



Greece travel advice

Summary

- Still current at:
28 June 2015
- Updated:
28 June 2015
- Latest update: Summary and Money section – revised advice on taking cash to Greece

The currency of Greece is the euro. When travelling outside of the UK, you should take more than one means of payment with you (cash, debit card, credit card). Visitors to Greece should be aware of the possibility that banking services – including credit card processing and servicing of ATMs – throughout Greece could potentially become limited at short notice. Make sure you have enough Euros in cash to cover emergencies, unforeseen circumstances and any unexpected delays.

There are regular strikes. These are sometimes called at short notice and can cause disruption to public transport in and out of Greece (including air travel and ports). Demonstrations take place regularly in central Athens, and have also taken place in other towns and cities. You should avoid all demonstrations and follow the advice given by local security authorities. See [Major pre-planned strikes and demonstrations](#)

There is a general threat from terrorism and acts of political violence. See [Terrorism](#)

In the early hours of 10 April 2014 there was a large explosion outside the Bank of Greece in central Athens. There were no reported injuries.

The emergency services number in Greece is 112. Calling 999 from a UK mobile in Greece will automatically transfer you to the Greek emergency services.

British nationals make around 2 million visits Greece to every year. Most visits are trouble-free, but you should take sensible precautions to protect yourself and your belongings. See [Crime](#)

Carry a copy of your passport or other photographic ID which confirms British nationality at all times.

The Greek police won't accept rowdy or indecent behaviour, especially where excessive drinking is involved. Greek courts impose heavy fines or prison sentences on people who behave indecently. Your travel insurance may not cover you after drinking. See [Local laws and customs](#).

The currency of Greece is the euro. When travelling outside of the UK, you should take more than one means of payment with you (cash, debit card, credit card). Make sure you have enough money to cover emergencies and any unexpected delays.

Take out comprehensive [travel and medical insurance](#) before you travel.

The [Overseas Business Risk service](#) offers information and advice for British companies operating overseas on how to manage political, economic, and business security-related risks.

Safety and security

Major pre-planned strikes and demonstrations

Demonstrations take place regularly around major squares in central Athens, in particular Syntagma Square. The police have used tear gas to disperse demonstrators. You should follow local media and avoid large crowds and demonstrations. Road closures are common in Athens

and are not always announced in advance. Demonstrations can be called at short notice, but there are certain dates on which demonstrations traditionally occur: 1 May, 17 November, and 6 December.

Crime

Most visits to Greece are trouble-free, but theft of wallets and handbags are common on the metro and in crowded tourist places. Leave valuables in a safe place at your hotel or apartment. You should maintain at least the same level of personal security awareness as in the UK. There have been some racially motivated attacks, mostly in inner-city areas.

Personal attacks, including sexual assault and rape, are generally rare in Greece, although there have been incidents involving British nationals in some holiday resorts frequented by large numbers of youth tourists. In some cases the alleged attackers were also British nationals. In many cases excessive drinking by either the victim or the offender preceded the incident.

Alcohol and drugs can lead to you being less alert, less in control and less aware of your environment. Drinks served in bars overseas are often stronger than those in the UK.

Local travel

Certain border areas are militarily sensitive. Although you can visit these areas, you should avoid taking photographs or video footage. You should also avoid approaching or taking photographs or video footage of military installations.

Road travel

Take particular care when travelling by road. In 2012 there were 1,027 road deaths in Greece ([source: Department for Transport](#)). This equates to 9.1 road deaths per 100,000 of population, compared to the UK average of 2.8 road deaths per 100,000 of population in 2012.

Make sure any vehicle you hire is in good condition and check that you're insured. Hire companies sometimes ask for your passport as a form of security. Don't hand over your passport under any circumstances. Check the terms and conditions regarding any damage to the vehicle.

If you intend to hire a moped you will need a valid driving licence with at least category A1 - 'light motorcycle'. Category P, which is valid in the UK for driving mopeds up to 50cc, is not valid in Greece.

By law you must wear a crash helmet on a scooter, moped or motorcycle. Quad bike riders must wear a full-face helmet (or non-full-face helmet plus goggles). Failure to wear a helmet might invalidate your travel insurance if you are involved in an accident.

See the [European Commission](#), [AA](#) and [RAC](#) guides on driving in Greece.

Swimming

Follow local advice if jellyfish are present.

Political situation

Greece is a stable democracy and a member of the European Union. At present, the country is going through a severe economic crisis. The Greek government, with the support of the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission and the European Central Bank, is implementing an economic adjustment programme with a view to ensuring fiscal stability, economic recovery and Greece's continued membership of the Eurozone.

Terrorism

There is a general threat from [terrorism](#) and acts of political violence. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places frequented by foreigners. High profile British interests in Greece should be vigilant and regularly review their security measures.

There have been several attacks involving explosives and automatic weapons against Greek institutions, shopping malls, media interests, diplomatic targets and the police. On 26 September 2013 there was an explosion at the tax office in Kifissia, northern Athens, which damaged the building and cars parked outside. On 4 October 2013 there was an explosion at the Panathinaikos football supporters' club in the Athens district of Petralona, which caused serious damage to the premises, adjacent stores and several parked cars.

