



SURVIVE

**in Greece
on Holidays**

www.GreekTravelAngels.com

Athens, 2018



Greece is an **amazing country**, with a unique character which is a blend of 5,000 years of non-stop historic presence.

Its **landscape** is extremely diverse: sea, sun, mountains, villages, islands, forests, rivers, all within proportion.

Greeks are very **friendly**, hospitable and sincere.

HOWEVER, you can't help getting the goose bumps when you start planning your trip, with **questions like**: *is it safe, what's the locals' attitude, what do I do with money, what is traffic like etc*

This **“SURVIVAL guide”** will, hopefully, address some of these concerns.

BUT don't forget: if in need, you absolutely require a **knowledgeable local Greek** to help you out.

That's what the thousands of **Greek Travel Angels** are eager to do for you.

Tourists' attitude





Make sure that you **smile often** and honestly. Locals love foreigners who have a pleasant mentality and predisposition. Be polite towards people, even if they might sound a bit abrupt. Due to the financial challenges that the country has been facing, Greeks may not always exhibit their natural cordial attitude, or might become abrupt and irritable at times. However, they still remain loving and accommodating individuals.



Accept how things are, and don't try too much to change them, or be judgmental towards Greeks if they don't react in the orderly and organized manner that you might be accustomed to. When you face an unexpected problem, it's a good practice to just smile, shrug your shoulders and say "ola kala" ("everything's fine"). Be patient and retain a good sense of humor.



Go with the general flow and mood. The mood in Greece over the summer is **relaxed**. People are keen to enjoy the sunshine, the sea, the blue sky, or their coffee, regardless of the problems they may be facing. Take things easy and chill out, that's the general idea behind holidays, anyway. Don't try to change local people to match your expectations.



Don't anticipate things to be just like home, because you will be disappointed. Turn a blind eye and don't expect things to happen in an orderly manner, or on time. Greek tourism professionals are very good at what they do, but the general attitude is far from resembling a construction factory. Things slip through the cracks; things may get forgotten or delayed.



Discover the amazing local life and make new friends with **local people**, without “bringing your home country with you”. Try to have a wonderful stay, with tons of relaxation and enjoyment. Leave your bad habits or your big city mentality behind you, and grasp the feeling of the local land. Try to become part of the locals’ day to day life, and they will be more than happy to welcome you into their own world, with a broad smile on their face.



