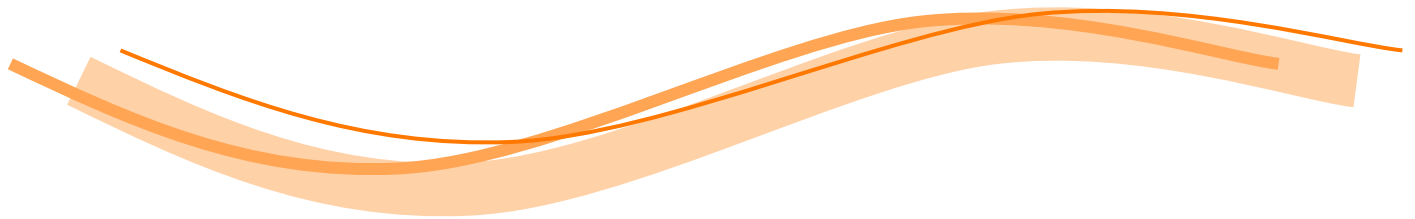




# GREECE & TRANSAT HOLIDAYS





<b>DESTINATION INFO</b>	<b>GREECE</b>
<b>Location</b>	Located in southeastern Europe, Greece occupies the southern tip of the Balkan Peninsula and a series of small, paradisiacal islands.
<b>Geography</b>	Greece is a land of sea and mountains. Over a fifth of the Greek landmass is islands, numbering several thousand if you count every floating crag - and nowhere in Greece will you find yourself more than 96km from the sea. It should come as no surprise that the sea has shaped the Greek imagination, as well as its history. Mainland Greece is a great vertebrate, with the Pindos range reaching from north to south, and continuing, like a tail, through the Peloponnese. The highest of its peaks is Mount Olympus, the seat of the gods, nearly 3,000m (10,000 ft.) above sea level. Eighty percent of the Greek mainland is mountainous, which you will rapidly discover whether you make your way on foot or on wheels.
<b>Name</b>	The origins of the name of Greece are lost in time but many believe that it may derive from an entomology meaning 'old people'. The Greeks themselves do not use the word.
<b>Population</b>	11 million, including 5 million in Athens
<b>Language</b>	Language is usually not a problem for English speakers in Greece, as so much of the population has lived abroad, where English is the primary language. Young people learn it in school, from Anglo-American-dominated pop culture, and in special classes meant to prepare them for the contemporary world of business. Many television programs are also broadcast in their original languages, and American prime-time soaps are very popular, nearly inescapable. Even advertisements have an increasingly high English content. Don't let all this keep you from trying to pick up at least a few words of Greek; your effort will be rewarded by your hosts, who realize how difficult their language is for foreigners and will patiently help you improve your pronunciation and usage.
<b>Currency</b>	The local currency is the Euro (€). €1.00 is approx. \$1.55 CAD. Exchange desks can be found in your hotel. Banks and exchange offices are located throughout the city. Bank hours are Monday to Thursday, 8:00 am to 2:30 pm, Friday, 8:00 am to 2:00 pm, Saturday and Sunday closed. Branches of the National Bank in Athens can be found at Syntagma Square and Omonia Square. They are opened from Monday to Friday, 8:00 am to 6:30 pm and Saturdays, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. ATM's can be found throughout Athens
<b>Tipping</b>	Tipping is discretionary, but customary! Aboard ship: To cover the entire ship's staff we would recommend € 6 per day from each person accommodated in the cabin. Excursion guides/drivers: It is customary to offer a small token and we recommend about € 4 per person/day or so to cover both.

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	Restaurants: 10 to 15% will be added to your bill but may not make its way to the wait staff, so you might wish to leave another 5 to 10% in cash on the table.
<b>Government</b>	Democracy
<b>Documentation</b>	Canadian travellers' passports should be valid for at least six months upon entering Greece.
<b>Time zone</b>	Greece is 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. In reference to North American time zones, it's 7 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time
<b>Health</b>	The public drinking water in Greece is safe to drink, although it can be slightly brackish in some locales near the sea. For that reason, many people prefer the bottled water commonly available at restaurants, hotels, cafes, food stores, and kiosks
<b>Safety tips</b>	Crimes against tourists are not a significant concern in Greece. Athens is probably the safest capital in Europe. Pocket-picking and purse-snatching may be slightly on the rise, especially in heavily touristed areas, but breaking into cars remains rare. Tourists, however, are conspicuous and much more likely to carry valuables, so take normal precautions.

<b>CLIMATE</b>	
<b>General climate</b>	Greece has a generally mild climate, though in the mountainous northern interior the winters are rather harsh and summers brief. Southern Greece enjoys a relatively mild winter, with temperatures averaging around 13°-16°C in Athens. Summers are generally hot and dry, with daytime temperatures rising to 30°-35°C, usually cooled by prevailing north winds (meltemi), especially on the islands, which often cool appreciably in the evenings. And at some point in most summers, usually July, the temperature will rise to over 38°C.
<b>Today's weather</b>	37 C and sunny (11 August, 2007)
<b>Best time to visit</b>	The best time to visit is late April to mid-June, when the wildflowers are in bloom and before summer arrives in force with hordes of tourists, higher prices and high temperatures. The September and first half of October periods are quiet and still warm too.

