

Greece

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Acropolis** Savour your first glimpse of the most important monument of the ancient world, in Athens (p521)
- **Rhodes** Meander the atmospheric streets of the largest inhabited medieval town in Europe (p547)
- **Olympia** Dash off a quick 100m at the evocative birthplace of the games (p534)
- **Santorini** Experience the dramatic volcanic caldera, arguably the most spectacular Greek dot on the map (p542)
- **Best Journey** Explore the Peloponnese: the ancient sites of Corinth (p531), Mycenae (p532) and Epidavros (p530), pretty Venetian Nafplio (p531), magical Byzantine Mystras (p532) and walled Monemvasia (p532)
- **Off-the-beaten track** Party with the locals in Thessaloniki, Greece's second city, but for many its best and its hippest (p535)

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 131,900 sq km
- **ATMs** Widespread
- **Budget** €50 to €60 per day
- **Capital** Athens
- **Famous for** ancient ruins, beautiful beaches
- **Language** Greek
- **Money** euro (€); A\$1 = €0.60; CA\$1 = €0.68; ¥100 = €0.66; NZ\$1 = €0.51; UK£1 = €1.47; US\$1 = €0.78
- **Phrases** *yasas* (hello), *andio* (goodbye), *parakalo* (please), *efharisto* (thank you), *ne* (yes), *ohi* (no)
- **Population** 11 million
- **Telephone codes** country code ☎ 30; international access code ☎ 00
- **Time** GMT/UTC + 2
- **Visas** most travellers don't need a visa



TRAVEL HINTS

Don't leave home without strong sunglasses in summer and paperbacks for long ferry rides. If you're heading to northern and central Greece, a phrasebook is essential.

ROAMING GREECE

After exploring Athens, travel to the Peloponnese for the ancient sites of Corinth, Mycenae and Olympia, Byzantine Mystras, pretty Nafplio, romantic Monemvasia and Mycenae. Catch a ferry from Gythio to Crete, and after exploring Crete, island hop through the Dodecanese (medieval Rhodes is a must) and Cyclades (don't miss Santorini and Mykonos) before returning to Athens.

There *is* something magical about Greece. The combination of the ancient archaeological sites that vividly recall Greece's rich past and the magnetism of over 1400 islands harbouring breathtaking beaches that guarantee you a deep tan while soaking up a chilled-out vibe is alluring. And also makes for guilt-free travel – a slice of history served alongside a healthy dose of hedonism.

GREECE



There's plenty to occupy travellers with more vigorous activities in mind, from trekking, hiking and windsurfing to bungy jumping. No matter what your aspirations, you can't wander far without stumbling across a broken column, a crumbling bastion or a tiny Byzantine church, each perhaps neglected and forgotten but retaining an aura of their former glory.

Perhaps, though, the true allure of Greece is due to less tangible attributes – the dazzling clarity of light, the floral aromas that permeate the air, the spirit of places – for there is hardly a grove, mountain or stream that is not sacred to a deity.

Among the myriad attractions, travellers to Greece inevitably end up with a favourite site they long to return to – get out there and find yours.

HISTORY

With its strategic position at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Greece has had a long and turbulent history. During the Bronze Age – 3000 to 1200 BC in Greece – the advanced Cycladic, Minoan and Mycenaean civilisations flourished. The Dorians, who replaced the Mycenaeans, introduced Greece to the Iron Age. Next was the Dark Ages, a 400-year period about which very little is known. Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* were composed during this period.

By 800 BC Greece was experiencing a cultural and military revival with the evolution of the powerful city-states of Athens and Sparta. The unified Greeks repelled the Persians at Marathon (490 BC) and Salamis (480 BC). This was followed by the classical (or golden) age, when Pericles commissioned the Parthenon, Sophocles wrote *Oedipus the King* and Socrates taught young Athenians to think.

While preoccupied with fighting the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC), the Greeks failed to notice the expansion of Macedonia under King Philip II, who conquered the city-states, although Philip's ambitions were surpassed by his son Alexander the Great, who marched triumphantly into Asia Minor, Egypt, Persia, and parts of what are now Afghanistan and India.

Roman incursions began in 205 BC, and by 146 BC Greece and Macedonia had become Roman provinces. In AD 395 Greece was part of the Eastern Roman Empire, based at Constantinople. In 1453, when Constantinople fell to the Turks, most of Greece became part of the Ottoman Empire. By the 19th century the Ottoman Empire was declining and the Greeks fought the War of Independence (1821–32). In January 1833 Otho of Bavaria was installed as king, until 1862 when he was peacefully ousted and George I, a Dane, was chosen as king.

Greece fell to Germany in 1941, but more people were killed in the resulting civil war

than in WWII. Almost a million Greeks left in search of a better life, primarily to Australia, Canada and the USA. An army coup d'état in 1967 led to a period of brutality and repression. The Turkish occupation of Cyprus became (and remains) one of the most contentious issues in Greek politics. Finally, a discredited junta had to hand back power to civilians.

In 1981 Greece entered the European Community (EC, now the EU), and in 2001 the EU agreed that Greece had met the requirements for monetary union. Greece held a successful 2004 Olympics, although is still counting the cost. Now Greece is supporting its neighbour Turkey's bid to join the EU.

THE CULTURE

Greece's population exceeded 11 million in 2004, with around one-third living in Greater Athens and more than two-thirds living in cities. Less than 15% of the population live on the islands, the most populous being Crete, Evia and Corfu. Officially there are over 200,000 foreigners with residency permits, and immigrants make up 10% of the population (most come from Albania.)

Despite immigration's impact on the social landscape, traditional customs are integral to everyday life. The influence of the Greek Orthodox Church extends beyond the life-cycle

READING UP

Dive in the deep end with Homer's *The Odyssey*, and if that whets your appetite, move on to Homer's *Iliad* or *Poems & Fragments* by Sappho. *Zorba the Greek* by Greece's most important 20th-century novelist, Nikos Kazantzakis, is essential reading. Patrick Leigh Fermor's *Mani* is an excellent travel tome on southern Greece, while *Dinner with Persephone* is Patricia Storea's insightful memoir of a year in Greece.

events, such as births, funerals and weddings. Young Greeks continue to follow tradition, yet are far more cosmopolitan in their outlook and are in tune with the latest global cultural trends.

SPORT

In 2004 Greece hosted the Olympics and the national football team (soccer) won the European Cup. By far the most popular sport in Greece, the football season runs from September to mid-May. The most popular teams are Olympiakos (Piraeus) and Panathinaikos (Athens). These clubs are also the main players in Greece's other main sport, basketball, and fare well in European competition. The national team won the European 2005 championships.

RELIGION

About 98% of the Greek population belongs to the Greek Orthodox Church. The remainder is split between the Roman Catholic, Protestant, Evangelist, Jewish and Muslim faiths. Older Greeks and those in rural areas tend to be deeply religious, yet most young people are decidedly more secular – but will still make a sign of the cross when passing a church.

ARTS

The arts have been an essential aspect of Greek life since ancient times, with architecture having the most profound influence. Greek temples, seen throughout history as symbols of democracy, were the inspiration for architectural movements, such as the Italian Renaissance.

The first and greatest ancient Greek writer was Homer, author of *Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, while the great love poets were Sappho (6th century BC) and Alcaeus (5th century BC), both of whom lived on Lesbos. Sappho's poetic descriptions of her affections for women gave rise to the term 'lesbian'. Constantine Cavafy (1863–1933) revolutionised Greek poetry by introducing a conversational style. Nikos Kazantzakis, author of *Zorba the Greek*, is the most famous 20th-century Greek novelist.

Greeks have always had a love of music. The *bouzouki* (stringed lute-like instrument) is one of the main instruments of *rembetika* music, the Greek equivalent of the American blues, and was associated with the underworld of the 1920s.

Traditional dance is also integral to Greek life, whether at a wedding, nightclub or village celebration. Try to catch the Dora Stratou Dance Company in Athens.

Greek cinema is generally associated with film maker Theo Angelopoulos, who won Cannes' Palme d'Or in 1998 with *An Eternity and One Day*. Since the late 1990s it's witnessed a minor renaissance, with local films such as *Safe Sex* (2000) luring Greek moviegoers back to cinemas.

Greek TV is dominated by chat shows, sport and foreign movies, only to be interrupted by localised versions of the latest American 'reality TV' hit.

ENVIRONMENT

At the southern tip of the Balkan Peninsula, Greece has 1400 islands, 169 of which are inhabited. The land mass is 131,900 sq km, and Greek territorial waters cover a further 400,000 sq km. Around four-fifths of Greece is mountainous. In one of the most seismically active regions in the world, Greece has recorded more than 20,000 earthquakes in the last 40 years – most very minor.

The variety of flora is unrivalled, with a dazzling array of wild flowers. Squirrels, rabbits, hares, foxes and weasels are common on the mainland. Lake Mikri Prespa has the richest colony of fish-eating birds, while the Dadia Forest Reserve is home to the golden eagle and the giant black vulture. The brown bear still survives in small numbers in northern Greece. There are about 200 monk seals (Europe's rarest mammal) in Greece, about 40 in the Ionian Sea and the rest in the Aegean. Zakynthos is home to Europe's last large colony of the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*). The **Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece** (☎/fax 21052 31342; www.archelon.gr) runs monitoring programmes and is always looking for volunteers.

TRANSPORT

GETTING THERE & AWAY Air

While there are 16 international airports in Greece, most of them handle only summer charter flights to the islands. Athens handles most international flights, including all intercontinental flights, and has regularly scheduled flights to the European capitals.

Thessaloniki is also well served, and Iraklio, Crete's capital, takes scheduled flights.

Athens Eleftherios Venizelos International Airport (ATH; ☎ 210 353 0000; www.aia.gr)

Iraklio Nikos Kazantzakis International Airport (code HER; ☎ 281 022 8401)

Thessaloniki Macedonia International Airport (code SKG; ☎ 231 047 3700)

The country's national airline, **Olympic Airlines** (☎ 801 114 4444; www.olympicairlines.com), receives strong competition from Crete-based **Aegean Airlines** (☎ 801 112 0000; www.aegeanair.com). Both serve most European cities. Aegean has an excellent online 'e-ticket' booking system.

Bus & Train NORTHERN EUROPE

Overland travel between northern Europe and Greece is uneconomical, as buses and trains are unable to compete with cheap airfares. All bus and train services now go via Italy and take the ferries over to Greece. However, Greece is part of the Eurail network, and passes are valid on the ferries operated by Adriatica di Navigazione and Hellenic Mediterranean Lines from Brindisi to Corfu, Igoumenitsa and Patra.

NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

The Organismo Sidirodromon Ellados/Hellenic Railways Organisation (OSE) operates buses between Athens (500m west of the Larisis train station) and Tirana, Albania (€35.20, 16 hours, daily) via Ioannina and Gjirokastra. To Bulgaria, the OSE operates an Athens-Sofia bus (€45.50, 15 hours, daily except Monday) and a Thessaloniki-Sofia service (€19, 7½ hours, four daily). To Turkey, the OSE operates from Athens to Istanbul (€67.50, 22 hours, daily except Wednesday). This stops at Thessaloniki (€44) and Alexandroupolis (€15). There are daily trains between Athens and Istanbul (€63, 22 hours) via Thessaloniki (€42.50).

The crossing points into Turkey are at Kipi and Kastanies; into the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) at Evzoni, Niki and Doirani; into Bulgaria at Promahonas and Ormenio; and to Albania at Kakavia, Krystalopigi, Sagiada and Mertiziani.

GETTING AROUND

Greece is easy to travel around. Buses travel to just about every dot on the map, and trains generally offer a good alternative where avail-

able. Island-hopping in Greece is easy as, during summer, there are countless ferries criss-crossing the Adriatic and the Aegean.

Air

Most domestic flights are handled by Greece's financially national carrier, **Olympic Airlines** (☎ 8011 144 444; www.olympicairlines.com). Crete-based **Aegean Airlines** (☎ 8011 120 000; www.aegeanair.com) offers flights to many of the same destinations, and has youth discounts as well as occasional discount fares.

Bicycle

With hilly terrain and stifling summer heat, cycling is not popular in Greece. Bicycles for hire at most tourist centres are for pedalling around town rather than for serious riding. Prices cost €5 to €12 per day. Bicycles are carried free on ferries.

Boat

Most islands have ferry services, although in winter these are reduced. Services become more frequent from April, and during July and August Greece's seas are a mass of wake and wash. The hub of the ferry network is Piraeus (p528), Athens' main port. Piraeus has ferries to the Cyclades, Crete, the Dodecanese, the Saronic Gulf Islands and the northeastern Aegean Islands. Patra (p530) is the main port for ferries to the Ionian Islands, and Volos and Agios Konstantinos are the ports for the Sporades islands.

New high-speed ferries are slashing travel times on some of the longer routes. **NEL Lines** (☎ 22510 26299; www.nel.gr), for example, does Piraeus to Chios in 4½ hours – nearly half the time of a normal ferry – but at twice the price. The newer ferries also have the advantage of being inherently safer than some of the older tubs plying the routes.

Hydrofoils offer a faster alternative to ferries on some routes, particularly to islands close to the mainland. They take half the time, but cost twice as much. Most routes operate only during July and August.

High-speed catamarans are as fast as hydrofoils and have roughly the same fare structure, but are much more comfortable. They are also much less prone to cancellation in rough weather. The main players are Hellas Flying Dolphins and Blue Star Ferries.

Information about ferry routes and schedules is online. For an overview try **Greek Ferries**

MAIN FERRY ROUTES



(www.greekferries.gr). Most of the ferry companies also have their own websites:

Agoudimos Lines (www.agoudimos-lines.com)

ANEK Lines (www.aneek.gr)

Blue Star Ferries (www.bluestarferries.com)

Hellas Flying Dolphins (www.hellasferries.gr/)

Hellenic Mediterranean Lines (www.hmferry.com)

Minoan Lines (www.minoan.gr)

Superfast (www.superfast.com)

Bus

Greece's comfortable and punctual, long-distance buses are operated by regional collectives known as **KTEL** (Kino Tamio Eispraxeon Leoforion; www.ktel.org). Fares are fixed by the government, and routes can be found on its website. Journeys cost about €4 per 100km, and

tickets should be bought at least an hour in advance to ensure a seat. Ticket prices from local agents can vary depending on how much (undisclosed) commission they add.

Car & Motorcycle

Greece recognises all national driving licences and the International Driving Permit. The automobile club, **Automobile and Touring Club of Greece** (www.elpa.gr) offers reciprocal services to the members of other national motoring associations.

Hire cars are widely available throughout the country. Local companies' rates are some 25% lower than those of the big multinational companies, and they are also willing to negotiate. High-season weekly rates, including

unlimited mileage, start at around €280 for the smallest models, dropping to €200 in winter, excluding taxes and insurance. The minimum driving age in Greece is 18, but most car-hire firms require a driver to be at least 21 or older.

Mopeds and motorcycles are available for hire everywhere; however, you will need a valid motorcycle licence for bikes from 50cc upwards. Mopeds and 50cc motorcycles start at €12 per day.

Local Transport

Most Greek towns are small enough to get around on foot. Major towns have local bus systems, but you'll probably only use them in Athens and Thessaloniki. Taxis are reasonably priced and widely available. Yellow city taxis are metered. Flag fall is €0.75, followed by €0.28 per kilometre in towns and €0.53 per kilometre outside towns. The rate doubles from midnight to 5am. Additional charges are €3 from airports, €0.80 from ports, bus stations and train stations. Luggage is €0.30 per item over 10kg. In rural areas taxis don't have meters, so agree on a price with the driver before you get in – drivers are generally honest, friendly and helpful. In Athens and Thessaloniki drivers are gifted in their ability to make a little extra with every fare. If you have a complaint, note the taxi number and contact the tourist police.

Train

Train travel is limited to two main lines: from Athens to Thessaloniki and Alexandroupolis in the north, and to the Peloponnese. There are several branch lines, such as the Pyrgos–Olympia and the very spectacular Diakofto–Kalavryta mountain railway; see **Hellenic Railways Organisation (OSE)** (www.ose.gr) for details. Services range from painfully slow, dilapidated, 'all stations' trains, to the faster, modern intercity (IC or ICE) trains.

Inter-Rail and Eurail passes are valid in Greece, but you need to make reservations. In summer make reservations a couple of days in advance.

ATHENS ΑΘΗΝΑ

pop 3.7 million

Ancient Athens, named after the goddess of wisdom, Athena, is up there with Rome for archaeological treasures, classical mythology and influence on Western civilisation. It's just as well Athens wasn't named after the god of love, Eros, as until the capital's 2004 Olympics facelift, it was a city few fell for.

The Olympics, while leaving a huge hole in the city's wallet, showed the world that Athens was a city of style and culture, and deserving of more attention. Although much of Athens was given a makeover, she's still no beauty, with terrible traffic congestion and pollution.

Take the time to look beneath her skin and you'll find a city full of contradictions – funky new cafés sit beside atmospheric *ouzeria* (ouzo bars), stylish eateries next door to traditional tavernas, and *rembetika* is performed at one bar while a DJ spins trance across the street.

Athens is worth visiting just as much for its ancient wonders and splendid artefacts as it is for its hip style and buzzy social life.

ORIENTATION

Athens is a sprawling city but most sights are within a manageable distance. Plateia Syntagmatos (Syntagmatos Sq), or Syntagma (*syn-tag-ma*), is the city's heart. Surrounded by luxury hotels, banks, airlines and travel offices, it's dominated by the Greek parliament building. Plateia Omonias (Omonia Sq) is to the north of Syntagma; Plateia Monastirakiou (Monastiraki Sq), Psyrri and Gazi are to its west; the Plaka district borders it to the south; and Kolonaki is at its east.

The city's major landmarks, the Acropolis and Lykavittos Hill, serve as good reference points as they're visible from most places.

Omonia is home to pickpockets, prostitutes and drug dealers. Spruced up for the Olympics, its central square is surrounded by franchises and fast-food joints.

