

COUNTRY/ HELLENIC REPUBLIC (GREECE)

Geography

Greece is strategically located at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa and has land borders with Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Bulgaria to the north and Turkey to the northeast. The Aegean Sea lies to the east of mainland Greece, the Ionian Sea to the west, and the Mediterranean Sea to the south. Greece has the 11th longest coastline in the world at 13,676 km in length, featuring a vast number of islands (approximately 1,400, of which 227 are inhabited). Eighty percent of Greece consists of mountains, of which Mount Olympus is the highest at 2,917 m.



The names for the nation of Greece and the Greek people differ from the names used in other languages and cultures. Although the Greeks call the country *Hellas* or *Ellada* and its official name is the Hellenic Republic, in English it is referred to as Greece, which comes from the Latin term *Graecia* as used by the Romans, which literally means 'the land of the Greeks', and derives from the Greek name *Γραικός*. However, the name *Hellas* is sometimes used in English as well and it means either bright or mountainous.

Population

Greece's total population in 2011 was 10,815,197. Almost two-thirds of the Greek people live in urban areas. Greece's largest and most influential metropolitan centers are those of Athens (which is also the country's capital) and Thessaloniki, with metropolitan populations of approximately 4 million and 1 million inhabitants respectively.

Climate

The climate of Greece is primarily Mediterranean, featuring mild, wet winters and hot, dry summers. The mountainous areas feature an Alpine climate with heavy snowfalls. The inland parts of northern Greece, in Central Macedonia, East Macedonia and Thrace feature a temperate climate with cold, damp winters and hot, dry summers with frequent thunderstorms.

Languages

The official language is Greek which is spoken as a first language by 99% of the population.



The Parthenon on the Acropolis of Athens is a symbol of classical Greece



Delphi

Education

Compulsory education in Greece comprises primary schools and gymnasium. Nursery schools are popular but not compulsory. Kindergartens are now compulsory for any child above 4 years of age. Children start primary school aged 6 and remain there for six years. Attendance at gymnasia starts at age 12 and lasts for three years.

Greece's post-compulsory secondary education consists of two school types: unified upper secondary schools and technical–vocational educational schools. Post-compulsory secondary education also includes vocational training institutes which provide a formal but unclassified level of education.

Public higher education "Highest Educational Institutions" consists of two parallel sectors: the University sector and the Technological sector. The Capodistrian University of Athens is the oldest university in the eastern Mediterranean.

Culture

Greek language, culture, and identity emerged early in human history, having endured centuries of significant political and social change, including foreign domination. The culture of Greece has evolved over thousands of years, beginning in Mycenaean Greece and continuing most notably into Classical Greece, through the influence of the Roman Empire and its Greek Eastern continuation, the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire. The Modern Greek state, which encompasses much of the historical core of Greek civilization, was established in 1830, following the Greek War of Independence from the Ottoman Empire.

Modern Greece traces its roots to the civilization of Ancient Greece, generally considered the cradle of Western civilization. As such, it is the birthplace of democracy (Pericles), Western philosophy (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle), the Olympic Games, Western literature (Homer) and historiography (Herodotus, Thucydides), political science, major scientific and mathematical principles (Pythagoras, Hippocrates, Euclides), and Western drama (Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes), including both tragedy and comedy. This legacy is partly reflected in the 17 UNESCO World Heritage Sites located in Greece, ranking it 7th in Europe and 13th in the world.

Leading figures of modern Greek culture include Yannis Ritsos, Nikos Kazantzakis, Constantine P. Cavafy, George Seferis (awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1963) and Odysseas Elytis (awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1979), Manos Hatzidakis, Mikis Theodorakis, N. Moushouri (music), K. Parthenis, N. Hatzikiakos Gikas, J. Tsarouhis, G. Bouzianis (painting), Eirini Papa, Melina Merkouri, K. Gavras (cinema), Cornelius Castoriadis (philosophy), G. Papanikolaou, D. Trihopoulos, D. Nanopoulos, K. Karatheodori (sciences).



The Antikythera mechanism



The ancient Panathenaic Stadium in Athens, which was essentially rebuilt in 1895, hosted the Olympic Games in 1896, 1870, 1875, 1906 and was used to host events at the 2004 Olympics.