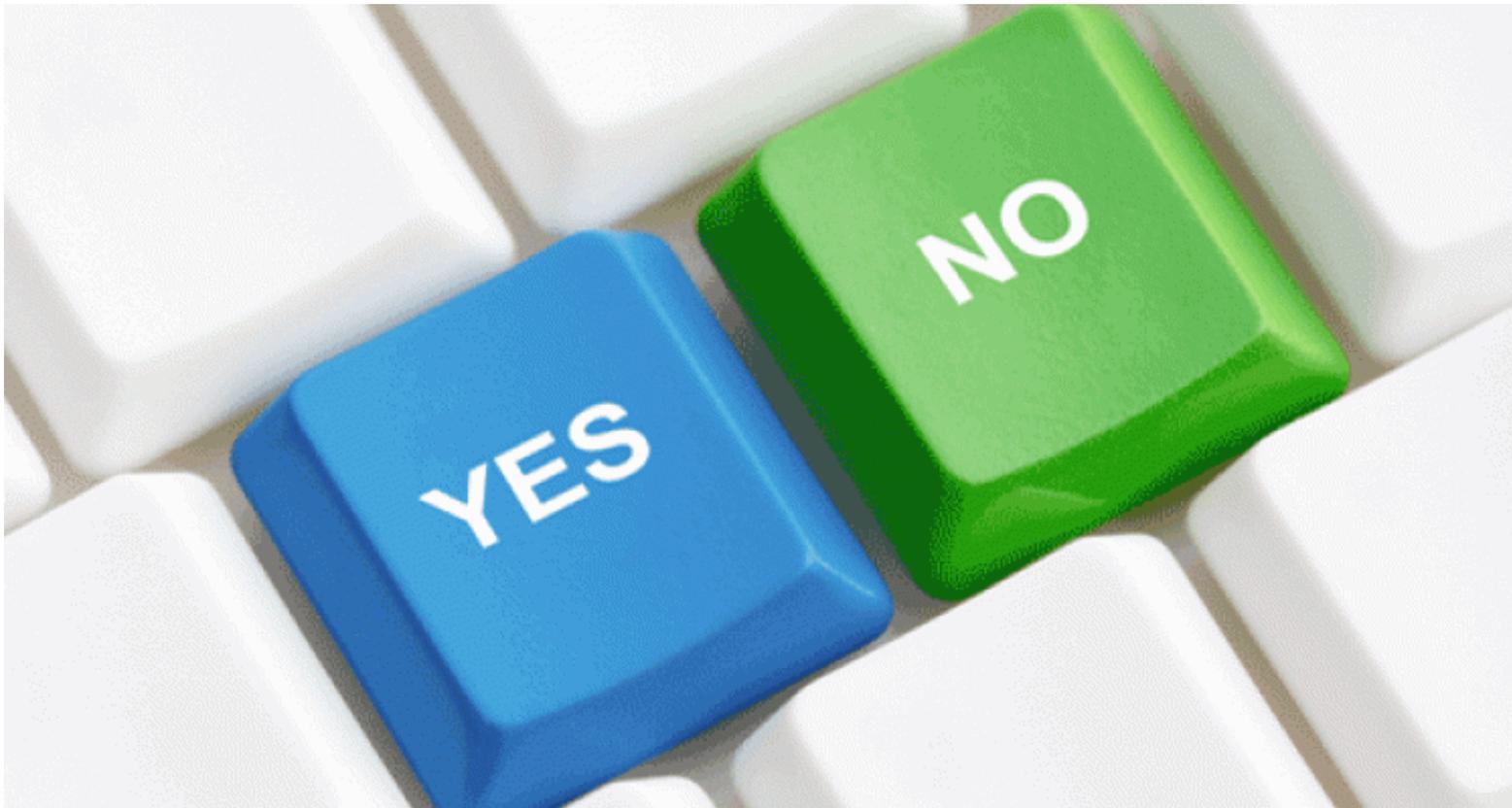
Keep a journal, take notes, and **take lots of photos** as you wander all over the place. Never ever be surprised by anything. The global press treats the Greeks very unfairly and many people in Europe are conditioned to pre-judge them harshly. Spend some time getting to know the Greeks you meet. However, when at fault, or in trouble, scream the loudest! Don't just survive; thrive.



Learn how to **communicate in Greek**. A few words or phrases will take you a long way, and Greeks will be ever so happy to see that you are making the effort to speak their language. You are 100% fine with English, and everyone will do their best to help you if you speak English to them. But learning a couple of Greek words can help you a lot, and allows you to show appreciation as well.

Greeks' attitude





When you get a **“yes” for an answer** from a Greek, don't expect that you're home and dry. Things may turn out quite differently, commitments might change, definite answers might become vague, plans may change, certainties may not be as certain. Chill out and try to adapt to the new circumstances.



Don't expect everything to be done **efficiently, or properly**, or on time - except for food! Complaining will have a slight improvement on efficiency rates, but don't expect miracles. The typical answer that you will be receiving is “E, ti na kanoume” (“well, what can we do”). Don't feel bitter about it.