On 9 October 2013 there was an attack on the political office of the Greek Shipping Minister, which caused extensive fire and smoke damage.

On 30 December 2013 gunmen fired automatic weapons at the German Embassy in Athens just before dawn; there were no reported injuries.

In the early hours of 10 April 2014 there was a large explosion outside the Bank of Greece in central Athens; there were no reported injuries.

In the early hours of 12 December 2014 gunmen fired automatic weapons at the Israeli Embassy in Athens; there were no reported injuries.

British nationals are not normally considered a specific target, but attacks could happen in places visited by foreigners.

There is considered to be a heightened threat of terrorist attack globally against UK interests and British nationals, from groups or individuals motivated by the conflict in Iraq and Syria. You should be vigilant at this time.

Local laws and customs

Indecent behaviour, including mooning, is not tolerated. The police will make arrests and the courts are likely to impose heavy fines or prison sentences on people who behave indecently. Some fancy dress costumes may be regarded as offensive and therefore against decency laws.

Don't become involved with drugs of any kind, and don't bring drugs - including 'class C' drugs - from the UK. Possession of even small quantities can lead to a long prison sentence.

Driving any vehicle while over the legal drinking limit can result in a heavy fine and/or imprisonment.

If you are seeking employment in bars or night clubs in Greece, you will need a health certificate/licence issued by the local authorities. Failure to have such a certificate is punishable by a fine and or imprisonment.

Make sure you get a receipt for any goods or services you buy. If you buy pirate CDs or DVDs in Greece you could be imprisoned.

Don't buy any offensive weapons like knuckledusters or knives with a blade length of 10cm or above.

It's illegal to smoke in all indoor public places. The penalty for violating this law is a fine of up to €500.

Entry requirements

Passport validity

Your passport should be valid for the proposed duration of your stay; you do not need any additional period of validity on your passport beyond this.

The Greek authorities have confirmed they will accept British passports extended by 12 months by British Embassies and Consulates under additional measures put in place in mid-2014.

Visas

You don't need a visa to enter Greece. As a British passport holder you can stay as a visitor for 3 months. For longer stays, you will need to apply for a residence permit.

UK Emergency Travel Documents

UK Emergency Travel Documents are valid for entry, airside transit and exit from Greece.

Health

Contact your GP around 8 weeks before your trip to check whether you need any vaccinations or other preventive measures. Country specific information and advice is published by the [National Travel Health Network and Centre](#), and useful information about healthcare abroad, including a country-by-country guide, is available from [NHS Choices](#).

If you're visiting Greece you should get a free European Health Insurance Card ([EHIC](#)) before leaving the UK. The EHIC isn't a substitute for medical and travel insurance, but it entitles you to state provided medical treatment that may become necessary during your trip. Any treatment provided is on the same terms as Greek nationals.

If you don't have your EHIC with you or you've lost it, you can call the Department of Health Overseas Healthcare Team (+44 191 218 1999) to get a Provisional Replacement Certificate. The EHIC won't cover medical repatriation, ongoing medical treatment or non-urgent treatment, so you should make sure you have adequate travel insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of any medical treatment and repatriation.

The Greek National Health system has a reciprocal agreement with the British National Health Service. Treatment and facilities are generally good on the mainland, but may be limited on the islands. The standards of nursing and after care, particularly in the public health sector lag behind what is normally acceptable in the UK. The public ambulance service, which will normally respond to any accident, is basic. There are severe shortages of ambulances on some islands.

Make sure you have sufficient medical supplies (including prescription medicines) for the duration of your stay and any unforeseen delays, adequate travel insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of any medical treatment and repatriation.

There have been cases of West Nile Virus (WNV) in Greece during the warmer summer months and 1 death caused by WNV was reported in 2014 by the Hellenic Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.

If you need emergency medical assistance during your trip, dial 112 or 166 and ask for an ambulance. If you are referred to a medical facility for treatment you should contact your insurance/medical assistance company immediately.

Natural disasters

Earthquakes

Earth tremors are common in mainland Greece and on most of the Greek islands popular with British tourists. Serious earthquakes are less frequent but do occur. Follow the advice of local authorities in the event of a natural disaster.

The US Federal Emergency Management Agency has advice about what to do [before, during and after an earthquake](#).

Forest Fires

Forest fires are common during the summer. Monitor local media and follow the advice of local authorities. Take care when visiting or driving through woodland and forest areas. Make sure cigarette ends are properly extinguished. Don't light barbecues and don't leave any rubbish, particularly empty bottles, behind.

Money

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Contact FCO Travel Advice Team

This email service only offers information and advice for British nationals planning to travel abroad.

If you need urgent help because something has happened to a friend or relative abroad, contact the consular assistance team on 020 7008 1500 (24 hours).

If you're abroad and need emergency help, please contact the nearest [British embassy, consulate or high commission](#).

If you have a question about this travel advice, you can email us at TravelAdvicePublicEnquiries@fco.gov.uk

Before you send an email, make sure you have read the travel advice for the country you're travelling to, and the guidance on [how the FCO puts travel advice together](#).