

Athens, Greece - OVERVIEW

Updated: May 12, 2014



Country Name Long Form: Hellenic Republic of Athens

Government Type: Parliamentary monarchy

Languages Spoken: Greek, English, French

National Flag



Athens is a Tier III location. Significant security measures are necessary.

	Overall Assessment	Political Violence	Crime	Terrorism	Travel Safety
Athens					
Key: (L) Low – (M) Medium – (H) High – (C)Critical					

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Political Violence is rated at MEDUIM in Athens

Frequent and general demonstrations take place in Athens and Thessaloniki on an almost daily basis. Demonstrations are organized by labor unions, political parties, leftist anti-authoritarian groups, student groups, doctors, school crossing guards, pharmacists, accountants, and many other groups in the public and civilian sectors. Demonstrations are generally directed against the political and economic policies of the government, European Union and International Monetary Fund. These demonstrations vary in size ranging from a few dozens to several thousands.

Although most demonstrations are peaceful, anarchist groups are known to infiltrate demonstrations to create chaos. They often gather in the Athens University area before marching toward the city center area, particularly Syntagma Square, across the Parliament.

TERRORISM

Terrorism is assessed as MEDIUM

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Domestic and international terrorist groups continue to be an ongoing concern. Police continue to pursue members of various terrorist groups through investigations and daily operations while examining the possibility of potential collaboration between various groups.

International terrorism also continues to be a concern.

RULE OF LAW / CORRUPTION

The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2013 gave Athens a score of 40, indicating that the country has moderate levels of corruption. The CPI rates countries by the perceived levels of corruption in the public sector, with the least corrupt receiving a maximum score of 100.

CRIME

Crime is assessed as Medium

Rates of street crimes, such as pickpocketing, purse snatchings, and other crimes of opportunity, continue to be high. Over the last year, there were several reported incidents of pickpocketing and theft, mainly targeting popular tourist areas and passengers on the city Metro system. Many of the incidents involved multiple perpetrators and used various efforts to distract their victims.

Armed violence and random assaults have been on the rise. This increase can be attributed to several factors, including decreased coverage by police due to budget cuts and austerity measures. There have been incidents involving improvised explosive and incendiary devices, as well as small arms weapons ranging from handguns to military-type assault rifles. The majority of such attacks have a specific target of interest (a criminal figure, politician, well-known journalist, wealth industrialist, or banks).

There has also been a significant increase in burglaries of both occupied and unoccupied residences and apartments and theft from attended and unattended vehicles with valuables left in plain sight, especially during the holiday seasons (December and Orthodox Easter). Incidents relating to attempted and committed armed bank robberies have increased steadily over the past several years.

KIDNAPPING

Kidnappings remain a concern for law enforcement authorities. Organized crime is on the rise to include a focus on kidnappings for ransom and trafficking persons and drugs. It is not known if organized crime networks are responsible for many of the kidnapping for ransom schemes or if domestic terrorism groups are committing these crimes in an attempt to extort funds to support ongoing terrorist activities. Police continue to investigate the possibility of collaboration between organized crime networks and domestic terrorist groups.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Sexual assault crimes remain low in relation to the size of the population. Tourist-related sexual assaults continue to be underreported.

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NATURAL DISASTERS

Greece is in a seismically active region and is at risk for earthquakes. Several significant earthquakes have occurred in 2013 (August 14 and October 12) and in Kefalonia on February 3, 2014.

Forest fires in the dry summer months are also a concern. High winds significantly contributed to large areas being ravaged by the blazes. Although most of the devastation occurred in unhabitated forest areas, hundreds of residents sustained severe material losses and the proximity of the fires to Athens was a major concern.