Monastiraki is linked to Syntagma by the pedestrianised shopping street Ermou and Mitropoleos, which skirts the northern edge

GETTING INTO TOWN

From the airport, bus X94 (25 minutes, every 10 minutes) operates from 7.30am to 11.30pm between the airport Metro Line 3 at Ethniki Amynta. Bus X95 (60 to 90 minutes, every 30 minutes) operates 24 hourly between the airport and Plateia Syntagmatos. The Syntagma stop is on Othonos St. Bus X96 (60 to 90 minutes, every 20 minutes) operates 24 hourly between the airport and Plateia Karaiskaki in Piraeus. Tickets for all these services cost €2.90.

Line 3 of the metro links the airport to the city centre in around 30 minutes from Monastiraki (from 5.50am to 10.50pm) and from the airport (from 6.30am to 11.30pm). Tickets are €6. Taxi fares vary according to the time of day and level of traffic, but you should expect to pay €20 to €30 from the airport to the city centre, and €20 to €25 from the airport to Piraeus, depending on traffic conditions. Both trips can take up to an hour.

If you're arriving in Piraeus, line 1 of the metro (€0.60, 24 minutes, every three to 10 minutes) is the fastest and easiest way to get to the city centre; it operates from 5am to midnight.

of Plaka. Plaka, a charming old neighbourhood of labyrinthine streets (now dominated by souvenir shops and tavernas), is nestled on the northeastern slope of the Acropolis, with most ancient sites nearby.

Streets are signposted in Greek and English, but if you get lost, ask a shopkeeper for help.

INFORMATION

Emergency

Duty doctor (☎ 105; 🕒 2pm-7am)

Duty hospitals (☎ 1434)

Duty pharmacy (☎ 107)

Police Station (Map p524; ☎ 210 725 7000; Plateia Syntagmatos)

SOS Doctors (☎ 1016 🕒 24hr) Call-out service with multilingual doctors.

Tourist police (☎ 171; 🕒 24hr) General tourist info and emergency help.

Internet Access

Internet cafés charge €1.50 to €4 per hour. **Arcade Internet Café** (Map p524; Stadiou 5, Syntagma; per hr €3; 🕒 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat) Offers dedicated ADSL laptop connections.

Internet Cyberzone (Map p522; Satovriandou 7, Omonia; per hr €2.50; 🕒 24hr) Prices drop after midnight.

Mocafé (Map p522; cnr Marni & Veranzerou 49, Omonia; per hr €3, for laptops €2; 🕒 8am-1am) Handily placed near the Victor Hugo youth hostel; with wi-fi.

Money

Acropole Foreign Exchange (Map p524; ☎ 210 331 2765; Kydathineon 23, Plaka; 🕒 11.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) Also offers Western Union services and has a Citibank ATM.

Eurochange (Map p522; ☎ 210 523 4816; Plateia Omonias 10; 🕒 8am-9pm) Exchanges Thomas Cook travellers cheques without commission.

Post

Athens' Central Post Office (Map p522; Eolou 100, Omonia; 🕒 7.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-2pm Sat) All poste restante is sent here unless specified otherwise.

Parcel post office (Map p524; Stadiou 4, Syntagma; 🕒 7.30am-2pm Mon-Fri) Parcels over 2kg going abroad must be taken here, unwrapped for inspection.

Syntagma post office (Map p524; ☎ 210 331 9500; cnr Mitropoleos & Plateia Syntagmatos; 🕒 7.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-2pm Sat, 9am-1.30pm Sun) If staying in Plaka, get poste restante sent here.

Tourist Information

City of Athens Info Line (☎ 195) Info booths in Plateia Syntagmatos during summer.

EOT/Greek National Tourist Organisation Head Office (Map p522; ☎ 210 870 7000; www.gnto.gr; Tsoha 7; 🕒 9am-2pm Mon-Fri); EOT tourist office (Map p524; ☎ 210 331 0392; Leoforos Vasilissis Amalias 26; 🕒 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun); EOT info desk (☎ 210 353 0445; Arrivals Hall, Eleftherios Venizelos International Airport; 🕒 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun)

SIGHTS Acropolis

Athens most iconic symbol, the **Acropolis** (Map p524; ☎ 210 321 0291; sites & museum adult/concession

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- Ambulance ☎ 166
- Fire ☎ 199
- Police ☎ 100
- Roadside Assistance (ELPA) ☎ 104
- Tourist Police ☎ 171

SPLURGE

Fresh (Map p522; ☎ 210 524 8511; www.freshhotel.gr; Sophocleous 26; d from €158; P ☒ ☒ ☒) One funky pad, with white light-filled interiors, lots of dark wood, and orange and fuchsia Perspex features. The minimalist rooms are small but comfortable, and the buffet breakfast expensive. The highlight, however, is the cool rooftop lounge bar and lap pool with Acropolis views.

favourite. Popular with a young local Greek crowd, who come here to socialise over juicy gyros and generous serves of *mezedes* (literally, ‘tastes’; *meze* for short), salads, mixed grills and ouzo, it’s situated on what has become one of Athens’ most atmospheric pedestrian areas, particularly late at night with the glorious ruins glowing near you.

Savvas (Map p524; ☎ 210 324 5048; Mitropoleos 86-88, Monastiraki; gyros €1.60) Serves the tastiest gyros and enormous souvlaki and grilled meat plates in Athens. You can takeaway or sit down in what is one of the city’s busiest eat streets late at night.

O Platanos (Map p524; ☎ 210 322 0666; Diogenous 4, Plaka; mains €7; ☒ noon-4.30pm & 7.30pm-midnight Mon-Sat, noon-4.30pm Sun) Laidback O Platanos (‘The Plane Tree’) serves tasty home cooked-style Greek food in a leafy courtyard.

Noodle Bar (Map p524; ☎ 210 331 8585; Apollonos 11, Plaka; mains €8) The pick of several Asian restaurants around Plaka, Noodle Bar does tasty noodles and soups (we love the laksa) at honest prices.

Taverna tou Psiri (Map p524; ☎ 210 321 4923; Eshylyou 12, Psyrri; mains €5-12) Tucked away off Plateia Iroön (look for the mural of a drunk leaning against a lamppost), this atmospheric taverna is popular with locals who come for the daily specials.

Pica Pica: Tapas Stories (Map p524; ☎ 210 325 1663; Ag Anargyron, Psyrri; mains €2.50-20) If you’re tired of Greek food, head here for tasty authentic Spanish tapas, including tortilla, *patatas bravas* (spicy potatoes), *gambas* (prawns) and *pulpo* (octopus).

Taverna tou Psarra (Map p524; ☎ 210 321 8734; Eretheos 16, Plaka; mains €5-18) On a path leading up towards the Acropolis, this gem of a taverna is one of Plaka’s best, serving scrumptious *mezedes* and excellent fish and meat classics, on a terrace under the plane trees.

Byzantino (Map p524; ☎ 210 322 7368; Kydathineon 18, Plaka; mains €3-16) Rather touristy, but still a good Plaka choice for hearty traditional cuisine, and it’s in a pleasant shady spot that’s great for people-watching.

Eden Vegetarian Restaurant (Map p524; ☎ 210 324 8858; Lyssiou 12, Plaka; mains €4-10) Expect vegetarian versions of Greek classics, and organic wine and beer.

DRINKING

Athens has more than its fair share of drinking establishments, from casual, grungy student hang-outs to stylish bars. Do what the locals do: grab the best seats for people-watching and sit on a frappé (frothy ice coffee) or drink for hours as you wonder why the locals never seem to go back to work. Outside summer, the bars of Psyrri are the most popular, although during summer most of the action heads to the islands. Some bars open from morning until late, while others (noted where applicable) don’t open until late.

Brettos (Map p524; ☎ 210 323 2110; Kydathineon 41, Plaka) This distillery, bottle shop and bar is dark and dingy, but once the sun goes down, its eye-catching, back-lit collection of coloured bottles give the place a certain magic. Watch those shots of Brettos-brand spirits – they’re lethal.

Mooi (Map p524; ☎ 210 321 2624; cnr Miaouli & Themidos, Psyrri; ☒ Tue-Sun) Formerly known as Bee, cool Mooi is mellow by day but late at night attracts a party crowd that spills out onto the street.

Sobar (Map p524; ☎ 210 322 2205; Navarhou Apostoli 5, Psyrri; ☒ 10pm-3.30am Sun-Thu, 10pm-6am Fri & Sat) This funky bar is low-key until around 1am when it goes off, while weekends frequently see dancing on the bar.

Wonderbar (Map p522; ☎ 210 381 8577; Themistokleous 80, Exarhia) Relaxed by day, packed by night, this lounge bar attracts hip young Athenians who come for some of Athens’ best DJs.

Live Music

Get tickets for concerts at **Ticket House** (Map p522; ☎ 210 360 8366; Panepistimiou 42). The following are popular venues:

Rodon Club (Map p522; ☎ 210 524 7427; Marni 24, Omonia; ☒ from 10pm) The city’s main venue for rock and metal.

Gagarin 205 Club (Map p522; ☎ 210 854 7601; Liossion 205; ☒ from 9.30pm) The city’s coolest space attracts the most interesting acts.

Half Note Jazz Club (Map p522; ☎ 210 921 3310; Trivonianou 17, Mets; ☒ from 10.30pm) The main venue for serious jazz.

Megaron Mousikis (Athens Concert Hall; Map p522; ☎ 210 728 2333; www.megaron.gr; Leoforos Vasilissis Sofias; tickets €10-60) Tickets can be purchased online for performances by local and international artists at this superb concert venue.

Rembetika Stoa Athanaton (Map p522; ☎ 210 321 4362; Sofokleous 19; ☒ 3.30-7pm & 11pm-late Mon-Sat Oct-May) Located in the meat market, this is a venue for *rembetika*. Hard to catch during summer when most of the authentic venues shut, you can also listen to it at tavernas in Psyrri.

CLUBBING

Athenians don’t head to clubs until after midnight. Cover charges apply late and when there’s a guest DJ (although they often include a free drink), and drinks are more expensive than at bars.

Decadence (Map p522; ☎ 210 882 3544; cnr Poulhierias & Voulgaroktonou 69, Lofos Strefi; admission €6-8) For indie and alternative music lovers, Decadence has two levels, with a quieter bar scene on the lower floor and club upstairs.

Lava Bore (Map p524; ☎ 210 324 5335; Filellinon 25, Plaka) This fun dance club is popular with a young international globetrotting crowd.

Gay & Lesbian Venues

The greatest number of gay bars and clubs are in Makrigianni, south of the Temple of Olympian Zeus, and Exarhia. Most don’t get moving until midnight. Check out **gay.gr: the Greek Gay Portal** (www.gay.gr).

Aroma (Map p522; ☎ 210 381 9615; Tsamadou 15, Exarhia) Athens’ most popular lesbian dance club plays both mainstream and Greek music.

Kirkis (Map p522; ☎ 210 346 6960; Apostolou Pavlou 31, Thisio) Head to this hip gay and lesbian hang-out to find out what’s hot in Athens when you’re visiting.

Lamda Club (Map p522; ☎ 210 942 4202; Lembesi 15, Makrigianni) Athens’ best gay dance club gets crowded late.

ENTERTAINMENT

The *Kathimerini* supplement inside the *International Herald Tribune* has daily event listings and a cinema guide.

Most cinemas show recent releases in English and admission prices are around €8. In central Athens, try the **Apollon** (Map p524; ☎ 210

323 6811; Stadiou 19) or the **Astor** (Map p524; ☎ 210 323 1297; Stadiou 28).

Dora Stratou Dance Company (Map p524; ☎ 210 921 6650; www.grdance.org; Filopappos Hill; tickets €15) puts on colourful performances of traditional folk dancing and music using over 75 dancers and musicians. Performances are held at 9.30pm Tuesday to Saturday and at 8.15pm Sunday from May to September.

SHOPPING

Athens is the place to shop for cool jewellery, hippy-chic clothes and leather shoes, as well as souvenirs, like backgammon sets, textiles, traditional blouses, olive-oil skin products, worry beads and ceramics. You’ll find fashion boutiques on Ermou, from Syntagma to Monastiraki, and souvenirs, folk art and leather in Plaka and Monastiraki. The **Sunday market** (Map p524; ☒ 7am-2pm) and the Athens’ Monastiraki flea market (Map p524) starting at Plateia Monastiraki are a must.

Stavros Melissinos’ Store (Map p524; ☎ 210 321 9247; Aghias Theklas 2, Monastiraki) You can get some custom-made sandals and poetry from the poet sandal maker here.

GETTING THERE & AWAY
Air

Athens is served by **Eleftherios Venizelos International Airport** (code ATH; ☎ 210 353 0000; www.aia.gr) at Spata, 27km east of central Athens. For transport details, see Getting into Town (p521).

Most domestic flights are handled by **Olympic Airlines** (☎ toll free 8011 144 444, flight information 210 966 6666; www.olympicairlines.com); Syntagma (Map p524; ☎ 210 926 4444; Filellinon 15). Crete-based **Aegean Airlines** (Map p524; ☎ 210 331 5502, reservations 8011 120 000; www.aegeanair.com; Othonos 10, Syntagma) offers flights to many of the same destinations as Olympic.

Bus

Athens has two main intercity **KTEL** (www.ktel.org) bus stations, about 5km to 7km north of Omonia. KTEL timetables are online. **EOT** (www.gnto.gr) also has online schedules.

Kifissos Terminal A (☎ 210 512 4910; Kifissos 100) has buses to the Peloponnese, Ioumenitsa, Ionian Islands, Haldiki, Florina, Ioannina, Kastoria, Edessa and Thessaloniki, among other destinations. Get here on bus 015 from the junction of Zinonos and Menandrou, near Plateia Omonia.

Liossion Terminal B (☎ 210 831 7153; Liossion 260) has departures to Trikala (for Meteora),

Delphi, Larissa, Thiva, Volos and other destinations. To get here take bus 024 from outside the main gate of the National Gardens on Leoforos Vasilissis Amalias. Get off at Liosion 260, turn right onto Gousiou and you'll see the terminal.

Hitching

Hitching is never entirely safe (Lonely Planet doesn't recommend it) and Athens can be difficult to hitchhike from. Ask the truck drivers at the Piraeus cargo wharves. Otherwise, for the Peloponnese, take a bus from Panepistimiou to Dafni, where National Rd 8 begins. For northern Greece, take the metro to Kifissia, then a bus to Nea Kifissia and walk to National Rd 1.

Train

Lariss Train Station is Athens's main train station. Suburban and intercity train services pass through here. More information is available from **OSE offices** Omonia (Map p522; ☎ 210 524 0647; Karolou 1; 🕒 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-3pm Sat); Syntagma (Map p522; ☎ 210 362 4402; Sina 6; 🕒 8am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-3pm Sat). Both offices handle advance bookings.

GETTING AROUND

The metro system makes getting around central Athens and to Piraeus easy, but Athens' road traffic is still horrendous. A 24-hour travel pass (€2.90) is valid for all forms of public transport.

Bus & Trolleybus

Blue-and-white suburban buses operate every 15 minutes from 5am to midnight. Route numbers and destinations are listed on the free EOT map. Timetables can be obtained from the **GNT0** (www.gnto.gr) at EOT tourist offices, or the **Athens Urban Transport Organisation** (OASA; ☎ 210 883 6076; www.oasa.gr). The EOT map identifies the routes of the yellow trolleybuses, which also run from 5am to midnight.

Special buses to Piraeus operate 24 hours, running every 20 minutes from 6am to midnight, and then hourly until 6am. Bus 040 leaves from the corner of Syntagma and Filelinton, and bus 049 leaves from the Omonia end of Athinas.

Tickets for all services cost €0.45 and must be purchased before boarding, from a ticket booth or a *periptero* (kiosk). The same tickets can be used on either buses or trolleybuses and must be validated as you board.

Metro

The metro operates from 5am to midnight. Trains run every three minutes during peak periods and every 10 minutes at other times. For metro timetables visit **Attiko Metro** (www.ametro.gr). Travel within one section costs €0.60 and a journey covering two or more sections costs €0.75. Tickets must be validated at the machines at platform entrances before travelling.

Taxi

Athenian taxis are yellow. The flag fall is €0.75, and there's an additional surcharge of €0.60 from ports and train and bus stations, as well as a €1.18 surcharge from the airport. After that, the day rate (tariff 1 on the meter) is €0.23 per kilometre. The rate doubles between midnight and 5am (tariff 2 on the meter). Baggage is charged at the rate of €0.30 per item heavier than 10kg. The minimum fare is €1.50, which covers most journeys in central Athens.

AROUND ATHENS

PIRAEUS ΠΕΙΡΑΙΑΣ

pop 175,697

Greece's main port, Piraeus, is the hub of the Aegean ferry network. It takes around 25 minutes to get here from central Athens by metro (avoid taking a bus or taxi – the streets are even more clogged than they are in Athens), so there's no reason to stay in shabby Piraeus.

Orientation & Information

Piraeus is a peninsula surrounded by three harbours. The largest is the Megas Limin (Great Harbour), on the western side, where all the ferries leave from, along with hydrofoil and catamaran services to Aegina and the Cyclades. Zea Marina (Limin Zeas) and Mikrolimano (Small Harbour), on the eastern side of the peninsula, are for private yachts. There are also some good seafood tavernas and cafés on Koumoundourou. Trolleybus 20 runs past the harbour.

Getting There & Away BUS

Two 24-hour bus services operate between central Athens and Piraeus. Bus 049 runs from Omonia to the bus station at the Megas Limin,

and bus 040 runs from Syntagma to the tip of the Piraeus peninsula. Bus 040 is the service to catch from Athens for Zea Marina (get off at the Hotel Savoy), though the trip can take well over an hour in bad traffic. The fare is €0.45 for each service.

FERRY

The following information is a guide to ferry departures between June and mid-September. There are fewer ferries running in April, May and October, and services are radically reduced in winter – especially to smaller islands. The main branch of EOT in Athens (see p521) has reliable schedules that are updated weekly. All ferry companies provide timetables online (see p518). The departure points for ferry

destinations are shown on the Piraeus map (below). When buying your ticket, confirm the departure point. See the Getting There & Away sections for each island for more details.

Crete Two ferries daily to Hania and Iraklio, a daily service to Rethymno, and three weekly to Agios Nikolaos and Sitia.