<b>GETTING THERE</b>	
<b>Flying time</b>	11 hours
<b>Cities - Athens</b>	Birthplace of democracy, capital of Greece, Megalopolis... The cradle of western civilization, Athens is a bustling city that attracts visitors with, among other things, its legendary classical temples; its museums displaying timeless works of art; the flower-filled balconies and Mediterranean streets of the Plaka district; and its crowded, lively taverns.

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	<p>The political, economic and cultural heart of Greece, Athens is located in the southern region of the country. Founded deep in a valley, 7 km from the port of Piraeus, the city developed around the omnipresent hill of Acropolis.</p> <p>The modern city of Athens surrounds the Acropolis. On a rocky outcrop stands the magnificent Ionic temple of Athena Nike, while the Parthenon prominently occupies the highest part of the plateau. The incarnation of Greek genius, the largest ancient Doric temple was dedicated to Athena Parthenos ("virgin") and built by architects Ictinos and Callicrates between 447 and 438 BC. On the north side, on the very site where the goddess defied Poseidon in their conflict over ownership of the city, is the Erechtheion, of Ionic style, famous for its portico of the Caryatids. Of the several theatres of Ancient Athens, the Dionysus still remains. Located south of the Acropolis, this is where the words of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes once resounded. To the west, the restored Theatre of Herodes Atticus (a Roman theatre from the year 161) still presents concerts and shows. East of the Plaka, near the National Garden, visitors can admire the 15 remaining columns of the Olympeion, a monumental temple dedicated to Zeus.</p> <p>The Plaka district, built under Turkish occupation, is the most popular and lively in Athens. Along its sinewy streets, Byzantine churches, taverns, bistro terraces, small, white houses and souvenir shops stand side by side. Farther north, the Plaka leads to Syntagma Square, the largest in the capital.</p> <p>In Greece, the aperitif is taken around 8 or 9 p.m., so in Athens, it is not rare to see people walking into restaurants around 10 p.m. Highly convivial, its regional cuisine is rich in products of the land. Elegant, expensive restaurants are found in the city's western section, towards Kifissia, while in the Plaka, taverns provide both cuisine and folklore. Everywhere in Athens, you will find many cafés that still have an old-fashioned look, as well as bars and nightclubs that attract all types of individuals: young and old, artists and business people. Folklore-lovers shouldn't miss the Philopappos Theatre, between May and September. Another must-see from June to September is the Athens festival.</p>
<b>Distances</b>	Thessaloniki is 516 km north of Athens; Pylos is 317 km south of Athens
<b>Ferries</b>	<p>Ferries are the most common, cheapest, and generally most "authentic" way to visit the islands, though the slow roll of a ferry can be authentically stomach-churning. A wide variety of vessels sail Greek waters -- some huge, sleek, and new, with comfortable TV lounges, discos, and good restaurants; some old and ill-kept, but pleasant enough if you stay on deck.</p> <p>The new Flying Dolphin hydrofoils also serve all the major islands. Undoubtedly faster, they cost almost twice as much as regular ferries, and their schedules are often interrupted by weather conditions.</p>

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<p><b>Trains</b></p>	<p>Greece's railway system covers some 2,500 kilometers, but many of the lines were originally laid down around the turn of the century, which means that train travel can be slow and a bit meandering. Though it is wise to ask how many hours your train trip will last, keep in mind there is a charm to overnight trains and first-class sleeping compartments. Some lines, especially the Athens-Thessaloniki run, have been revamped for express trains, and travel time between Greece's two major cities can be as little as 6 hours. It is a good idea to buy tickets for express trains a few days in advance, however, as these trains are new, comfortable, and very popular.</p> <p>Both the Larissa train station (for trains heading north or abroad) and the Peloponese station (for trains heading south) are located at 31 Theodorou Deliyianni St., near the Larissis metro station.</p>
<p><b>Car Rental</b></p>	<p>There are many rental cars, and almost as much variation in prices. Many cars have a standard shift; if you must have an automatic, make sure in advance that one is available. You are strongly advised to make your reservation before leaving home and well in advance. Always ask if the quoted price includes insurance; many credit cards make the collision-damage waiver unnecessary, but you will find that most rental agencies automatically include this in their rates. You can sometimes save by booking at home before you leave; this is especially advisable in summer. If you are shopping around, let the agents see the number of competitors' brochures you're carrying.</p> <p>Most companies require that the renter be at least 21 years old (25 for some car models). An occasional company won't rent to anyone older than 70 or 75. Definitely inquire beforehand! You must possess a valid Canadian or International Driver's License.</p>
<p><b>Buses</b></p>	<p>Public buses are inexpensive but often overcrowded. Local bus lines vary from place to place, but on most islands the bus stop is in a central location with a posted schedule. Destinations are usually displayed on the front of the bus, but you might have to ask. The conductor will collect your fare after departure.</p> <p>Note that in Athens and other large cities, a bus ticket must be purchased before and validated after boarding. Kiosks usually offer bus tickets as well as schedules. Tickets cost about .5€ (65¢).</p>
<p><b>Taxis</b></p>	<p>Taxi fares begin at approx. 1 euro, and all cabs have meters; taxis also have charts in Greek and English on their dashboard, explaining the charges you can expect to incur for baggage, the airport surcharge (only coming from the airport), rates between midnight and 0500 in the morning (charged at a faster meter rate), holiday surcharges, etc. Rates within all major cities are non-negotiable. Tipping is neither expected nor practiced, though is customary to round off the fare. Getting a cab in Athens on the street is a matter of flagging it down and calling out the area or street you are going to. It is rare to get a cab to yourself during</p>

