



Culture



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Greek Culture

The cultural beginnings in Europe

History and culture have reached great heights on the southeast parts of the European continent. They tell the amazing tale of a land and surrounding seas across the recent millennia. A land which has been blessed with great beauty and seen the growth of remarkable civilisations. Ancient Greek mythology and culture have grown and flourished in the eastern Mediterranean shores. Europe was named after *Europa*, a princess with whom god Zeus fell in love with. According to the myth, he transformed himself into a bull and approached her.



Korai (Maidens) statues fronting Erechtheion, Acropolis, Athens

Europa got impressed by the all-white quiet and strong animal and decided to ride him. He then abducted her and led her to Crete. She had three children with Zeus on the island, the first one being Minos, the later king and founder of the Minoan Civilisation. In Greece, across the ages, myth and history have become intertwined. Visit countless monuments across the country in the open air and in museums, collections and galleries. Archaeological sites, ancient, medieval, byzantine and post-byzantine ones, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Religious Monuments are only a portion of this country's cultural history and heritage; other aspects involve Folk Traditions and Art, Music, Dancing, Festivals, Cinema, Theatre and Arts Performances. Discover them while you visit Greece and enjoy the perfect blend of a relaxing holiday and an unforgettable cultural experience in this celebrated archaeological and historical wonderland.



Thessaloniki waterfront area; 'Umbrellas' by G. Zongolopoulos

Museums

Get acquainted with Greek culture in all its forms in museums as well as in the open air across the country. Tour the Acropolis area in Athens and visit the nearby **Acropolis Museum**. 22A remarkable collection of architectural parts offer the visitor an overall view of the cultural life in ancient Athens. **The National Archaeological Museum** is also a must-visit museum as it holds significant collections from Greece and beyond.

The Byzantine Museums focus on the Greek history and art starting from the Early Christian Period until the medieval, post-byzantine and recent times.

The History and Folk Art Museums will offer you information on everyday life tools and artefacts,



National Archaeological Museum, Athens



Thessaloniki Museum of Photography

traditions and customs as they were practiced until the mid-20th c.

Greek maritime and nautical activities are a huge chapter in this country's history.

Visit **maritime museums** in Piraeus, Mykonos, Andros, Crete and Galaxidi.

Explore contemporary Greek art in Thessaloniki: plan your visit to the **Cinema Museum**, the **Museum of Photography** and the **Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art**.

In Athens go to the **National Museum of Contemporary Art**, the **Greek Popular Instruments Museum** and the **Museum and Study Centre of the Greek Theatre**.

The list of museums is endless, so shortlist the ones you're interested in and start exploring them!



Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens



Numismatic Museum, Athens

Unesco World Heritage Sites

Travel to Greece and explore the impressive works of man and nature over the centuries.

Feel captivated by the beauty of the 18 inscribed unique monuments and sites.

The one that is best-known across the globe needs no introduction: The **Athens Acropolis** welcomes you for a tour around one of the most sacred and renowned places of Greek antiquity.

The Cyclades Islands in the Aegean Archipelago hold “the most sacred of all islands”; visit **Delos Island** where Apollo, the god of light, was born and raised.

Take a trip to Rhodes and marvel at the **Medieval City of Rhodes**, a fascinating walled city built in the Gothic style by the Knights of St John of Jerusalem.



Philippi Archaeological Site



Terrace of the Lions, Delos Island

In the Greek North, travel to the **Archaeological Site of Aigai** (Vergina), the first capital of the ancient Greek kingdom of Macedonia. See also the **Archaeological Site of Philippi**, a city named after Philip II, the ancient Greek Macedon king and father of Alexander the Great. In Thessaloniki, make a point of seeing the ancient city walls and the amazing **Paleochristian and Byzantine Monuments**. In Central Greece, travel to the **Archaeological Site of Delphi**, the Oracle of god Apollo, considered in antiquity as the centre (called 'the navel') of the world.



Palace of the Grand Master, Rhodes Island



Parthenon, Athens



The Charioteer, Delphi Archaeological Museum

Unesco World Heritage Sites

In the Peloponnese, visit the **Archaeological site of Olympia**, the main worship site of Zeus; the **Sanctuary of Asklepios** – the ancient Greek healer and god of medicine- at Epidaurus; the **Temple of Apollo Epicurius at Bassae**, Arcadia; the **Archaeological Sites of Mycenae and Tiryns** – the two greatest cities of the Mycenaean Civilisation (15th c. – 12th c. BC). Further south, discover the **Archaeological Site of Mystras**, an awe-inspiring medieval and byzantine town.