Cyclades Daily ferries to Amorgos, Folegandros, Ios, Kimolos, Kythnos, Milos, Mykonos, Naxos, Paros, Santorini (Thira), Serifos, Sifnos, Sikinos, Syros and Tinos; and two or three weekly to Iraklia, Shinoussa, Koufonisi, Donoussa and Anafi.

Dodecanese Daily ferries to Kalymnos, Kos, Leros, Patmos and Rhodes; three weekly to Karpathos and Kassos; and weekly services to the other islands.

Northeastern Aegean Islands Daily ferries to Chios, Lesvos (Mytilini), Ikaria and Samos; and twice weekly to Limnos.



Saronic Gulf Islands Daily ferries to Aegina, Hydra, Poros and Spetses year-round.

HYDROFOIL & CATAMARAN

Hellenic Seaways (www.hellenicseaways.gr) operates high-speed hydrofoils and catamarans to the Cyclades from early April to the end of October, and year-round services to the Saronic Gulf Islands. All services to the Cyclades and Aegina leave from Megas Limin. Some services to Poros, Hydra and Spetses also leave from here, but most leave from Zea Marina.

METRO

The fastest and most convenient link between the Megas Limin and Athens is the metro (€0.60, 24 minutes). The station is close to the ferries, at the northern end of Akti Kalimasioti. There are metro trains every 10 minutes from 5am to midnight.

TRAIN

At the time of research, all services to the Peloponnese from Athens start and terminate at the Piraeus train station, although this could change.

Getting Around

Local buses 904 and 905 run between the Megas Limin and Zea Marina. They leave from the bus stop beside the metro at Megas Limin, and drop you by the maritime museum at Zea Marina.

DELPHI ΔΕΛΦΟΙ

pop 2373

Delphi's setting, overlooking the Gulf of Corinth from the slopes of Mt Parnassos, is stunning, making it a very special place to visit.

The bus station, post office, OTE, banks and EOT (☎ 22650 82900; Vasileon Pavlou 44; ☎ 7.30am-2.30pm Mon-Fri) are all on modern Delphi's main street, Vasileon Pavlou.

By the 6th century BC, **ancient Delphi** (☎ 22650 82312; site or museum €6, combined admission adult/concession €9/5, free Sun Nov-Mar; ☎ 7.30am-7.30pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-7pm Tue-Fri, 8.30am-2.45pm Sat, Sun & holidays Nov-Mar) had become the Sanctuary of Apollo. Pilgrims flocked here to consult the (middle-aged female) oracle. Wars, voyages and business transactions were undertaken on the strength of these prophecies. From the entrance take the **Sacred Way** up to the **Temple of Apollo**, where the oracle supposedly sat.

From here the path continues to the **theatre** and **stadium**.

Down the main road some 100m is the **Sanctuary of Athena** and the much-photographed **Tholos**, a 4th-century-BC columned rotunda of Pentelic marble.

Apollon Camping (☎ 22650 82762; apollon4@otenet.gr; camp sites per adult/tent €5/3.50; 📍) is located 1.5km west of town, with good facilities, including a taverna and barbecue.

The welcoming **Hotel Hermes** (☎ 22650 82318; www.delphihotels.gr; Vasileon Pavlou-Friderikis 27; s/d €55/70; 📍) in the town centre has spacious rooms, with balcony, stunning valley views and breakfast.

Taverna Epikouros (☎ 22650 83250; Vasileon Pavlou-Friderikis 33; mains €4-12) has wonderful views and unobtrusive service, and serves scrumptious *mezedes*, imaginative salads and generous portions of tasty regional dishes.

From the **bus station** (☎ 22660 82317) there are six buses daily to Athens (€12, three hours).

THE PELOPONNESE ΠΕΛΟΠΟΝΝΗΣΟΣ

The Peloponnese is ruggedly beautiful, breathtaking at its best. Home to Olympia, birthplace of the Olympic Games, the ancient archaeological sites of Mycenae, Epidavros and Corinth, the ruined Byzantine city of Mystras and ancient Sparta, it has played a significant role in Greek history. Two of Greece's most gorgeous towns grace its shores – pretty Venetian-style Nafplio and romantic Monemvasia. The isolated Mani Peninsula is blanketed with spectacular wildflowers in spring and dotted with striking stone-tower settlements.

Situated at the southern extremity of the Balkan Peninsula, it was linked to the rest of Greece by the narrow Isthmus of Corinth and several road and rail bridges.

PATRA ΠΑΤΡΑ

pop 185,670

Greece's third-largest city, Patra is the principal ferry port for the Ionian Islands and Italy. Despite its 3000-year history, ancient sites and vibrant social life, few travellers linger longer than necessary. Laid out on a grid stretching uphill from the port to the old *kastro* (castle), Patra is easy to negotiate. The information centre, ports, train and bus stations, and other services to travellers are all

along the waterfront on Othonos Amalias, in the centre of town, and within easy walking distance of each other.

Information

Info Centre (☎ 26104 61741; infopatras@hol.gr; Othonos Amalias 6; ☎ 8am-10pm) The friendly multilingual staff have tonnes of info on transport, free stuff to do, free bicycle hire and internet access.

Netpark (Gerokostopoulou 36; per hr €1.10, cheaper from 1-7am; ☎ 9am-7am) There are several 'gaming' cafés on this street, but the helpful staff here let you plug in your laptops.

Tourist police (☎ 26104 55833; Gounari 52; ☎ 7am-9pm)

Sleeping & Eating

Pension Nicos (☎ 26106 23757; cnr Patreos & Agiou Andreou 121; s/d/tr €20/35/45, d/tr with shared bathroom €30/40) Spotlessly clean and the best budget choice.

Scores of cafés and fast-food eateries lie between Kolokotroni and Ermou, while Agios Nikolaos and Radinou (off Riga Fereou) are the places for drinking.

Europa Centre (☎ 26104 37006; Othonos Amalias 10; mains €4-8; ☎ 7am-midnight) An accommodating cafeteria, convenient to all transport, that serves Greek food and offers a left-luggage service.

Getting There & Away

From **Patras train station** (☎ 26106 39108; Othonos Amalias 27) there are daily trains to Athens, Pyrgos (for Olympia) and Kalamata, among other destinations.

The **KTEL Achaia bus station** (☎ 26106 23886; Zaimi 2), on the corner of Othonos Amalias, has regular services to Athens (€13, three hours, half-hourly), via Corinth, Ioannina, Thessaloniki, Pyrgos (for Olympia), Tripoli and Kalamata. Buses to the Ionian islands, via Kyllini, leave from the **KTEL Zakynthos bus station** (☎ 26102 20993/22224; Othonos Amalias 47) or nearby **KTEL Kefalonia bus station** (☎ 26102 74938; Othonos Amalias 58).

There are daily ferries to Zakynthos (€6, 1½ hours, four to five daily), Kefallonia (€7 to €12, 1½ to 2½ hours, nine daily), Ithaki (€12, 3½ hours, two daily) and Corfu (€26 to €30, seven hours, two daily). Ticket agencies line the waterfront.

CORINTH ΚΟΡΙΝΘΟΣ

pop 29,787

The ruins of **ancient Corinth** (☎ 27410 31207; site & museum €6; ☎ 8am-7.30pm Apr-Oct, 8am-5pm Nov-Mar) lie at the edge of the village of Ancient Corinth,

7km southwest of Corinth's modern town. There is little left standing except the imposing **Temple of Apollo**, although the ruins of an ancient citadel, **Acrocorinth**, towers over it on a massive outcrop.

Blue Dolphin Camping (☎ 27410 25766; www.camping-blue-dolphin.gr; camp sites per adult/tent €6/6; 📍), at Lecheon, about 4km west of Corinth, is close to the Ancient Corinth turn-off. It has a beach, decent facilities and buses from Corinth to Lecheon stop here. **Tasos Taverna & Rooms** (☎ 27410 31225; fax 27410 31183; Ancient Corinth; s/d/q €25/35/50, breakfast €6; 📍), 200m from the museum, are great-value digs consisting of spotless rooms with TV, fridge, balconies and views, above an excellent taverna serving home-style Greek classics. In modern Corinth, **Hotel Apollon** (☎ 27410 22587; www.hotelapollongr.com; Damaskinou 2; s/d €50/60; 📍) is handily situated near the Corinth bus and train stations, and offers good discounts when it's quiet.

One of the world's most exhilarating spots to bungy jump is over the Corinth canal, operated by **Zulu Bungy** (☎ 210 514 7051; www.zulubungy.com; per person €60) in Athens.

Buses to Athens (€6, 1½ hours, half-hourly), Lecheon and Ancient Corinth (€0.90, 20 minutes, hourly) leave from **KTEL Korinthos bus station** (☎ 27410 75425; Dimocratias 4) opposite the train station, while buses to Nafplio leave from **Argolis bus station** (cnr Ethnikis Antistaseos & Aratou). There are daily trains to Kalamata (€6, 4½ hours, three daily) via Argos (for Nafplio; €2, one hour, five daily) and Tripoli (€3, 2½ hours, three daily).

NAFLIO ΝΑΥΠΛΙΟ

pop 14,500

Breezy lanes lined with elegant Venetian houses dripping with crimson bouganvillea make Nafplio one of Greece's prettiest towns. Add to that a lively waterfront café scene and buzzy nightlife, and you have a great place to hang for a few days.

The friendly **Kasteli Travel and Tourist Agency** (☎ 27520 29395; 38 Vass Konstantinou; ☎ 9am-2pm & 6-8pm in summer, 9am-2pm rest of year) books rooms and sells ferry tickets.

The old town is the place to stay. Cheaper rooms can be found on the road to Argos and Tolo, but you'll have transport costs into town. **Hotel Economou** (☎ 27520 27721; Argonafton 22; dm €10, d/tr €30/35) is a bit of a walk out of town, but it's the only budget option, while **Hotel**

Victoria (☎ 27520 27420; fax 27520 27517; Spiliadou 3; s/d €65/80; 📶), in a better central location, offers discounts of up to 50% when it's quiet.

There are tavernas on Staikopoulou and Bouboulinas. Bustling **Taverna Aeolos** (☎ 27520 26828; V Olgas 30; mains €4-11) gets packed with locals who share the generous mixed grill plates for €8.50.

The **KTEL Argolis bus station** (☎ 27520 27323; Syngrou 8) has hourly buses to Athens (€10, 2½ hours) via Corinth, as well as regular services to Argos (for Peloponnese connections), Mycenae and Epidavros, costing €1 to €2 and taking 30 to 45 minutes.

MYCENAE MYKHNEΣ

The most powerful influence in Greece between 1600 and 1200 BC, **Ancient Mycenae** (☎ 27510 76585; admission €8; 🕒 8am-7pm Apr-Oct, 8am-5pm Nov-Mar) was described by Homer as being 'rich in gold', and excavations of **Grave Cirde A** by Heinrich Schliemann in the 1870s uncovered magnificent gold treasures, such as the Mask of Agamemnon, now on display at the National Archaeological Museum (p524). Most people visit on day trips from Nafplio, but the historic **Belle Helene Hotel** (☎ 27510 76225; fax 27510 76179; Christou Tsounta; s/d €35/50), on the main street, is where Schliemann stayed during the excavations.

There are three buses daily to Mycenae from Argos (€1.50, 30 minutes) and Nafplio (€2, 45 minutes).

SPARTA ΣΠΑΡΤΗ

pop 19,550

Modern, laidback Sparta (*spar-tee*) has little to see, but makes a good base from which to visit Mystras. Sparta's street grid system sees Palaeologou running north-south through the town, and Lykourgou running east-west.

Camping Paleologou Mystras (☎ 27310 22724; fax 27310 25256; camp sites per adult/tent €4/3.50; 🕒 year-round; 📶), 2km west of Sparta on the road to Mystras, has good facilities, and buses travelling to Mystras will drop you there. **Hotel Cecil** (☎ 27310 24980; fax 27310 81318; Palaeologou 125; s/d €35/45; 📶) has long been popular with travellers who come for its clean rooms with balcony and TV, decent breakfasts and parking.

Restaurant Elyse (☎ 27310 29896; Palaeologou 113; mains €4.50-10), run by a friendly Greek-Canadian family, serves good Greek standards, although next door's **Café Ouzeri** (☎ 27310 81565; mains €2.50-10) has more character.

Sparta's **KTEL Lakonias bus station** (☎ 27310 26441; cnr Lykourgou & Thivronos) services Athens via Corinth (€14, 3½ hours, 10 daily), and Gythio (€4, one hour, five daily) and Monemvasia (€7, two hours, three daily) among other destinations. Frequent buses to Mystras take 30 minutes (€0.90).

MYSTRAS ΜΥΣΤΡΑΣ

Magical Mystras (☎ 27310 83377; adult/concession €6/3; 🕒 8am-7.30pm Apr-Oct, 8am-3.30pm Nov-Mar), once the shining line of the Byzantine empire, has cobbled streets lined with ruins of palaces, monasteries and churches, most of them dating between 1271 and 1460. Staying in the village nearby allows you to get to the site early before the tour buses arrive. **Hotel Byzantion** (☎ 27310 83309; byzantion@otenet.gr; s/d €40/60; 📶) near the main square has rooms with views and a swimming pool.

GEFYRA & MONEMVASIA ΓΕΦΥΡΑ & ΜΟΝΕΜΒΑΣΙΑ

pop 1320

The atmospheric Byzantine walled village of Monemvasia occupies one side of a great rock, dramatically rising out from the sea, which was separated from mainland Gefyra by an earthquake in AD 375.

While mass tourism blights the town during the day, it hasn't lessened the thrill of arriving – you enter a narrow tunnel on foot, from where you emerge into the magical town of cobblestone streets and stone houses. You can walk up to the ruins of a Venetian **fortress** and Byzantine **Church of Agia Sophia**, perched precariously on top of the rock. The views are spectacular.

To truly appreciate Monemvasia, stay overnight and explore after the day-trippers leave or before they arrive in the morning. If you're on a tight budget, stay in Gefyra. Modern **Hotel Aktaion** (☎ 27320 61234; fax 27320 63026; s/d €30/40), on the Gefyra end of the causeway, is popular with travellers for its clean rooms with balconies, and views of the sea and 'the rock'.

Hotel Malvasia (☎ 27320 61113/61160; fax 27320 61722; d from €80; 📶) in Monemvasia has a variety of atmospheric, traditionally decorated rooms (most with sea views) scattered in stone buildings around the old town.

On a balmy night the small terrace at **To Kanoni** (☎ 27320 61387; Monemvasia; mains €6-12) is the spot to eat excellent seafood, while **Taverna O Botsalo** (☎ 27320 61491; Gefyra; mains

€5.90-23.50) serves tasty meals overlooking the port in Gefyra.

Buses stop at friendly **Malvasia Travel** (☎ 27320 61752), where you can buy tickets for buses and ferries. Four daily buses travel to Athens via Corinth (€23, 5½ hours) and Sparta (€8, 5½ hours).

GYTHIO ΓΥΘΕΙΟ

pop 4489

Gythio (*yee-thih-o*), once the port of ancient Sparta, is a picturesque fishing town on the Lakonian Gulf and the gateway to the rugged Mani Peninsula.

Pretty **Marathonisi Islet**, linked to the mainland by a causeway, is said to be ancient Cranae, where Paris (prince of Troy) and Helen (the wife of Menelaus of Sparta) consummated the love affair that sparked the Trojan War. You'll find the **Museum of Mani History** (☎ 27330 24484; admission €1.50; 🕒 9am-7pm) here in an 18th-century tower.

Camping Meltemi (☎ 27330 22833; www.camp ingmeltemi.gr; camp sites per adult/tent €5/4.50; 🕒 year-round; 📶) is situated behind silver olive groves on the beach 3km south of Gythio, and has a swimming pool and bungalows. The Areopoli bus stops here.

Kenia Karlaftis Rooms to Rent (☎ 27330 22719; s/d/tr €25/35/40), opposite Marathonisi, has clean rooms and kitchen access, but if you can't get in here, there are a dozen places nearby of similar quality, while elegant old **Hotel Aktaion** (☎ 27330 23500/1; fax 27330 22294; Vassilis Pavlou 39; s/d €40/60; 📶) has rooms with balconies and sea views.

The waterfront is lined with excellent fish tavernas and cafés. For tasty Greek standards and tables on the sea, head to **I Gonias** (☎ 27330 24024; Vassilis Pavlou; mains €3-7; 🕒 10am-late), on 'the corner' opposite the port.

The **KTEL Lakonias bus station** (☎ 27330 22228; cnr Vasileos Georgios & Evrikleos) services Athens (€18, 4½ hours, five daily), Sparta (€4, one hour, four daily), Areopoli (€2, 30 minutes, four daily) and the Diros Caves (€3, one hour, one daily). **ANEN Lines** (www.anen.gr) runs five ferries weekly to Kissamos, Crete (€21, seven hours), via Kythira (€10, 2½ hours) in summer. The schedule changes, so check with **Rozakis Travel** (☎ 27330 22207) on the waterfront.

THE MANI Η ΜΑΝΗ

The ruggedly beautiful Mani occupies the central peninsula of the southern Peloponnese, and is divided into the Lakonian (inner

Mani in the south and Messinian (outer) Mani in the north towards Kalamata.

Lakonian Mani

The wild and remote Lakonian Mani is dotted with striking stone-tower houses, and is loveliest in spring when the barren countryside bursts into life with spectacular wild flowers.

Areopoli, 30km southwest of Gythio, has lovely towers on the narrow, cobbled streets of the old town. Nearby are the stunning **Diros Caves** (☎ 27330 52222; adult/concession €12/6; 🕒 8am-5.30pm Jun-Sep, 8am-3pm Oct-May). **Gerolimenas**, 20km further south, is a tranquil fishing village on a sheltered bay.

Tsimvolia Rooms (☎ 27330 51301; Kapetan Matepan, Areopoli; s/d €35/50, apt 665) has cosy rooms in a renovated tower tucked behind the Church of Taxiarches, while **Nicola's Corner Taverna** (☎ 27330 51366; Plateia Athanaton, Areopoli; mains €4-9), on the central square, is a favourite with locals for its delicious Greek classics.

The **bus station** (☎ 27330 51229; Plateia Athanaton, Areopoli) services Gythio (€2, 30 minutes, four daily), Itilo (for the Messinian Mani; €1, 20 minutes, three daily) and the Diros Caves (€1, 15 minutes, one daily).