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	rush-hour, so expect other people to be in the cab or to pick up others heading in the same direction after you are already in. You will still pay the normal fare.
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<b>ACCOMMODATION TYPES</b>	<p>Greece now offers a full spectrum of accommodations ranging from the extravagant to the basic. Within a given locale, of course, not all options are available, but most travellers will find something that appeals to them.</p> <p>One of my personal favourite hotels is in Greece:          White Rocks Hotel &amp; Bungalows (Kefalonia, Ionian Islands; tel. 26710/28-332). For those who appreciate understated elegance, a shady retreat from all that sunshine, a private beach, and quiet but attentive service, this hotel, located a couple of miles outside Argostoli, can be paradise.</p>
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<b>TARGET GROUPS</b>	
<b>Kids</b>	The stunning beaches on the mainland and islands are wonderful for children. It is very easy for kids to meet local children as well in Greece, even if they don't a word in common. And even the most blasé of kids will be impressed with the antiquity and the sites of the ancient temples and ruins of Greece.
<b>Teens</b>	There's plenty of opportunities for water sports at most of the Greek resorts and the nightlife can be exciting even for jaded Canadian teenagers!
<b>Romance</b>	Santorini Caldera (Cyclades): As you approach Santorini by ferry, the whitewashed cliff-top villages of Ia and Fira resemble at first a new dusting of mountain snow. Then the ferry enters the caldera, the cliff walls rise steeply on either side, and you're suddenly enclosed in a fantastic bowl whose sides are formed of red, yellow, and ocher rock and whose surface is the shimmering blue Aegean. Some 3,600 years ago, the center of the island was blown away in a colossal volcanic eruption, leaving behind a roughly circular depression in the sea floor and the crescent-shaped sliver of rock known as Santorini. The best places to view the caldera are the walking path between Fira and Ia, and the cliff-top streets in either of the two towns.
<b>Seniors</b>	Cruising the Greek Islands has to be one of the most gentle, scenic, historical and accessible vacations for Seniors who want to carry on traveling without sacrificing any of the wonders that travel continues to bring.

<b>UNIQUES</b>	The Acropolis is one of a handful of places in the world that is so well known, you may be anxious when you finally get here. Will it be as beautiful as its photographs? Will it be, ever so slightly, a disappointment? Rest assured: The Acropolis does not disappoint.
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	<p>What you want here is time - time to watch the Parthenon's columns appear first beige, then golden, then rose, then stark white in changing light; time to stand on the Belvedere and take in the view over Athens and listen to the muted conversations floating up from the Plaka; time to think of all those who have been here before you...</p>
<b>Surprising</b>	<p>Night of the Full Moon: On the night of the full moon in August, the city of Athens opens up its monuments and archaeological sites to the public for free. Moonlit classical concerts and other events under the stars make for an enchanting midnight stroll through the ancient sites.</p>
<b>History</b>	<p>The history of Greece is simply too immense to even attempt a précis here – it is in many ways the history of the emergence of European culture. But don't let this immensity prevent you from delving into the incredible historical mosaic of ancient Greek civilisations, Roman empire, Byzantine empire, Ottoman Rule and eventual independence again.</p>
<b>Books</b>	<p>Frommer's Greece James Chatto: The Greek for Love – A Memoir of Corfu</p>
<b>1000 Places to see before you die</b>	<p>Crete; Mykonos; Delos; Santorini; Patmos; Rhodes; Symi; The Acropolis Athens national archaeology museum; Delphi; Epidaurus; Monemvassia; Mount Athos; Hydra; Meteora monasteries</p>
<b>Must Sees</b>	<p>The Acropolis (Athens): No matter how many photographs you've seen, nothing can prepare you for watching the light turn the marble of the buildings, still standing after thousands of years, from honey to rose to deep red to stark white. If the crowds get you down, remember how crowded the Acropolis was during religious festivals in antiquity.</p> <p>Nemea (Peloponnese): This gem of a site has it all: a beautifully restored stadium, a handsome museum, and picnic tables with a view of the romantic Doric temple with its three long-standing columns - and several newly restored and re-erected ones. If you're lucky, you may see Nemea's archaeologists at work lovingly reconstructing and re-erecting more columns from the temple's north facade in their ambitious restoration project.</p> <p>Olympia (Peloponnese) &amp; Delphi (Central Greece): Try to visit both Olympia, where the Olympic Games began, and Delphi, home of the Delphic Oracle. That's the only way you'll be able to decide whether you think Olympia, with its massive temples and shady groves of trees, or Delphi, perched on mountain slopes overlooking olive trees and the sea, is the most beautiful ancient site in Greece.</p> <p>Palace of Knossos (Crete): A seemingly unending maze of rooms and levels and stairways and corridors and frescoed walls - the Minoan Palace of Knossos. It can be packed at peak hours, but it still exerts its</p>