On Samos Island, you will be impressed by the sites of **Heraion** - the temple of Hera, wife of Zeus, and **Pythagoreion**, the island's ancient fortified port. On Patmos Island tour the **Historic Centre**



Meteora, Thessaly



(Chora), visit the **Monastery of St. John the Theologian** [founded in the 10th c.] and the **Cave of the Apocalypse**. In Thessaly, enjoy the view from **Meteora**, a complex of Greek Orthodox byzantine and post-byzantine monasteries built on huge pillars of stone in a breathtaking natural environment. Travel north to Halkidiki peninsula and visit **Mount Athos** ("Holy Mountain"), an Orthodox spiritual centre since the 10th c. Only male adult visitors are allowed to enter this amazing artistic and monastic state. The 11th c. **Monasteries of Daphni** (in Attica), **Hosios Loukas** (in Fokida) and **Nea Moni of Chios Island** are three outstanding examples of Byzantine craftsmanship. Take a trip to the Ionian Island of Corfu and stroll in the **Old Town of Corfu**. You will be impressed by the neoclassical urban ensemble and the old Venetian Citadel.



Monastery of St. John, Patmos



Arched gateway to the ancient Olympia stadium



Mount Athos, Simonos Petras Monastery

Intangible Culture Heritage of Humanity

Get acquainted with the following outstanding Greek practices, inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity; learn about them, witness and enjoy the entire process. Read about the *Know How for Cultivating Mastic on Chios Island*, an agricultural, social and cultural process that goes on throughout the year and a legacy passed on by older generations to younger ones; admire the *Tinian Marble Craftsmanship* (on Tinos Island); enjoy *Rebetiko*, a musical



Spinalonga islet

UNESCO's tentative list of World Heritage Sites considered for nomination:

Minoan Palatial Centres (Knossos, Phaistos, Malia, Zakros, Kydonia) - Crete
Petrified Forest of Lesvos (North Aegean Sea Island)
The area of Prespes Lakes: Megali Prespa and Mikri Prespa which includes Byzantine and post-Byzantine monuments (Florina, Northwest Greek border)
Late Medieval Bastioned Fortifications in Greece
National Park of Dadia - Lefkimi - Souflion (Evros)
Ancient Lavrion (Port in SE Attica)
Archaeological site of Ancient Messene (Messinia, the Peloponnese)
Archaeological site of Nikopolis (Preveza)
The broader region of Mount Olympus (borders of Pieria and Larissa)
Gorge of Samaria National Park (Crete)
Fortress of Spinalonga (islet off the northeast coast of Crete)
Ancient Towers of the Aegean Sea
Zagorochoria - North Pindos National Park (Ioannina)
Ancient Greek Theatres



and cultural expression, which originally appeared among Greek lower classes in the early 20th c.; and experience customary practices such as *Momoeria*, a traditional New Year's celebration in eight villages of *Kozani* area, *West Macedonia*; these events take place from December 25 to January 5 and involve dancing, music playing and acting. Understandably the choice is hard when your available time is limited and the must-visit sites so many. So plan your future trips to Greek UNESCO World Heritage Sites and enjoy visiting them all!



Mastic tree resin teardrops, Chios



Rebetiko music played on bouzouki



Arched marble lintel, Tinos Island

Art Galleries Athens & Thessaloniki

The history of art in Greece is a long one, as many of the arts and crafts in this country date from prehistoric times. Apart from Classical Arts, the Greek Contemporary Art production is also noteworthy.

In Athens, visit the **National Gallery – Alexandros Soutzos Museum** and enjoy the wide display of paintings of Greek and foreign artists, dating from the post-Byzantine period to the present day.

Part of the Gallery's collection is exhibited at the **National Glyptothèque**. You will find annexes of the National Gallery in Nafplion town, Corfu Island, Sparta town and on Aegina Island. The brand new



Teluglion Foundation of Art, Thessaloniki



National Museum of Contemporary Art holds Greek and foreign works of modern art.

Thessaloniki welcomes art lovers at the **State Museum of Contemporary Art** in Moni Lazariston, Stavroupoli. View the permanent Costakis Collection which includes masterpieces of the Russian Avant Garde movement, and a number of paintings and sculptures of Greek and other foreign artists. **Teloglio Foundation of Art of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki** boasts some 7,000 exhibited works of art including 20th c. prints, collections of paintings, engravings, sculpture, ceramics, glass, textiles and more. The **Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art** showcases objects of art donated by collectors such as Franz Geierhaas and Alexandros Iolas. You will find works of painting, sculpture and photography, engravings, and monographs mostly of the 20th c. Enjoy your travels in Greece with a touch of Modern Art!