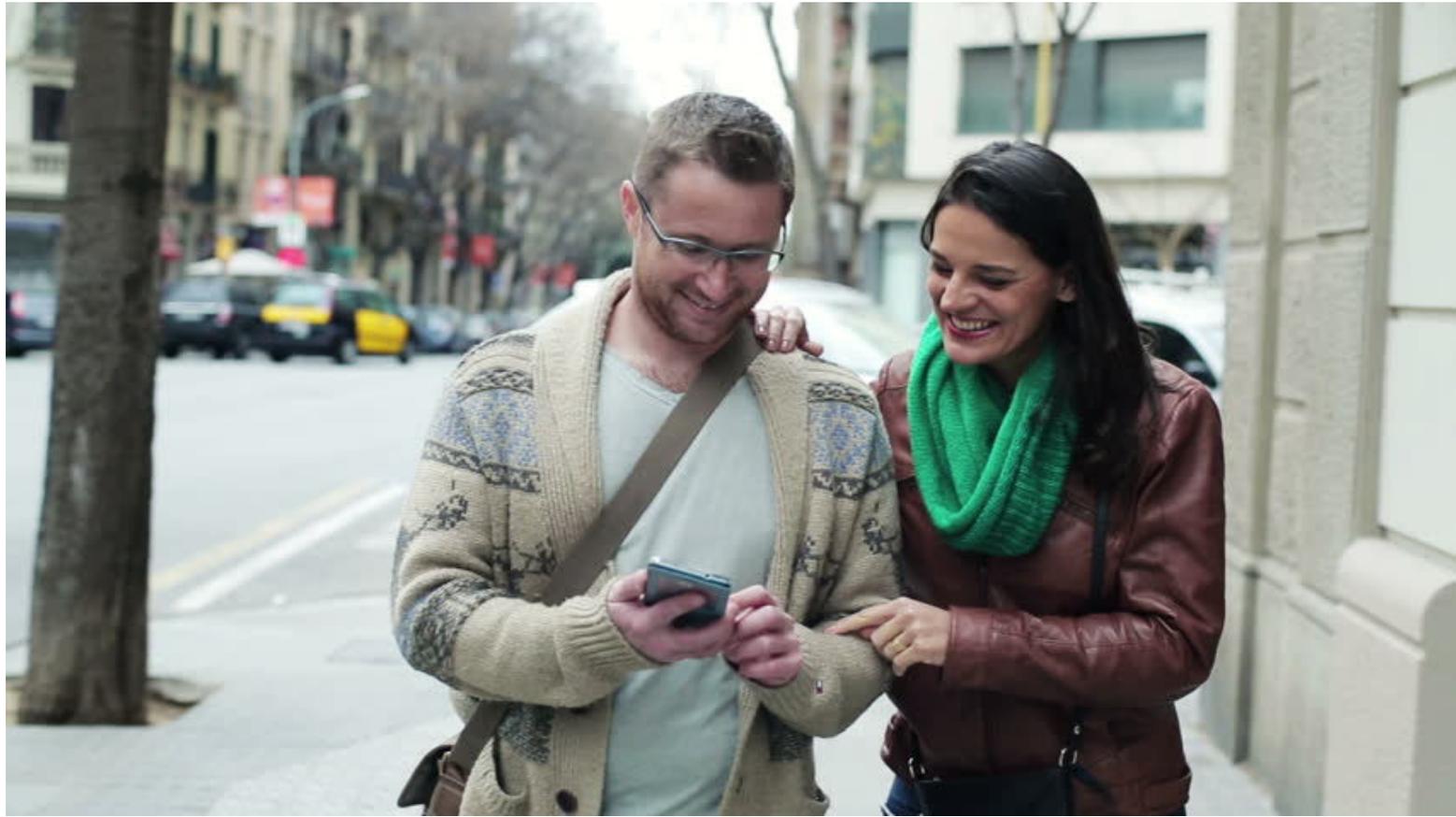
One of the things that you may really hate in Greece is that some taxi drivers might **smoke inside the taxi** during the ride, while keeping their window open. If you complain about it, they may get upset. This phenomenon, however, has significantly diminished nowadays, since it's against the law to smoke indoors.



Don't try to change the Greeks' way of thinking because they always think they know better. You'll only manage to become frustrated, so if you can't beat them you might as well just join them. Act as if you “can't hear or see”. Go along with their argument, and show that you are really interested in their opinion. Express your disagreement tacitly: “I see your point, which is quite interesting; however I would like to put forward a different point of view”.