Messinian Mani

The Messinian Mani runs along the coast from Kalamata to Itilo and has some of Greece's most dramatic countryside: beautiful aquamarine swimming coves surrounded by silver olive groves and set against the Taygetos Mountains.

Enchanting **Kardamyli**, 37km south of Kalamata, was made famous by travel writer Sir Patrick Leigh Fermor, who wrote about his rambles in *Mani: Travels in the Southern Peloponnese*. Trekkers come for magnificent **Vyros Gorge**.

Kardamyli has *domatia* (B&B) to suit all budgets: all well signposted and easy to find, but book ahead for summer. **Olympia Koumounakou rooms** (☎ 27210 73623; s/d €25/30) are popular with backpackers who like the communal kitchen. **Lela's Rooms** (☎ 27210 73541/73730; fax 27210 64130; s/d/f €50/60/70; 📶), run by the former housekeeper to Patrick Leigh Fermor, who lived in Kardamyli for many years, has charming rooms, while **Lela's Taverna** (☎ 27210 73541) serves tasty home-style cooking with sea views.

Kardamyli is on the main bus route from Itilo to Kalamata, and two to three buses stop daily at the central square.

OLYMPIA ΟΛΥΜΠΙΑ

pop 1286

In ancient times Olympia was a sacred place of temples, priests' dwellings and public buildings, as well as being the venue for the quadrennial Olympic Games. **Ancient Olympia** (☎ 26240 22517; adult/concession €6/3, combined site & museum €9/5; ☎ 8am-7.30pm May-Oct, 8am-3pm Nov-Apr) is dominated by the immense ruined **Temple of Zeus**, to whom the games were dedicated.

Camping Diana (☎ 26240 22314; fax 26240 22425; camp sites per adult/tent €6/4; ☎ year-round; 🏠) is the best situated of Olympia's camping grounds (250m west of town), in lovely leafy grounds with good facilities. The only thing the **Youth Hostel** (☎ 26240 22580; Praxitelous Kondyli 18; dm €8) has going for it is its price. **Pension Posidon** (☎ 26240 22567; Stefanopoulou 9; s/d/tr €30/40/50) is a sparkling clean, family-run place, while **Pension Achilleus** (☎ 26240 22562; Stefanopoulou 4; s/d/tr €25/35/40) is a little more worn around the edges.

Taverna Gefsis Melathron (☎ 26240 22916; ant.xri@yahoo.gr; George Douma 3; mains €2.95-6.75) is a friendly family-run taverna serving delicious traditional cuisine, including scrummy vegetarian options, such as fried baby zucchini balls.

There are four buses daily to Athens (€23, 5½ hours), and regular buses to Pyrgos (€1.60, 30 minutes) and Tripoli (€10, 2½ hours). Two IC trains run daily to Corinth (€12, two hours) via Pyrgos (€3, 30 minutes) and Patra (€12, 45 minutes).

NORTHERN GREECE ΒΟΡΕΙΑ ΕΛΛΑΔΑ

Northern Greece is stunning, with magnificent mountains, thick forests, tranquil lakes and archaeological sites, and it's easy to get off the beaten track and experience aspects of Greece noticeably different to the islands.

IGOUMENITSA ΗΓΟΥΜΕΝΙΤΣΑ

pop 9104

The west-coast port of Igoumenitsa (ih-goo-meh-nit-sah) is little more than a ferry hub, and few travellers stay here longer than it takes to buy a ticket out.

If you must stay, look for signs for *domatia* around the port. Try **Rooms to Let** (☎ 26650 23612; Xanthou 12; s/d €35/42), which is clean and handy for the ferry. There are eateries along the main street.

From the **bus station** (☎ 26650 22309; Kyprou 29), there are buses to Ioannina (€7, two hours, nine daily) and Athens (€30, eight hours, five daily).

Several companies operate passenger and car ferries to Corfu (€5.10, 1½ hours, nearly every hour) between 5am and 10pm, while there are international services to the Italian ports of Ancona, Bari, Brindisi, Trieste and Venice. Ticket agencies are opposite the port.

IOANNINA ΙΩΑΝΝΙΝΑ

pop 75,180

Attractive Ioannina (ih-o-ah-nih-nah), on the western shore of Lake Pamvotis, was a major intellectual centre during Ottoman rule. Today it's a thriving university town with a lively waterfront café scene.

The main streets meet in the town centre, around Plateia Dimokratias. There's regional tourist information at **EOT** (☎ 26510 41142; Dodonis 39; ☎ 7.30am-2.30pm).

The pleasant **old town** sits on a small peninsula jutting into the lake. Within its impressive fortifications is the **kale**, an inner citadel with lovely lake views, that is home to the **tomb of Ali Pasha** and splendid **Fetiye Cami** (Victory Mosque), built in 1611. The **Nisi** (island) sits serenely in the middle of the lake, with four monasteries set among the trees. Ferries (€1) leave regularly from the waterfront outside the walls.

Limnopoula Camping (☎ 26510 20541; fax 26510 38060; Kanari 10; camp sites per adult/tent €5/3; ☎ Apr-Oct) is an attractive shady camping ground on the lake 2km northwest of town.

There are fewer lovelier places to sit with a cold beer on a sunny day than atmospheric **Kale** (☎ 26510 64206; Kastro; mains €3-7) in the citadel, with good sandwiches, salads and pasta dishes. **Taverna To Manteio** (☎ 26510 25452; Plateia Georgiou 15; mains €3-9) serves deliciously fresh Greek *mezedes*, salads and grills.

The **main bus station** (☎ 26510 26404; Zossimadon), 300m north of Plateia Dimokratias, serves Athens (€27, 7½ hours, 10 daily), Igoumenitsa (€7, 2½ hours, nine daily), Thessaloniki (€22, seven hours, five daily) and Trikala (€10, 3½ hours, two daily).

ZAGORIA VILLAGES & VIKOS GORGE ΤΑ ΖΑΓΟΡΟΧΩΡΙΑ & ΧΑΡΑΡΑ ΤΟΥ ΒΙΚΟΥ

The spectacular Zagoria region, with its deep gorges, raging rivers, dense forests and snow-capped mountains, covers a large expanse of

the Pindos Mountains north of Ioannina. Some 46 charming villages, famous for their grey-slate architecture, and known collectively as the Zagorohoria, are sprinkled across the mountains.

Delightful **Monodendri** is the main departure point for treks through dramatic **Vikos Gorge**, with its sheer limestone walls. It's a strenuous 7½-hour walk along well-marked paths from here to the atmospheric twin villages of **Megalo Papingo** and **Mikro Papingo**. Get information on the walks from Ioannina's EOT office.

The atmospheric **Archontiko Zarkada** (☎ 26530 71305; www.monodendri.com; s/d €35/45 incl breakfast) is one of Greece's best small hotels, with friendly service and spacious, comfortable rooms with TV, DVD/CD player, mini-bar, spa showers and valley views. Its taverna serves delicious regional specialities.

There are two buses from Ioannina to Megalo Papingo and Mikro Papingo (€5, two hours, three weekly) and to Monodendri (€3, one hour, twice daily).

METEORA ΜΕΤΕΩΡΑ

Magical Meteora (meh-teh-o-rah), with its magnificent late-14th-century monasteries perched atop enormous rocky pinnacles, is one of Greece's most extraordinary sights.

While there were once monasteries on each of the 24 pinnacles, only six are still occupied: **Megalou Meteorou** (Grand Meteoron; ☎ 9am-5pm Wed-Mon); **Varlaam** (☎ 9am-2pm & 3.20-5pm Fri-Wed); **Agiou Stefanou** (☎ 9am-2pm & 3.30-6pm Tue-Sun); **Agias Triados** (Holy Trinity; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-5pm Fri-Wed); **Agiou Nikolaou Anapafsa** (☎ 9am-3.30pm Sat-Thu); and **Agias Varvaras Rousanou** (☎ 9am-6pm). Admission is €2 for each monastery and strict dress codes apply (women must wear skirts below their knees, and men long trousers and sleeves).

The tranquil village of **Kastraki**, 2km from Kalambaka, is the best base for visiting Meteora. **Vrachos Camping** (☎ 24320 22293; camping-kastraki@kmp.forthnet.gr; camp sites per adult & tent €5; 🏠) has great facilities and is close to the village. **Taverna Gardenia** (☎ 24320 22504; Kastrakiou 5; mains €3-8) not only serves the freshest Greek food with Meteora views and the scent of gardenias, but it also has good-value, spacious rooms (some with views) at **Plakias** (☎ 24320 22504; s/d/tr €30/45/55).

Local buses shuttle between Kalambaka and Kastraki. Hourly buses from Kalambaka

go to the transport hub of Trikala (€1.50, 30 minutes), from where there are buses to Ioannina (€9, three hours, two daily) and Athens (€21, 5½ hours, eight daily). From Kalambaka, there are express trains to Athens (€20, five hours, two daily), and Thessaloniki via Paliofarsalos (€11, four hours, two daily).

THESSALONIKI ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗ

pop 800,764

Thessaloniki (thess-ah-lo-nee-kih), also known as Salonica, was the second city of Byzantium and is the second city of modern Greece, with countless Byzantine churches, a smattering of Roman ruins, engaging museums, shopping to rival Athens, atmospheric *ouzeria*, a lively café scene and a vibrant nightlife.

Orientation & Information

Laid out on a grid system, the main thoroughfares of Tsimiski, Egnatia and Agiou Dimitriou run parallel to Leoforos Nikis, on the waterfront. Plateias Eleftherias and Aristotelous, both off Leoforos Nikis, are the main squares. The train station is on Monastiriou, the westerly continuation of Egnatia beyond Plateia Dimokratias, and the airport is 16km to the southeast.

Bianca Laundrette (Panagias Dexias 3; ☎ 8am-8.30pm Tue, Thu & Fri, 8.30am-3pm Mon, Wed & Sat; per 6kg €6)

In Spot: the Internet Place (Patriarchou Ioakim 28; per hr €2.40, midnight to noon €6; ☎ 24hr)

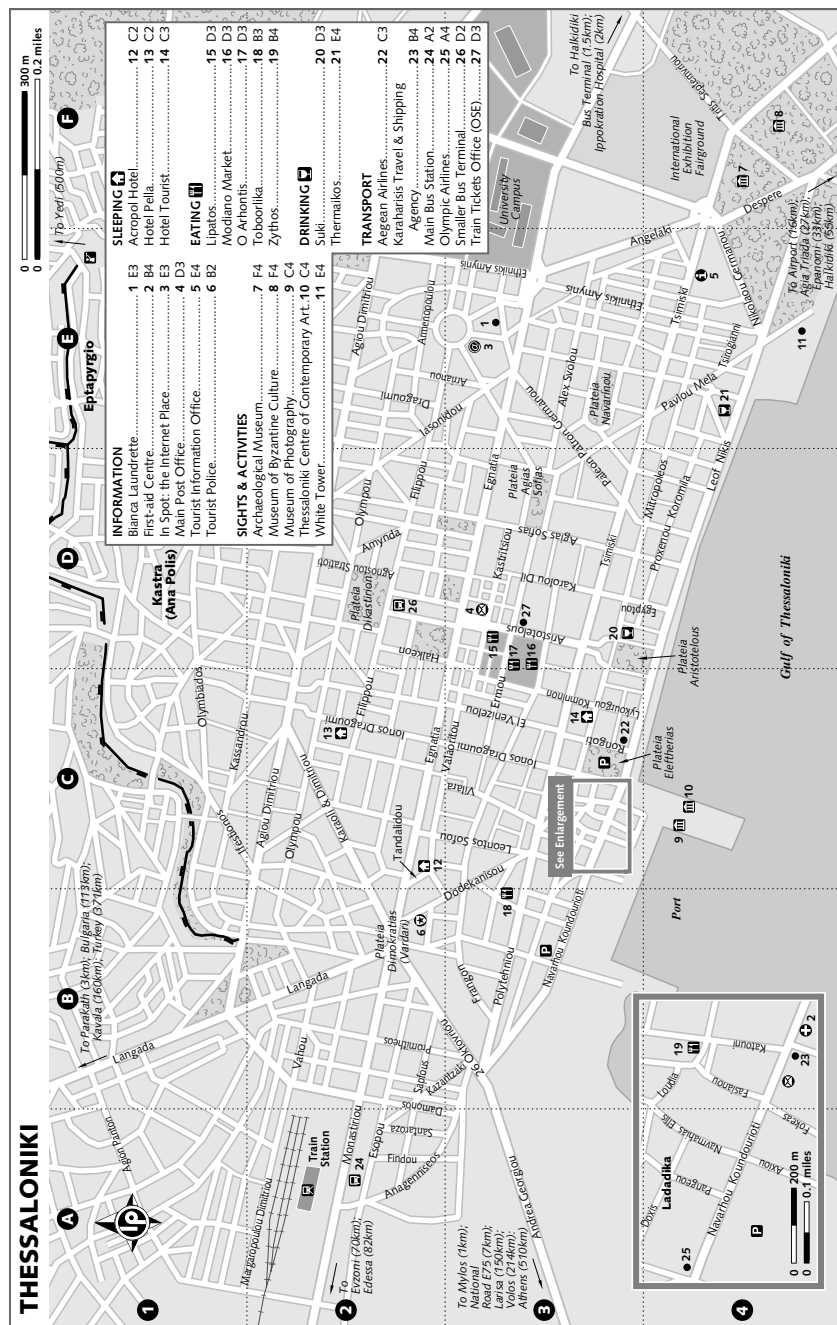
Main post office (Aristotelous 26; ☎ 7.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-2.15pm Sat, 9am-1.30pm Sun)

Tourist information office (☎ 23102 21100; the-info_office@gnto.gr; Tsimiski 136; ☎ 8am-2.45pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat)

Tourist police (☎ 23105 54871; 5th fl, Dodekanisou 4; ☎ 7.30am-11pm)

Sights

The award-winning **Museum of Byzantine Culture** (☎ 23108 68570; Leoforos Stratou 2; admission €4; ☎ 10.30am-5pm Mon, 8.30am-3pm Tue-Fri) has splendid sculptures, mosaics, ceramics, jewellery, icons and other intriguing artefacts beautifully displayed. The **Archaeological Museum** (☎ 23108 30538; Manoli Andronikou 6; admission €4; ☎ 10.30am-5pm Mon, 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) houses some wonderful finds from sites in Northern Greece, including Macedonian gold from Alexander the Great's time. Although not white, the 15th-century **White Tower** (☎ 23102 67832; Lefkos Pyrgos;



☎ 8am-6pm Tue-Sun) is the city's most prominent landmark. The adventurous **Thessaloniki Centre of Contemporary Art** (☎ 23105 46683; ☎ 11am-7pm) and small **Museum of Photography** (☎ 23105 66716; ☎ 11am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-9pm Sat & Sun) beside the port are worth an hour of your time.

Sleeping

Acropolis Hotel (☎ 23105 36170; fax 23105 28492; Tandalidou 4; s/d with shared bathroom €18/26) The best budget option in town, with spartan but clean rooms

Hotel Pella (☎ 23105 24221; pellahot@otenet.gr; Ionos Dragoumi 63; s/d with shared bathroom €35/50) A simple family-run place, with spotless rooms.

Hotel Tourist (☎ 23102 70501; fax 23102 26865; Mitropoleos 21; s/d €55/70; ☎) In an old neoclassical hotel, Hotel Tourist has comfortable rooms with TV. Rates include breakfast.

Eating & Drinking

O Arhontis (☎ 23102 80202; Ermou 26; mains €4; ☎ 10am-8pm) Eat delicious grilled sausages, potatoes and salad off butcher's paper at this popular working-class eatery in Modiano market.

Toboorlika (☎ 23105 48193; Naomahia Limbou 14; mains €6) An authentic *ouzeri*, decorated with musical instruments, that gets packed with locals who come for the fresh seafood and to watch the two cousin-owners perform *rembetika*.

Zythos (☎ 23105 40284; www.zythos.gr; Katouni 5; mains €8) The friendly staff dish up delicious Greek and Italian dishes.

Thermaikos (☎ 23102 39842; Leoforos Nikis 21; ☎ noon-late) This retro-cool bar attracts a young arty crowd with its funk, jazz and alternative beats.

Suki (☎ 23102 34027; Plateias Aristotelous 4; ☎ noon-3am) Whimsically decorated Suki is the choice bar of clubbers – it goes off on Sunday afternoons in summer.

Self-caterers should visit Modiano market for fruit, vegies, cheeses and olives, or nearby **Lipatos** (☎ 23108 55866; Plateias Aristotelous 23) for the best selection of pittas, breads and biscuits hot out of the oven.

Getting There & Away

From Thessaloniki's **Macedonia International Airport** (code SKG; ☎ 231 047 3700), 16km southeast of the city centre, both **Olympic Airlines** (☎ 23103 68666; Koundourioti 3) and **Aegean Airlines** (☎ 23102 80050; Venizelou 2) have several flights daily to Athens. Between them they fly to Ioannina, Les-

vos, Limnos, Corfu, Iraklio, Mykonos, Chios, Hania, Samos, Crete, Rhodes and Santorini.

The **main bus station** (☎ 23105 95408; Monastiriou 319) serves Athens (€32, seven hours, 12 daily) and Ioannina (€23, six hours, five daily), among other destinations. Buses to the Halkidiki Peninsula leave from the smaller **bus terminal** (☎ 23109 24445; Karakasi 68).

Weekly ferries go to Lesvos (€32, 13 hours), Limnos (€21, eight hours) and Chios (€32, 18 hours) throughout the year. **Karaharis Travel & Shipping Agency** (☎ 23105 24544; fax 23105 32289; Navarhou Koundourioti 8) handles tickets for all ferries and hydrofoils.

From the **train station** (☎ 23105 17517; Monastiriou) there are seven express services daily to Athens (€28, six hours) and two fast trains daily to Alexandroupolis (€17, 5½ hours). International trains from Athens stop at Thessaloniki. Get schedules directly from the **OSE** (☎ 23105 98120; www.ose.gr; Aristotelous 18) or its website, or the train station.

Bus 78 plies the airport bus route (slowly), while a taxi to/from the airport costs around €15 and takes about 20 minutes.

