

Greetings Greece Travelers!

This letter will provide some insight into what to pack, what you'll experience on the cruise, and little things you should know to enhance your travel to Greece.

There's a lot of information here over a wide range of topics. Please read it over as soon as you can.

Airport Check in

Please check in for your flight at least 2 hours prior to flight time. I always recommend an early check in for a trip like this. You'll need to have your passport and confirmation/ticket number for your flight. It's a good time now to verify that your passport has 3 months validity left after your return home. If not, your passport must be renewed.

Remember your passport

Make a couple of photocopies to place in your baggage and another with a friend at home. If lost or stolen, passports are much easier to replace if you have a facsimile copy. Take a picture of the signature page as a backup.

No visas are required for Italy (for US or Canadian Citizens), but your passport must have at least 3 months validity remaining from the date you depart Greece for home.

The visa requirement for US visitors to Europe has been delayed once again. All you need is your passport. **Check your passport expiration date today.**

Dining aboard (please respond)

The cruise includes two dinners, which are served the first and last nights aboard. There are 5 lunches that are included, served on day 2,3,4,5, and 6. Here's the cruise line blub about accommodating food issues:

[Special arrangements can be made for diabetic, gluten-free, lactose-free, vegetarian and vegan meals. We ask you to please submit special health requirements in writing 15 days prior to embarkation.](#)

Athens

Most of you are going to Athens either before or after the cruise. Athens has a subway system that is relatively easy to use. There is a station from the airport that takes you into the city center. It takes a while, though, a little over twice the time that at car would take. It's only about \$2 for the ticket, though, as opposed to \$60-\$70 for a taxi or transfer company.

Here is the website for the Athens Urban Rail Transport. You'll find a trip planner that will provide you with a schedule and fare between points.

<https://www.stasy.gr/en/>

I do not suggest hailing a cab on the street and they are known for ripping tourists off. Use the Uber app, or prebook with a transfer company.

The Ship

I encourage you to check out the ship in advance using the link above to get a little more familiar with it in advance of our boarding. Here is a link to the [ship](#) and a [video](#) that should get you a little jazzed for the experience.

- Wi-fi** Yes, you'll be able to connect to the outside world. It's a marine satellite system, so probably a little slower than you might be used to. You'll find the best connection when we're stopped and/or when your other passengers aren't competing for bandwidth.
- Pool** There was talk of adding a lap pool, but it appears that that change was not made with the refit. There is a jacuzzi spa in the aft portion of the ship.
- Dining** Breakfast is included each morning. Dinners will be served the first night and the last night of the cruise. Lunches are included day 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.
- Laundry** There is laundry available on board for a fee
- Climate** The ship is air conditioned
- Telephone** I assume that most of you will bring a phone. See the section below that discusses phone plans and calling.
- Smoking** Smoking is not permitted anywhere on board.

24-hour clock

Get used to using the 24-hour clock. Most of Europe works this way. 11:30 pm is noted as 23:30. This is especially important when catching any sort of scheduled transportation. Add 12 to PM times to come up with the correct number. Two PM becomes 14:00. Five AM is 05:00.

Weather

Late April weather typically sees average temps from 57-70 degrees. Swimming is an option, but water temperatures in late April range between 63-68°F. Average rainfall for late April/early May is about 1.5 inches.

I suggest checking Accuweather.com or Weather.com just before you pack for the most current forecast.

Suggested Dress

There is no established dress code for this tour. It's entirely up to you. I've spent some time in various islands in Greece and never felt like I was under dressed. This only exception to this rule is if you visit a church while touring. They prefer that knees and shoulders are covered.

There is absolutely no reason to pack any formal wear. Be comfortable. Because of cool evenings, I suggest a layered approach. Cool mornings, warming in the afternoon. I have a shell that blocks wind and rain which will be in my suitcase as I arrive in Athens. I may never take it out, but it's there if I need it.

Morning tours may be a bit chilly, with warming as the day goes on. We may also experience some precipitation along the way. Layer up in the morning if it's chilly. Remove layers as the day progresses. Bring a lightweight raincoat and/or a collapsible umbrella with you.

Be certain to bring comfortable walking shoes. Break them in before the trip. Cobbled streets and uneven surfaces are common.

