



Thinking about relocating to Greece? Whether it's a voluntary decision or a professional move, there are a few things you should know about Greece and the local culture. Here are a few things to know to help you settle in worry-free!

All About That Cash

One of the most important things to know is that payment in Greece is done mostly in cash. Hotels and restaurants do accept credit cards, but this might not be possible for small businesses, tavernas and cafés, taxis, kiosks or street vendors. There is a tiny improvement in recent years due to the recent capital control regulations, but you should try to always have cash with you. ATMs are readily available anywhere and even abound in main areas. Vendors tend to prefer being paid in cash: **receipts are obligatory** (you'll notice the laminated signs pinned on every cash register).

Currency

Greece's currency is the euro (€). All major credit cards are widely accepted in Greece, though some establishments do not accept American Express and Diners.

Banks

In Athens, banks are open Monday—Friday from 8 am to 2 pm, except on [public holidays](#). (A few central branches have extended hours and some are open on Saturdays.)

You can find ATMs all around the city that can disperse cash from your accounts at home, but they will charge you €2-3 per transaction.

Currency Exchange

Foreign currency can be exchanged at most Greek and foreign banks and at exchange bureaus located at [Athens International Airport](#), [Piraeus port](#), and around the city centre. You will need your passport to exchange money. Travellers checks and credit cards are also widely accepted.

Tipping

There is no service charge at [bars](#) and [restaurants](#), so do leave a tip for the staff, especially if you are pleased with the service. The amount you tip is at your discretion, and depends on the bill. Anywhere between 5% and 15% is the norm, but definitely not the rule.

On The Roads

Athens is your new home. After you've decided on where to live, it is time for you to learn your surroundings. Athens has a good public transport network, consisting of buses, trams and the Athens metro. Public transport is inexpensive, clean and generally punctual, but as in other major cities it gets crowded at peak times.

If you plan on using public transport, grab a map and learn the closest metro, tram, trolley and bus station. Depending on how often you plan to use it, a monthly pass may be the best solution as it gives you unlimited access to all transport everywhere in Athens – except the airport – for 30 Euros. Note that the ticket system transitioned to a paperless system in 2017. More information here:

<https://www.introducingathens.com/metro>

Improvements have been made to transport in Athens both in the run up to and since the city hosted the 2004 Olympic Games. The road infrastructure has been improved, as has the city's public transport network. Although the road infrastructure in Athens is reasonably good, the standard of driving is not always high. Athens and indeed the whole of Greece have a relatively high rate of road traffic accidents, so it is important to drive with caution. The minimum age for driving is 18, and if you wish to use a hire car you will need to be at least 21 years of age. Drivers must carry a fire extinguisher, first aid kit and warning triangle in their vehicle at all times, as well as their relevant driving documents.

Get to Know the Shopping Working Hours in Athens

Opening Hours

Shops are generally open:

Monday & Wednesday: 9 am-3 pm; Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 9 am-2 pm and 5.30 pm-9 pm; Saturdays: 9 am-3 pm; almost all shops are closed on Sundays.

Department stores are open Monday-Friday: 10 am-9 pm Saturday: 9 am-8 pm or 10 am-9 pm, depending on the store.

Note: Most shops in the centre stay open throughout the day on Monday and Wednesday, and do not close for the 2.5 hour break on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

Pharmacies

Monday, Wednesday: 8 am-2 pm, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 8 am-2 pm and 5:30 pm to 8 pm.

Selected pharmacies in each area stay open after hours. Find your nearest pharmacy [here](#).

Post Offices

Monday-Friday: 7:30 am-2 pm; select post offices remain open for longer hours:

[Syntagma Square](#): Monday-Friday 7:30 am-8:30 pm, Saturday: 7:30 am-2:45 pm, Sunday: 9 am-1:30 pm

[Athens International Airport](#): Monday-Saturday 7 am-7:30 pm, Sunday and holidays: 8:30 am-6:30 pm

[100 Aiolou Street](#): Monday-Friday 7:30 am-8:30 pm, Saturday: 7:30 am-2:45 pm

[60 Mitropoleos Street](#): Monday-Friday 7:30 pm-8:30 pm

Note: On public holidays (listed above) stores are closed and archaeological sites and museums are either closed or open for limited hours. Check online before you set off.