If in urgent need of food items, forget the taverns. **Knock on some Greek neighbours' door,** instead. They will be more than happy to provide you with food, knowledge, and love.



Hospitality in Greece is like nowhere else, and that's one of the Greeks' stronger trait. It's definitely something that foreign visitors appreciate. Greeks are, most of the time, eager to help you out when you need directions or medical help, or if you are facing day to day life challenges.



Do your best to get through the **time that it takes to get things mended**, especially when the workman forgets to tell you that he's decided not to turn up, or that he's going to be late. This may happen quite often. The Greek attitude towards customer service is not quite the same as in other countries where being punctual is considered a must.



Laws and rules are broadly perceived more as guidelines in day to day life in Greece, except for when they apply to yourself! Greeks would not make laws if they did not expect someone to break them. Everyone is more or less relaxed about “what the law requires”, and this is probably one of the many pluses of holidays in Greece: this sense of freedom. However, don’t take that attitude “to the bank”. Obey the laws, without freaking out if you don’t quite manage to.

Greek Landscape





Stray beyond the stone rubbles of touristy ancient historical sites. Greece is a traveller's paradise. Don't make a fixed itinerary. **Get off the beaten track**, and try and get away from the tourists' crowd. You will find beautiful mountain villages with welcoming people. Spend some time in these remote places, discover the little-known hotspots, learn the locals' stories, explore the local habits and tastes, become a part of the local society.



Greece is full of rivers (calm ones) which are perfect for trying out canoeing. You can also enjoy thousands of hidden sunny beaches, appreciate the **sweet laziness** over a glass of wine or ouzo or local beer, accompanied by local mezedes (delis), and then fall in love while enjoying the amazing sea or sunset.



Greece is huge, with an extreme breadth and wealth of natural and cultural places of interest. Avoid assuming that life only exists in Athens/Attiki. Don't book with large hotels only; prefer small ones or local BnB's in **remote towns** or villages.



Greece is soulful and mellow. It possesses a unique character, which is a blend of 5,000 years of non-stop historic presence which took the Greeks through periods of constructive peace and tremendous turmoil. There is abundant sun and sea, and a prevailing spirit of Orthodox Christianity, coupled with an attitude of eternity and a belief in the extraordinary.



If you choose to stay in an “all inclusive” establishment or are visiting Greece on a cruise ship, try not to fall into the **“isolated from all the surroundings” plague**, which usually entails things like: solely going where your local guide takes you to, not meeting Greeks or other foreigners in that area, not exploring the country, not visiting the nice local little shops and restaurants, not trying the local delis. Stray off on your own, even for a few hours, and absorb the local atmosphere.



If you want to experience Greece, experience it both for what it is today and what it has been for the last 5,000 years. It's mountainous in the mainland and full of beaches at the islands. It is also more Balkan in culture than the other Mediterranean countries. Its **landscape is extremely diverse**, and cannot be characterised by one or two single features. It contains plenty of everything, all within proportion: sea, sun, mountains, villages, forests, rivers. Nothing is huge, nothing is extremely small, and everything is measured by the “size” of the human being. Greece is unusually unique, and almost no one outside the country knows this.

Money





Always ask for the **price prior to purchasing** or consuming something. Though it's not a widespread issue, some greek merchants might tacitly increase the price as soon as they see that you are a foreigner! You're also entitled to get a receipt immediately after the purchase, otherwise it is your legal right to not pay for the goods received.



Almost all trade establishments are required, by law, to **accept debit or credit cards**, so that is a valid payment option for you. However, since most greek merchants operate on thin profit margins, and the banks charge them interest rates on goods purchased, this may result in their margins diminishing alarmingly. Therefore, paying with cash is always far more preferable for them. Carry some coins with you, or small bills, by breaking down big ones at your local bank.



