**Know Before You Go**

- Driving is on the right.
- Drivers are required to carry a passport or photo identification at all times, along with an International Driving Permit (IDP), a valid national driving license and proof of insurance.
- An IDP is not available in Greece and must be obtained prior to travel through the American Automobile Association (AAA) or the American Automobile Touring Alliance (AATA).
- Greece has one of the highest road fatality rates within the European Union. Both pedestrians and motorists should remain alert and exercise caution.
- Pedestrians account for 18 percent of all traffic crash fatalities.
- There are many scooters and motorcycles. Riders of motorized two- and three-wheeled vehicles make up 32 percent of all road crash deaths.
- Legal blood alcohol limit is below 0.05 g/dl for all drivers. Despite laws, 25 percent of all road crash deaths involve the use of alcohol.
- There are 6.5 road deaths per 100,000 people in Greece, compared to 2.8 in Sweden and 3.1 in the UK.

**Driving Culture**

- Driving standards are generally regarded as poor.
- Speeding is common.
- There are many aggressive drivers.
- Drivers often flash their headlights to indicate that they want other vehicles to get out of their way.
- Drivers typically disregard lane markings. On two-lane highways, slower traffic often drives on road shoulders, and faster vehicles will pass between lanes straddling double yellow center lines.
- Many drivers do not come to full stops at traffic lights and intersections.
- There are large numbers of motorbikes, scooters and mopeds, especially on islands and in popular tourist destinations. In locations with cruise ports, motorbike, scooter and moped rentals are popular. Drivers may be unfamiliar with traffic rules.
- Be alert at all times to the presence of motorbikes. Drivers of motorbikes commonly travel between lanes and may pull up beside larger vehicles within the same lane.

**Road Conditions**

- There are 117,000 km (72,700 miles) of roads.
- Road conditions vary widely. Most major roadways are well maintained.
- Outside of cities, paved roads may give way to gravel surfaces without signs to indicate this change.
- Heavy traffic is typical, particularly in and near cities.
- Multi-lane motorways are designated by the prefix “A” followed by route number.
- National roads are identified by route number against a blue background; these roads are generally single carriageways or limited access roads with one or two lanes in each direction.
- Major European routes have the prefix “E” followed by route number displayed on a green background.
- There are many toll roads, including the two main motorways: the E75 between Athens and Thessaloniki and the E65 linking Athens and Kalamata.
- Tolls may apply to some bridges and tunnels. The Aktio–Preveza tunnel requires toll payment.
- Tolls can be paid in cash (Euros). Some toll booths are equipped with credit card readers.
- Electronic toll payment systems are available from several companies; vehicles must be equipped with electronic toll reader to use this system.
- Traffic signs are often obscured and difficult to see.
- Most road signs are in Greek.
- Pedestrian infrastructure is underdeveloped. There are few sidewalks. In cities, sidewalks may have broken or uneven surfaces.
Both motorists and pedestrians may ignore crossings. Drivers should be alert to pedestrians who may step into roadways; pedestrians should be cautious of drivers who disregard their presence.

At intersections, motorbike drivers may attempt to pass through pedestrians crossing the road.

Driving terrain may be difficult, particularly in remote areas and on islands.

There are many high altitude mountain passes. Many of these roads have gravel surfaces. The surfaces of mountain roads may not be regularly maintained.

Avoid driving at night or on mountain roads during inclement weather as road conditions may become treacherous.

Public demonstrations, strikes and work stoppages are common and cause disruptions to travel. Public transportation, taxi service, and seaport and airport operations may be affected. Even peaceful gatherings may become violent. Violent anarchist groups may join demonstrations and engage in clashes with police.

Traditional dates for large demonstrations are May 1, November 17 and December 6. On these dates, avoid all areas where gatherings occur.

Beyond cities, fuel stations may be long distances from one another.

The following roads may present particular challenges to motorists:

- The coastal road to Ancient Thera beginning in Kamari on the island of Santorini has 22 hairpin switchbacks along its 2.3 km (1.4 mile) length, and is often referred to as the Kamari Serpentines. It is popular with visiting drivers. The road has a mixed stone and asphalt surface. The serpentine stretch of this road is closed on Mondays, and daily between 5:30 pm and 7:30 am. Although the road is not very long, there is an elevation gain of 198 meters (649 feet) with an average grade of 8.6 percent. Not all sections have guardrails.

- The road connecting Prousos and Karpenisi is considered one of the most dangerous roads in Europe. The narrow, paved road runs adjacent to the Karpenisiotis River in Central Greece and lacks adequate guardrails. The 28.9 km (17.9 mile) road is subject to heavy snow, avalanches and landslides. Patches of ice are common during cold weather. Most areas are impassable by more than one vehicle at a time.

