

Greece Fun Facts

1. With an area of 50,949 square miles, Greece is roughly the size of Alabama.
2. The population of Greece is more than 10 million people.
3. Approximately 16.5 million tourists visit Greece each year, more than the country's entire population.
4. Tourism constitutes nearly 16% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
5. Voting is required by law for every citizen who is 18 or older.
6. About 7% of all the marble produced in the world comes from Greece.
7. Greece has more international airports than most countries because so many foreign tourists want to visit.
8. Greece is the world's third leader producer of olives. Some of the olive trees planted in Greece in the thirteenth century are still producing olives.
9. The saying "taking the bull by its horns" comes from the Greek myth of Hercules saving Crete from a raging bull by seizing its horns.
10. Greece has zero navigable rivers because of the mountainous terrain. Nearly 80% of Greece is mountainous.
11. Approximately 98% of the people in Greece are ethnic Greeks. Turks form the largest minority group. Other minorities are Albanians, Macedonians, Bulgarians, Armenians, and gypsies.
12. About 12 million people in the world speak Greek.
13. In the 1950s, only about 30% of Greek adults could read and write. Now, the literacy rate is more than 95%.
14. Athens is one of the oldest cities in Europe and has been continuously inhabited for over 7000 years.
15. Athens is the birthplace of democracy, Western philosophy, the Olympic Games, political science, Western literature, historiography, major mathematical principles, and Western theories of tragedy and comedy.
16. Over 40% of the population lives in the capital Athens.
17. Greece has more than 2000 islands, of which approximately 170 are populated.
18. Greece's largest island is Crete (3,189 sq. miles)
19. Currently, Greek men must serve from one year to 18 months in any branch of the armed forces.
20. Ancient Greece was not a single country like modern Greece. Rather, it was made up of about 1,500 different city-states. Each had its own laws and army, and they often quarreled. Athens was the largest city-state.
21. The life expectancy for Greek females is 82 and 77 for men.
22. Greece is ranked #26 in the world for life expectancy rates. The United States is ranked #49.
23. Greece has more archaeological museums than any other country in the world.
24. Soccer is the national sport of Greece.
25. Retirement homes are rare in Greece. Grandparents usually live with their children's family until they die. Most young people live with their families until they marry.
26. Many Greek structures such as doors, windowsills, furniture, and church domes are painted a turquoise blue, especially in the Cyclades islands. It is used because of an ancient belief that this shade of blue keeps evil away.
27. Feta is the national cheese.
28. In Greece, people celebrate the "name day" of the saint that bears their name rather than their own birthday.

29. The city of Rhodes (the capital of the island of Rhodes) is the most popular location for tourists in Greece. The city is famous for housing one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World: the Colossus of Rhodes.
30. The Olympic Games took place in 776 B.C.
31. Greece has one of the richest varieties of wildlife in Europe, including 116 species of mammals, 18 of amphibians, 59 of reptiles, 240 of bird, and 107 of fish.
32. In Greece, the dead are always buried because the Greek Orthodox Church forbids cremation.
33. Greek has been spoken for more than 3000 years, making it one of the oldest languages in Europe.
34. Greece enjoys more than 250 days of sunshine – or 3000 sunny hours – a year.
35. Greeks do not wave with an open hand. In fact, it is considered an insult to show the palm of the hand with the fingers extended. Greeks wave with the palms closed.
36. Greece has about 9000 miles of coastline, the 10th longest in the world.
37. The Greeks revolutionized the art of sculpture. Instead of stiff poses and blank faces, Greek artists began to carve statues of people that showed both movement and emotion.
38. The Greeks would sacrifice one hundred bulls to Zeus during each Olympics.
39. Greece's official name is the Hellenic Republic. It is also known as Hellas or Hellada.
40. Greece has two major political parties: the Socialists and the Democrats.
41. The Greek government provides free hospitals and other medical services.
42. The Greek flag is blue and white.
43. The nine blue and white stripes stand for the nine syllables of the Greek motto "Eleftheria I Thanatos" or "Freedom or Death."
44. Blue represents Greece's sea and sky
45. White stands for the purity of the struggle of freedom.
46. In the upper left-hand corner is the traditional Greek Orthodox cross.
47. Greek workers get at least one month of paid vacation per year.
48. About 10% of Greek adults are unemployed.
49. Greece's currency was the drachma until it was replaced by the Euro in 2002.
50. The national anthem of Greece has 158 verses.
51. Greece did not achieve independence until 1829.
52. Greece is the leading producer of sea sponges.
53. In Ancient Greece, only the wealthy were able to use live animals for animal sacrifice.
54. In Greece it is customary to give someone a compliment and then spit at them. This is the way to ward off receiving the compliment from the "evil eye."
55. Greece began the first community dump around 500 B.C.
56. It is a law that you cannot wear shoes that could damage historic sites like the Parthenon – think high heels.
57. During the first Olympic Games in 775 B.C., Coroebus, a cook, won the very first sprint race.
58. Greek people rank #8 in regards to the tallest people in the world.
59. There are over 4,000 different kinds of traditional dances throughout the country.
60. The country's main exports include food and beverage products, manufactured goods, oil, chemicals and textiles.
61. They have good trading relationships with Italy, Germany and Bulgaria.
62. Greece's main imports include machinery and automobiles.
63. Greece follows a unitary parliamentary constitutional republic, and they elect a President and a Prime Minister every five years.

64. Whenever a couple gets engaged, it is custom that the future groom ask the bride's father for her hand in marriage. Once the couple is engaged, they both wear wedding rings on their left hands, and once they are married they switch the rings to their right hands.
65. Clean Monday is the first day of Lent each year. During this day families celebrate the Easter season by picnicking in the park and flying kites.
66. Whenever someone brings bad news to the family, members of the family will often spit three times in order to make the misfortune go away.
67. In Greek culture, Tuesday the 13th is considered bad luck whenever it comes around.
68. Located in Greece, Vikos Gorge is one of the deepest gorges in the world. It is 3,600 feet deep.
69. The Greek language has contributed to thousands of English words, some of the common one's are academy, apology, marathon, alphabet and typhoon.
70. Almost 100,000 birds from Asia and northern Europe spend their winters in Greece's wetlands.
71. Greece has the lowest divorce rates in the European Union (EU).
72. Baklava is one of the most popular desserts in Greece. It is made with flaky phyllo dough that is layered with cinnamon-spiced nut filling and bathed in sweet syrup.
73. Pasteli is one of the oldest Greek snacks consumed since ancient times. It is a delicious honey and sesame seed bar that many Greeks around the world still eat today.
74. Spanakopita is another favorite Greek snack. It is a phyllo dough roll or triangle fill with cooked spinach. There are other varieties of this snack as well.
75. The national bird of Greece is the little owl.
76. The national flower of Greece is the laurel branch, Violet.

ATHENS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

1. Athens International Airport services over 21.7 million people a year.
2. This is Greece's busiest airport and it serves at the hub and main base of Aegean Airlines.
3. Aegean Airlines is the national airline of Greece.