We've got daylight hours to spare during our time in Greece with sunrise about 6:30 AM and sunset occurring a little after 8:00 PM.

Speaking Greek?

Greece has been entertaining tourists from all over the world for thousands of years. Like many touristed destinations, you'll find that English is a common fallback. Still, it's always respectful and fun to greet the locals in their native tongue.

I've included a 1-page cheat sheet words and phrases that you'd expect to use on the tour. You may also want to consider a printed translation guide available at book stores or online. Google Translate, Microsoft Translator are but two free apps that you can download to your mobile device. Both have the unique feature of translating photographed text. This comes in handy if you want to avoid some internal organ as an entrée.

Shipboard Account

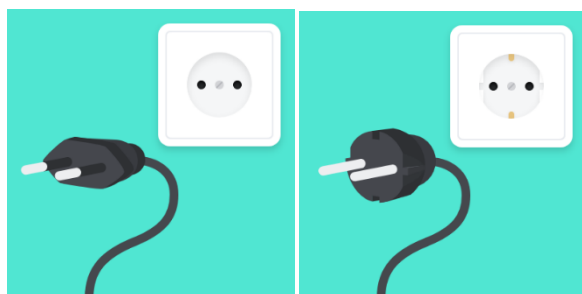
The currency on board is the Euro. You'll be asked to register a credit card on arrival so that you can charge items throughout the week. You'll settle the account with cash or card before disembarkation.

Electrical plugs and adaptors

On board, the outlets available are 110 VAC and/or 220 VAC at 50 Hz, most vessel areas and cabins feature European and US type plugs. Additionally, all Elysium cabins are fitted with direct USB power supply outlets.

If you are staying longer in Greece, you will need to bring C and F plugs. See the diagrams below.

You will need an adaptor and convertor for most US manufactured electrical devices that you take. The convertor changes the voltage, and adaptor allows you to plug it in. US Voltage is 110-120, and Europe runs on 220-240 volts. Battery chargers, curling irons, hair dryers are among these items. You can buy adapter/convertor kits at most drug stores. They come with many adaptors. There is a wide range of plug types. You will need to use a C or F type plug, which are similar to the F.



Type C

Type F

Your computer and/or smart phone charger, if you bring one, should have already come equipped with a transformer/convertor in the cord. Check the voltage requirements on the transformer portion of the power cord. If it comes with a

transformer in the cord, you will just need a plug adapter, not a current convertor.

Adaptors/convertors are available at travel stores, Target, Amazon, etc.

Telephones

Call your provider to see what they recommend for phone coverage overseas. Each year it seems that US carriers become more competitive with coverage plans for Europe.

If your current phone isn't equipped to work in Europe, one of the most affordable options is to buy a simple phone over there with pre-purchased minutes. There are many local phone stores in Europe that will sell inexpensive phones with preloaded minutes if you need to have the means to call home. An inexpensive smartphone preloaded with 300 minutes will probably cost you less than \$100.

Whatsapp

This is the app most widely used to communicate in Europe and elsewhere. It's sponsored by Meta (Face Book) and is free. It's important that you have an international data plan for texting. Otherwise, you will only receive and send messages when you're tapped into Wi-Fi. If you're not getting messages with the app in real time, the benefits are largely lost. Contact your carrier to get a data to see about a data plan.

Calls are free using the app. The quality can sometimes be sketchy in terms of quality when you're falling back on 5G transmission. It uses a VOIP technology so that you sometimes get some echo. Making your call while on Wi-Fi can solve that problem.

I would like you all to download this app if you're not already using it. Send a text to me, using the app, at 425 417 3322 (with your name, please) so that I can add you to the Greek Whatsapp group. If you're touring the first week (April 25-May 2, you are Elysium1. Second week guests (May 2-9), you are Elysium2.

Any changes to schedule during the week will be announced and posted to the Whatsapp group. It's a great tool provided everyone uses it.

Currency

The Euro has been the official currency in Greece since 2001. The dollar has taken a beating the last few months, and right now, you should expect that it will take about \$1.10 to purchase one euro. I'm hoping it swings back the other way over the next few weeks to \$1.05, where it's been pegged at the past year or so.