- National Road E091 links the center of Athens with Sounio on the coast of the Attica peninsula. The asphalt road is popular with visitors. There are many twists and turns, with some dangerous blind curves. There have been multiple crashes. Speeding and dangerous overtaking are common.

- The Kapetaniana-Agia Ioannis Road on the island of Crete is a steep mountain road with many hairpin turns. It is popular with adventure seekers. The rough road has a loose gravel surface with sections that have grades of up to 15 percent. For most of its length, the road has sharp vertical drop-offs and no guardrails. Many vehicles have fallen over the edge of the road. The road is subject to landslides and is regarded as dangerous, particularly after heavy rain. Driving this road is not recommended.

### Regional and Seasonal Conditions

- Greece is subject to tremors, earthquakes, seasonal flooding and forest fires. The country is located within an active seismic zone. Be alert to announcements regarding increased activity.

- During spring and winter months, flooding may occur. Water on roadways may conceal potholes, obstacles or other hazards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of road</th>
<th>Maximum speed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban areas</td>
<td>50 kph (30 mph)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural roads</td>
<td>90 kph (55 mph)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highways</td>
<td>130 kph (80 mph)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Always adjust speed according to signage, hazards and weather conditions.

**Signs are generally pictorial and may not follow European Union conventions.**

![Signs](image-url)
Forest fires are common during hot, dry weather in summer months, particularly from June to September. Fires may disrupt travel and transport. Smoke may obscure visibility and add to road danger.

Be familiar with emergency procedures. The Red Cross provides a website and free, downloadable emergency app: http://www.redcross.org/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation options include cars, buses, trams, metro, taxis, rideshare services, trains and ferries.

Public transportation is generally regarded as reliable, though crashes involving regional buses and ferries have occurred.

When using public transportation, be sure to validate ticket prior to travel. Ticket inspectors are common; failure to produce a validated ticket carries steep fines.

The bus network is extensive. Intercity buses are operated by KTEL (Koino Tamio Eis Praxeon Leoforion).

In small towns and villages, bus schedules may not be published in English.

Bus tickets can be purchased as stations or online.

Tram service is limited to Athens.

There is metro service in Athens.

Licensed, metered taxis are typically yellow in color.

Licensed taxis are readily available. Drivers may not turn on meters unless directed to do so by passengers.

Taxi routes to and from airports may have fixed rates.

Taxis may be flagged on the street or found at taxi queues near stations, hotels and tourist areas.

Taxi drivers may not speak English. Carry destination address written in Greek.

Not all small car rental agencies are licensed. Rental vehicles may be in poor condition. Before agreeing to rental, check vehicle to ensure it is in good condition and has standard safety features including seat belts, working brakes, adequate tires, windshield wipers, turn signals, headlights and tail lights.

Use only rideshare services that have a dispatch app providing vehicle description, license plate number and driver’s name. Verify all information before entering vehicle.

Trains are operated by OSE (Organismos Sidirodromos Ellados/Hellenic Railways Organisation). The OSE website is in Greek and English; tickets may be purchased online or at stations.

The train network is limited. There is regular service between Athens and Thessaloniki.

Ferries provide service between mainland Greece and Greek islands. Ferries are operated by multiple companies.

Ferries are often referred to as “sea buses.”

Most ferries meet European safety standards. These include ferries operated by Bluestar Ferries, Anes Ferries and Hellenic Seaways.

TRAFFIC REGULATIONS

Minimum age to drive is 18. Minimum age to rent a vehicle is generally 21. Individual rental agencies may have different requirements.

Unless posted otherwise, give way to vehicles approaching from the right.

At traffic circles, drivers within the traffic circle must give way to traffic entering from the right unless merging traffic has a stop sign.

On three-lane highways, the middle lane is reserved for passing.

Double lines on roadways indicated that overtaking is prohibited.

Enforcement of speed limits is low.

Seat belt use is mandatory for all vehicle occupants.

Restraints are required for children between the heights of 135–150 cm (53–59 inches).

Children may be seated in front seats provided if secured in a restraint appropriate to size, weight and height. Children in rear seats between the heights of 135–150 cm (53–59 inches) to use a seat belt.

For safety, children should be secured in appropriate restraints and be seated in rear seats of vehicle.

Helmet use is compulsory for motorcycle drivers and passengers. Helmets must be fastened and meet national safety standards.

Children under five years old may not be passengers on motorcycles. When possible, children should not be motorcycle passengers.

Police may carry out random breath tests for alcohol.

Passenger vehicles should be equipped with a first aid kit, warning triangle and a fire extinguisher.