There are a lot of heartbreaking **city beggars** in the Athens streets, or the Metro (subway) system. You could help them every now and then, but stay clear of donating to drug addicts or small children who are often being exploited by adults. If you want to help in a more practical way, buy them a sandwich or give them food you may have taken "paketo" (packed) from a restaurant. That way, help goes to the kids personally, instead of their traffickers who will have no use for it.



Greece is by far one of the best “value for money” places to spend your holidays. However, hold on to your money, do some quick market research to establish the price of things, **don’t pay any ridiculous prices** that a sly merchant might be asking for, and be ready to bargain (or leave the premises) if you believe that you are being overcharged.



Notice what money you're handing over to the cashier in shops, and always **count your change**. People, sadly, might try to take advantage if they think you're a tourist. If the change is not the correct amount, go back to the cashier and tell him/her: "I believe you made a mistake with the change". He will immediately hand over to you any missing amount.



Make sure you have some **money on the side**,
just in case of an emergency.
Do not overspend from day one.



When you get a taxi, make sure that **the taxi driver turns the meter on** as soon as you enter his car. As in every other major holiday destination, you might stumble into a taxi driver who does not turn the meter on and charges whatever overpriced fare he wants! So watch out for unprofessional taxi drivers, or use a reputable taxi app.



If you're renting a car, be aware that **highway tolls** are highly priced, and may mess up your holiday budget. Taking smaller or village roads is a viable alternative, but this will lengthen your journey since some of these roads often pass through small towns, and may not be in the best condition.



Most Greeks who are involved in **financial transactions** with tourists are quite honest. However, always pay attention. There might be someone who is trying to cheat. Nevertheless, this type of persons is the exception, not the rule.

Local life





Explore and learn **authentic greek crafts**, from local craftsmen who are more than eager to offer short courses in subjects like: religious iconography, silversmithing, creating handmade jewellery, greek cuisine, herbal drinks and spices, aromatherapy, producing handmade natural soap, embroidery, greek dancing and singing, wood carving, creating ornamental artifacts, wine and liqueur production, handmade sweets and delis, traditional bakery etc.

At www.GreekTravelAngels.com you will find numerous such top-class & carefully selected **GoGreekforADay short courses**, that will teach you how to become “Greek”.



We all love dogs, but when you come across large **dogs in rural areas** walk away. Sadly they may be either stray and vicious, or farm dogs doing their job guarding sheep. They've got nothing personal against you.



Greece is by far one of the **safest and easiest places to visit** for holidays. People don't use firearms, and walking around is safe even after midnight (just avoid one or two specific areas). Shops or mini-markets stay open until late at night. In case of emergency, there's always someone around to help.



Do a lot of **walking around** in order to appreciate the local vibes of the place. Prefer not to drive. Use sunscreen regularly. Be aware of the traffic! Definitely go swimming. However, don't drink too much ouzo and go swimming afterwards!



Listen to **Greek music**, it has its own rhythm and character. You will absolutely love it. Hang out with Greeks. Appreciate the food, the people, the culture, the climate, the beauty of this country.



Don't drink hard alcohol in clubs or bars which you don't know. It's a pity but there have been cases of bad booze poisoning in some places in Greece: cheap booze made at illegal distilleries, that is then disguised as brand name bottles. They are known as "bombes" (bombs) and are mostly served at cheap bars and tourist clubs in the summer. Not only are you vomiting for more than 12 hours after drinking them, but the side effects may remain for more than a week.



Don't order water in restaurants, because you will have already received water when you came to the table. Usually, that water is bottled and charged for, so if you only require tap water, ask for it. Make sure that you have double-checked that the local tap water is drinkable, especially in the islands. In many food establishments, the bread is charged for, even though not asked for or wanted: it's called "cover charge".



When it comes to food, be prepared to **try everything at least once**. Eat plenty of Greek food! Don't come to Greece and order fish fingers & chips. Try octopus or sea food as a side deli (mezes), accompanied by wine or Ouzo.



Drink local beers, most of them are produced in small micro-breweries and are delicious. Be prepared to try every greek deli or dish, at least once. Eat and drink where the locals frequent, because that's where you will find properly priced food at good quality.