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	<p>power if you enter into the spirit of the labyrinth, where King Minos ruled over the richest and most powerful of Minoan cities and, according to legend, his daughter Ariadne helped Theseus kill the Minotaur and escape.</p> <p>Delos (Cyclades): This tiny isle just 3.2km offshore of Mykonos, was considered by the ancient Greeks to be both the geographical and spiritual center of the Cyclades; many considered this the holiest sanctuary in all Greece. The extensive remains here testify to the island's former splendor. From Mount Kinthos (really just a hill, but the island's highest point), you can see many of the Cyclades most days and the whole archipelago on a very clear day. The 3 hours allotted by excursion boats from Mykonos or Tinos are hardly sufficient to explore this vast archaeological treasure.</p> <p>Vergina (Northern Greece): In the brilliantly designed museum here, you can peek into what may have been the tomb of Alexander the Great's father, Philip of Macedon; nearby there are more than 300 burial mounds that stretch for miles across the Macedonian plain.</p> <p>Messene (Peloponnese): This sprawling 4th century B.C. site has the best-preserved ancient fortification walls in Greece, an enormous Sanctuary of Asklepios and a stadium - and views of almost all Messene and Laconia from the summit of Mount Ithomi.</p>
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<b>SPORTS ACTIVITIES</b>	
<b>Golf</b>	There are relatively few golf courses in Greece, although several more are in the planning stages. Those now in existence are in Glifada (along the coast outside Athens), Halkidiki, Corfu, Crete (Elounda), and Rhodes.
<b>Fishing</b>	Opportunities for fishing abound. Contact Amateur Anglers and Maritime Sports Club, Akti Moutsopoulou, 18537 Piraeus (tel. 210/451-5731).
<b>Horse riding</b>	You can go horseback riding in Greece at a fair number of places. Near Athens you'll find the Athletic Riding Club of Ekali (tel. 210/813-5576) and the Hellenic Riding Club in Maroussi (tel. 210/681-2506). Call for directions and reservations. Good facilities are also located near Thessaloniki and on the islands of Corfu, Crete, Rhodes, and Skiathos, with smaller stables elsewhere (inquire at local travel agencies).
<b>Hiking</b>	Greece offers endless opportunities for hiking, trekking, and walking. Greeks themselves are now showing interest in walking for pleasure, and there are a number of well-mapped and even signed walking routes. The Gorge of Samaria in Crete is rightly famous as Europe's longest and deepest gorge which may be hiked 16 km from the

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	mountains to the sea.
<b>Cycling</b>	More and more tourists are traveling in Greece by bicycle. For information, contact the Hellenic Cycling Association, National Velodrome, 15123 Marousi-Athens (tel. 210/689-3403). Trekking Hellas, 7 Filellinon, 10557 Athens (www.trekking.gr), can also assist you in arranging mountain-biking trips. But Greece is not the place to learn how to tour on a bicycle. Greek drivers have little experience in accommodating bicyclists, road shoulders in Greece are often nonexistent and even at best are not generous, and roads are not especially well maintained
<b>Diving</b>	Scuba diving is currently restricted throughout most of Greece because of potential harm to sunken antiquities and the environment. That said, many locales now allow diving under supervision by accredited "schools." On the mainland, these may be found along the coast of Attica, off the Peloponnese peninsula, and off Halkidiki and a few other places in the north. There is also limited diving off the islands of Corfu, Crete, Hydra, Kalimnos, Kefalonia, Mykonos, Paros, Rhodes, Santorini, Skiathos, and Zakynthos

