

Sea Kayaking Grecian Islands

Adventures in Good Company General Information 2008

International travel takes some planning, and the rewards are well worth it! This information will answer many of your questions, but please don't hesitate to call Adventures in Good Company if we can be of assistance.

Emergency Contact Information: Trekking Hellas is our outfitters for the trip. Their telephone number is +30.210.3310323. Once we are out kayaking we will be unreachable by phone, but the guiding company will so their best to pass along messages in serious emergencies. Otherwise call the Adventures in Good Company office (877) 439-4042 and we will do everything we can to get in touch with you. We will send you information about the hotel in Athens in the pre-trip letter.

Passport: A valid passport is required for travel in Greece. You will need to present it at the airports before and after your flights. A visa is not required. Be sure to carry a photocopy of your passport in a separate location, for security's sake. It is also a good idea to leave one with somebody at home. If you already have a passport, check to make sure it is still current (they expire every 10 years). Passports can be renewed through the mail. If you are getting a passport for the first time, you must submit your application in person. For information on how to obtain a passport, you can download an application at the State Dept.'s site: travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html; ask your travel agent; or call the Passport Office at 202-647-0518. Allow at least 6 weeks.

Getting There: Arrive anytime on the 4th but in time for an evening tour and welcome dinner. You will be met by a Trekking Hellas representative at the airport to help you transfer to the hotel. If you are flying, you will fly into **Athens Eleftherios Venizelos International (ATH)**. Coming from the United States, there are several airlines that fly there; Air Canada, British Airways, Delta, Iberia Lineas, KLM Royal Dutch, Alitalia, and Lufthansa are several airlines that fly into Athens.

Weather: The weather in Athens in the summer is typically dry, windy and hot (90s F), especially during the day. The Ionian gulf, where we will be kayaking, is part of the Adriatic Sea, which separates Greece and Italy. Its waters are calm,

clear and still, sheltered from the prevailing northeastern winds of the summer by the bulk of the Greek mainland. The temperatures are typically in the upper 70s during the day and lower 60s during the night. Exposure to the sun, however, is deceptively high. Generally speaking rain is very unlikely, and apart from a regular afternoon breeze there are rarely any winds. The sea temperature is pleasant, though a few degrees cooler than the Aegean.

Conditioning: Additional aerobic conditioning is unnecessary for anyone who already exercises regularly. If you don't, you will probably find that you have more energy during the trip if you start a moderate exercise program a couple of months before your trip. For example, you might start walking 3 or 4 times a week for half an hour, at a pace that is brisk enough to make you breathe deeply. Hills are good for this. Other options are working out at a health club on a stairmaster or treadmill, aerobics classes, cross country skiing or any activity that makes you breathe deeply.

Paddling primarily works the upper body, back, and stomach muscles, so conditioning should take those areas into account. Muscular endurance is more critical than strength. If you do any strength training, more repetitions with low weights is better than few repetitions with high weights. Most people with chronic back problems do fine in a kayak, but you should consult with your doctor first. If you use a lumbar roll or support, bring it along. Weight training with lightweights can also be useful. Give us a call if you need more specific guidance.

Tipping Guidelines

Tipping at the end of the trip is completely optional. If you feel your guide(s) did an outstanding job and would like to reward them for their efforts, a suggested rule of thumb is US \$5-\$10 per person, per day. Oftentimes, trip members organize a group envelope (this makes it anonymous) and present it to the guides at the last shared meal.

Currency and Spending Money: Greece is one of the members of the EU and has converted to the single European currency, the Euro. The current exchange rate is approximately 1 Euro to 1.40 US dollar, although this can fluctuate. Travelers' cheques and foreign money can be changed at banks, railway stations and airports, and very often at major hotels (generally at a less attractive rate). Travelers' cheques are less generally accepted than they used to be. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travelers are advised to take travelers' cheques in Euros.

Credit & debit cards: MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted, but many small establishments - shops and restaurants - only accept cash. It is advisable to ask merchants if they accept credit cards before trying to purchase items if they do not display the insignia in the window. You should be aware that to purchase products or services on a credit card a fee of 5%-10% sometimes is applied.

Getting cash from ATMs in Greece is more popular than any other method of exchanging money. In most cases, you pay only your usual bank fee rather than a commission, though this may vary depending on your bank's policy. If you are unsure about compatibility, contact your bank or credit card company. Generally, you will get the best available exchange rate at ATMs as well. Street-side ATMs are still the most common, though a few hotels, restaurants, and tavernas may have one.

Special Tip: In busy tourist locations, it's very common for the machines to run out of money on weekends and to stay empty until mid-week. The Greek ATMs with signs in English or other languages generally run out of money first. The all-Greek ATMs ten feet away will often still have Euros. This can take a little bravery, but can literally pay off. In most cases, if you put your card into one of these all-Greek ATMs, the display will come up in English.

All meals are covered from the first Friday dinner, to the last Friday breakfast. You will need money for personal items such as: snacks, gifts, beverages in restaurants, guide gratuities, and other items of a personal nature. In restaurants the law requires menu prices to include service charge, and tipping is a matter of personal choice - most people leave some small change if they're satisfied.

Electrical Appliances: The electrical current in Spain is 220V, 50 Hz so travelers from the US need a three-tier standard travel converter. Make sure you bring a plug adapter for any electrical items you travel with - plugs have two round pins. Some specialty travel stores carry adapters and can help you choose the right one.

Suggested Reading

Dinner with Persephone: Travels in Greece by Patricia Storace is one of the best travelogues written in the last ten years about any country. It is beautifully written, full of insight into the Greek character and the country.

Greek Salad: A Dionysian Travelogue by Miles Lambert-Gocs. A rollicking odyssey through the Greek islands and mainland with Grecophile and ex-Athenian wine reporter Lambert-Gocs whose book *The Wines of Greece* won awards from the Wine Guild of the UK and the Angelo Hellenic League. This book is like the Greek version of the movie *Sideways*, a medley of wit and insight about Greece with local wine and food as the backdrop.

Travelers Greece: Memories of an Enchanted Land. An anthology of travel writing by John Tomkinson of over 100 visitors to Greece spanning a period of more than 3 centuries, from the late 16th to the early 20th. From waterspouts in the Ionian Sea to vampires on Mykonos, this book is of interest to anyone visiting Greece and especially those who love the history and culture of Greece.

Athens: The Collected Traveler. Part of a series by *Barrie Kerper* published by *Fodor's*. It is packed with essays about different aspects of travel, food, culture and many other aspects of Greece. With articles by famous chefs and authors Aglaia Kremezi and Diane Kochilas plus lots of practical information including a whole page on George the Famous Taxi Driver. This book is an excellent travelers' companion, the right balance of practical information and entertaining writing. If you want a guidebook full of prices, timetables and hours this is the wrong book, but if you want to know a lot about where you are going buy this book.

