

Holidays

When traveling to Greece, it's essential to be aware of both national holidays and local festivals or celebrations that may impact your trip. Greece celebrates a mix of religious, cultural, and national holidays throughout the year. Here are some of the significant holidays and festivals to be aware of:

- **New Year's Day:** January 1st marks the beginning of the year with celebrations, fireworks, and gatherings. Many businesses and attractions may be closed on this day.
- **Epiphany:** Observed on January 6th, this holiday celebrates the baptism of Jesus. It includes the "Blessing of the Waters" ceremony, where a cross is thrown into the sea, and young men dive to retrieve it.
- **Clean Monday:** This moveable holiday marks the beginning of Lent and is celebrated with outdoor activities, picnics, and the consumption of vegetarian dishes. It usually falls in February or March.
- **Greek Independence Day:** Celebrated on March 25th, this holiday commemorates Greece's declaration of independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1821. Parades and festivities take place across the country.
- **Easter:** Easter is the most significant religious holiday in Greece and is celebrated with various traditions and events. It falls on different dates each year, based on the Orthodox Christian calendar. Holy Week leading up to Easter Sunday is filled with church services and rituals.
- **Labor Day:** Celebrated on May 1st, Labor Day is a public holiday. Many businesses and services may be closed, but it's also a day for parades and celebrations.
- **Assumption of Mary:** Celebrated on August 15th, this holiday honors the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. It's a religious holiday, and many Greeks attend church services.
- **Ohi Day:** Observed on October 28th, Ohi Day commemorates Greece's refusal to surrender to Italian forces during World War II. Parades and celebrations take place, and it's a national holiday.
- **Christmas:** Christmas is widely celebrated in Greece, with decorations, family gatherings, and traditional holiday foods. Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are both observed.
- **Boxing Day:** December 26th is known as St. Stephen's Day and is a public holiday. It's a day for relaxation and family time.

Keep in mind that during some of these holidays, businesses, banks, and government offices may be closed or have limited hours.

Festivals and Events

Greece hosts a wide range of annual festivals and events that celebrate its rich culture, history, and traditions. These festivals offer a fantastic opportunity for both locals and tourists to immerse themselves in Greek heritage and enjoy the vibrant atmosphere. Here are some of Greece's biggest annual festivals and events:

- **Athens Epidaurus Festival (June to August):** This festival showcases a diverse program of theater, music, dance, and visual arts. Performances take place in the ancient theaters of Athens and Epidaurus, creating a unique fusion of art and history.
- **Thessaloniki International Film Festival (November):** Greece's premier film festival, held in Thessaloniki, features international and Greek films, documentaries, and shorts. It's a significant event for cinephiles and filmmakers alike.
- **Carnival (February/March):** Celebrated in various cities and islands, Greece's Carnival season is known for its colorful parades, costumes, and lively parties. The most famous Carnival celebrations occur in Patras, Xanthi, and Rethymno.
- **Athens International Film Festival (September):** This festival focuses on showcasing contemporary Greek and international cinema. It includes film screenings, premieres, and special events.
- **Apokries (Carnival) in Naousa, Paros (February/March):** The Carnival in Naousa on the island of Paros is one of the most famous in Greece. It features traditional customs, music, dance, and the "Pirate Parade" known as "Glenti."
- **Athens International Street Theatre Festival (May/June):** This festival brings street performers and theater groups from around the world to Athens, creating a lively and entertaining atmosphere on the city's streets and squares.
- **Rockwave Festival (Summer):** An annual music festival held in Athens, Rockwave features a lineup of international and Greek rock and pop bands. It's a major event for music enthusiasts.
- **Odeon of Herodes Atticus Concerts (Summer):** This ancient open-air theater at the Acropolis hosts a series of classical music, opera, and ballet performances during the summer months, attracting top artists and musicians from around the world.
- **Ancient Olympia International Festival (July/August):** Held in the birthplace of the Olympic Games, this festival features music, dance, and theater performances in a historic and picturesque setting.

- **Feast of the Assumption (August 15th):** Celebrated in various locations, this religious festival marks the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Thousands of pilgrims visit churches and monasteries to pay their respects.
- **Athens and Thessaloniki International Marathons (November):** These marathons attract runners from all over the world. The Athens Marathon follows the route of the original marathon, from the town of Marathon to Athens.

These festivals and events provide a wonderful opportunity to experience Greece's cultural richness and vibrant traditions. Keep in mind that event dates may vary slightly from year to year, so it's a good idea to check specific dates and details closer to your travel time.