STANDING TRAVEL ADVICE

- People are urged to exercise caution, especially in the immediate vicinity of Omonia Square, from sunset to sunrise.
- During the summer time, wear appropriate clothing, to limit exposure to the sun at the hottest times of the day, use ample sun lotion and drink plenty of liquids to prevent heat stroke and exhaustion.
- Stay in groups, travel in a caravan consisting of two or more vehicles, and stay on the main roads.
- Ensure that someone not traveling with you is aware of your itinerary.
- Avoid hotels that do not have adequate security.
- It is preferable to stay in the main tourist destinations.
- Pay close attention to your surroundings, especially when walking.
- Official taxis are a suitable means of travel in daylight hours in urban areas. It is highly recommended that taxis be arranged through your hotel, or program office. Negotiate the price in advance.
- Women should be especially careful when traveling alone and avoid staying out late without a trusted male escort.
- Make sensible security precautions to mitigate the risk of petty crime, particularly pick pocketing and bag snatching.
- Carry a photocopy of your passport when traveling to avoid losing it in a robbery.
- Do not resist if you are being robbed and avoid eye contact and do not make any sudden movements. Victims have been killed when they resisted attack or refused to give up their money or other valuables.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times and keep a low profile.
- Never leave your belongings unattended.
- Carry bags close to your body and make sure the fasteners are secure.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash or wearing expensive jewelry or valuables.
- Leave all important documents in a safe or safe deposit box at your hotel and only carry certified copies.
- Trust your instincts. If someone or something makes you uneasy, avoid the situation.

Important Contact Details:

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International Dialing Code: +30

International Dialing Prefix: 00

Victims of crime in Greece should contact the following phone numbers for assistance:

POLICE: The local equivalent to the “911” emergency line in Greece is 100

FIRE DEPARTMENT: 199

AMBULANCE: 166

GENERAL EUROPEAN EMERGENCY NUMBER: 112

TOURIST POLICE: 171

Note: Police, ambulance or fire department response may be unreliable in some parts of the country.

TRAVEL & ROAD SAFETY

- Greece has a well-developed infrastructure across the country.
- The road network is extensive and well maintained but highly variable from region to region, with some islands and rural locations suffering from relative underdevelopment.
- Greece has one of the worst road safety records in the European Union, largely due to congested traffic conditions of secondary roads elsewhere.
- The provision of electricity, water and fuel is reliable across the country, and shortages are rarely reported.
- Telecommunication services, including mobile phones and internet coverage, are available in all but the most remote locations in Greece.

RECOMMENDED TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

- No rural travel after dark.
- No deviation from approved travel routes.
- No use of ATMs after dark.
- No photos of military facilities and personnel.

HEALTH

There are many state-run and private hospitals and medical centers in Greece, but standards vary; the best medical staff and treatment are generally found in private hospitals and clinics in the main cities, Athens and Thessaloniki. State-run facilities, especially in more remote areas and on the islands, often lack resources and standards of hygiene and nursing care may be poor.

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- Tap water in Greece is safe to drink but we still recommend that travelers drink bottle water as a precaution.
- Unpasteurized milk should be boiled before consumption, or powdered or tinned milk should be used as an alternative.

The following vaccinations are recommended or required if travelling to Greece:

- Hepatitis A (recommended for travelers going to rural areas)
- Hepatitis B (recommended)
- Yellow Fever (required for travelers arriving from a country where yellow fever is present)

SIGNIFICANT DISEASES

- **Diarrhea** – A common issue with travelers that is caused by bacteria, viruses or parasites. One of the most common causes is a bacterium known as E.coli, which is transmitted by ingesting contaminated food and liquids.
- **Tick-borne encephalitis** – A viral infection of the central nervous system that is spread by Ixodes ticks. It is a risk for travelers visiting rural and forested areas in the spring and summer.

It is also important to ensure that routine vaccinations are up to date for diseases including influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus.

HOSPITALS – Greece

Athens General Clinic
15M Geroulannou
Athens
115 24
Tel: +30 210 692 1484
Fax: +30 210 692 1408

IASO General Hospital
264 Mesogeion Ave
Holargos, Athens
15562
Tel: +30 210 618 4000
Fax: +30 210 618 4158

US EMBASSY – CONSULATE LOCATIONS

The US Embassy in Greece

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91 Vasilisis Sophias Avenue

Athens

Tel: +30 210 721 2951

Fax: +30 210 645 6282

Email: AthensAmEmb@state.gov

Website: <http://athens.usembassy.gov>

USF INTERNATIONAL HOTLINE

USF 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 813-317-5815

AXA Assistance 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 1-877-577-9504 / +1-203-399-5130 (Call collect from abroad)

ASSIST ID #: GLMN 04983932. <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/resources/>

* Information derived from CIA World Fact Book, US Department of State, OSAC, and Travel Guard. This travel overview summarizes some of the most important concerns; however, it does not negate the need for detailed trip planning.