

# Useful information about Athens

## *From the airport to the Royal Olympic Hotel*

**By Metro** to the city center (**Syntagma Square Station**) for **€6**. Group tickets (2 or 3 persons) are also available and they provide some discount. The airport Metro line is an extension of Line 3 (**blue line**) that takes you to the downtown **Syntagma station**. From the **Syntagma station** you can pick up a taxi (just signal the taxi driver), to bring you to the hotel. Taxis are relatively cheap and the hotel is very near to the Syntagma Station. The expected Taxi fare is €5 maximum. For further information about metro, please see below.

**By bus:** Take the number **X95** to **Syntagma Square** (subway Lines 2 and 3) for **€3,20**. It's easiest to take it and it's probably quicker than the Metro. It takes 45 min to 1.5 hrs depending on traffic. Buses, unlike Metro, operate 24 hours a day.

**By taxi** for **€30 - €35** If you take a taxi be careful. Make sure that the meter is switched on and shows tariff 1 (tariff 2 applies after midnight and is twice as expensive).

## *Address and contact number of the hotel*

### **Royal Olympic Hotel**

28-34 Athanasiou Diakou Str.

117 43, Athens

Tel.: +30 210 92.88.400

*For further assistance, please do not hesitate to call:-*

Andreas Ploubidis, mobile No. +30 6932611429

Sozos Papakyriacou, mobile No. +357 99677162

## *Time Zone*

Greece is in the Eastern European Time Zone. Eastern European Standard Time (EET) is 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT+2).

## *Money & currency*

The Currency used in Greece is the Euro (EUR or €). Most major banks have branches around Syntagma and there are ATMs all over the city. Standard bank opening hours are 8am to 2.30pm Monday to Thursday and 8am to 2pm on Friday, though some private banks open certain branches until 8pm weekdays and on Saturday.

All major Credit Cards as well as Euro-cheques are recognized and accepted in most hotels, shops, travel and car rental agencies and restaurants. Stickers in the front windows will advise you as to which cards are acceptable.

## *Weather*

Autumn (October and November) can be a great time to visit Athens as temperatures are a little cooler and there is still a lot of sunshine.

October has an average high of 24°C; November sees daytime highs in the upper teens. Night times are pleasantly cool in October.

Rainfall increases rapidly from the start of October. About 50mm of rain can be expected each month. Most of this rain falls in short heavy showers so there is still a lot of sunshine.

The average temperature for October is:

- Average high 23,3 °C (73,9 °F)
- Average mean 18,35 °C (65,03 °F)
- Average Low 13,4 °C (56,1 °F)

For an active visit to Athens, this is a very good time.

### *Language*

The official language is Greek. Most Athenians, especially those involved in the tourist business, know English, and can communicate in other languages such as French or German. Some can speak better than others, but the majority will make an effort to communicate and help you.

### *Taxi*

Taxi fares in Athens are among the lowest of European cities.

Note that meter "must" be running when they start off and it should show a (tariff) "1", except after midnight it shows double tariff "2".

It is quite normal for taxis to pick up other passengers en route; everyone still pays the full fare for their trip. This is an illegal practice and you can deny.

From July 1<sup>st</sup>, taxi drivers have to issue receipts for services including 11% VAT. So including VAT minimum fare is 3.10 euros.

You can call a radio taxi if you wish at a surcharge.

### *Public Transport*

Ticket price: 1€ valid for all transport means – valid for 1,30 hr and possibility to change between metro and buses.

### **Metro**

The Athens Metro is more commonly known in Greece as the Attiko Metro. While its main purpose is transport, it also houses Greek artifacts found during construction of the system. The Athens Metro supports an operating staff of 387 and runs two of the three metro lines; its two lines (red and blue) were constructed largely during the 1990s, and the initial sections opened in January 2000, and the lines run entirely underground. The metro network operates a fleet of 42 trains consisting of 252 cars, with a daily occupancy of 550,000 passengers.

Don't forget to buy and validate your metro ticket before you get on the train. If you are caught with no ticket or a non-validated ticket you have to pay a heavy fine.

### **Electric railway (ISAP)**

The third line, not run by the Athens Metro, is the ISAP, the Electric Railway Company. This is the Green line of the Athens Metro as shown on the adjacent map,

and unlike the red and blue routes running entirely underground, ISAP runs either above-ground or below-ground at different sections of its journey. This same operation runs the original metro line from Piraeus to Kifisia; it serves 22 stations, with a network length of 25.6 km (15.9 mi), an operating staff of 730 and a fleet of 44 trains and 243 cars, and a daily occupancy rate of 600,000 passengers. The historic Green Line, a 25.6 km (16 mi)-long and 24-station line which forms the oldest and for the most part runs at ground level, connects the port of Piraeus to the northern suburb of Kifissia.

