

WELCOME TO GREECE

A guide to AFS participants hosted in Greece



DEAR AFSer,

Welcome to AFS Greece!

This guide is as a resource for you to prepare for your AFS experience in Greece and also for you to consult during your exchange experience!

We recommend that you print it or save it in a special folder on your computer/tablet or on your mobile. There is a lot of important information here that you might need to consult during your stay.

This guide is designed to give you a brief introduction to the Greek culture and to provide you with basic information about the AFS experience in Greece. It includes rules and information about health and safety.

You will receive additional local information from your local chapter and during your arrival orientations.

We will also keep in touch with you from the National Office by e-mail every other month.

We hope this handbook will assist you with helpful information for you to make the best of your intercultural experience in Greece!

Efharisto,

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Welcome to Greece

Greece is a beautiful, diverse country and people of many domestic and international cultural backgrounds and lifestyles live here.

Greece is the southernmost country in Europe.

It has the longest coastline in Europe.

The mainland has rugged mountains, forests and lakes, but the country is well known for the thousands of islands dotting the blue Aegean Sea to the east, the Mediterranean Sea to the south and the Ionian Sea to the west.

Participants coming to Greece on exchange need to be aware that their potential placements could be:

- In a city
- In a beach or island
- In a farming region
- In a rural/country area/town

The **climate** of **Greece** is Mediterranean with summers that are usually hot and dry, and the winters that can be quiet cold and wet.

Summers in **Greece** are usually very hot and in July and August temperatures usually reach 30 to 35°C, but sometimes even 40°C and more.



COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS

Hundreds of Islands
Many beautiful Beaches
Multicultural
Diverse landscape
Friendly people
Variety of foods
Variety of sports
Community Activities

COUNTRY OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Greek, but many natives speak English.

To see more details about visiting Greece, please click here:

<http://www.visitgreece.gr/>

AFS Recruitment Guidelines

RELIGION	<p>Greek Orthodox. In many areas of Greece, religion can play a somewhat significant part in the life of the host family and community. Even when placed with a religious family, participants are generally not required to attend services on a regular basis but they may be expected to attend a religious service at least once, so to demonstrate awareness of the family's practice. They may also be expected to attend some social activities connected to the family's center of worship, such as a church picnic, a fundraiser, a holiday celebration or performance.</p>
DIETARY CUSTOMS	<p>Placement of vegetarians and vegans is often difficult, especially in rural areas. AFS Greece will make every attempt to place a participant according to their dietary requirements but cannot always guarantee placement of vegetarians or vegans. More commonly, one or two members of the family may follow a plant-based diet. The family might eat a non-vegetarian diet to which they might expect the participant adapt, or they might expect the participant to eat more of the side dishes instead of the meat/fish or dairy product. Please be as specific as possible when stating a participant's dietary restrictions. For example, will the participant eat foods cooked with meat, but not the meat itself?</p>
HEALTH RESTRICTIONS	<p>Prospective students must be in good general health and meet the medical criteria.</p> <p>Please note: Candidates with strong allergies may not be able to find suitable host family placements. Particularly those students with strong allergies to pets, dust and food products. Candidates must be able to manage these allergies whilst on the program and if not, may not be accepted.</p>
SMOKING	<p>Smoking is popular in Greece among young adults and middle-aged people, but it is prohibited in all public places including shopping centers, bars, restaurants and schools. Lately,</p>

there is a strong cultural bias against smoking in Greece - our host families are very clear in their preferences and it is up to them to host a smoking participant. Therefore, all applicants requesting to come to Greece should mark their applications accordingly.

ENVIRONMENT AND GEOGRAPHY

More information regarding Greece's environment and geography can be found here: [Greece by National Geographic](#)

ADDITIONAL COUNTRY SPECIFIC RECRUITMENT GUIDELINES

Please be aware that participants should minimize the contact with natural parents. The host families are not taking it well being considered about the hosted students not settling well when contacting the natural parents too much.

INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS:

AFS Greece will not cover any expenses brought on the Host Family or third part by the participant - we do not have a liability or a luggage insurance

All participants to Greece must purchase an insurance to cover liability. Sending partners must ensure that the Insurance policy is uploaded to the participants' online application in the Authorization section. AFS Greece reserves the right to reject applicants without valid insurance covering liability. All participants are also advised to purchase an insurance covering luggage.