Get to Know Your City

As a new local, you need to learn your city. Yes, Athens is loud. Yes, it may sometimes seem chaotic, and not necessarily very pretty. And confusing. Browsing through websites like [Culture Trip](#), [Savoteur](#) or [Greece Is](#) will help you discover the city you are in and fall in love with it over and over again.

Cost of living in Athens (current as of Jun 2019)

Please visit this link: <https://www.expatistan.com/cost-of-living/athens-greece>

What to do in Case of an Emergency in Athens

Safety

Athens is generally a very safe city. The streets teem with people and traffic around the clock. Like every big city, there are pickpockets and petty criminals—be especially vigilant with your belongings on [public transport](#). Common sense precautions include:

- Always use a licenced [taxi](#).
- Use well-lit, well-populated ATMs
- Avoid leaving your phone lying around on café tables, or it might be snatched.

- You might see open drug use in some areas (especially around Omonia and Exarchia Squares, Keramikos-Metaxourgio, Pedion tou Areos park, and Athens Law School). Ignore them and they will generally ignore you.
- Avoid Exarchia and Syntagma Squares on days when strikes and demonstrations are planned, as police occasionally use tear gas to dispel protestors.

Emergency Numbers

Police Hotline: [100](tel:100)

Tourist Police: [171](tel:171) (English, French and German)

Airport Police: [+30 210 353 6919](tel:+302103536919)

Medical Assistance: [112](tel:112)

Ambulance: [166](tel:166)

Hospitals & Pharmacies: [14944](tel:14944)

Roadside Assistance (ELPA): [10400](tel:10400)

Fire Brigade: 199

Athens Police Headquarters

Please visit this link: <https://www.gtp.gr/TDirectoryDetails.asp?ID=10078>

Greek Police Department

Please visit this link: <http://www.astynomia.gr/index.php?lang=EN>

USA Embassy in Athens, Greece

Embassy of the United States of America

91, Vassilissis Sophias Avenue

10160 Athens

T : 210-721-2951

F : 210-645-6282

E : usembassy@usembassy.gr

W : www.usembassy.gr

A Few Tips:

Use your Feet

Driving in Athens is not for the faint-hearted. Buses and vehicles jostle for space, pedestrians dart into the street, and just when you think you've gotten the hang of it, a motorbike blasts by, narrowly missing you. The metro is cheap (1.40 euros for a 90-minute ride) and a lot of stations have archaeological exhibits, but it doesn't cover the whole city. My preferred mode of transportation is walking for miles. However, Athenian sidewalks are tiny, often full of parked cars, and have at least three different textured tiles on each street. If you are traveling in a wheelchair or with a stroller, be aware that maneuvering may be difficult or nearly impossible in some neighborhoods.

The Big Flush

As the sewage system is basic, the rule is to avoid flushing the toilet paper and use the bin placed for that purpose. It may take you some time to get used to, but you will quickly adapt.

Learn the Language

Greeks are pretty decent with other languages, especially English or German, but they always appreciate when a non-Greek makes an effort at speaking their language. You are not expected to strike up an articulate conversation about the political situation in the Middle East or discuss philosophy at length, but a simple *Kalimera* (Good morning) or *Kalispera* (Good afternoon) and other polite phrases go a long way. Plus, being able to decipher the Greek alphabet will help you in many situations.

A Bad Habit

Greeks have one major bad habit: they smoke. A lot. It used to be legal to smoke indoors, but a recent new law prohibits indoor smoking in any public places. You will soon find that this rule is not observed by many – and while various restaurants and bars are starting to implement the rule of smoking outside only, you won't be able to

avoid it. The good thing is with warm weather for more than half the year, you will spend a lot of time outside, so the smoking nuisance is rather minimal.

Weather in Athens

<https://www.thisisathens.org/useful-tips/weather>

Useful Apps & Websites

<https://www.thisisathens.org/useful-tips/useful-apps-websites>

Info Points

From [transportation tips](#) and directions to the beach, to details of the newest [gallery](#) that's not in your guidebook, the seasoned experts at our Info Points are ready to answer all your questions.

This is Athens Info Points are situated at:

- [Athens International Airport](#): Arrival's level, daily and weekends 8 am - 8 pm. Open year-round from 8 am - 8 pm daily. Tel. [+30 210 353 0390](tel:+302103530390)
- [Syntagma Square](#): Open year-round from 9am - 8pm daily.