<b>CULTURE</b>	
<b>Arts</b>	One of the great pleasures of visiting Athens is browsing in its small art galleries, getting a sense of the contemporary Greek art scene, and possibly buying something to take home. Stop in at an opening, if you see a notice - most are free to the public. For listings, pick up complimentary copies of the quarterlies Art and the City and The Athens Contemporary Art Map (both in Greek and English); both are available in hotels and galleries
<b>Music</b>	Greece has a long and distinguished - and beautiful - musical tradition that will repay those with inquisitive musical tastes. (Where recordings are available online, their labels and numbers are given here. Recordings of others are probably to be found only in Greece.) Each region - indeed, many an island - has its own variation of traditional folk music
<b>Films</b>	Of the many films made in and about Greece, all more or less readily available on video or DVD. The films of Michael Cacoyannis - from his Euripides trilogy, including Trojan Women and Iphigenia, to his famed Zorba the Greek - are essential viewing. So too is Costa-Gavras's Z, a gripping political thriller inspired by the assassination of Grigorios Lambrakis in 1963. The film version of Nicholas Gage's Eleni manages to be nearly as disturbing as the book. There's also Never on Sunday and Captain Corelli's Mandolin. Finally, for a good laugh and to enjoy the Greek scenery, Jacqueline Bisset and Irene Papas team up to confront High Season on the island of Rhodes. The even sillier Summer Lovers (1982) is set on Santorini. And don't forget, 007 has "done"

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	Greece (For Your Eyes Only), as did Gregory Peck in The Guns of Navarone.										
<b>Museums</b>	<p>If you can only visit one museum during your trip to Athens, it should be the National Archaeological Museum, founded in 1874. Located in the northern part of town in a beautiful neoclassical building, it showcases impressive collections of marble, bronze and ceramic works, as well as treasures of all kinds. North of the National Garden are the Benaki Museum, the Goulandris Museum of Cycladic Art and, farther east, the Byzantine Museum, whose collection of icons is one of the most stunning in the world.</p> <p>Athens's New Museums: In the last few years, a number of new and quite wonderful museums have opened in Athens.</p> <p>The most impressive is Benaki Museum of Islamic Art. The stunning collection, housed in a 19th-century town house, displays Islamic art (ceramics, carpets, woodcarvings, and other objects) that date from the 14th century to the present. Labels are in Greek and English. (At Agio Asomaton and Dipylou, Psirri; tel. 210/367-1000; www.benaki.gr; admission 6€/\$7.80; Mon, Wed, and Fri 9am-5pm, Sat 9am-midnight, Thurs and Sun 9am-3pm; Metro: Monastiraki.)</p> <p>A block away, The Museum of Traditional Pottery has a wide-ranging display of traditional and contemporary Greek pottery, labeled in Greek and English. (At 4-6 Melidoni, Kerameikos; tel. 210/331-8491; Mon, Thurs, and Fri 9am-3pm, Wed 9am-8pm, Sat 10am-3pm, Sun 10am-4pm, Tues 9am-3pm; small cafe.)</p> <p>In nearby Plaka, Frissiras Museum has innovative and excellent special exhibits as well as a permanent collection of 20th-century and later European art, with labels in English. (At 3-7 Moni Asteriou; tel. 210/323-4678; admission 6€/\$7.80; Wed-Thurs 11am-7pm, Fri-Sun 11am-5pm; small cafe; Metro: Akropolis.)</p>										
<b>Festivals</b>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Hellenic Festival</td> <td>Mid June to mid September</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Epidaurus</td> <td>July to August (every weekend)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Philippi &amp; Thassos</td> <td>July to August</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thessaloniki: Dimitria</td> <td>October</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wine Festivals</td> <td>During harvest</td> </tr> </table>	Hellenic Festival	Mid June to mid September	Epidaurus	July to August (every weekend)	Philippi & Thassos	July to August	Thessaloniki: Dimitria	October	Wine Festivals	During harvest
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<b>ATTRACTIONS</b>	
<b>Beaches</b>	<p>Here are just three of the countless gorgeous beaches in Greece...</p> <p>Paradise (Mykonos, Cyclades): Paradise is the quintessential party beach, known for wild revelry that continues through the night. An extensive complex built on the beach includes a bar, taverna, changing rooms, and souvenir shops. This is a place to see and be seen, a place to show off muscles laboriously acquired during the long winter months.</p>

