops there will be a fixed price for goods on sale. In the flea markets and with street vendors, a bit of bargaining may be more appropriate.

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Greek Cuisine

Greek food has a venerable history dating back to antiquity. Although the country's rocky terrain limits its agricultural output, cooking and cuisine are essential to its culture. Olives, cheese, and wheat are integral parts of the local diet, appearing in salads, stews, and breads. Seafood at restaurants – often squid, octopus, mussels, and fish - is likely to come fresh from the Mediterranean, especially on the Greek islands.

Greek cuisine is simple but incredibly varied. In terms of popular dishes, you will find moussaka (aubergine & lamb casserole), souvlaki (spit-roasted meat), and dolmades (vine leaves stuffed with meat & herbs) in many tavernas and restaurants, sometimes with regional variations. Meat-free options include briam (roasted vegetables in tomato sauce), and of course, Greek salad with olives & feta cheese. For indulging your sweet tooth, pastry shops serve delicacies such as Turkish-inspired baklava (filo pastry layered with honey and chopped nuts). Ice cream and honey with yogurt are also common sweet snacks.

Drinks are a major part of the traditional dining experience. Ouzo, an anise-flavoured spirit distilled from pressed grapes, is Greece's most popular alcohol, usually served as an aperitif with iced water and some small appetizers. Be careful not to drain your glass too quickly – it is a strong drink, meant to be enjoyed over a period of time.

Drinking Water

In the major cities, it's generally safe to drink water from taps and also from drinking fountains. However, it is strongly recommended to stick to bottled water on most islands and in rural areas.

Tipping

Tipping customs in Greece vary widely. Service charge may be included in the bill, but tipping remains a common practice, especially in popular tourist destinations. Your tip should reflect the service so if it was excellent, 10% is an added bonus. At some restaurants, a small mandatory 'cover charge' for bread & water is also included in the bill (usually about

one Euro per person). Taxi drivers usually expect tips and it is also standard to tip hotel porters and local tour guides. If the concierge is particularly helpful, people often tip 1 to 2 Euros.

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