

Greece at a glance

Section

1

1.1 Introduction

Coming to Greece (Hellenic Republic) it may be useful for you and your family to have a practical idea of how the country looks like. Thus, this section provides general information about the Greek geography, weather and climate conditions, currency etc. Details such as the above will definitely help you to prepare yourself better before and after your arrival to the country.

Geography

Figure 1. 1 Map of Greece



Source: The Greek National Researcher's Mobility Portal

- Location

Greece is located in south-eastern Europe on the southern tip of the Balkan Peninsula, bordering Turkey to the east; Albania, Bulgaria and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) to the north; and surrounded by the Ionian and the Aegean seas.

- Land Boundaries

Total 1,210 km (747 miles), Albania 282 km (174mi), Bulgaria 494 km (305 mi), Turkey 206 km (127 mi), Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) 228 km (141 mi.)

- Land Area

The overall land area of Greece is estimated to 130, 800 sq.km (50,471 sq.mi).

- Terrain

Some 80% of the mainland is mountainous with ranges extending into the sea as peninsulas or chains of islands, while 20% of the total land area of Greece consists of more than 3,000 islands along its coast that range from very small islands to Crete which

converted at all the major banks, airports and central locations in many cities. In addition, paying with credit cards is fairly easy, and most of the stores accept them.

- Religion Affiliations

The official religion of Greece is Greek Orthodox Christianity, which accounts for approximately 98% of the population. There are also a small minority of Muslims which account for 1.5% of the population. Minority religions face some discrimination from the state Greek Orthodox Church.

- Languages and national flag

The official language is Greek (Ellinika) with 98% of the population speaking and writing it. However, Greek people are multilingual and so English, French and German are also widely understood and spoken, especially from young people.

Figure 1.3

The national flag of Greece consisted of 9 horizontal stripes, alternatively blue and white; a white cross on a blue square field in canton, symbolising the blue of the Hellenic Sea and the Whiteness of its restless waves.



National flag of Greece

- Weather and Climate conditions

The climate in Greece is typical of the Mediterranean climate: mild and rainy winters, relatively warm and dry summers and, generally, extended periods of sunshine throughout most of the year. The weather in Greece varies from the dry climate of Attiki (Athens' greater area) and East Greece in general, to the wet climate of Northern and Western Greece.

In climatological terms, the year can be broadly subdivided into two main seasons: The cold and rainy period lasting from mid-October until the end of March, and the warm and dry season lasting from April until September.

During the first period the coldest months are January and February, with, a mean minimum temperature ranging, on average, between 5 -10 degrees Celsius near the coasts and 0 - 5 Celsius over the mainland, with lower values (generally below freezing) over the northern part of the country.

Long stretches of consecutive rainy days are infrequent in Greece, even during the winter, and the sky does not remain cloudy for more than a few days in a row, as it does in other regions of the world. "Bad weather" days in winter are often interrupted, during January and the first fortnight of February, with sunny days, known as 'Halcyon days' since ancient times.

The winter is milder in the Aegean and Ionian Islands compared to Northern and Eastern mainland Greece.

During the warm and dry period the weather is usually stable, the sky is clear, the sun is bright and there is generally no rainfall. There are, however, infrequent and brief intervals of rapid rain or thunderstorms chiefly over mainland areas.

The warmest period occurs during the last ten days of July and the first ten days of August, when the mean maximum temperature lies between 29.0 and 35.0 degrees Celsius. During the warm period the high temperatures are tempered by fresh sea breezes in the coastal areas of the country and from the north winds, known as 'Etesian', blowing mainly in the Aegean. (Source: Hellenic National Meteorology Service)

Table 1. 2 Average temperatures (°C) in seven areas

	Athens	Corfu Island	Heraklion	Rhodes Island	Santorini Island	Thessaloniki	Serres
JAN	10,3	9,7	12,1	11,8	11,2	5,0	3,9
FEB	10,7	10,3	12,3	12,0	11,2	6,6	6,2
MAR	12,4	12,0	13,6	13,6	12,6	9,7	9,6
APR	16,0	15,0	16,6	16,6	15,5	14,2	14,2
MAY	20,7	19,6	20,3	20,6	19,1	19,4	19,6
JUN	25,1	23,8	24,3	24,7	23,3	24,2	24,3
JUL	27,9	26,4	26,1	26,9	25,4	26,5	26,3
AUG	27,7	26,2	26,0	27,0	24,8	25,9	25,3
SEP	24,2	22,7	23,4	24,6	22,5	21,7	21,6
OCT	19,4	18,4	20,0	20,6	19,0	16,1	15,5
NOV	15,5	14,3	16,7	16,5	15,4	11,0	9,2
DEC	12,2	11,2	13,9	13,4	12,7	6,8	5,0

Source: Hellenic National Meteorology Service

- Time zone

The local time (for the whole country) zone is European Standard Time (EET): 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT+2).