MT OLYMPUS ΟΛΥΜΠΙΟΣ ΟΡΟΣ

Greece's highest mountain, Mt Olympus, was the ancient home of the gods. The highest of its eight peaks is Mytikas (2917m), popular with trekkers, who use Lithoro (5km inland from the Athens-Thessaloniki highway) as their base. The **EOS office** (☎ 23520 84544; Plateia Kentriki; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 6-8pm Mon-Sat Jun-Sep) has information on various treks. The main route to the top takes two days, with a stay overnight at one of the refuges (open May to October). Good protective clothing is essential, even in summer. If you trek outside the official season, you do so at your own risk.

Olympos Beach Camping (☎ 23520 22111/2; www.olympos-beach.gr; Plaka Lithoro; camp sites per adult/tent €6/7; ☎ Apr-Oct) is an excellent camping ground, with decent bungalows, a good taverna, a funky waterfront lounge bar/disco and a pleasant beach. **Hotel Aphroditis** (☎ 23520 81415; fax 23520 83646; Plateia Kentriki; d/tr €30/40 incl breakfast) is an atmospheric old hotel with a cosy bar with fireplace. Its rooms have four-poster beds and balconies with views of Mt Olympus.

Gastrodromio El Olympio (☎ 23520 21300; www.gastrodromio.gr; Plateia Kentriki; mains €4-11) has scrumptious specialities, such as *soutzoukika* (minced meat with cumin and mint), and views of Olympus.

From the **bus stop** (☎ 23520 81271) there are 18 buses daily to Thessaloniki via Katerini (€7, 1½ hours) and three to Athens (€25, 5½ hours).

CYCLADES ΚΥΚΛΑΔΕΣ

pop 110,000

The Cyclades (kih-*klah*-dez) are the islands you picture in your mind's eye when you think of the Greek Islands – rugged outcrops of rock in the azure Aegean, speckled with white cubist buildings and blue-domed Byzantine churches. Throw in sun-blasted golden beaches and a fascinating culture, and it's easy to see why many find the Cyclades irresistible.

MYKONOS MYKONOS

pop 9300

Sophisticated Mykonos shamelessly survives on tourism, but does it well. The maze of white-walled streets in Mykonos Town was designed to confuse pirates, and it certainly manages to captivate and confuse the crowds that consume the island's capital in summer.

Orientation & Information

There is no tourist office, but at the old port, the **Hoteliers Association of Mykonos** (☎ 22890 24540; www.mykonosgreece.com; ☎ 8am-midnight) can book accommodation. **Island Mykonos Travel** (☎ 22890 22232; www.discovergreece.org), on Taxi Sq, where the port road meets the town, is helpful for travel information.

Angelo's Internet Café (Xenias; per hr €3.50) is on the road between the southern bus station and the windmills.

Sights & Activities

Little Venice, where the sea laps up to the edge of the restaurants and bars, and Mykonos' famous hill-top row of **windmills** should be included in a stroll.

The island's most popular beaches are away from town on the southern coast. **Platys Gialos** has wall-to-wall sun lounges, while nudity is not uncommon at **Paradise Beach**, **Super Paradise**, **Agrari** and gay-friendly **Elia**.

A 25-minute boat ride southwest of Mykonos takes you to the ancient island of **Delos**, which makes for an excellent daytrip.

Sleeping

Rooms in town fill up quickly in the high season. However, outside July and August, they are as cheap as chips.

Paradise Beach Camping (☎ 22890 22852; www.paradisemykonos.com; camp sites per person/tent €8/4) There are lots of options here out of town on the south coast, including camping, beach cabins and apartments. It is skin-to-skin mayhem in summer with a real party atmosphere. Minibuses meet the ferries and buses go regularly into town.

Hotel Apollon (☎ 22890 22223; fax 22890 24237; Paralia; s/d with shared bathroom €50/65) Prepare for some old-world Mykonian charm in the middle of the main waterfront. Rooms are traditional and well kept, and the owner is friendly.

Hotel Philippi (☎ 22890 22294; chriko@otenet.gr; 25 Kalogera; s/d €60/75) In the heart of the Hora, Philippi has spacious, bright clean rooms that open onto a railed balcony overlooking a lush garden.

Eating & Drinking

There is no shortage of places to eat and drink on Mykonos.

Madupas (☎ 22890 22224; Paralia; dishes €5-12) On the waterfront, Madupas serves a mean Mykonian sausage and is a great spot to chill out with a Mythos.

Antonini's (☎ 22890 22319; Taxi Sq; dishes €3.50-12.50) A local hang-out with standard, but reliable Greek food, Antonini's offers a different view from its terrace overlooking Taxi Sq.

Long feted as a gay travel destination, Mykonos has plenty of gay-centric clubs and hang-outs.

Kastro (☎ 22890 23072; Agion Anargion) In Little Venice, this is the spot to start the night with cocktails as the sun sets.

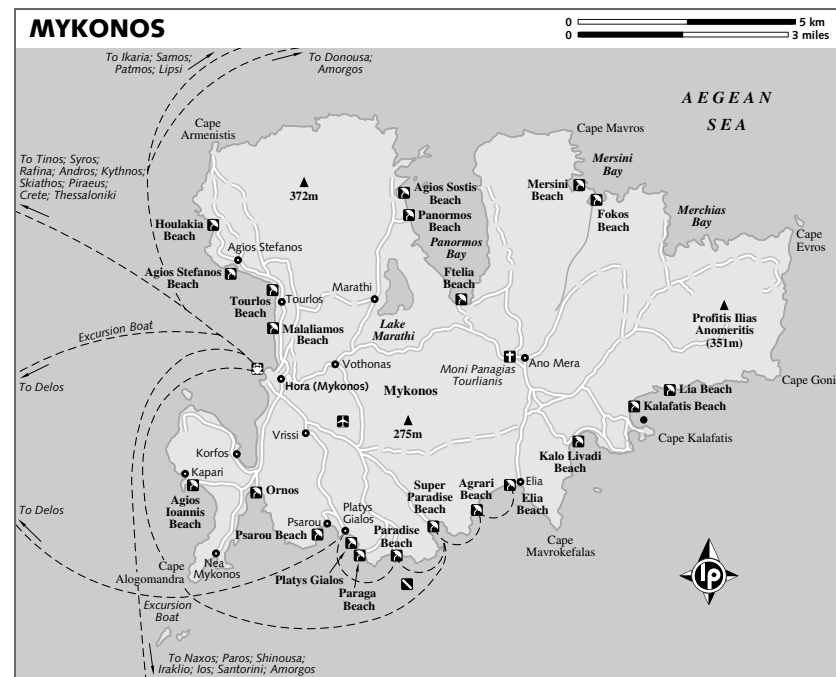
Pierro's (☎ 22890 22177) A popular dance club, near Taxi Sq, for rounding off the night.

Cavo Paradiso (☎ 22890 27205; www.cavoparadiso.gr; admission from €20) For those who want to go the whole hog, this club 300m above Paradise Beach boasts a pool in the shape of Mykonos. A bus transports clubbers from town in summer.

Getting There & Around

There are daily flights connecting Mykonos (JMK) to Athens (€94).

Daily ferries arrive from Piraeus (€23.60, six hours). From Mykonos, there are daily ferries and hydrofoils to most major Cycladic islands.



The southern bus station, a 300m walk up from the windmills, serves Agios Ioannis, Psarou, Platys Gialos, Ornos and Paradise Beach. In summer *caiques* (small fishing boats) from Mykonos town and Platys Gialos putter to Paradise, Super Paradise, Agrari and Elia beaches.

PAROS ΠΑΡΟΣ

pop 12,850

Paros is an attractive laid-back island with an interesting main town and good swimming beaches. It has long been prosperous, thanks to an abundance of pure white marble from which the *Venus de Milo* and Napoleon's tomb were sculpted.

Orientation & Information

Paros' main town and port is Parikia, on the west coast. Opposite the ferry terminal is Plateia Mavrogenous, the main square. Agora, also known as Market St, the main commercial thoroughfare, runs southwest from the far end of the square.

There is no tourist office, but **Santorineos Travel** (☎ 22840 24245; bookings@santorineos-travel.gr)

on the waterfront obliges with information. Near the ferry quay, **Memphis.net** (per 15min €1; ☎ 9am-midnight) provides internet access.

Sights & Activities

Known for its beautiful ornate interior, **Panagia Ekatontyliani** (Our Lady of the Hundred Gates; ☎ 22840 21243; ☎ 7.30am-9.30pm) is an impressive church dating from AD 326.

A great option is to hire a scooter and ride around the island, exploring villages such as **Naoussa**, **Marpissa** and **Aliki**, and swimming at beaches such as **Logaras**, **Pounda** and **Golden Beach**.

Sleeping

The **Rooms Association** (☎ 22840 22722; ☎ 9am-1am) has a helpful kiosk on the quay.

Koula Camping (☎ 22840 22081; www.campingkoula.gr; camp sites per person/tent €6/4) At Livadia beach, about 500m north of Parikia's waterfront, this camping ground has a restaurant and minimarket.

Rooms Mike (☎ 22840 22856; roommike@otenet.gr; s/d/tr €25/35/45) A popular place with backpackers, Mike's offers good value, a shared kitchen,

roof terrace and good local advice. It's next to Memphis.net.

Eating & Drinking

Happy Green Cows (☎ 22840 24691; dishes from €5; ☎ 7pm-midnight) Just off the back of the main square, this place is popular with vegetarians. The menu is creative and the bar stays open late.

Café Micro (☎ 22840 24674; Market St) This bright spot in the heart of the old town has filling breakfasts (€4), coffee, fruit and vegetarian juices by day, and drinks and music by night.

Pebbles Bar (☎ 22840 22283) Perched above the waterfront, Pebbles has stunning views, and plays cool jazz in the evening.

Getting There & Around

Paros' airport (PAS) has daily flight connections with Athens (€72).

Parikia is a major ferry hub, with daily connections to Piraeus (€23.40, five hours), and frequent ferries and catamarans to Naxos, Ios, Santorini (Thira), Mykonos and Crete.

From Parikia there are frequent bus services to the entire island.

NAXOS ΝΑΞΟΣ

pop 18,200

Naxos, the biggest and greenest of the Cyclades, enjoys its reputation as a family destination. The island is well worth taking time to explore with its fascinating main town, excellent beaches and striking interior.

Orientation & Information

Naxos Town, on the west coast, is the island's capital and port. The ferry quay is at the northern end of the waterfront, with the bus terminal at the front.

Naxos Tourist Information Centre (NTIC; ☎ 2285 025 201; www.naxostownhotels.com; ☎ 8am-midnight), opposite the port, offers help with accommodation, tours, luggage storage and laundry.

Next door, **Zas Travel** (☎ 22850 23330; per hr €4; ☎ 8am-midnight) sells ferry tickets and offers internet access.

Sights & Activities

The hilltop 13th-century **kastro**, where the Venetian Catholics lived, looks out over the town, and has a well-stocked **archaeological museum** (☎ 22850 22725; admission €3; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun).

The beach of **Agios Georgios** is a 10-minute walk south from the main waterfront. Beyond it, wonderful sandy beaches stretch as far south as **Pyrgaki Beach**. **Agia Anna Beach**, 6km from town, and **Plaka Beach** are lined with accommodation and packed in summer.

A hire car or scooter will help reveal Naxos' dramatic landscape. The **Tragea region** has tranquil villages, churches atop rocky crags and huge olive groves. **Filoti**, the largest inland settlement, perches on the slopes of **Mt Zeus** (1004m), the highest peak in the Cyclades.

Sleeping

Camping Maragas (☎ 22850 42552; www.maragas.camping.gr/naxos-camping.htm; camp sites per person/ tent €6/4) On Agia Anna Beach, 6km from town, this camping ground has all sorts of options, including camping, rooms and studios, and there is a restaurant and minimarket on site.

Pension Sofi (☎ 22850 23077; www.pensionsofi.gr; d & tr €30-60) and **Studios Panos** (☎ 22850 26078; www.studiospanos.com; Agios Georgios Beach; d & tr €30-60; ☎) are run by members of the friendly Koufopoulos family. All guests are met with a glass of family-made wine or ouzo, and rooms are immaculate, with bathroom and kitchen. Rates are half price outside the high season.

Eating & Drinking

Naxos' waterfront is lined with eating and drinking establishments.

Meze 2 (☎ 22850 26401; Paralia; dishes €2.50-9) An excellent old-style *mezedopoleio-ouzeri* (restaurant specialising in appetisers and ouzo) that is popular with locals and serves superb seafood dishes.

Picasso Mexican Bistro (☎ 22850 25408; dishes from €4.75) A stylish and popular place that does sensational Tex-Mex. It's 20m off Court Sq, a few minutes' walk south of the main waterfront.

Ocean (☎ 22850 26766; ☎ from 11.30pm) At the southern end of the waterfront, this place goes wild after midnight, featuring guest DJs and modern Greek music.

Getting There & Around

Naxos' airport (code JNX) has daily flight connections with Athens (€56).

There are daily ferries (€23.10, five hours) and catamarans (€39.10, 3¼ hours) to Piraeus, and good ferry and hydrofoil connections to most Cycladic islands.

Buses travel to most villages regularly from the bus terminal in front of the port.

IOS ΙΟΣ

pop 1850

While some would like to see Ios shake off its 'Party Island' tag, for others partying is the prime reason for going there. There are wall-to-wall bars and nightclubs in 'the village' that thump all night, and fantastic fun facilities at Milopotas Beach that entertain all day.

Orientation & Information

Ios' three population centres are all close together on the west coast. Ormos is the port where ferries arrive. Two kilometres inland and up from the port is the capital, Hora (also known as 'the village'), while 2km down from Hora to the southeast is Milopotas Beach.

There is no tourist office, but helpful **Acteon Travel** (☎ 22860 91343; www.acteon.gr) has offices in Ormos, the village and Mylopotas. It also has internet access (per hour €5).

Sights & Activities

The village has an intrinsic charm with its labyrinth of white-walled streets, and it's very easy to get lost, even if you haven't had one too many.

Apart from the nightlife, it's the beaches that lure travellers to Ios. While **Gialos Beach** near the port gets crowded, **Koubara Beach**, 1.3km west of Gialos, is less so. **Milopotas** has everything a resort beach could ask for and parties hard from noon until midnight. Beautiful but isolated, **Manganari Beach** on the south coast is reached by bus or excursion boat in summer.

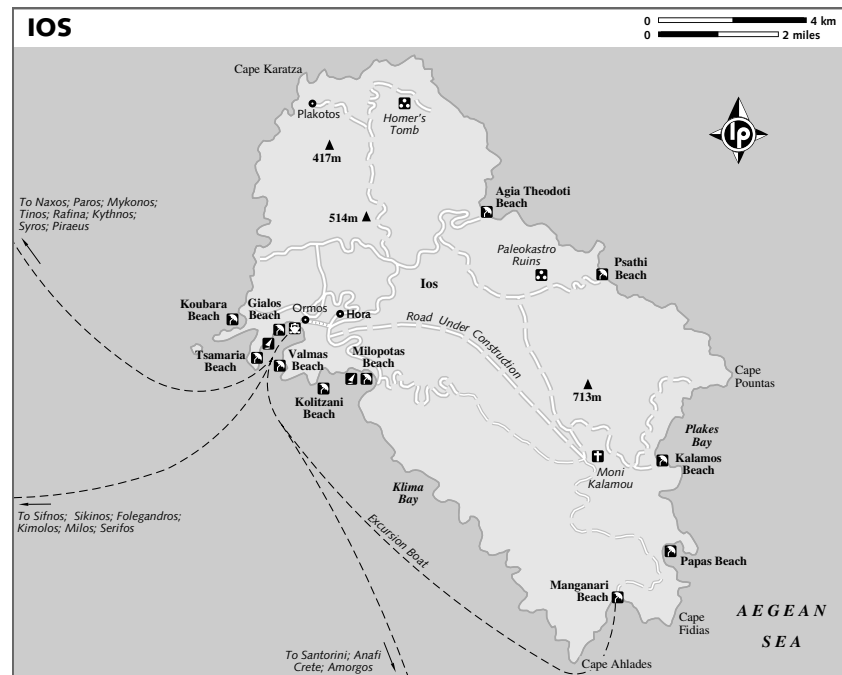
Sleeping

Francesco's (☎ 22860 91223; www.francescos.net; Hora; dm/s/d €11/30/40; ☎) A lively meeting place in 'the village' with superlative views from its terrace bar, Francesco's is convenient for party-going and rates halve outside the high season. The party spirit rules here.

Far Out Beach Club (☎ 22860 91468; www.faroutclub.com; Milopotas; camp sites per person €7, bungalows €15, r €25-60; ☎) Right on Milopotas Beach, this place has tonnes of facilities, including camp sites, bungalows and hotel rooms, and its four pools are open to the public.

Eating & Drinking

There are numerous places to get cheap eats like gyros in 'the village'.



Porky's (☎ 22860 91143; Hora) Just off the main square, this eatery is legendary for its good-value tasty toasties and hamburgers.

Ali Baba's (☎ 22860 91558; Hora; dishes €6-10) Long an Ios favourite, Ali Baba's parties until late. Upbeat service complements the funky ambience. The meals are of humungous proportions, especially the Dinosaur Ribs.

At night, the compact little village erupts with bars. Perennial favourites include **Red Bull** (☎ 22860 91019), **Slammers** (☎ 22860 92119) and **Blue Note** (☎ 22860 92271).

Getting There & Around

Ios has daily ferry connections with Piraeus (€21, seven hours), and there are frequent hydrofoils and ferries to the major Cycladic islands and Crete. There are buses every 15 minutes between the port, the village and Milopotas Beach until early morning, and two to three per day to Manganari Beach (€6, 45 minutes).

SANTORINI (THIRA)

ΣΑΝΤΟΡΙΝΗ (ΘΗΡΑ)

pop 13,400

Stunning Santorini is surely the most spectacular of the Greek Islands. The massive caldera, lava-layered cliffs and precarious cliff-top towns exude an incomparable sense of drama and impermanence, and should not be missed.

Orientation & Information

The capital, Fira, perches on top of the caldera, with the new port of Athinios, where most ferries dock, 10km south by road. The old port of Fira Skala, used by cruise ships and excursion boats, is directly below Fira and accessed by cable-car (adult/child one way €3/1.50), donkey (up only, €3) or by foot (588 steps).

