

Greece

Facts and Statistics

Location: Southern Europe, bordering Albania 282 km, Bulgaria 494 km, Turkey 206 km, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 246 km

Capital: Athens

Climate: mostly mountains with ranges extending into the sea as peninsulas or chains of islands

Population: 10,647,529 (July 2004 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: Greek 98%, other 2%

Religions: Greek Orthodox 98%, Muslim 1.3%, other 0.7%

Government: parliamentary republic; monarchy rejected by referendum 8 December 1974

The Greek Language

98% of the 10.6m population of Greece speak Greek, which is the country's official language. The largest minority language is Macedonian, spoken by 1.8% of the population. Others include Albanian, spoken in the centre and the south, Turkish, spoken by Muslim communities around the Aegean, and Arumanian and Bulgarian. None of these minority languages has official status.

Greek Society & Culture

An Ancient Heritage

- . Greeks are proud of their cultural heritage and their contribution to world civilization.
- . A recent study found that Greeks' pride in being Greek surpassed the ethnic satisfaction of every other European nation.
- . Plays continue to be staged in the theatres where they were originally performed.
- . Greek literature includes poetry, drama, philosophy, history, as well as travelogues.

Religion in Greece

- . The Greek Orthodox Church is the national religion and is practiced by the majority of the population.
- . Religion is integral to life in Greece and is evidenced in the respect for hierarchy and view of the family as a single unit of strength.
- . Most holidays and festivals are religious in nature.
- . Younger people are not as devout church-goers as their parents and grandparents, yet most will still turn to the church to observe such important rituals such as weddings and funerals.
- . Easter is the major religious holiday and the celebration is more important to most Greeks than Christmas.
- . The Church plays a greater role in political, civic, and governmental affairs than in more secular countries.

Greek Family Values

- . The family is the basis of the social structure.
- . The family offers both financial and emotional support to its members.
- . The extended family is expected to help relatives in times of need, even to the point of assisting them to find employment.
- . Family relationships carry over into business. Nepotism is accepted
- . The wrongdoing of one family member brings dishonor to the entire family.