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	<p>Lalaria Beach (Skiathos, Sporades): This gleaming, white-pebble beach boasts vivid aquamarine water and white limestone cliffs with natural arches cut into them by the elements. Lalaria is not nearly as popular nor as accessible as Skiathos's famous Koukounaries, which is one of the reasons it's still gorgeous and pristine.</p> <p>Megalo Seitani (Samos, Northeastern Aegean): Megalo Seitani and its neighbor, Micro Seitani, are situated on the mountainous and remote northwest coast of Samos. There aren't any roads to this part of the island, so the only ways to reach the beaches are by a short boat ride or a rather long (and beautiful) hike. You won't regret taking the trouble, since both beaches are superb: Micro Seitani's crescent of pebbles in a rocky cove, and Megalo Seitani's expanse of pristine sand.</p>
<p><b>Islands</b></p>	<p>Hydra (Saronic Gulf Islands): Old-timers keep waiting for Hydra, with its handsome stone mansions overlooking a picture-postcard harbor, to be "spoiled." After all, even before Mykonos and Santorini, Hydra was one of the first Greek islands to be "discovered." So far, so good: donkeys still outnumber motorcycles, and the day-trippers who blitz the appealing harborside shops leave at twilight. That means you can almost always find the table you want at one of Hydra's pleasant small restaurants.</p> <p>Crete: Whether for its rugged mountains or its countless beaches, its ancient remains or its ultramodern hotels, its layered history or its intense people, Crete cannot be denied. It is not just a distinctive Greek island -- it is a world unto itself.</p> <p>Santorini (Cyclades): This is undoubtedly one of the most spectacular islands in the world. The streets of Fira and Ia are carved into the face of a high cliff, overlooking the circular caldera left by an ancient volcanic eruption and now filled with the deep blue waters of the Aegean. The site of Akrotiri offers a unique glimpse into life in a Minoan city, frozen in time by the eruption 3,600 years ago. Add to this the Fira nightlife scene, and you'll see why this is one of the most popular (and overcrowded) summer vacation spots in the Aegean.</p> <p>Siros (Cyclades): This tiny island has it all: a vivacious, cosmopolitan capital town; thriving beach resorts; and a starkly beautiful region of farming communities, archaeological remains, and remote beaches to the north. Siros is also one of the centers of rembetika, a form of Greek traditional music with roots in Asia Minor; the Fragosiriani, a classic known throughout Greece, was composed by the Sirit Markos Vamvakaris, and you're sure to hear its simple and infectious rhythms</p>

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	<p>many times during your stay here.</p> <p>Rhodes (Dodecanese): The island of Rhodes has everything a visitor could want -- dazzling ancient and medieval ruins, great food, spectacular beaches, and the hottest nightlife outside of Athens -- the one drawback being that everyone knows it.</p> <p>Skyros (Sporades): Winding roads and remote beaches, one main town and a few minor villages, some ancient legends and 20th-century tales: Skyros's charms remain perhaps the most elusive of the four Northern Sporades. But though the island remains a bit difficult to access and still not overstocked with touristy amenities, Skyros also offers both a living local culture and some natural wildness.</p> <p>Corfu (Ionian Islands): Lush vegetation, some still undeveloped interior and unspoiled coast, ancient sites and a 19th-century presence, a dash of Italy and a dose of the cosmopolitan, Corfu is a Greek island like no other. Tourism may be rampant, but Corfu's attractions have survived worse.</p> <p>Hios (Northeastern Aegean): You'd think that an island with such gorgeous beaches, exquisite medieval towns, and remarkable scenery wouldn't remain a secret for long. Despite the qualities that attract a small group of devotees year after year, Hios remains surprisingly quiet. If you like the idea of getting away from the tour buses, being alone on a beach to rival any in the Cyclades, and exploring towns that preserve the contours of medieval life, Hios is for you. Another benefit: the local hospitality hasn't worn thin here, as it has on many of the more heavily toured islands.</p> <p>Sifnos (Cyclades): Sifnos is a green island of ravines, mountaintops, and pristine beaches. Despite its small size (a hardy walker can explore the entire island on foot), Sifnos has numerous attractive small towns which can be used as bases for your explorations. Apollonia, in the central hills, offers elegant small-town civility, with the added benefit of being the hub of an excellent public transportation system. Kastro, on its seaside rock, is the medieval locus of the island, while Platis Yialos is a quiet beach resort. Don't visit in August, when the island is mobbed with vacationing Athenians.</p>
<p><b>Castles/Forts</b></p>	<p>Old fortresses dot the Greek landscape from all periods of Greece's turbulent history, particularly from the days of the Crusades and the Ottoman Empire. Crete and Rhodes are particularly rich in wonderful castle ruins to explore.</p>