Dakoutros Travel (☎ 22860 22958; www.dakoutros.travel.gr; ☎ 8.30am-10pm), opposite the taxi station, is extremely helpful. Internet access is available at **PC World** (Central Sq; per 30min €2.10).

Sights & Activities

FIRA

The stunning caldera views from Fira are unparalleled.

The exceptional **Museum of Prehistoric Thira** (☎ 22860 23217; admission €3; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun), which has wonderful displays of artefacts predominantly from ancient Akrotiri, is two blocks south of the main square.

AROUND THE ISLAND

Santorini's black-sand beaches of **Perissa** and **Kamari** sizzle.

Excavations in 1967 uncovered the well-preserved Minoan settlement of **Akrotiri** at the south of the island, but a bit of the roof collapsed in 2005, and at the time of research it's future as a visitor attraction was up in the air.

At the north of the island, the flawless village of **Oia** (pronounced ee-ah), famed for its postcard sunsets, is a must-visit. There's a path from Fira to Oia along the top of the caldera that takes about three hours to walk.

Excellent excursions can take you to the islands in the caldera, you can clamber around on volcanic lava on **Nea Kameni**, then swim into warm springs in the sea at **Palia Kameni**.

Sleeping

Fira has spectacular views, but is miles from the beaches. Perissa has a great beach but is on the southeast coast, away from the caldera views.

Santorini Camping (☎ 22860 22944; www.santorini.camping.gr; Fira; camp sites per person €8; (P) (C)) This ground, 500m east of Fira's main square, is the cheapest option. There is a restaurant, bar and minimarket, but no caldera views.

Maria's Rooms (☎ 22860 25143; Agiou Mina, Fira; d €60; ☎) On the southern edge of Fira, Maria's has small but immaculate rooms, and stunning caldera views from its terrace.

Stelio's Place (☎ 22860 81860; www.steliosplace.com; Perissa; d/tr/q €60/75/100; ☎) Stelio's is an excellent choice just back from Perissa's beach. There a refreshing pool, very friendly service, and free port and airport transfers. Rates more than halve outside the high season.

Eating & Drinking

Cheap eateries are in abundance around the main square in Fira.

Nikolas (☎ 22860 24550; Erythrou Stavrou; dishes €5-10) This long-established traditional place serving Greek cuisine in the heart of Fira receives rave reviews from diners.

Taverna Lava (☎ 22860 81776; Perissa; dishes €3-8) On Perissa's waterfront, this island-wide favourite has a mouthwatering menu. You can visit the kitchen and pick what looks good.

Most of the popular bars and clubs in Fira are clustered along Erythrou Stavrou.

Kira Thira (☎ 22860 22770) Opposite Nikolas Restaurant, Kira Thira is Fira's oldest bar, with smooth jazz and ethnic sounds, and occasional live music.

SANTORINI (THIRA)



Full Moon Bar (☎ 22860 81177; ☎ 9pm-late) On the main street in Perissa, this lively nightclub goes off until the wee hours.

Getting There & Around

Santorini's international airport (code JTR) has daily flight connections with Athens (€94), and less regular ones with Iraklio, Mykonos and Rhodes.

There are daily ferries (€27.80, nine hours) and fast boats (€45, 5½ hours) to Piraeus, and daily connections in summer to Mykonos, Ios, Paros and Crete. Large ferries use Athinios port, where they are met by buses (€1.20) and taxis that will take you into Fira.

Buses go frequently from Fira to Oia, Kamari, Perissa and Akrotiri.

CRETE KPTH

pop 540,000

Greece's largest and most southerly island of Crete, with its dramatic landscape and unique cultural identity, is a delight to explore. While the island's proud, friendly and hospitable

people have enthusiastically embraced mass tourism, they continue to fiercely protect their traditions and culture.

IRAKLIO ΗΠΑΚΑΕΙΟ

pop 131,000

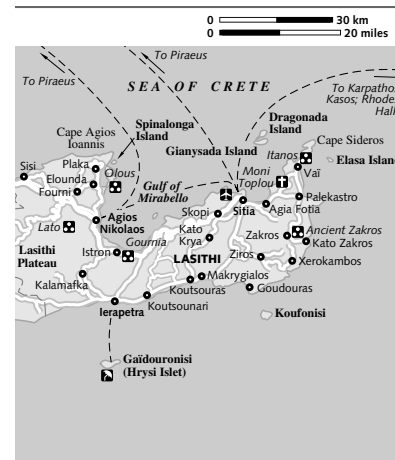
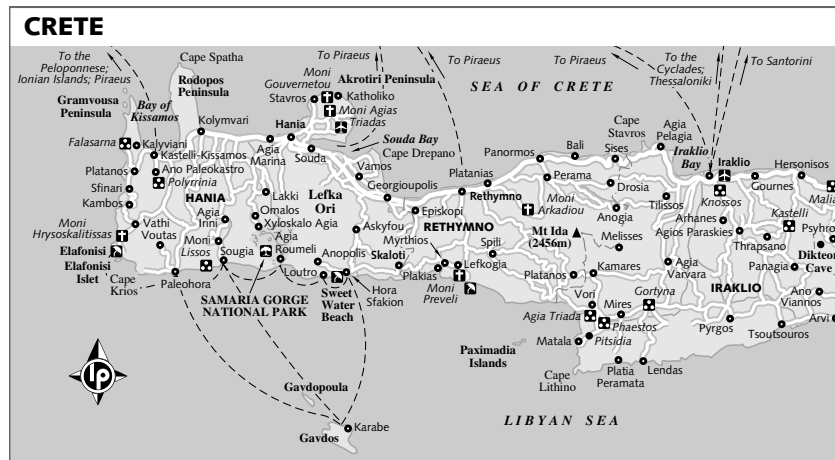
Iraklio (ee-rah-klee-oh; often spelt Heraklion), Crete's capital, is a bustling modern city that has undergone a significant makeover in recent years, partly due to being chosen as an 'Olympic city', but mostly because of increasing prosperity.

Orientation & Information

Iraklio's Old Harbour is instantly recognisable as it is protected by the old Venetian fortress. The New Harbour is 400m east. Plateia Venizelou, the main square, is the heart of the city, 500m south of the Old Harbour, up 25 Avgoustou.

There is no official tourist office, but **KTEL** (www.ktel.org), which runs the buses on Crete, has useful tourist information inside Bus Station A.

Skoutelis Travel (☎ 28102 80808; www.skoutelis.gr; 25 Avgoustou 20) handles airline and ferry bookings,



and hires cars. **Gallery Games** (www.gallerygames.net; Korai 14; per hr €1.50; ☎ 24hr) has high-speed internet access.

Sights

Iraklio's **archaeological museum** (☎ 28102 26092; Xanthoudidou 2; adult/student €6/3; ☎ 12.30-7pm Mon, 8am-7pm Tue-Sun) has an outstanding Minoan collection, second only to the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.

The **Battle of Crete Museum** (☎ 28103 46554; cr Doukos Beaufort & Hatzidakis; admission free; ☎ 8am-3pm) chronicles the historic WWII battle with photographs, letters, uniforms and weapons.

Sleeping

Rent Rooms Hellas (☎ 28102 88851; Handakos 24; dm/d/tr with shared bathroom €10/30/40) A popular budget choice, this place has a lively atmosphere, packed dorms, a rooftop bar and a bargain breakfast.

Hotel Mirabello (☎ 28102 85052; www.mirabello-hotel.gr; Theotokopoulou 20; s/d €37/40; ☎) A pleasant, relaxed budget hotel on a quiet street in the centre of town, this place is run by an ex-sea captain who has travelled the world.

Eating & Drinking

There's a congregation of cheap eateries in the Plateia Venizelou and El Greco Park area, as well as a bustling, colourful market all the way along 1866.

Giakoumis Taverna (☎ 28102 80277; Theodosaki 5-8; dishes €2.50-8; ☎ Mon-Sat) With its full menu of Cretan specialities, Giakoumis is the best

of a bunch of cheap tavernas in the market area.

Ippokampos Ouzeri (☎ 28102 80240; Mitsotaki 2; dishes €3.50-8) On the waterfront, this place serves a popular, well-priced menu. Enjoy eating at a sidewalk table or on the promenade across the road.

Take Five (☎ 28102 26564; Akroleondos 7; ☎ 10am-late) On the edge of El Greco Park, this gay-friendly place has low-key music and ambience. The outside tables fill up after sundown.

Getting There & Around

There are many flights daily from Iraklio's **Nikos Kazantzakis International Airport** (HER; ☎ 28102 28401) to Athens (€83) and, in summer regular flights to Thessaloniki, Rhodes, Mykonos and Santorini.

Daily ferries service Piraeus (€29.50, seven hours), and most days boats go to Santorini (Thira) and continue on to other Cycladic islands.

The bus station, with departures to Crete's major cities, is just inland from the New Harbour.

KNOSSOS ΚΝΩΣΣΟΣ

Five kilometres south of Iraklio, **Knossos** (☎ 28102 31940; admission €6; ☎ 8am-7pm Apr-Oct, 8am-5pm Nov-Mar) was the capital of Minoan Crete, and is now the island's major tourist attraction.

Knossos (k-nos-os) is the most famous of Crete's Minoan sites and is the inspiration for

the myth of the Minotaur, a half-man half-bull who lived in a labyrinth beneath the king's palace, munching on youths and maidens.

In 1900 Arthur Evans uncovered the ruins of Knossos. Although archaeologists tend to disparage Evans' reconstruction, the buildings give a reasonable idea of what a Minoan palace might have looked like.

A whole day is needed to see the site and a guidebook is essential. Arrive early to avoid the crowds. From Iraklio, local bus 2 goes to Knossos (€0.95) every 10 minutes from Bus Station A.

RETHYMNO ΡΕΘΥΜΝΟ

pop 29,000

Rethymno (*reth-im-no*) is one of Crete's architectural treasures, due to its stunning fortress and mix of Venetian and Turkish houses in the old quarter, on a peninsula that juts out into the Sea of Crete. The fortress sits at the head of the peninsula, while the Venetian Harbour, ferry quay and beach are on its eastern side.

The **municipal tourist office** (☎ 28310 29148; Eleftheriou Venizelou; ☎ 9am-2pm Mon-Fri), on the beach side of El Venizelou, is convenient and helpful. **Ellotia Tours** (☎ 28310 24533; elotia@ret.forthnet.gr; Arkadiou 161) will answer all transport, accommodation and tour inquiries. **Galero Café** (☎ 28310 54345; per hr €3), beside the Rimondi fountain, has internet access.

Rethymno's 16th-century **Venetian fortress** (fortezza; ☎ 28310 28101; Paleokastro Hill; admission €3; ☎ 8am-8pm) affords great views across the town

and mountains. **Happy Walker** (☎ 28310 52920; www.happywalker.com; Tombazi 56) runs an excellent programme of daily and longer walks in the nearby countryside.

Elizabeth Camping (☎ 28310 28694; www.camping-elizabeth.com; camp sites per person/tent €6.50/4.35) is situated on Mysiria beach, 4km east of town, and is accessible by the bus that goes to and from Iraklio. It has a taverna, snack bar and minimarket. **Rethymno Youth Hostel** (☎ 28310 22848; www.yhrethymno.com; Tombazi 41; dm €8) is a well-run place, with crowded dorms, free hot showers and no curfew.

Restaurant Symposium (☎ 28310 50538; www.symposium-kriti.gr; dishes from €3.50), near the Rimondi fountain, takes its food seriously (check out its website), but has good prices. Nearby, **Mona Liza** (☎ 28310 23082; Paleologou 36) is legendary for its 'crema' ice cream made from sheep's milk.

There are daily ferries between Piraeus and Rethymno (€24, nine hours). Buses depart regularly to Iraklio (€5.90, 1½ hours) and Hania (€5.55, one hour).

HANIA ΧΑΝΙΑ

pop 53,500

Hania (*hahn-yah*; often spelt Chania) is Crete's most romantic and alluring town, with a rich mosaic of Venetian and Ottoman architecture, particularly around the Old Harbour. Hania is a good base for exploring nearby beaches and a spectacular mountainous interior.

Orientation & Information

Hania's bus station is on Kydonias, two blocks southwest of Plateia 1866, one of the city's main squares. From Plateia 1866, the Old Harbour is a short walk north on Halidon.

The **Tourist information office** (E01; ☎ 28210 36155; Plateia 1866 16-18; ☎ 8am-2.30pm) is helpful, and provides practical information and maps. **Tellus Travel** (☎ 28210 91500; Halidon 108; ☎ 8am-11pm) can help with schedules and ticketing, and hires cars. **Hotel Manos** (☎ 28210 94156; Zambeliou 24; per hr €4) provides internet access.

Sights & Activities

A stroll around the **Old Harbour** is a must. It's worth the 1.5km walk around the sea wall to get to the Venetian **lighthouse** at the entrance of the harbour.

The **archaeological museum** (☎ 28210 90334; Halidon 30; admission €2; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) is in a 16th-century Venetian Church that the Turks made into a mosque.

If you're interested in activities like trekking or mountain biking in Crete's rugged Lefka Ori ('White Mountains') south of Hania, contact **Alpine Travel** (☎ 28210 50939; www.alpine.gr; Bouniali 11-19, Hania; 🕒 9am-2pm Mon-Fri) or **Trekking Plan** (☎ 28210 60861; www.cycling.gr).

Sleeping

Camping Hania (☎ 28210 31138; www.camping-hania.com; camp sites per person/tent €5/3.50) Take the Kalamaki beach bus from the southeast corner of Plateia 1866 to get to this popular spot, 3km west of town on the beach. There is a restaurant, bar and minimarket.

Pension Lena (☎ 28210 86860; www.travelling-crete.com/lena; Ritsou 5; s/d €32/50; 🍷) A friendly *pension* in an old Turkish building near the mouth of the Old Harbour, Lena's has an old-world feel and a cosy atmosphere. Help yourself to a room if Lena isn't there.

Hotel Manos (☎ 28210 94156; www.manoshotel.gr; Zambeliou 24; s/d €45/55; 🍷) One of the oldest small waterfront hotels, Manos has great views from its harbour-facing rooms. The rooms are clean and spacious, and there is an internet café.

Eating & Drinking

The entire waterfront of the Old Harbour is lined with restaurants and tavernas. For cheap traditional cuisine, the tavernas in Hania's covered food market offer excellent quality and prices.

Amphora Restaurant (☎ 28210 93224; Akti Koundourioti 49; mains €4.50-7) On the waterfront and under the hotel of the same name, Amphora serves Cretan specialities and excellent pasta dishes, and has a fine reputation.

Tamam (☎ 28210 58639; Zambeliou 49; mains €4-6.50; 🕒 1pm-12.30am) A taverna in an old converted Turkish bathhouse, this place has tasty

soups and a superb selection of vegetarian specialities.

Café Kriti (☎ 28210 58661; Kalergon 22; 🕒 8pm-late) Also known as Lyrakia, Café Kriti is the best place in Hania to hear live Cretan music. It's rough-and-ready, but a fine place to have a drink.

Getting There & Away

There are several flights daily between Hania (CHQ) and Athens (€86), and five flights weekly to Thessaloniki (€110).

Daily ferries sail between Piraeus (€22, nine hours) and the port of Souda, 7km east of Hania.

Frequent buses run along Crete's northern coast to the towns of Iraklio, Rethymno and Kastelli-Kissamos; buses run less frequently to Paleohora, Omalos and Hora Sfakion.

SAMARIA GORGE ΦΑΡΑΓΓΙ ΤΗΣ ΣΑΜΑΡΙΑΣ

The **Samaria Gorge** (☎ 28250 67179; admission €5; 🕒 6am-3pm May-mid-Oct) is one of Europe's most spectacular gorges and a 'must-do'. Walkers should take rugged footwear, food, drinks and sun protection for this five- to six-hour hike.

You can do the walk as part of an excursion tour, or do it independently by taking the Omalos bus from the main bus station in Hania (€5, one hour) to the head of the gorge at Xyloskalo (1230m) at 6.15am, 7.30am, 8.30am or 4.30pm. It's a 16.7km walk out (all downhill) to Agia Roumeli on the coast, from where you take a boat to Hora Sfakion (€5, 1¼ hours, three daily) and then a bus back to Hania (€5.40, two hours, four daily). You're forbidden from spending the night in the gorge, so you need to complete the walk in a day.

BEAT THE CROWDS: SAMARIA GORGE WALK *Craig McLachlan*

The Samaria Gorge walk is extremely popular and can get quite crowded, especially in summer. Most walkers are on a day trip from Hania and other northern coast cities, and are heading back there that day.

If you've got a bit of time on your hands, an excellent option is to let the sprinters go and to take your time trekking through this stupendous gorge.

Our pick Farangi Restaurant & Rooms (☎ 28250 91225; s/d/tr €18/30/35; 🍷) is a great place to head when you hit the coast at Agia Roumeli. You can down a cool beer, take a dip in the refreshing Libyan Sea, savour the restaurants' tasty Cretan specials and stay the night in the tidy rooms above. The next day you can take a ferry either west to Sougia or Paleohora, or east to Loutro or Hora Sfakion.

DODECANESE ΔΩΔΕΚΑΝΗΣΑ

pop 190,000

Due to their geographic proximity to the coast of western Turkey, the 18 islands of the Dodecanese have suffered a turbulent past of invasions and occupations that has endowed them with a fascinating cultural diversity.

RHODES ΡΟΔΟΣ

pop 98,000

Rhodes (*ro-dos* in Greek) is the largest island in the Dodecanese. According to mythology, the sun god Helios chose Rhodes as his bride, and bestowed light, warmth and vegetation upon her. The blessing seems to have paid off, for Rhodes produces more flowers and sunny days than most Greek islands.

Rhodes City

pop 56,000

Rhodes' capital and port is Rhodes City, on the northern tip of the island. Almost everything of interest lies in its amazing World Heritage-listed Old Town, the largest inhabited medieval town in Europe. The New Town to the north is a monument to package tourism.

The main port, Commercial Harbour, is east of the Old Town, and north of here is Mandraki Harbour.