Costas Tsoclis Museum



Art installation, Jannis Kounellis



National Glyptotheque

MODERN ART ON THE ISLANDS

Continue your journey in art on the islands of Corfu, Andros, Tinos and Rhodes. The **Municipal Gallery** on Corfu holds a comprehensive collection of 19th c. works of art created by local artists. The **Museum of Contemporary Art - Basil & Elise Goulondris Foundation** on Andros keeps the entire collection of Michalis Tombros, a native sculptor, next to other sculptures. On Tinos, visit the **Municipal Institution - Costas Tsoclis Museum** where Costas Tsoclis' complex artistic creations are on display. In Rhodes, the **Modern Greek Art Museum** welcomes you for a tour in the medieval building, which houses 20th c. paintings, engravings, and sculptures created by acclaimed artists.

Film Festivals

Festivals in Greece hold a significant place in the country's cultural life. Some of them enjoy international acclaim, attracting art lovers and professionals alike from across the world.

In November, visit **the Thessaloniki International Film Festival [TIFF]**, a leading event in Southeast Europe, running since 1960, offering newcomers the opportunity to present their work, next to the work of already famous filmmakers. In March, the city welcomes visitors for the **Thessaloniki Documentary Festival [TDF]**.

New documentaries and videos appear and the ones that are finally awarded the Golden Alexander Award become eligible to submit for Oscar consideration in the Documentary Feature category.



Thessaloniki International Film Festival [TIFF]

BLOCKBASTER FILMS SHOT IN GREECE

'The Boy on the Dolphin' 1957, Hydra Island, Athens, Corinth, Meteora
'The Guns of Navarone' 1961, Rhodes Island
'Zorba the Greek' 1964, Crete
'For your eyes only' 1981, Meteora, Corfu Island
'Le Grand Bleu' 1988, Ios and Amorgos Islands
'Mediterraneo' 1991, Kastellorizo Island
'Captain Corelli's Mandolin' 2001, Kefalonia Island
'The Bourne Identity' 2002, Mykonos Island
'Lara Croft- the Tomb Raider, the cradle of life' 2003, Santorini Island
'Mamma Mia' 2008, Skopelos and Skiathos Islands, Mt Pelion, Thessaly
'Before Midnight' 2013, Messinia, the Peloponnese
'The Two Faces of January' 2014, Chania, Heraklion, Athens

For more info, contact the Hellenic Film Commission at www.filmcommission.gr



In September, travel northeast to Drama town, where the **International Short Film Festival** takes place. In the summer, visit the **Athens Open Air Film Festival**, the **Syros International Film Festival** in Ermoupoli town and the **Aegean Film Festival** on Patmos and Paros islands.

Take a winter trip in early December to Pyrgos and Amaliada towns, for the **Olympia International Greek Festival for Children and Young People**.

Watch various fiction & documentary films as well as short fiction live action films, short/medium documentaries and short animation films. If you are an animation fan, make a point of visiting the **Athens ANIMFEST - International Animation Festival**, which takes place every March.

Plan your trip to the capital in September for the **Athens International Film Festival Opening Nights**.

View premieres of international independent films before they hit the screens. Don't miss out!



Athens Open Air
Film Festival



The Two Faces of January, 2014

Dance

Dancing has always been a popular form of art with Greeks. Dancing traditions are numerous and differ from one area to the other. This explains the great variety of folk dance types across the country. Are you a dance fan? Travel to Athens and visit the **Dora Stratou Dance Theatre** on Philopappou Hill facing the Acropolis. From May to September enjoy the daily performances of folk dances. Groups wear local costumes as per each dance's place of origin. Plan your visit to Lefkada, Ionian Islands for the **International Folklore Festival of Lefkada** Island. This is the oldest folk art festival in Greece and celebrations take place in August.



Kalamata International Dance Festival



Lefkas International Folklore Festival



You will have the opportunity to watch colourful groups of dancers from across the world while enjoying your summer holidays. In mid-May, visit Stavros, Thessaloniki for the four-day events of the **Volvis International Folklore Festival**. The **International Folk Festival in Central Pieria**, South Macedonia takes place in Katerini town and in nearby villages in July. The area also boasts a beautiful beachline and is close to the famous Mt. Olympus.