### **Buses**

Ethel, or Thermal Bus Company, is the main operator of buses in Athens. Its network consists of about 300 bus lines which span the entire Attica Basin, with an operating staff of 5,327, and a fleet of 1,839 buses. Of those 1,839 buses 416 run on compressed natural gas, making up the largest fleet of natural gas-powered buses in Europe.

Besides being served by a fleet of natural-gas and diesel buses, the Athens metropolitan area is also served by trolleybuses — or electric buses, as they are referred to in the name of the operating company. The network operated by Electric Buses of the Athens and Piraeus Region, or ILPAP, consists of 22 lines with an operating staff of 1,137.[67] All of the 366 trolleybuses are equipped to enable them to run on diesel in case of power failure.

Tickets cost 1 Euro and must be bought from a kiosk or at special stands in main squares and at some bus terminals. They are sold individually or in bundles of 10 and must be validated by a machine on the bus.

### *Crime level*

Greece is one of the safest countries in the world. Large cities like Athens have experienced an increase in crime during recent years, and there might be areas (like the red light district near Omonia) that you would like to avoid. Violent crime is rare, but petty theft, car theft, and burglaries have been on slight rise in recent years. Overall however, the crime rate in Greece is among the lowest in the European Union. Locking valuables in safes at the hotel is always a good idea, but one feels generally safe in the streets even in the middle of the night.

### *Pollution and environment*

By the late 1970s, the pollution of Athens had become so destructive that according to the then Greek Minister of Culture, Constantine Trypanis, "...the carved details on the five the caryatids of the Erechtheum had seriously degenerated, while the face of the horseman on the Parthenon's west side was all but obliterated." A series of strict measures taken by the authorities of the city throughout the 1990s resulted in the improvement of air quality; the appearance of smog (or nefos as the Athenians used to call it) has become an less usual. Nevertheless, air pollution still remains an issue for Athens, particularly during the hottest summer days.

In late June 2007, the Attica region experienced a number of brush fires, including a blaze that burned a significant portion of a large forested national park in Mount Parnitha, considered critical to maintaining a better air quality in Athens all year

round. Damage to the park has led to worries over a stalling in the improvement of air quality in the city.

The major waste management efforts undertaken in the last decade (particularly the plant built on the small island of Psytalia) have improved water quality in the Saronic Gulf, and the coastal waters of Athens are now accessible again to swimmers. In January 2007, Athens faced a waste management problem when its landfill near Ano Liosia, an Athenian suburb, reached capacity. The crisis eased by mid-January when authorities began taking the garbage to a temporary landfill.

### *How to cross the road in Athens!*

A note about walking or crossing the street in Athens. Do not worry, but do pay attention. Do not presume that all cars will stop at a red traffic light - they do not. And do not presume that a one-way street may not have traffic going in both directions; scooters and mopeds especially, routinely ignore traffic direction regulations. The way to approach all this is simple, when you cross the street look at what car and driver are doing (not what they "should" be doing). If a green light shows that it's OK to cross you must first, look for yourself to see that all cars have stopped and none are still approaching the junction, then proceed and keep watching. Presume that motorized vehicles have right of way.

### *Shopping in Athens*

The first area you will normally be recommended to shop in is Ermou street, the pedestrian street that runs off Syntagma at McDonald's. Yes there are some good shops here for clothes, but veer off into the side streets for cloth and varied items and also try Monastiraki.

If you like big shops or to buy brands, head a for the Town Hall (Kotzia square). The Notos Galleries department store will reward you with good views from its roof top cafe.

If you will be going to Pireus and are looking for lower priced items, you'll probably do better there.

Opening hours are: 8:30-13:30 & 17:30-20:30 Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. Monday and Wednesday 8:30-14:00. Saturday 8:30-14:30 (or 15:00), Sundays closed. Some department stores are open everyday from 8:30 to 20:30 without a break. Tourist and other shops in tourist areas may be open for more hours and on Sundays.

*For further assistance in Athens, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Sozos Papakyriacou at +357 99 677 162 or Mr Andreas Ploubidis at +30 693 261 1429*

***We wish you have a nice and pleasant stay in Athens!***