REGION/ CENTRAL MACEDONIA



Greece consists of thirteen regions. The region of Macedonia (central, eastern, western) is the biggest of the country and has a total population of 2.771.000 inhabitants. Macedonia is a historical region of the Balkan Peninsula in the Northeastern Europe. This region is being shared among three countries: Greece which owns the biggest part 52,4% of the Land, F.Y.R.O.M. with the 38% and Bulgaria with 10%. According to the Ancient Greek historian Herodotus the ancient Macedonians were undoubtedly of Greek origin and they used Greek language ever since they came to inhabit the region in the 8th century B.C. Consequently, this area is of great archaeological and cultural interest as it was the center of the ancient world for many centuries.

The region of Central Macedonia includes the prefectures of Thessaloniki, Pella, Imathia, Chalidiki, Serres and Kilkis and has a total of 1.874.590 inhabitants. The capital city is Thessaloniki. Other cities are Veria, Naousa, Edessa, Yiannitsa, Katerini, Serres, Kilkis.

MAIN PLACES OF INTEREST IN CENTRAL MACEDONIA



Pella

The main feature of the region is the city of Pella, the greatest of all cities in Macedonia according to Xenophon, where Alexander the Great was born and raised. Having explored the archaeological site the visitor will then want to look around the new Archaeological museum of Pella.

Mt. Athos – the holly Mountain



Mt. Athos is the only self – governing part of the Greek state, administered by the Holly Community, consisting of representatives of the 20 monasteries and based in Karyes. The most remarkable building in is the Protatou Church, where visitors can admire frescoes by Manuil Panselinos. The monasteries themselves are true masterpieces of traditional Macedonian and Byzantine architecture.

Thessaloniki



Thessaloniki a symbolic city – modern, European, cosmopolitan, cultural and economic centre of the Balkans, has played an important role in the history of the region for centuries without interruption, ever since the city was founded by the Macedonian King Cassander in 315 BC.

The White Tower in Thessaloniki is a tower of Byzantine fortification of the 15th century (it was probably built among 1450 – 1470). It is considered to be Thessaloniki's landmark. The white tower today is a museum and one of the best well known landmarks in Greece. It has six floors and it is 34 meters tall.

Imathia

In Imathia there are traces of human settlement dating back to the prehistoric times, of which the best known are the remains at Nea Nikomedia (7th millennium BC).



At the feet of the Pieria Mountains where modern Vergina now stands, the ancient Macedonians built their first capital city Aiges. Visitors can inspect the remains of the palace, the Theatre, the Agra and the Royal Tombs, with all the unique archaeological finds associated with them – the best – known the Tomb of Philip.

There are also magnificent Macedonian Tombs in the Vicinity of Naousa, while ancient Mieza was the site of the School of Aristotle, where the young Alexander was taught philosophy, mathematics and the arts by the great philosopher.



The waterfalls in Edessa

The waterfalls are very well known and beautiful sight throughout Greece from the past until now. You can admire the big waterfall “Karanos” with safety and you can watch how the water falls from a height of 70 meters. You can also admire the double waterfall and the cave under the big rock. There is a tourist center, a small cave with stalactites and a small chapel under the waterfall of Karanos.



Ski resort centre of Kaimaktsalan

The view from the mountain is breathtaking and when the weather is good and the sky clear you can even watch the Thermaikos gulf in Thessaloniki and the mythical peak of Olympus. The ski centre has long and wide tracks with no particular difficult points. This centre is considered to be the ideal one for someone who wants to improve his/her techniques and experience rides on the fresh snow.



Loutraki’s mineral springs and baths

These mineral water springs exist in the village of Loutraki and they’re known as Loutraki’s Baths. The water is at the 37 degrees of celcium all year round and it has many healing abilities. You can either have a bath in this water or you can drink it. After bathing you feel very relaxed. There is also a big open swimming pool. They have found about 15 caves around this area with many findings from prehistoric era. The visitor can watch all these findings in the small museum of the area. This specific region is considered to be a national cave park and it’s the first of its kind in Greece.