If however you are looking for a modern dance festival - Kalamata town in the Peloponnese will be your favourite seaside destination. Enjoy the dance performances, outdoor events and workshops that take place in July during the **Kalamata International Dance Festival**. Most activities take place in *Kalamata Dance Megaron*.



Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Centre



Dora Stratou Dance Theatre, Athens

Theatre

Theatre is one of the oldest forms of art in Greece. Ancient Greek theatre is the origin of theatrical art as we know it across the western world.

The most important modern day culture festival in Greece is the **Athens and Epidaurus Festival**, offering viewers the opportunity to enjoy international theatre, dance and music artists.

During June and July enjoy the top-class performances which take place in Athens; the top venues are the *Odeon of Herodes Atticus* (a 2nd c. AD Roman Odeum built at the foot of the Acropolis), *Peiraios 260* (close to the centre of Athens), and *Megaron, the Athens Concert Hall*: in Epidaurus (Peloponnese) performances take place in July and August at the *Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus* and at the *Little*



Ilektra, a tragedy performed by the National Theatre of Greece, summer 2018



Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus, Peloponnese

Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus. The last two locations are the original 4th c. BC theatres where religious ceremonies took place and where ancient Greek tragedies and comedies were also performed then as they are nowadays. In the Little Theatre, you will enjoy alternative performances of ancient Greek Drama by Greek and international artists (both emerging and established ones). There are also English surtitles for foreign spectators.

A much newer and very promising festival is the **International Youth Festival of Ancient Drama** which takes place in Ancient Messene, in the southwest part of the Peloponnese, during April. Experience a memorable theatrical performance in the original locations (e.g. Delphi, Epidaurus, Filippii, Dion, Aptera, Oiniades etc.).



Terracotta theatre face masks,
Kavala Museum



Odeon of Herodes Atticus, Athens

Music

Music is an ever-popular form of artistic expression in Greece. And each part of the country has its own traditions and style in music and dancing. Folk music known in Greek as '*dimotika*' (on the mainland) and '*nisiotika*' (on the islands) carries the essence of Greek mentality of recent times; traditional folk songs describe the way of life, the joys and troubles of Greek people as experienced across the country.

In the Ionian Islands, the numerous *Philharmonic Bands* prove the locals' great love for their musical traditions and their active engagement with all types of music.



Local feast, Karpathos Island, Dodecanese



Laika is a type of popular music that's more associated with urban centres, without being restricted to them. If you want to get a taste of Greek nightlife, this is the type of music you'll listen and dance to in nightclubs. *Rebetiko* is another type of popular music that could be described as the Greek blues. In Athens, the *Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Centre* is a must-visit location, housing the **Greek National Opera and the National Library of Greece**. Watch live events, and enjoy activities for young and old at the Centre's brand new facilities. In Greece, the night is young and promising; so, book your ticket for your favourite modern music festival across the country, such as **Ejekt Festival**, **Rockwave Festival**, **Sani Festival**, **Plissken Festival**, and **Summer Nostos Festival**.



Ejekt Festival, Plateia Nerou, Athens



Thessaloniki Concert Hall



Megaron, the Athens Concert Hall

Folk Traditions and Spiritual Places

Cultural and religious traditions in Greece have played an important role in shaping Greek mentality over the centuries. The numerous museums, monuments, and sites in the country serve as evidence of the artistic and spiritual heritage, cherished and preserved by Greek people over the centuries. A remarkable display of (a part of) this cultural heritage can be seen at the **Byzantine and Christian Museum**, Athens. If you happen to be in Athens, make a note of visiting it: you'll view a number of collections and a permanent exhibition of remarkable items – mostly about Greek Orthodox faith – spanning the entire Byzantine Period and beyond.



Daphni Monastery, Attica (11th c.)



Get acquainted with folk art and traditions by visiting locations such as the **Museum of Greek Folk Art in Plaka**, Athens; the **Centre for the Study of Modern Pottery in Kerameikos**, Athens; the **Folk Life and Ethnological Museum of Macedonia and Thrace** in Thessaloniki; the **History and Folk Art Museum** in Rethymno, Crete; and the **Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation Museum** in Nafplio, Peloponnese.

Travel to the islands or in the mainland and visit churches and monasteries; admire the architecture, the lovely mosaics, murals, icons, woodcarving, the gold, silver or brass-sculpted icon screens; feel the serenity enveloping these places, matched in many cases with breathtaking natural surroundings.



Museum of Greek Folk Art
& Ancient Agora, Plaka, Athens



Museum of Greek Olive Oil, Sparta

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