Bear in mind that these are the rates at which banks buy from other banks. The Dollar moves up and down a few pegs in a week's time, but has been mostly stable the past month or so.

Spending overseas

The ATM or Bancomat is the best way to obtain cash in Greece. They are easy to find along the route. Plan on a trip to the ATM every other day to withdraw Euro. You get the best exchange rate and won't have to worry about whether a vendor will accept a credit card.

Credit cards give you a fairly good exchange rate and most card offer consumer protection on your purchase. You also have a record of your purchase. Some bank cards charge 1-2% for purchases made in foreign currency, which offsets the beneficial rate somewhat. Chase Bank and a few others offer cards that do not charge the foreign exchange fee. Check with your bank to see about foreign currency fees. Make sure you keep your receipts.

I have found that Visa cards seem to have the widest acceptance, followed by Mastercard. It is sometimes difficult to get a vendor to accept American Express, perhaps because of their fee structure. Most smaller shops will not want to accept your card. They get hit with fees that make cash a much more attractive alternative for them.

Bringing US Currency and hoping to exchange notes is a mistake. Banks keep shorter hours. Some don't offer foreign exchange, and many others won't like the condition of the notes you want to change. It certainly couldn't hurt to bring some US Dollars (new bills, \$50 or \$100 denomination) to use as a back up in case your card gets compromised or your banks security department locks it down.

You should be able to order some Euros from your bank if you want to arrive there with some (though really not necessary). There is usually a fee and you have to allow time for your bank to secure the currency. It's easiest just to hit the ATM at the airport or the nearest one to your destination. At each ATM Stop, get enough cash to last you for a couple days. **Please note that airport and rail station ATM machines charge a higher fee. The last note related to ATMs is to use one that's associated with a bank. The "stand-alone" machines can charge more. Euronet machines are a rip off and will charge a higher exchange and more fees. Avoid them.**

Traveler's checks are a thing of the past. They are a distant third to Cash (ATM), followed by credit card.

My bank (chase) no longer wants me to notify them of overseas card usage. You may want to check with your bank to see what their preferences are. Be prepared to have a card stop working while you're there. Bank loss management departments now find it easier to simply shut down your account at the first sign of irregularity than to manage individual travelers. Be aware that your credit card may be suspended with overseas use. If generally takes a call to your bank to rectify the problem. **You should be sure to get the toll-free international number for your bank in the event of an over-reaching security algorithm at your bank.**

Another Note: I have a wallet that is **RFID protected**. Some credit and debit cards can be read remotely using a portable reader. Add a level of protection by purchasing RFID sleeves for your cards. You can also find RFID wallets online.

Packing your bags

There are a few excellent websites dedicated to the art of packing for a trip. I have reproduced some of that information here, but you may want to visit some

of these sites yourself. The links are www.oratory.com/travel, and <https://happytowander.com/suitcase-packing-tips/>. Please do what you can to reduce the size of your bag and remember that laundry is available on board

Make sure you have a bag with wheels. Don't take too much.

Laundry

Laundry is available on board for a fee.

Security/Safety

There is very little violent crime toward tourists in Greece. There is, however, a great deal of pickpocketing and scams in which tourists are a prime target.

Be particularly aware of your belongings and surroundings in crowded places. Markets, churches, restaurants are places where a lack of attention can lead to a snag in your holiday fun.

Take a photo of your passport with your phone. It's also a good idea to photocopy the data page and zip it into a suitcase pocket. Leave a copy with a friend or relative that is able to fax or email that copy should you need it. It's much easier to replace a lost or stolen passport if you have a facsimile to present.

Rick Steves and people that have used them, swear by a money belt. I've always found them to be somewhat uncomfortable, but you may want to give it a try. Please! No wallets in back pockets! Purses and backpacks should always be zipped closed and held in front of you in crowded situations. See the section on RFID protection under Banking.

Buddy up! If you're going out, don't go alone. There is safety in numbers.

Each cruise cabin has a personal safe for guest use.

Suggested Gratuities

The cruise line offers this from their FAQ page:

Tipping remains at the discretion of our guests. Gratuities for the Elysium range between 100-200 Euros per person.