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<b>OTHER ACTIVITIES</b>	
<b>Shopping</b>	<p>The Plaka in Athens has pretty much cornered the market on souvenir shops, with T-shirts, reproductions of antiquities (including obscene playing cards, drink coasters, bottle openers, and more), fishermen's sweaters, and jewelry (often not real gold) - enough souvenirs to encircle the globe.</p> <p>There are lots of mass-produced so-called "crafts" for sale in Athens, which is why it's good to know which shops offer quality work. The Center of Hellenic Tradition, 3 Mitropoleos and 36 Pandrossou in the Plaka (tel. 210/321-3023), is a wonderful place for quality traditional Greek art, including icons, pottery, woodcarvings, embroideries, and prints. Best of all, you can take a break from shopping and look at the Acropolis while you have coffee and a snack at the cafe here. While you are on and around Mitropoleos, named after Athens's Metropolitan cathedral, keep an eye out for the shops where craftspeople still turn out decent reproductions of icons for the faithful.</p>
<b>Markets</b>	<p>The Central Market (fish, meat, vegetables, and more) on Athinas is open Monday through Saturday from about 8am to 6pm. You may not want to take advantage of all of the bargain prices, but this is a great place to buy Greek spices, herbs, cheeses, and sweets - and to see how Athens is fed.</p> <p>Every Friday from about 8am until 2pm, Xenokratous in Kolonaki turns into a street market selling flowers, fruits, and vegetables. This is a very different scene from the rowdy turmoil of the Central Market, although it's lively enough. Kolonaki matrons come here with their Filipino servants, who lug their purchases home while the ladies head off for shopping and light lunches (perhaps at fashionable To Kafenio). Every neighborhood has a weekly market; if you want to take in a number of them, ask at your hotel.</p> <p>Monastiraki (Athens) has a famous flea market, which is especially lively on Sunday. Although there's a vast amount of ticky-tacky stuff for sale here, you can uncover real finds, including retro clothes and old copper. Many Athenians furnishing new homes head here to pick up old treasures.</p>
<b>Nightlife</b>	<p>Greeks enjoy their nightlife so much that they take an afternoon nap to rest up for it. The evening often begins with a leisurely volta (stroll); you'll see this in most neighborhoods, including the main drags through the Plaka and Kolonaki Square. Most Greeks don't think of dinner until at least 9pm in winter, 10pm in summer. Around midnight, the party may move on to a club for music and dancing.</p>
<b>CUISINE</b>	
<b>Food</b>	<p>The best known appetizers are taramosalata, a delicious fish roe spread, tzatziki (yogurt with cucumber and garlic) and melitzanosalata</p>

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	<p>(eggplant and garlic dip). Seafood is very popular here and fish can be chosen personally and will be gladly trotted out for inspection. The most popular meat courses include lamb (arnaki), suckling pig (gourounopoulo) and souvlaki, meat kebabs grilled on a skewer. For those with sweet teeth, dessert shops feature pastries, cookies, ice creams, chocolate and sticky buns of flaky filo pastry filled with honey and nuts and known as baklava and kataifi.</p>
<p><b>Wine/Spirits</b></p>	<p>Ouzo, a spirit with a licorice flavour, is the traditional aperitif. Tasty, drinkable wines are found just about everywhere (the rugged Retsina, however, is an acquired taste).</p>
<p><b>Restaurants</b></p>	<p>Some favourites:</p> <p>Daphne's (Athens; tel. 210/322-7971): As well as Pompeiian-style wall frescoes and one of the nicest gardens in Athens, Daphne's offers consistently delicious food. It makes you wonder why other Greek restaurants can't make supposedly simple dishes like eggplant salad or yogurt with quince taste this distinctive. Added to all this are strolling musicians - and the owners and staff are so delightful that you hate to leave, even when you can't eat another prawn with toasted almonds.</p> <p>Vlassis (Athens; tel. 210/646-3060): This small restaurant with a very loyal following (ranging from prominent ambassadors to struggling artists) serves traditional (paradisiako) Greek cooking at its very best. A tempting choice if you have only one night in Athens - but be sure to make a reservation.</p> <p>Varoulko (Athens; tel. 210/522-8400; <a href="http://www.varoulko.gr">www.varoulko.gr</a>): In its new Athens location, with a menu that adds tasty meat dishes to its signature seafood, Varoulko continues to win plaudits. Everything here is so good that many Athenians believe chef/owner Lefteris Lazarou serves not only the finest seafood in Athens, but some of the best food in all of Greece.</p> <p>Nykterida (Chania, Crete; tel. 28210/64-215): We're not saying that the location may influence your taste buds here, but the spectacular views from this restaurant high above Chania and Soudha Bay can definitely make you feel as if you're eating a meal like few others in Greece.</p> <p>Selene (Santorini, Cyclades; tel. 22860/22-249): The best restaurant on an island with lots of good places to eat, Selene is one of the finest restaurants in all Greece. The reason: Owners George and Evelyn Hatzyiannakis constantly experiment with local produce to turn out their own innovative versions of traditional dishes. Inside, the dining room is elegant, while the terrace has a wonderful view over the caldera.</p>

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	<p>Petrino (Kos, Dodecanese; tel. 22420/27-251): When royalty come to Kos, this is where they dine. Housed in an exquisitely restored, two-story, century-old stone (petrino) private residence, this is hands-down the most elegant taverna in Kos, with cuisine to match. This is what Greek home cooking would be if your mother were part divine.</p> <p>Venetian Well (Corfu, Ionian Islands; tel. 26610/44-761): A bit severe in its setting at the edge of a small enclosed square in Corfu town, with no attempt at the picturesque, this restaurant gets by on its more esoteric, international, and delicate menu. It's for those seeking a break from the standard Greek scene.</p>
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<b>MORE INFO</b>	<p>HELLENIC TOURISM ORGANIZATION          1500 DON MILLS ROAD, SUITE 102, TORONTO, ONTARIO M3B 3K4          Tel : (001416) 9682220          Fax :(001416) 9686533          E-mail : grnto.tor@on.aibn.com</p>
<b>Brochures</b>	Transat Holidays Greece, Italy, Spain 2007
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.transatholidays.com">www.transatholidays.com</a> <a href="http://www.gnto.gr">www.gnto.gr</a>