MUNICIPALITY OF PELLA

Since the Kallikratis programme reform entered into effect on January 2011, Greece has a total of 325 municipalities. The municipality of Pella contains many towns and villages. The biggest ones are Yiannitsa and Kria Vrissi. Kria Vrissi is located in the Southwest part of the region of Central Macedonia and in the S.E. part of the prefecture of Pella. The municipality's population totals 10.977 residents. It is located in the heart of the Macedonian Lowlands, also known by the novel of Penelope Delta "The secrets of March", where the historical events of the Macedonian Fights took place. The modern history of Kria Vrissi began in late 1930.

SIGHTS - MONUMENTS

The archaeological site of Ancient Pella and Pella's museum



Pella is the birth place of Alexander the Great. The archaeological site includes many private houses of the Hellenistic period like Dionisous house, Elenis house and Poseidon's house. The site also includes the buildings of ancient agora (market) which is about 70.000 square meters. At this place ancient Greeks did their commercial transactions. In the north of agora the visitor can see Aphrodite's sanctuary.



Pella's archaeological museum is one of the most important and worth visiting museums in Greece. The building itself is new and very modern. It has been build very carefully and has many auxiliary rooms. The admirable thing in the museum is not only that it is connected with the archaeological site but mostly because its permanent exhibits are of the most important ones in the whole country.

Moslem Monuments of Yiannitsa

Many Muslim monuments exist in the town of Yiannitsa. Specifically, the visitor can see the Hatzi



Evrenos Mausoleum (15th century), Hazi Evrenos' Baths (14th century), Ahmet Bei's mausoleum (15th century). Another worth visiting monument is the clock tower which is also a landmark of the town. In Yiannitsa you can see many other Muslim monuments since the town used to be sacred during the Ottoman period.



Loudias River

In the south of Yiannitsa, in a distance of 7 Km., the visitor meets the river called Loudias. Near the river there are water sport facilities where many children of the nearby area do water sports. There is also a restaurant where the visitors can enjoy their meal admiring the surrounding area which is totally green with many trees. This place is also used for



different shows and festivals like the musical festival which takes place every year organized by the students of Yiannitsa.

Ecological Park of Kria Vrisi

This park exists in the southeast part of the town. It is a modern and well built place where someone can go there to enjoy him/herself and spend some hours of relaxation. The park has various functions. It can host conferences and cultural events.

TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS

The Carnival of Kria Vrisi



It was launched in 1988 by the initiative of the young people of Kria Vrisi, organized later, became known and established. Events last for three days of Shrove Monday, culminating on Sunday when the big parade of groups and chariots takes place.

Agricultural – industrial exhibition of Pella

The exhibition was launched in 1987 by an initiative of the Community of Kria Vrisi. Today is a remarkable economic event for the municipality and the wider region of Central Macedonia. It takes place at the end of August until early September and brings together over 1000 exhibitors.

Cultural September

It is established over many decades, in September a series of cultural events are held including movie nights, theatrical performances, sport competitions, concerts. Also the ecological Park in recent years during the same period has been established the event “Antamoma (meeting) of Vlachs”.

TRANSPORTATION

The city of Thessaloniki has its own airport (Macedonia airport). The airport is the second largest state owned and operated airport in the country. It opened in 1930 and was the second busiest airport in Greece in terms of flights served and the third busiest in terms of passengers served in 2009 and 2010. It is the main airport of Northern Greece and serves the city of Thessaloniki (the second-largest city in Greece), and the surrounding cities of Central Macedonia.

The airport is served on a 24-hour basis by the buses of **OASTH** (Thessaloniki Urban Transport Organization) to downtown Thessaloniki, to Thessaloniki's train station, to the port of Thessaloniki and to Macedonia Intercity Bus Station, where buses depart for many cities of mainland Greece (Bus number 78 during the day and 78N during the night).

There is also a 24-hour basis of taxi service outside the airport.

The visitor, who wishes to pay a visit to the area of Kria Vrisi, can be transferred by road by bus, car and motorbike. The town of Kria Vrisi is only 65 KM away from Thessaloniki and in the city there is a bus station of Pella with daily routes from the city to the neighboring cities as Edessa, Yiannitsa and Thessaloniki.

Enjoy your visit!