Taxis are generally offered an extra 1-2 euro in the city. If you get help with your bags and you have an exceptional driver, then 5% is a nice addition.

Hotel porters-generally 1 € per bag.

I generally tip a guide for a ½ day tour €5. A little more if they were exceptional.

Restaurant servers are tipped 5% to 10%. If the service or meal was bad, don't tip.

Motion issues on board

The Elysium is a relatively small ship and may be prone to motion, especially if the wind is up. The Aegean is largely sheltered, but it's best to take precautions. If you know you have motion issues, stock up on the patch, pills, magnets, acupuncture, spells, or whatever works best for you. Best to be proactive than try to beat it after.

Swim gear

Bring it! If it's hot (or even warm), we will be making a series of swim stops en-route. Unlike our Croatia ship, it is VERBOTEN to jump off the top of Elysium.

Drinks

There is a full-service bar aboard. Wine and cocktails are served for a charge at meals and during our cruising time. You are welcome to bring outside wine aboard, with a €20 corkage fee per bottle.

Arrival/Departure at the ship

Arriving Athens

- The subway is an option for budget minded travelers.
- Uber app will work to call obtain a taxi. You pay through the app, which eliminates the possibility of overcharging. This option will cost less than \$60 for two people and bags. I prefer this method over the transfer company reservation because of potential flight delays.
- Car service such as [Welcome Pick Ups](#). Book your car in advance. In practice they monitor your flight time and will know if you're on time or arriving late.

- You can board the ship anytime after 1:00 PM. We depart at 4:00 PM.

Arriving Santorini

- No subway in Santorini, but they do have a pretty good local bus service. I'm told that Uber works in Santorini with their taxi network, but I have not been able to confirm this.
- Taxi estimate from JTR Airport to the Athinios Ferry dock is \$38 for two people. Slightly less going to Fira Town. We depart at 4:00. You may board any time after 1:00 PM.

Departing Athens

- Uber is my suggestion from Athens hotels to the airport. The pier in Lavrio is somewhat remote, so I suggest that you book a car from the ship into town or back to the airport. Once again, Welcome Pick Ups has a good reputation.

Departing Santorini

- It's a small island. If you're staying over in Santorini after the cruise, have the hotel call a taxi they trust. If you're coming from the ferry terminal to make a flight from JTR Airport, it's suggested that you book a car with the aforementioned Welcome Pick Ups. We are to arrive on May 2nd at 6:00 AM. As previously mentioned, we will be docked. Arrange your pick up for 6:30 for morning flights. It's only about 20 minutes from the dock to airport check in.

Docking vs Anchor/Tender

The ideal situation is to be docked at the pier for easy access. There are some ports where docking is not possible. If we must anchor away from the port, the ship provides a tender service using their zodiac rafts. The last page of this shows each port and the anchor/docking situation.

Please note that there is a change from the information that I sent last week. In Santorini, we are now **DOCKED** at the Athinios Ferry Terminal. The ship will arrive

there at the end of the first cruise at 6:00 AM to accommodate guests flying from Santorini to Athens or connecting hubs.

To get around Santorini by bus, which is cheap and convenient, I suggest you watch this video. <https://santorinidave.com/santorini-buses>

Athens Transfer

I advise not using Transfeero for your transportation. I have had two issues with them personally, and the internet is littered with similar stories.

Athens to Lavrio Port

This will cost about \$62 for two passengers with a large bag each from the airport to the port. If you're starting at a hotel in the city, add about another 25%.

Lavrio Port to Athens Airport or Athens City

Plan on about \$60 for a ride for 2 guests and 2 bags to the air

Traveler Name list

I am often asked about publishing a guest list of participants. Given security and privacy issues, I don't generally send guest name lists in advance of travel. Using the Whatsapp phone/text program will provide you with contact details for other tour members. The same goes for the end of the tour. If you want to share contact information with other travelers, Whatsapp is the best way.