Education System

Greece has been an independent country since 1830 following the signature of the London Protocol. Greece became a member of the European Community (now the EU) in 1981. Greece has an area of 50,949 square miles (131,958 square kilometers); roughly the size of Alabama, with a population of more than 11 million people (almost twice the population of Alabama which is around 4.8 million.) Voting is mandatory for everyone over the age of 18 who is a Greek citizen.

Education Facts:

1. The education system in Greece is centralized, with all levels falling under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs.

2. The Greek Educational System comprises of three consecutive levels: Primary; Secondary; Tertiary.
3. Education from Grades 1-9, ages 6-15, is free and compulsory.
4. Primary education is sub-divided into Pre-school Education and Compulsory Primary Education. The Pre-school Education is offered by kindergarten classes and the Compulsory Primary Education is given by Primary schools.
5. Secondary education is divided into two stages, stage 1 is the Compulsory Lower Level Secondary Education provided in Gymnasiums and stage 2 is the Post-compulsory or Upper Secondary Education which is offered by the Unified Lyceums and Technical Vocational Educational Schools.
6. The duration of studies in Basic Lyceums is three years and in the Technical Vocational Educational Schools (TEE) two years (a' level) or three years (b' level).
7. The Ministry of Education has overall responsibility for course development and approval, as well as supervises most of these schools. Certain TEE are supervised by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Development.
8. Tertiary education is divided into university education offered by universities and non-university education offered by Higher Technological Educational Institutes and Higher Education Institutes.
9. Higher Education institutions in Greece are fully self-administered legal entities under public law, and are funded and supervised by the Hellenic Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs in accordance with Provision 16 of the Constitution.
10. There are 22 Universities, including Polytechnic Schools, the School of Fine Arts and the Hellenic Open University (EAP), 14 Technological Educational Institutes (T.E.I.) and the School of Pedagogic and Technological Education (ASPETAI).
11. There are also Higher Ecclesiastical Schools, supervised by the Ministry of Education and other higher education institutions mainly supervised by other Ministries (for example Merchant Marine Academies are under the supervision of the Ministry of Mercantile Marine, Higher Military Education Schools that are under the supervision of the Ministry of Defense, and Higher Police Academies are under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Order).

It should be noted that Greek public schools do not possess lunch rooms hence no lunch is offered but various light meals can be found at the school canteen with a small fee.

COVID-19 Requirements

During the **Covid-19** pandemic, Greece has taken measures that slowed down its spread in the country. As a result, Greece is now considered one of the safest countries worldwide.

See [here](#) detailed data about the progress of the pandemic in Greece.

The Greek government has taken steps to deal with the health crisis, and it is now gradually **lifting the restrictions** created to halt the spread of Covid-19 throughout Greece.

The government plan for the gradual lifting of imposed restrictions is assessed and updated, based on the daily epidemiological data. The Greek government asks that a safe distance be kept among shop owners and customers; that a limit be imposed on the number of customers per square footage when indoors; and that a face mask be used in all public transport means, in taxis, hospitals and when visiting government services buildings and all shops but restaurants and churches where use of mask is strongly recommended instead (as of August 1st 2020).

To see more updated information about the COVID-19 requirements in Greece please visit:

http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/home/about_covid_19

Here is the link to AFS COVID-19 updates:

<https://afs.org/covid-19-resources/>

Health and Safety

In order to have access to necessary health care, visitors from member states of the European Union (EU) wishing to visit Greece must be holders of the European Health Card (EHIC) or any other legal Community document issued by their competent social security agency.

In these cases, the necessary treatment in Greece is provided by:

- the Social Security Institute Health Units (polyclinics) or doctor's offices in the region;
- Regional clinics (former rural clinics) or the Health Centres of the National Health System; and
- the outpatients' departments of the hospitals on contract

In order to have access to necessary health care, visitors from countries other than the member states of the European Union wishing to visit Greece must consult their social security agency for information before travelling.

In case of emergency call:

Ambulance Service: 166

SOS Doctors : 1016

Duty Hospitals and Clinics: 1434

Pharmacies: 1434

Open Line for alcohol drug Addiction: 210 3617089

Poisoning First Aid: 210 7793777

Police: 100

Tourist Police: 1571

The Covid-19 pandemic underscores the need

for global cooperation and reflects the importance of the AFS mission

Stand with us by giving to the [AFS Covid-19 Response Fund](#), so we can:

- Aid host families in providing extraordinary support to thousands of students unable to return to their home countries during the pandemic.

- Facilitate emergency return travel for students where possible.
- Deploy online resources for students' continued learning and peer-based community sharing.
- Reinforce AFS staff and our global network of 50,000 local volunteers serving our students during this crisis.

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