INFORMATION

The **tourist office** (EOT; ☎ 22410 35226; cnr Makariou & Papagou; 🕒 7.30am-3pm Mon-Fri) has brochures, maps and *Rodos News*, a free English-language newspaper.

In the New Town, **Triton Holidays** (☎ 22410 21690; www.tritondmc.gr; 1st fl, Plastira 9, Mandraki) is extremely helpful, handling accommodation bookings, ticketing and hire cars.

In the Old Town, **Mango Café Bar** (www.mango.gr; Plateia Dorieos 3; per hr €5; 🕒 9.30am-midnight) has internet access.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The Old Town is reputedly the world's finest surviving example of medieval fortification, with 12m-thick walls.

The cobbled **Odos Ippoton** (Avenue of the Knights) is lined with magnificent medieval buildings, the most imposing of which is the

Palace of the Grand Masters (☎ 22410 23359; admission €6; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun), which was restored, but never used, as a holiday home for Mussolini.

The 15th-century Knight's Hospital now houses the **archaeological museum** (☎ 22410 27657; Plateia Mousiou; admission €3; 🕒 8am-4pm Tue-Sun) and has an impressive collection that includes the *Aphrodite of Rhodes*.

SLEEPING

Mango Rooms (☎ 22410 24877; www.mango.gr; Plateia Dorieos 3, Old Town; s/d €30/45; 🍷) Mango has a restaurant, bar and internet café down below, six well-kept rooms above, and a superb sun terrace on top.

Pink Elephant Pension (☎ 22410 22469; www.pinkelphantpension.com; Irodotou 42, Old Town; d €30-50) Down a side street at the back of the Old Town, this *pension* has cosy, compact and clean rooms around a communal courtyard.

Hotel Spot (☎ 22410 34737; www.spohotelrhodes.com; Perikleous 21, Old Town; s/d/tr incl breakfast €35/60/80; 🍷) Convenient and exceptionally clean, the Spot offers tastefully decorated rooms, left-luggage facilities and a small book exchange.

EATING & DRINKING

There are a lot of cheap places in the New Market, at the southern end of Mandraki Harbour.

Taverna Kostas (☎ 22410 26217; Pythagora 62, Old Town; mains €5-10) This good-value spot has stood the test of time and can't be beaten for its quality grills and fish dishes.

Kafé Besara (☎ 22410 30363; Sofokleous 11, Old Town) This Aussie-owned establishment is one of the Old Town's liveliest bars and a great spot to hang out.

Mango Café Bar (☎ 22410 24877; Plateia Dorieos 3, Old Town) Mango claims to have the cheapest drinks in town and is the preferred haunt of local expats and die-hard travellers.

Colorado Entertainment Centre (☎ 22410 75120; www.coloradoclub.gr; cnr Akti Miaouli & Orfanidou 57) This enormous palace of hype has six venues in one in the New Town street of Orfanidou, also known as 'Bar St'.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are daily flights between Rhodes' airport (RHO) and Athens (€75), Iraklio (Crete; €65) and Karpathos (€28).

There are daily ferries from Rhodes to Piraeus (€38, 15 to 18 hours). Most sail via the

Dodecanese north of Rhodes, but at least three times weekly there is a service via Karpathos, Crete and the Cyclades. There are also four ferries a week heading east to Kastellorizo (€17, four hours)

Between April and October there are daily boats from Rhodes to Marmaris in Turkey (one way/return €45/60).

GETTING AROUND

Rhodes City has two bus stations. The west-side bus station, next to the New Market, serves the airport (€1.50, 25 minutes), Kamiros (€4.10, 55 minutes) and the west coast. The **east-side bus station** (Plateia Rimini) serves the east coast, Lindos (€4.60, 1½ hours) and the inland southern villages.

Around the Island

The **Acropolis of Lindos** (☎ 22440 31258; admission €6; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Tue-Sun), 47km from Rhodes City, is an ancient city spectacularly perched atop a 116m-high rocky outcrop. Below is Lindos town, a tangle of streets with elaborately decorated 17th-century houses.

The extensive ruins of **Kamiros** (admission €4; ☎ 8am-5pm Tue-Sun), an ancient Doric city on the west coast, are well preserved, with the remains of houses, baths, a cemetery and a temple.

KOS ΚΩΣ

pop 17,900

A long, fertile island with a mountainous spine, Kos is only 5km from the Turkish peninsula of Bodrum. Package tourists turn up in droves, and the main town and port of Kos Town almost exudes an aura of mini Las Vegas.

Orientation & Information

Kos Town is based around a circular harbour protected by the imposing Castle of the Knights. The ferry quay is north of the castle. Akti Kountourioti is the main drag around the harbour.

The helpful **Municipal tourist office** (☎ 22420 24460; www.kosinfo.gr; Vasileos Georgiou 1; ☎ 8am-2.30pm & 3-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) is on the waterfront directly south of the port. **Exas Travel** (☎ 22420 28545) handles schedules, ticketing and excursions.

Café Del Mare (www.cybercafe.gr; Megalou Alexandrou 4; per 30min €3; ☎ 9am-1am) is a well-equipped internet café near the harbour.

Sights & Activities

The focus of the **archaeological museum** (☎ 22420 28326; Plateia Eleftherias; adult/student €3/2; ☎ 8am-2.30pm Tue-Sun) is sculpture from excavations around the island.

The **ancient agora**, with the ruins of the **Shrine of Aphrodite** and **Temple of Hercules**, is just off Plateia Eleftherias. North of the agora is the **Hippocrates Plane Tree**, under which the man himself is said to have taught his pupils.

On a pine-clad hill, 4km southwest of Kos Town, stand the extensive ruins of the renowned healing centre of **Asklipieion** (☎ 22420 28763; adult/student €4/3; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Tue-Sun), where Hippocrates practised medicine.

Sleeping

Kos Camping (☎ 22420 23275; camp sites per adult/tent €4.50/2.50) This spot, 3km along the eastern waterfront, has good shade and a minimarket. Hop on any of the buses going to Agios Fokas from the harbour.

Pension Alexis (☎ 22420 28798; fax 22420 25797; Iro-dotou 9; s/d €25/30; ☎) This highly recommended place has long been a budget favourite with travellers. It has large rooms and shared facilities. It's back behind Dolphin Sq.

Eating & Drinking

The central waterfront is lined with restaurants and bars.

Barbas (☎ 22400 27856; Evripilou 6; mains €3-5) Opposite Hotel Afendoulis, Barbas specialises in grills and has a mouth-watering chicken souvlaki. Sit at the streetside tables and watch the locals pass by.

Olympiada (☎ 22420 23031; mains €3.50-4) Back in the ruins area, Olympiada serves reliable unpretentious Greek dishes.

Fashion Club (☎ 22420 22592; Kanari 2) Off Dolphin Sq, this monster establishment has three bars and is a long-time favourite.

Getting There & Around

There are daily flights to Athens (€93) from Kos' Ippokratis International Airport (code KGS).

There are frequent ferries from Rhodes to Kos that continue on to Piraeus (€38, 12 to 15 hours). Hydrofoils head north to Patmos and Samos daily. In summer ferries depart daily for Bodrum in Turkey (€34 return, one hour).

By tourist office is a blue minitrain for Asklipion (return €3, hourly) and a green minitrain that does city tours (€3, 20 minutes).

NORTHEASTERN AEGEAN ISLANDS ΤΑ ΝΗΣΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΒΟΡΕΙΟΑΝΑΤΟ ΛΙΚΟ ΑΙΓΑΙΟΥ

pop 205,000

One of Greece's best-kept secrets, these far-flung islands are closer to Turkey than mainland Greece. Turkish influence is barely visible, despite the islands being part of the Ottoman Empire until 1912.

LESVOS (MYTILINI) ΛΕΣΒΟΣ (ΜΥΤΙΑΗΝΗ)

pop 93,500

The third-largest of the Greek islands, Lesvos has always been a centre of philosophy and artistic achievement. The two main towns on the island are the capital of Mytilini on the southeast coast and attractive Mithymna on the north coast.

Mytilini Μυτιλήνη

pop 27,250

The capital and main port, Mytilini, is an attractive working town, with most of the action around its waterfront. With a large university campus, Mytilini is a lively place, even out of season.

The **tourist office** (☎ 22510 42511; 6 Aristarhou; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Fri), 50m up Aristarhou inland from the quay, offers brochures and maps. The **tourist police** (☎ 22510 22776) are at the entrance to the quay and are helpful if you're outside tourist office hours. **Samiotis Tours** (☎ 22510 42574; samiotistours@hotmail.com; Kountourioti 43), on the waterfront, handles flights, boat schedules, ticketing and excursions to Turkey. **Sponda** (Kominaki; per hr €3), a block back from the waterfront, has internet access in a pool bar.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Mytilini's excellent neoclassical **archaeological museum** (☎ 22510 22087; 8 Noemvriou; adult/child €3/2; ☎ 8am-7.30pm) has a fascinating collection from Neolithic to Roman times.

A superb place for a stroll or a picnic is the pine forest surrounding Mytilini's impressive **fortress** (adult/student €2/1; ☎ 8am-2.30pm Tue-Sun),

which was built in early Byzantine times and enlarged by the Turks.

Five kilometres from Mytilini, on the Gulf of Yera, are the **Therma Yera hot springs** (☎ 22510 24575; admission €2.50; ☎ 8am-6pm), where you can bathe in a steamy white room overlooking the water and mountains.

SLEEPING

Pension Thalia (☎ 22510 24640; Kinikiou 1; s/d €25/30) This *pension* has clean, bright rooms in a large house. It's about a five-minute walk north of the main square, up Ermou. Follow the signs from the corner of Ermou and Adramytiou.

Pension Iren (☎ 22510 22787; Komnaki 41; d/tr incl breakfast €30/35) One block back from the waterfront and easy to find, rooms here are simple but clean. It's not far from the ferry quay.

EATING & DRINKING

Restaurant Averof (☎ 22510 22180; Ermou 52; mains from €4) Hearty Greek staples, such as *patsas* (tripe soup), are dished up at this no-nonsense traditional place just back from the main square.

Kalderimi (☎ 22510 46577; Thasou 3; mains from €6) Popular with locals, Kalderimi has an excellent ambience with tables in a vine-covered pedestrian street just back from the Sappho statue on the main harbour.

Ocean Eleven Bar (Kountourioti 17) On the corner on the waterfront, this is a superb spot to relax with a drink and partake in some Mytilini people-watching.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Written up on flight schedules as Mytilene, Lesvos' airport (code MJT) has daily connections with Athens (€78) and Thessaloniki (€88), and two weekly to Chios (€28).

In summer there are daily boats to Piraeus (€27.90, 12 hours), some via Chios and Mykonos, and one boat a week to Thessaloniki (€30.20, 13 hours). There are four ferries a week to Ayvalik in Turkey (one way/return €30/45).

Mytilini has two bus stations. For local buses, head along the waterfront to the main square, where buses leave regularly for Therma Yera. For long-distance buses, walk 600m from the ferry along the waterfront to El Venizelou and turn right until you reach Agia Irinis park. There are regular services in summer to Mithymna and Skala Eresou.

SAPPHO, LESBIANS AND LESVOS

One of Greece's great ancient poets, Sappho, was born on the island of Lesbos during the 7th century BC, in the town of Eresos. Her lyrically evocative style and richly sumptuous imagery were devoted to love and desire – and the objects of her affection were often female. Owing to this last fact, her name and birthplace have come to be associated with female homosexuality.

These days Lesbos is visited by many lesbians paying homage to Sappho. The whole island is very gay-friendly, in particular the southwestern beach resort of Skala Eresou, which is built over ancient Eresos, Sappho's birthplace. The village is well set up to cater to lesbian needs and has a **Women Together festival** held annually in September. Check out **Sappho Travel** (www.sapphotravel.com) for details.

There is an excellent statue of Sappho taking pride of place in the main square on the waterfront in Mytilini.

Mithymna Μίθυμνα

pop 1500

The gracious, preserved town of Mithymna (known by locals as Molyvos) is 62km north of Mytilini (€5, 1¼ hours by bus). Cobble streets canopied by flowering vines wind up the hill below the impressive castle.

From the bus stop, walk straight ahead towards the town for 100m to the helpful **municipal tourist office** (☎ 22530 71347; www.mithymna.gr; ☎ 8am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun), which has good maps. A further 50m on, the cobbled main thoroughfare of 17 Noemvriou heads up to the right. Alternatively, going straight at this point will take you to the colourful fishing port. **Panatella Holidays** (☎ 22530 71520; www.panatella-holidays.com), just before the fork, handles bookings and runs all kinds of local trips.

The noble **Genoese castle** (☎ 22530 71803; admission €2; ☎ 8am-7pm Tue-Sun) towers above the town and affords tremendous views out to Turkey. Pebbly **Mithymna Beach** is good for swimming. Don't forget to stroll down to the harbour.

Eftalou hot springs (☎ 22530 71245; public/private baths per person €3.50/5; ☎ public baths 10am-2pm & 4-8pm, private baths 9am-6pm), 4km from town on the beach, is a superb bathhouse complex with a whitewashed dome and steaming, pebbled pool.

Nassos Guest House (☎ 22530 71432; www.nassos.guesthouse.com; Arionis; d/tr €20-35) is an airy, friendly place with shared facilities and a communal kitchen in an old Turkish house oozing with character.

Betty's Restaurant (☎ 22530 71421; Agora; mains from €5) has superb home-style Greek food, views and atmosphere in a building that was once a notorious bordello.

SPORADES ΣΠΟΡΑΔΕΣ

Scattered to the southeast of the Pelion Peninsula, to which they were once joined, the 11 islands that make up the Sporades group have mountainous terrain and dense vegetation.

SKIATHOS ΣΚΙΑΘΟΣ

pop 6150

Lush and green, Skiathos has a beach-resort feel about it. An international airport has brought loads of package tourists, but the island still oozes enjoyment. Skiathos Town and some excellent beaches are on the hospitable south coast.

Orientation & Information

Skiathos Town's main street is Papadiamanti, running inland opposite the quay. There's a **tourist information booth** (☎ 24270 23172) to the left as you leave the port, but it opens irregularly. The helpful **tourist police** (☎ 24270 23172; ☎ 8am-9pm) can provide information and maps.

Heliotropio Travel (☎ 24270 22430; helio@skiathos.gr), opposite the ferry quay, handles ticketing, hire cars, and runs an excellent day trip that takes in Skopelos and Alonnisos (€20). **Internet Zone Café** (Evangelistrias 28; per hr €4.40; ☎ 9am-1am) is 30m from the post office.

Skiathos has superb beaches, particularly on the south coast. **Koukounaries Beach** is popular with families. A stroll over the headland, **Big Banana Beach** is lovely, but if you want an all-over tan, head a tad further to **Little Banana Beach**, where bathing suits are a rarity.

Sleeping

The **Rooms to Let** (☎ 24270 22990) bookings kiosk on the waterfront opens when ferries and

hydrofoils arrive. Prices can as much as halve out of the high season.

Camping Koukounaries (☎ 24270 49250; camp sites per person/tent €7/3) This camping ground, 30 minutes' drive from town by bus at Koukounaries Beach, has good facilities, a minimarket and a taverna.

Pension Pandora (☎ 24270 24357, 69791 56019; www.skiathosinfo.com/accomm/pension-pandora; Paleokastro; s/d/q €30/45/60; ☎ ☎) Run by the effervescent Georgina, this family-run place is 10 minutes' walk north of the quay. The spotless rooms have TV, kitchen and balconies.

Eating & Drinking

Skiathos is brimming with eateries. Nightlife sprawls along Polytehniou.

Taverna Dionysos (☎ 24270 22675; Panora) This well-run taverna has tasty three-course menus from €7, and presents you with an ouzo before dinner and a *metaxa* (brandy) with coffee to finish.

Psaradika Ouzeri (☎ 24270 23412; Paralia; mains €3.50-10) By the fish market at the far end of the old port, Psaradika is the seafood winner, specialising in fresh fish at decent prices.

Kahlua Bar (☎ 24270 23205; Polytehniou) On the club strip at the eastern waterfront end of town, Kahlua is popular and pulses with mainstream DJ sets and dancing drinkers.

Getting There & Around

In summer there is a daily flight from Skiathos' airport (code JSI) to Athens (€53).

There are frequent daily hydrofoils to/from the mainland ports of Volos (€21.10, 1¼ hours) and Agios Konstantinos (€23.20, 1½ hours), as well as cheaper ferries. The hydrofoils head on to and back from Skopelos (€10, 35 minutes) and Alonnisos (€14.20, one hour). In summer there is a daily hydrofoil to Thessaloniki (€35.30, 3½ hours).

Crowded buses ply the south-coast road between Skiathos Town and Koukounaries every 30 minutes between 7.30am and 11pm, stopping at all the beaches along the way.

SKOPELOS ΣΚΟΠΕΛΟΣ

pop 4700

A mountainous island, Skopelos is covered in pine forests, vineyards, olive groves and fruit orchards. The main port and capital of **Skopelos Town**, on the east coast, skirts a semi-circular bay and clambers in tiers up a hillside, culminating in a ruined fortress.

Velanio Beach on the south coast is the island's nudie spot. On the west coast, pebbled **Panormos Beach**, with its sheltered emerald bay surrounded by pine forest, is superb. The 2km stretch of **Milia Beach**, a few kilometres further on, is considered the island's best for swimming.

In Skopelos Town, there is no tourist office, but **Thalpos Leisure & Services** (☎ 24240 22947; www.holidayislands.com), on the waterfront, is handy for accommodation and tours. **Skopelos Internet Café** (per hr €3.50) and a stack of popular nightspots are on Doulidi.

Pension Sotos (☎ 24240 22549; www.skopelos.net/sotos; s/d €25/50; ☎ ☎), in the middle of the waterfront, has big rooms in an enchanting old Skopelete building. There's also a communal kitchen, terrace and courtyard.

Head to Souvlaki Sq, 100m up from the dock, for cheap eats. Top spot in town to chill out is under the huge plane tree at **Platanos Jazz Bar** (☎ 24240 23661), opposite the excursion-boat quay. It's open all day, and plays wicked jazz and blues.