Snow chains are permitted only in hazardous weather conditions.
Athens (Capital)

Transportation options include cars, buses, metro, trams, trolleybuses, suburban rail, taxis, rideshare services, trains and ferries.

Driving is not recommended. Traffic is chaotic. Traffic jams are common even during late night hours; heavy traffic includes many motorbikes.

From September through June, traffic in the city center is restricted based on license plate numbers. Odd numbers are admitted on odd days and even numbers are admitted on even days.

Traffic is lightest and parking is most available during August when many city residents are on vacation.

Road networks are confusing. The city is not built on a grid, and many streets are one-way, or zig-zag through the city in more than one direction.

Beyond main roads, city streets are typically too narrow for more than one vehicle.

Roads carrying the word “Leoforos” are main express avenues with multiple lanes. Traffic jams are less prevalent along these roads.

In the city center, the right lane is often reserved for buses. Drivers of other vehicles may only enter these lanes to make a right turn. Be alert to signs indicating bus-only lanes; most are separated from other lanes by double lines and have an image of a bus painted on the pavement.

Road closures are common and may not be announced in advance.

Traffic and street signs may be unclear. Wording is often obscured by graffiti.

Many street signs hang high above streets on buildings and may be obscured by trees or other obstructions.

Intersections may be controlled by traffic police, even if a traffic light is present. Be familiar with arm and hand signals used for traffic control.

There is little parking. Double parking is common; cars parked closest to the curb may be blocked for days.

Pedestrians should use caution. Streets are steep and there are few sidewalks; pedestrians may be required to walk in streets close to traffic.

Where present, many sidewalks are in poor condition with broken surfaces.

Tickets for public transport may be purchased at ticket booths and machines at all Athens Metro and tram stations.

The bus and trolleybus network are extensive. Most lines run daily from 5 a.m. until midnight.

There are limited international bus routes.

There are three metro lines. Lines connect to the tram, suburban railway and some bus routes.

Metro trains operate daily from 5 a.m. to midnight. Lines 2 and 3 run until 2 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. Trains run every 5–6 minutes during peak hours.

Metro line 1 (also called the ISAP) is an overground train with connections to lines 2 and 3 at select stations.

The tram network has three lines and 48 stations.

Trams connect central Athens to the coastal suburbs on Faliro and Voula. Tram stops connect to the metro and overground train at four stations: Syntagma, Syngrou/Fix, Neos Kosmos and SEF (Peace and Friendship Stadium).

The suburban rail line (Proastiakos) connects Piraeus port and Corinth and runs from 4:30 a.m. until 11 p.m. daily.

Licensed taxis are metered. Drivers may not turn on meters unless requested by passengers.

Drivers may not speak English. Carry destination address written in Greek.

Taxis may be hailed on the street, found at queues or booked over the phone.

Taxi drivers often behave recklessly. Drivers may speed and make dangerous maneuvers in traffic including passing on the right, running through stop signs and traffic signals, or passing other vehicles between lanes.

Use only rideshare services that have a dispatch app providing vehicle description, license plate number and driver’s name. Verify all information before entering vehicle.

Long distance trains to other areas of Greece are operated by OSE. There is no international rail service.

Cycling is not popular, but there are several bicycle rental companies in the city. There are few bike lanes.

Cyclists should be alert to drivers who may disregard the presence of bicycles on shared roadways.
Ferries are operated by multiple companies. Boats include large passenger/car ferries, high-speed catamarans and small catamarans.

Ferry services may be interrupted by transportation strikes.

Athens International Airport is located 33 km (20 miles) from the city center.

Airport express buses operate 24 hours a day. Routes connect the airport to Syntagma Square in the city center, Piraeus port and the Intercity Bus Terminal (KTEL Kifissos).

All airport buses drop off passengers at the departures level and depart from the arrivals level. Express buses numbers are preceded by the letter “X.”

Bus tickets may be purchased on board or at ticket booths outside of the airport between exits 4 and 5.

The Proastiakos suburban railway connects the airport to several stations including the main station (Larissis Station).

Metro line 3 (the blue line) connects the airport to the city center at Syntagma Square.

Licensed taxis may be found outside of Exit 3 on the arrivals level of the airport. Taxi rates between the airport and the city are fixed.

Most major car rental agencies are represented at the airport.

Thessaloniki

Transportation options include cars, buses, taxis, rideshare services, commuter trains, long-distance rail and ferries. Second largest city. Traffic is dense and unruly; there are many motorbike drivers weaving in and out of traffic. Driving is not recommended.

The city is a top European travel destination. There are many visiting drivers and pedestrians who may be unfamiliar with traffic patterns and rules.

Parking is difficult to find.

Many streets are hilly.

In the historic inner city center, streets are very narrow with uneven surfaces.