Traffic





Greeks drive on the right side of the road, like all continental Europeans. However, greek drivers are notorious for **bending the law**, when it comes to driving. So, do not assume that, because something is illegal, Greeks will abstain from it.



When driving down a one-way road, you may often encounter motorbikes, or even cars, **driving in the wrong direction**, and coming towards you in an attempt to shorten their overall distance travelled. Don't panic. Slow down a little bit, and keep driving ahead while paying attention to leave some space on your left side, in order to allow the on-coming motorbike driver through. If the on-coming guy is driving a car, and it's not easy for you to accommodate the situation by reversing, or making way for him to drive through, then stand your ground, and insist that he either finds an empty spot, to make way for you to drive through, or that he drives in reverse all the way back. Do not yell at the other driver, stay calm and firm.



Always **obey the traffic lights and signals**, no matter what greek drivers do. Offenders rarely get caught, but if you cause an accident because you did not see a STOP sign (which may have been hidden behind a tree), nobody will listen to an excuse like, “everybody does it, so why not me?”



Greek drivers are impatient, and some may drive aggressively or recklessly. Keep your calm, and neglect the driver behind you, who is flashing his headlights or sounding his horn, in an attempt to bully you to drive faster. Just follow the main traffic flow, and prefer to drive defensively and cautiously, no matter what. If you prefer to drive slowly or cautiously, do not drive on the fast lane.



When on foot, always **look at both directions** when crossing the road. Remember: there is often someone who may be driving the wrong way, or violating a red traffic light, or ignoring a STOP sign.



Be very aware of **motorbikes** whizzing all around you. Their drivers rarely wear protective helmets, so always make space for them to overtake you. Don't bully them. In fact, don't bully anyone.



When approaching a crossroad where priority to cross it is with you (i.e. the other guys have a STOP sign) always slow down and check for the reckless driver, who may be violating his STOP sign and attempting to cross the road ahead of you. “Stop sign” violations are among the top traffic accident causes in Greece. So, even if the law is on your side, you don’t want to end up in hospital. Always be on the look-out. Being right, doesn’t mean being injury-free. When you have the STOP sign, stop and check cautiously towards the direction the crossing traffic is coming from. If it’s clear to move, and before you press the acceleration pedal, always take a quick look in front of you: there is a chance that some pedestrian might be swiftly walking right in front of your car. In general, you may get a feeling that cars, bikes, & pedestrians, are coming at you from all directions. Be extra careful, especially at crossroads.



On **pedestrian crossings**, pedestrians have priority over coming traffic, although greek drivers rarely slow down. Always stop when you see a man on foot walking over a pedestrian crossing, regardless of what other drivers do.

Unfortunately, very few pedestrian crossings have flashing amber lights over them to indicate the exact spot, so be extra careful.



Greeks **park their cars everywhere**, regardless of whether it's allowed to or not. Pavements and pedestrian crossings are considered excellent parking places! This is due to excessive traffic, and non-consistent enforcement of the law. So, be a bit relaxed about where you park, but don't take as many liberties as the Greeks do, especially in large cities. Remember the popular attitude: in Greece, breaking the law is an offence, and more so if you get caught.



If you find yourself involved in an **accident**, do not admit any wrong doing unless it's 100% obvious that it's your fault. Call your car insurance hotline, and they will send someone on the spot to take photos and fill-in the red-tape forms. If there is injury involved, call an ambulance at 166, or the police at 100.



Do NOT drink and drive, no matter what.
If you drink, grab a taxi or public transport,
in order to make your way back home.



Driving on a pedal **bicycle** on busy roads is not very safe. Greek drivers do not have a “cycling in traffic” culture, and they tend to view cyclists as obstacles. Always wear a protective helmet, make use of your horn to let drivers know you are there, and drive on the right side of the street so that cars can speed by you, risk-free.



we sincerely hope
that you thoroughly enjoy
your amazing Greek HOLIDAYS

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