<b>PRIZE PARTNER</b>	Transat's Aegean Splendour – see below
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<b>AIRLINE PRIZE PARTNER</b>	Air Transat
<b>Flight details</b>	<p>Toronto to Athens direct with Air Transat Sundays and Fridays until end October</p> <p>Montreal to Athens direct with Air Transat likewise</p>

<b>TRANSAT HOLIDAYS</b>	<p>Transat Holidays is at the core of the vertical integration process adopted by its parent company, Transat A.T. developing and marketing vacation products as well as flights to destinations in the South and Europe.</p> <p>The company acts as a master craftsman in assembling different components of leisure travel: air transportation, passenger transfers from airport to hotel, accommodation, recreational and cultural activities, meals, cruises, and much more.</p> <p>As an industry leader, Transat Holidays offers departures from many Canadian cities including: St-John's, Halifax, Moncton, Fredericton, Montréal, Québec, Ottawa, Hamilton, Toronto, Thunder Bay, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Vancouver, Victoria, Comox, Abbotsford, Prince George and Kelowna.</p> <p>Transat Holidays' expertise continues to further establish the reputation</p>
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	<p>it has held for almost 20 years as Canada's leading leisure travel company.</p>
<p><b>Transat Holidays' Greece Programs</b></p>	<p>Transat Holidays carries more Canadians to Greece than any other vacation company in Canada with the experience of 20 years of Greece programs  Cruises are 3, 4, 7 and 10 days and can be combined with land stays  Hotel stays are from \$89 per room per night  Car rental from \$193 for 3 days  Customized itineraries – ask travel agent to contact Transat Holidays  Gift certificates – 1800-661-1312  Almost 100 hotels in Greece from mega resorts to family owned hotels  Flights are Fridays and Sundays from Toronto on wide-bodied Airbus 330's  Honeymooners: Sun depts. And special offers</p> <p>The Greece, Italy, Spain brochure is available through Travel Agencies across Canada. The brochure gives information on air only flights operated by Air Transat between May 1 and October 31, 2007 from Toronto or Montreal to Athens. It features 25 package holiday itineraries including 5 new ones, as well as a variety of Greek Island cruises, classical coach tours, nightly hotel rates, and car rentals for travellers who prefer to create customized vacations.</p>
<p><b>Transat Destinations in Greece 2007</b></p>	<p>Athens  Corfu  Corinth  Crete  Delphi  Epidaurus  Glyfada  Ios  Kalamata  Kefalonia   Meteora  Mykonos  Naxos  Olympia  Paros  Patmos  Patras  Rhodes  Santorini  Thessaloniki  Zakynthos</p>

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**Transat Island  
Cruise Itineraries  
2007**

Aegean Odyssey  
Aegean Splendour  
Aegean Vistas  
Apollo Treasures  
Classical Odyssey  
Fabled Places  
Hellenic Discoveries  
Hellenic Harmonies alpha  
Hellenic Harmonies beta  
Hellenic Harmonies delta  
Hellenic Harmonies Gamma  
Hellenic Harmonies kappa  
Hellenic Harmonies lamtha  
Hellenic Harmonies omega  
Hellenic Harmonies sigma  
Hellenic Harmonies yota  
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Islands & Legends  
Mediterranean Adventure  
Mediterranean Delight  
Mediterranean Medley  
Minos Magic

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	<p>Mykonian Gem</p> <p>Mykonian Gold</p> <p>Song of Aphrodite</p>
<p><b>Travel Show Prize Package - Aegean Splendour</b></p>	<p>This is a wonderful introduction to Greece!        8 Days / 7 nights: 4 days Greek Island &amp; Turkey Cruise, 3 days Athens        Take the time in Athens to explore the Acropolis and enjoy the splendid nightlife the Plaka has to offer. Then, visit the popular Greek Islands of Mykonos, Patmos, Rhodes, Crete and Santorini to discover the true splendour of the Aegean.        Day 1: Toronto/Athens - Depart Toronto for Athens        Day 2: Arrive Athens - Transfer to cruiseship (Piraeus) &amp; Mykonos        Day 3: Kusadasi (Turkey) &amp; Patmos        Day 4: Rhodes        Day 5: Crete (Heraklion) &amp; Santorini        Day 6: Athens (Piraeus) - Transfer to your hotel for 3 nights in Athens        Day 8: Athens/Toronto - Transfer to the airport for your flight to Toronto</p>
<p><b>Flights</b></p>	<p>Toronto to Athens direct with Air Transat Sundays and Mondays until end October</p>

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