Flying Dolphin hydrofoils dash several times daily to and from Skiathos (€10.30, 45 minutes), Alonnisos (€7.70, 20 minutes), Volos (€26.30, 2¼ hours) and Agios Konstantinos (€27.40, 2½ hours). There are frequent buses from Skopelos Town to the beaches.

ALONNISOS ΑΛΟΝΝΗΣΟΣ

pop 2700

Attractive Alonnisos is at the end of the line and thereby the least visited of the Sporades' main islands. The seas surrounding Alonnisos have been declared a marine park and reputedly have the cleanest waters in the Aegean.

The port village of Patitiri isn't too appealing. Its concrete buildings were slapped together in 1965 after an earthquake destroyed the hill-top capital of Alonnisos Town. There are two main thoroughfares; facing inland from the ferry quay, Pelasgos is to the left and Ikion Dolopon is to the far right.

There is no tourist office, but the post office, police and internet access at **Techno Plus** (☎ 24240 29100; per hr €3; ☎ 9am-2pm & 5-9pm) are on Ikion Dolopon. On the waterfront itself, **Alonnisos Travel** (☎ 24240 65188; www.alonnisotravel.gr) handles boat scheduling and ticketing.

Alonnisos is ideal for walking. Waterfront travel agencies offer guided tours or there's an excellent trail guide called *Alonnisos on Foot: A Walking & Swimming Guide* by Bente

Keller and Elias Tsoukanas, which is available at newsstands.

The **Rooms to Let Service** (☎ 24240 66188; fax 24240 65577; ☎ 9.30am-2pm & 6.30-10.30pm), opposite the quay, books accommodation all over the island. **Camping Rocks** (☎ 24240 65410; camp sites per person €5) is a shady, basic camping ground. It is a steep signposted hike about 1.5km from the port. **Pension Pleiades** (☎ 24240 65235; pleiades@internet.gr; s/d €35/50; ♿) looks out over the harbour and is visible from the quay. The rooms are immaculate, balconied, bright and cheerful.

To Kamaki Ouzeri (☎ 24240 65245; Ikion Dolopon; mains €4-10) is a traditional island eatery. Check the ready-to-eat dishes out in the kitchen.

Flying Dolphin hydrofoils provide the most regular schedules between the islands. They travel several times daily to Skopelos Town (€7.70, 20 minutes), Skiathos (€14.70, 1½ hours), Volos (€27.80, 2½ hours) and Agios Konstantinos (€31.30, 2¾ hours).

The local bus (€1) runs to the *hora* (Alonnisos Town) every hour.

IONIAN ISLANDS ΤΑ ΕΠΙΤΑΝΗΣΑ

The idyllic Ionian islands stretch down the western coast of Greece from Corfu in the north to Kythira, off the southern tip of the Peloponnese. Mountainous, with soft light, dramatic cliff-backed beaches and turquoise-coloured water, they're more Italian in feel, offering a contrasting experience to other Greek islands.

CORFU ΚΕΡΚΥΡΑ

pop 109,540

Verdant Corfu is the second-largest and most important island in the group, and many consider it to be Greece's most beautiful island.

Orientation & Information

The capital, Corfu Town, is built on a promontory and the Old Town is wedged between two fortresses. Ferries dock at the new port and the long-distance bus station on Avrami is inland from the port

National Bank of Greece (cnr Voulgareos & Theotoki)

On Line Internet Café (Kapodistria 28; per hr €4)

Tourist Police (☎ 26610 30265; 3rd fl, Samartzi 4)

Sights

The **Archaeological Museum** (☎ 26610 30680; P Vrailli 5, Corfu Town; admission €3; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sun) houses a fascinating collection of finds from Mycenaean to classical times. The **Church of Agios Spiridon** has a richly decorated interior and displays the remains of St Spiridon, paraded through town four times a year.

The main resort on Corfu's west coast is **Paleokastritsa**, set around a series of gorgeous cypress-backed bays. Further south, there are good beaches around the small village of **Agios Gordios**. Between Paleokastritsa and Agios Gordios is the hilltop village of **Pelekas**, a good place to watch the sunset.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Hermes (☎ 26610 39268/39321; fax 26610 31747; G Markora 14, Corfu Town; s/d €30/40, s/d with shared bathroom €20/30) This hotel offers one of the best deals in Corfu Town and is popular with backpackers.

Sunrock (☎ 26610 94637; www.geocities.com/sunrock_corfu; Pelekas Beach; per person with shared bathroom/full board €18/24; ☎ ♿) A family-run resort with great facilities, activities and pick-up service.

Pink Palace (☎ 26610 53103; www.thepinkpalace.com; Agios Gordios Beach; A-/B-class room incl breakfast & dinner per person €30/18; ♿ ♿) If you're missing school camp, head to this garish complex overlooking the sea, which offers a long list of organised activities, from wild beach parties and nude cliff diving to banana boating and table tennis!

To Tsipouzadiko (☎ 26610 82240; Old Port, Corfu Town; mains €3-8; ☎ dinner) This big atmospheric place, with old 45 *rembetika* records on its walls, serves generous portions of fresh (cheap) Greek food. Its lovely garden terrace hums until late with the chatter of locals. It's on a lane behind the Courthouse and Hotel Konstantinoupolis.

La Famiglia (☎ 26610 30270; Maniariisi Arlioti 16; mains €6-14; ☎ 8pm-late) An Italian eatery that's equally as popular with tourists (who eat around 8pm) and locals (who pack the place late) because of its authentic pasta dishes, buzzy atmosphere and great music.

There's nothing like starting the day with an espresso under the airy, elegant arcades of the **Café Liston** (☎ 26610 45514; Eleftherias 10), our pick for people-watching, although local frappé-drinking teens prefer roadside **Libro d'Oro** (The Liston).

Getting There & Away

From Corfu's **Ioannis Kapodistrias airport** (code CFU; ☎ 26610 30180), both **Olympic Airlines** (☎ 26610 38694; Polla 11, Corfu Town) and **Aegean Airlines** (☎ 26610 27100) offer several flights daily to Athens, while Olympic also flies to Thessaloniki a few times weekly.

There are hourly ferries to Igoumenitsa (€6, 1½ hours) and a daily ferry to Paxi (€5, one hour, and in summer there are daily services to Patra (€21 to €25, six hours) on the international ferries.

Daily buses to Athens (€30, 8½ hours) and Thessaloniki (€29, eight hours) leave from the Avrami bus terminal.

Getting Around

Buses for villages close to Corfu Town leave from Plateia San Rocco. Services to other destinations leave from Avrami bus terminal. A taxi from the airport to the Old Town costs around €10.

ITHAKI ΙΘΑΚΗ

pop 3080

Odysseus' long lost home in Homer's *Odyssey*, Ithaki, or ancient Ithaca, is a verdant island blessed with cypress-covered hills and beautiful turquoise bays for swimming.

The tiny village of **Kioni** has a laidback vibe and magical waterfront, and is a wonderful place to chill for a few days. **Hamilton House** (☎ 26740 31654; marina waterfront; r €40) has a certain shabby (cluttered) charm and unbeatable sea views. Also on the waterfront, **Kalipso** (☎ 26740 31066; mains €5-35) serves hearty traditional Greek dishes.

Four Island Ferries operate daily ferries between Frikes (Ithaki), Fiskardo (Kefallonia), and Nydri and Vasiliki (Lefkada). Tickets can be purchased at the Frikes dock just before departure. Most trips average 90 minutes and cost €5/27 per person/car. Phone **Delas Tours** (☎ 26740 32104; www.ithaca.com.gr; Vathy) for times. You really need a car to explore the island.

KEFALLONIA ΚΕΦΑΛΛΟΝΙΑ

pop 45,000

Tranquil cypress and fir-covered Kefallonia has fortunately not succumbed to package tourism to the extent the other Ionian islands have, despite being thrust under the spotlight following its starring role in *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*. It's breathtakingly beautiful in parts and remains low-key outside the resort areas.

Pretty **Fiskardo**, with its pastel-coloured Venetian buildings, set around a picturesque bay, was the only Kefallonian village not to be destroyed by the 1953 earthquake. Despite its popularity with yachts, it's still laidback enough to appeal to independent travellers, and is a sublime spot to chill for a few days. There are lovely walks and sheltered coves for swimming.

Regina's Rooms (☎ 26740 41125; d €50-60) has colourful breezy rooms with TV, fridge and balconies, some with gorgeous bay views, and some with kitchenettes or access to a communal kitchen. Friendly Regina gives good discounts for long stays and when it's quiet. It's located on the car park. **Lagoudera** (☎ 26740 41200; gyros €2) does delicious gyros and grills.

Nautilus Travel (☎ 26740 41440; fax 26740 41470) sells ferry tickets. Four Island Ferries operate daily ferries between Fiskardo (Kefallonia), Frikes (Ithaki), and Nydri and Vasiliki (Lefkada). Most trips average 90 minutes and cost €5.

GREECE DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

There is a good range of budget accommodation in Greece, subject to price controls set by the tourist police. By law, a notice must be displayed in every room stating the category of the room and the seasonal price. If you think you've been ripped off, contact the tourist police. Prices quoted in this chapter are for the high season, unless otherwise stated. Prices are about 40% cheaper between October and May.

Greece has around 350 camping grounds, but many are only open between April and October. Standard facilities include hot showers, kitchens, restaurants and minimarkets – and often a swimming pool. Prices vary according to facilities, but expect to pay €4.50 to €6 per adult, €3.50 for a small tent and €6 for a large one. Free camping is illegal in Greece.

You'll find youth hostels in most major towns and on half a dozen islands. Most hostels are members of the **Greek Youth Hostel Organisation** (Map p522; ☎ 21075 19530; y-hostels@otenet.gr; Damaros 75, Athens 116 33). Most charge €8 to €10 for a bed in a dorm, and you don't have to be a member to stay in any of them.

Domatia, the Greek equivalent of a B&B (minus the breakfast), can represent good value. Expect to pay about €25 to €35 for a single and €40 to 50 for a double. Owners shouting '*Domatia* (rooms)!' generally greet

ferries and buses. Just make sure that your room isn't an hour's walk from the action.

ACTIVITIES

Diving & Snorkelling

There is excellent snorkelling in Greece. Corfu, Mykonos and Santorini are popular with diving schools. Diving without certified supervision is forbidden in order to protect the many antiquities in the depths of the Aegean.

Sailing & Windsurfing

Sailing facilities are generally found at the same locations recommended for windsurfing. Hrysi Akti on Paros and Mylopotas Beach on Ios are two of the best locations. Hire charges for catamarans range from €20 to €25. Windsurfing sailboards are widely available for hire, priced at €12 to €15 per hour. The top spot is Vasiliki on the southern part of Lefkada.

Trekking

Greece has excellent trekking opportunities, but outside the main popular routes trails are generally overgrown and poorly marked. Several companies run organised treks; the biggest is **Trekking Hellas** (Map p524; ☎ 21033 10323; www.trekking.gr; Filellinon 7, Athens 105 57).

BUSINESS HOURS

Banks ☎ 8am to 2pm Monday to Thursday, and 8am to 1.30pm Friday (also afternoons and Saturday morning in large cities).

Bars ☎ generally after 8pm and close after midnight.

Clubs ☎ 11pm but don't really get going until after midnight.

Restaurants ☎ lunch from 11am to 2pm and for dinner from 8pm to 1am. If you're going to an upmarket restaurant, locals generally don't make a booking for earlier than 10pm.

Shops ☎ 8am to 1.30pm and 5.30pm to 8.30pm Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 8am to 2.30pm Monday, Wednesday and Saturday.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Embassies & Consulates in Greece

All foreign embassies in Greece are in Athens and its suburbs.

Australia (Map p522; ☎ 210 645 0404; Dimitriou Soutsou 37, GR-115 21)

Canada (Map p522; ☎ 210 727 3400; Genadiou 4, GR-115 21)

Cyprus (Map p522; ☎ 210 723 7883; Irodou 16, GR-106 75)

France (Map p522; ☎ 210 361 1663; Leoforos Vasilissis Sofias 7, GR-106 71)

Germany (Map p522; ☎ 210 728 5111; cnr Dimitriou 3 & Karaoli, GR-106 75)

Italy (Map p522; ☎ 210 361 7260; Sekeri 2, GR-106 74)

Japan (Map p522; ☎ 210 775 8101; Athens Tower, Leoforos Messogion 2-4, GR-115 27)

New Zealand (Map p522; ☎ 210 687 4701; Kifissias 268, Halandri)

South Africa (Map p522; ☎ 210 680 6645; Kifissias 60, Maroussi, GR-151 25)

Turkey (Map p522; ☎ 210 724 5915; Leoforos Vasilissis Georgiou 8, GR-106 74)

UK (Map p522; ☎ 210 723 6211; Ploutarhou 1, GR-106 75)

USA (Map p522; ☎ 210 721 2951; Leoforos Vasilissis Sofias 91, GR-115 21)

Greek Embassies & Consulates Abroad

Australia (☎ 02-6273 3011; 9 Turrana St, Yarralumla, ACT 2600)

Canada (☎ 613-238 6271; 76-80 Maclaren St, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 0K6)

Cyprus (☎ 02-680 670/671; Byron Blvd 8-10, Nicosia)

France (☎ 01-47 23 72 28; www.amb-grece.fr/presse; 17 Rue Auguste Vaquerie, 75116 Paris)

Germany (☎ 30-20 62 60; www.griechische-botschaft.de; Jaegerstrasse 54-55, 10117 Berlin-Mitte)

Italy (☎ 06-853 7551; www.greekembassy.it; Viale G Rossini 4, Rome 00198)

Japan (☎ 03-3403 0871/2; www.greekemb.jp; 3-16-30 Nishi Azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-0031)

New Zealand (☎ 04-473 7775; 5-7 Willeston St, Wellington)

South Africa (☎ 12-430 7351; 1003 Church St, Arcadia, Pretoria 0083)

Spain (☎ 01-564 4653; Ave Doctor Arce 24, Madrid 28002)

Turkey (☎ 312 448-0647; Ziya-ul-Rahman Caddesi 9-11, Gaziosmanpasa 06700, Ankara)

UK (☎ 020-7229 3850; www.greekembassy.org.uk; 1a Holland Park, London W11 3TP)

USA (☎ 202-939 1300; www.greekembassy.org; 2221 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC 20008)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

In Greece, it's probably easier to list the dates when festivals and events are *not* on! Some are religious, some cultural and others seemingly just an excuse to party. It's worth timing at least part of your trip to coincide with one as you'll be warmly invited to join in the revelry. Check out **Culture Guide** (www.cultureguide.gr) for details.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Although there is no legislation against homosexual activity, it's wise to be discreet in Greece. Nevertheless it's a popular destination for gay travellers, and Mykonos in the

Cyclades has long been famous for its bars, beaches and hedonism, while the town of Eresos on Lesbos has become a pilgrimage site for lesbians.

HOLIDAYS

New Year's Day 1 January

Epiphany 6 January

First Sunday in Lent February

Greek Independence Day 25 March

Good Friday/Easter Sunday March/April

Spring Festival/Labour Day 1 May

Feast of the Assumption 15 August

Ohi Day 28 October

Christmas Day 25 December

St Stephen's Day 26 December

INTERNET RESOURCES

Culture Guide (www.cultureguide.gr) Plenty of information about contemporary culture and the arts.

Greek Ferries (www.greekferries.org) Get all your ferry information from the source. Covers international and domestic ferries.

Greek National Tourist Organisation (www.gnto.gr) Concise tourist information.

Ministry of Culture (www.culture.gr) Information on ancient sites, art galleries and museums.

MONEY

Greece adopted the euro in 2002. Banks exchange cash or travellers cheques in all major currencies, along with Euro-cheques. Post offices charge less commission than banks, but won't cash travellers cheques. Credit cards are not as widely accepted as you'd expect. Always have cash handy. ATMs are located everywhere, except the smallest villages.

Greece is still a cheap destination by northern European standards, but it's no longer dirt cheap. A rock-bottom daily budget of €40 would entail staying in youth hostels or camping, staying away from bars, and only occasionally eating in restaurants or taking ferries. Your money will go further if you travel during the quieter months as accommodation is much cheaper outside the high season.

In restaurants the service charge is included in the bill, but it's customary to leave a small tip – just round up the bill.

POST

Post offices (*tahydromia*) are easily identified by the yellow sign outside. Regular post boxes are yellow, and red post boxes are for express

mail. Postcards and airmail letters within the EU cost €0.60. To other destinations the rate is €0.65. Post within Europe takes five to eight days, and to the USA, Australia and New Zealand, nine to 11 days. Some tourist shops also sell stamps, but with a 10% surcharge.

Parcels are not delivered in Greece – they must be collected from a post office.

TELEPHONE

The international access code is ☎ 00 and the country code is ☎ 30. Area codes are part of the 10-digit number within Greece and generally comprise the first five digits outside of Athens. The landline prefix is 2, the mobile prefix is 6. For local directory inquiries dial ☎ 131/13 and international directory inquiries ☎ 161/162

The Greek telephone service is maintained by Organismos Tilepikoionion Ellados, a public corporation always referred to by its acronym OTE (*o-teh*).

Public phones are easy to use and pressing the 'i' button brings up the operating instructions in English. Public phones are everywhere and all use OTE phonecards, sold at OTE offices and *periptera* (street kiosks). These cards are sold in €3, €5 and €9 versions, and a local call costs €0.30 for three minutes.

If you have a compatible GSM mobile phone from a country with a global roaming agreement with Greece, you should be able to use your phone in Greece. There are several mobile service providers in Greece; **Cosmote** (www.cosmote.gr) has the best coverage. You can purchase a Greek SIM card for around €20 and cards are available everywhere to recharge the SIM card.

VISAS

The list of countries whose nationals can stay in Greece for up to three months includes Australia, Canada, all EU countries, Iceland, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and the USA. For longer stays, apply at a consulate abroad or at least 20 days in advance to the **Aliens Bureau** (Map p522; ☎ 210 770 5711; Leoforos Alexandras 173, Athens; ☎ 8am-1pm Mon-Fri) at Athens Central Police Station. Elsewhere in Greece, apply to the local police authority.

In the past evidence of a visit to Turkish-occupied Northern Cyprus has been problematic when entering Greece. If visiting Northern Cyprus, have officials stamp a piece of paper rather than your passport.

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