Pedestrians should exercise caution. Pedestrian infrastructure is lacking. Where present, sidewalks are often in poor condition; pedestrians may be required to share roadways and streets with motorized traffic.

There are several pedestrian-only streets in the historic area.

Pedestrians should remain alert to motorbikes ignoring the pedestrian zone, and to delivery vans servicing restaurants and businesses within the pedestrian zone.

Buses are operated by KTEL. The city bus network is well developed.

Bus routes include regional destinations and limited international bus service.

Most buses have onboard ticket machines. Tickets may also be purchased at tourist information centers and ticket booths in main bus stations.

Licensed taxis can be found at queues throughout the city and near bus and train stations.

Taxis may be hailed on the street, booked online or reserved by phone.

Drivers may not speak English. Carry destination address written in Greek.

Many taxi drivers speed or behave carelessly. Speeding and lack of adherence to traffic laws is common.

Use only rideshare services that have a dispatch app providing vehicle description, license plate number and driver’s name. Verify all information before entering vehicle.

Regional train service is operated by OSE; trains arrive and depart from the main passenger station (New Railway Station).

There is limited long-distance train service to Budapest.
Thessaloniki, continued

» There is seasonal ferry service from the city port to nearby islands. Ferries are operated by multiple companies.
» Thessaloniki Airport Makedonia is 15 km (9.3 miles) from city center.
» Transportation between the city and the airport is managed by OASTH (Thessaloniki Urban Transport Organization).
» Buses linking the airport to the city center include night bus service.
» Taxi ranks are located beyond the airport arrivals area. Official, licensed taxis are metered. Fares to and from city center and the airport may vary with time of day and amount of luggage. Surcharges apply after midnight.
» Most major car rental agencies are represented at the airport.

Patras

» One of Greece’s largest cities. Transportation options include cars, buses, taxis, trains and ferries.
» Driving is not recommended. Traffic jams are common.
» There is heavy motorbike traffic. Many motorbike drivers behave recklessly.
» Street networks are confusing. Street and traffic signs are inadequate or may be obscured.
» Pedestrian infrastructure is underdeveloped. There are few sidewalks; existing sidewalks may have broken surfaces.
» Pedestrians may have to share roadways with motorized traffic, and should be particularly alert to motorbikes.
» Patras Bus Station/KTEL Achaias is the central bus station.
» The bus network is extensive and generally regarded as efficient.
» Buses connect all major locations within city limits.
» Regional and long-distance bus routes are available. There is frequent service to and from Athens.
» Licensed taxis can be found at queues throughout the city and near bus and train stations.
» Taxis may be hailed on the street, booked online or reserved by phone.
» Drivers may not speak English. Carry destination address written in Greek.
» Many taxi drivers speed and ignore traffic rules.
» There is no long-distance rail service.
» The Patras Suburban Railway trains connect the areas of Agios Vasileios and Kato Achaia. Suburban trains link with Trainose buses to provide service to additional areas including the hospital and university. Train tickets are good for Trainose bus travel.
» Ferries are available to nearby islands and to Italy. Ferries are operated by multiple companies.
Accommodations and Inclusions for Mobility Challenged

- Though law requires access to buildings, sidewalks and public transportation for all mobility challenged persons, compliance and enforcement may be lacking.
- Sidewalk ramps and parking spaces reserved for use by drivers with disabilities are often occupied or blocked by other parked vehicles.
- Many sidewalks are narrow with broken surfaces and potholes. Sidewalks may be obstructed by trees and street signs, making access difficult for persons with mobility challenges.
- Buildings may lack accessible elevators or bathrooms.
- In Athens, some public buildings offer full accessibility. Some buildings and intersections include accommodations for visually-impaired travelers.
- The Athens International Airport and Athens metro system are fully accessible with ramps and elevators.

Emergency Information

- Pre-program emergency numbers into your phone before departure.
- Responders to emergency numbers in remote areas may not speak English.
  - Police, ambulance and fire: 112
- Appropriate medical care is generally available only in or close to major cities such as Athens or Thessaloniki.
- Health care and emergency facilities are limited on Greek islands. Ambulance services are in short supply.
- First responders are typically unable to access areas beyond major cities or to provide urgent care.
- Most private hospitals require proof of adequate cash or insurance before admitting a patient. Even insured patients may be required to pay up front in cash.
- In general, non-emergency wards in public hospitals offer only minimal nursing staff overnight and on weekends.
- If involved in a crash:
  - Call police. Crash insurance claims may not be valid without a police report.
  - Do not move vehicles until instructed to do so by police, unless a vehicle’s position poses a danger to other road users.
  - Take photographs of scene and collect contact information from other driver(s) and any witnesses.