



2nd WENR Symposium
Cultural Factors Influencing Patient Safety
October 8, 9-10, 2009 Athens – Greece

USEFUL INFORMATION

Athens a tourists' paradise

Modern Athens is a major European city, vibrant and safe, where history meets with comfort and fascination. The Acropolis is one of the world's most famous landmarks and Greece's history and culture, combined with the nightlife, a wonderful climate, traditional cuisine and renowned Greek hospitality are just some of the countless attractions Athens has to offer. They provide a unique opportunity for those visiting the cradle of the concept of democracy, an experience you never will forget.



If you think of seeing Athens in one day, don't bother because you will have been in Athens but you will not have seen it. Do yourself a big favour, take enough time to discover Athens. Afterwards you'll be very happy you did. The Athens info Guide will help you prepare your visit to the birthplace of the concept of democracy. If you have been to Athens, these pages may be a stole down memory lane for you. Athens (Athina) is named after Athena, the goddess of wisdom, who, according to legend, won the patron ship over the city after defeating Poseidon in a duel.

Modern Athens was born in 1834, when the city was restored as the capital of a newly independent Greece. After World War II, American money funded a massive expansion and industrialization program. The rapid growth of the post-war years and the high temperatures of its Mediterranean climate, have created a city that can often be polluted.

Excessive traffic creates a gridlock on the streets of Athens and noxious fumes in the air although great efforts are being made to reduce this. Over three million visitors come to the city each year but the majority see the sights as quickly as possible, as if fulfilling some cultural duty, before heading off for the easy hedonism of the Greek islands. They are proven to be wrong.

Athens repays a closer acquaintance. In addition to the celebrated classical sites, the city boasts Byzantine, medieval and 19th-century monuments as well as one of the best museums in the world and areas of surprising natural beauty. Despite the traffic, an appealing village-like quality becomes evident in the cafes, tavernas, markets and the maze of streets around Plaka. Moreover, Athens has the finest restaurants and the most varied nightlife in the country and remains a major European center of culture.

Major projects include the new, now fully functioning, Eleftherios Venizelos international airport, the extension of the Athens metro system, the building of new sports venues and the upgrading of hotel accommodation. In addition, ancient sites within the city center are being linked by a traffic-free archaeological promenade intended to enhance the urban environment for locals and visitors alike.

Athens is a tourists' heaven..... if you are willing to take the time to see it.

THE PLACE - GREECE

Capital: Athens

Population: nearly 11 million. Greater Athens and Piraeus have a population of over 4 million. Thessaloniki, the second largest city, has nearly 1 million residents. The most popular island is Crete, with just over half a million inhabitants.

Language: Modern Greek

Literacy: 95%

Religion: Predominately Greek Orthodox Christianity, with small minorities of Muslims, Catholics, Evangelical sects & Jews.

Currency: Euro. There are no limits on the amount of Euros visitors can import and / or export. There are no restrictions on travelers' cheques but cash sums more than US\$ 10 000 or its equivalent should be declared on entry. All banks and most hotels buy foreign currency at the official rate of exchange fixed by the Bank of Greece.

Weights & Measures: Metric

Basics:

Time: Local time is GMT +2 (GMT +3 between the last Sunday in April and the last Sunday in October).

Electricity: Electrical current is 220 volts, 50 Hz. A variety of plugs are in use including the European-style two-pin and the round three-pin.

Language: Greek is the national language, but English is widely spoken.

(Client's origin) Embassy & Consulate: Embassy, Athens: +30 210

Visas & passports: Visas are required for Passport holders to enter Greece. Please ensure that you have the relevant document prior to departure.

Clothes: In the summer months, take lightweight, casual clothing. Add a pullover or jacket to this and you will be prepared for the occasional cool night breezes. Lightweight shoes and sandals are ideal in the summer but you will also need a pair of comfortable walking shoes that have already been broken in. In general, both Greeks and tourists dine in casual dress. You will only need formal dress if you plan to go to fancy establishments, casinos, formal affairs and so on.

Dress codes: The Greeks will not expect you as a tourist to dress as they do, but scuffed shoes, ripped jeans or visibly out-of-date clothing are considered offensive. In certain places and regions, you will encounter explicit requirements or conversations concerning the way you dress. To enter a church, men must wear long trousers and women must wear long skirts as well as respectable tops/shirts. Some specific areas have their own dress codes. The best approach is to observe what other people are wearing and dress accordingly.

Sun protection: A hat, sun cream and sunglasses are also highly recommended for protection from the intense midday sun.

Universal plug: Greek basins often aren't equipped with plugs, so if you want water in your sink a universal plug is essential.

Film: Film is widely available in a range of formats and speeds, at competitive prices, though if you require something esoteric, it's best to bring your own.

Torch: If you're planning a trip to one of the islands, pack one, as walking home from the taverna can be tricky if there's no moon. If you forget, Maglites or the like are widely sold.

Getting around: Most tourist sites are within the city centre, which is easy to get around on foot, however there is an extensive public transport network consisting of buses, trolley buses, minibuses, taxis, tram and a fast new 3-line underground metro service that requires a standard ticket for a daily usage span. The metro is especially useful to get to Piraeus to catch a boat to the islands. The metro stations are double, as impressive archaeological art and artifact galleries. Transport is cheap, but often overcrowded especially during the siesta rush hour between 1pm and 3pm, and operates until midnight; a limited bus service operates along major routes. Bus and metro tickets are not transferable but a daily pass, can be used on both; single tickets or packets of 10 must be bought in advance and validated when getting on. Although taxis are plentiful it may be difficult to get one during the siesta rush hour and it is not unusual to share the ride with other passengers going in the same direction. It is often easier to phone ahead for a radio cab. Taxis are inexpensive but always check that the meter is on and set to the minimum fare of €2.75 as drivers will often attempt to overcharge tourists – if it's "not working" look for another taxi. Legitimate surcharges can increase the final bill but these should be displayed on the dashboard. Driving in Athens is not recommended, there are new laws banning cars from the commercial centre to reduce heavy traffic and pollution and parking anywhere is near.