Friday, April 25th

Depart Lavrio	4:00PM	(docked)
Arrive Kea	5:30PM	(80% probability docked)
Depart Kea*	11:00 PM	

Saturday, April 26th

Arrive Syros	6:00AM	(docked)
Depart Syros	5:00AM +1	

Sunday, April 27th

Arrive Delos	8:00AM	(anchored)
Depart Delos	1:00PM	

Sunday, April 27th

Arrive Mykonos 2:00PM (anchored)
 Depart Mykonos 6:00AM +1

Monday, April 28th

Arrive Naxos 8:30AM (docked)
 Depart Naxos 6:00AM +1

Tuesday, April 29th

Arrive Paros 8:00AM (docked)
 Depart Paros 5:00AM +1

Wednesday, April 30th

Arrive Sifnos 8:00AM (50% possibility docked)
 Depart Sifnos 3:00PM

Wednesday, April 30th

Arrive Milos 6:00PM (anchored)
 Depart Milos 6:00AM +1

Thursday, May 1st

Arrive Folegandros 10:00AM (docked)
 Depart Folegandros 3:00 AM +1

Friday, May 2nd

Arrive Santorini 6:00AM (anchored)
 Depart Santorini** 4:00PM

Friday, May 2nd

Arrive Folegandros 7:00 PM (docked)
 Depart Folegandros 12:00AM

Saturday, May 3rd

Arrive Milos 5:00AM (anchored)
 Depart Milos 3:00PM

Saturday, May 3rd

Arrive Sifnos 6:00PM (50% probability docked)
 Depart Sifnos 5:00AM +1

Sunday, May 4th

Arrive Paros	6:30 AM	(docked)
Depart Paros	6:00AM	+1

Monday, May 5th

Arrive Naxos	8:00AM	(docked)
Depart Naxos	6:00AM	+1

Tuesday, May 6th

Arrive Mykonos	9:00AM	(anchored)
Depart Mykonos	7:00 AM	+1

Wednesday, May 7th

Arrive Delos	8:00AM	(anchored)
Depart Delos	12:00 PM	

Wednesday, May 7th

Arrive Syros	3:00PM	(docked)
Depart Syros	3:00PM	+1

Thursday, May 8th

Arrive Kea	7:00 PM	(80% possibility docked)
Depart Kea	12:00 AM	+1

Friday, May 9th

Arrive Lavrio (Athens)	2:00 AM	(docked)
Disembark by	9:00AM	

* If you miss the April 25th departure, there is a ferry departing from Lavrio to Kea at 5:00 PM. If you're really late, there is a ferry departing from Piraeus Port to Syros early Saturday morning.

**If you miss the May 2nd departure from Santorini, you won't be able to catch up to the ship until late on the 3rd using a ferry from Thira to Milos. There are no options the afternoon of the 2nd to Folegandros.

Greek phrase primer

The Alphabet

Capital	Lower	English Sounds	N	v	n in no
A	α	a in father	Ξ	ξ	x in ax
B	β	v in Victor	Ο	ο	o in only
Γ	γ	y in yes/w in wad	Π	π	p in poor
Δ	δ	th in this	Ρ	ρ	r in rain
E	ε	e in bet	Σ	σ	s in see
Z	ζ	z in zebra	Τ	τ	t in top
H	η	ee in beet	Υ	υ	ee in beet
Θ	θ	th in think	Φ	φ	f in Frank
I	ι	ee in beet	Χ	χ	h in hair
K	κ	c in car	Ψ	ψ	ps in lips
Λ	λ	l in lemon	Ω	ω	o in only
M	μ	m in mother			

Handy phrases

In English	In Greek	Pronunciation
How are you?	Τι κανείς	Ti kaneís
Hello / Goodbye	Γειά σου	Geiá sou
Nice to meet you!	Χάρηκα πολύ	Chárika polý
Good morning	Καλημέρα	Kaliméra
Good afternoon/evening	Καλό απόγευμα	Kaló apógevma
Goodnight	Καληνυχτα	Kalinychta
Thank you	Ευχαριστώ	Efcharistó
You are welcome / please	Παρακαλώ	Parakaló
See you	Τα λέμε	Ta léme
Sorry! / Excuse me!	Συγγνώμη	Sygnómi
I'm doing well, and you?	Είμαι καλά, εσύ?	Eímai kalá, esý?
Yes	Ναί	Naí
No	Όχι	Óchi
I don't understand	Δεν καταλαβαίνω	Den katalavaíno
How much is...?	Πόσο κάνει...	Póso káni...