

# IEEE Region 8 Meeting, Spring 2018 – Athens, Greece



## 1. Travelling Advisory

### Reaching Athens

There is only one airport in Athens, the Athens International Airport located in Spata, at a distance of 27 km from the city centre.

Athens airport is a major hub in the Aegean, Balkan and East Mediterranean regions. Air Canada, US Airways and Delta maintain non-stop flights from North America, while a large number of European carriers fly directly into Athens.

You can find good fares by using flight search platforms like [www.skyscanner.com](http://www.skyscanner.com).

### Meeting Venue

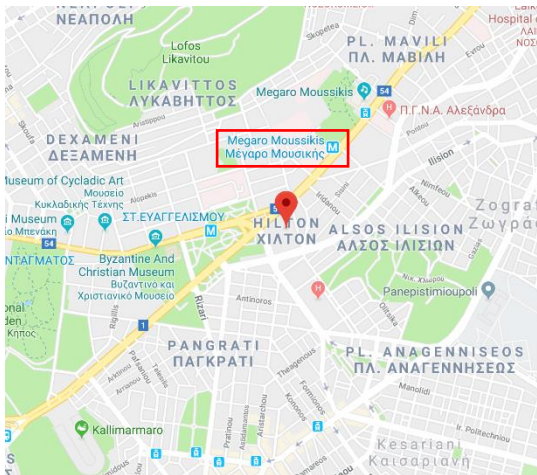
#### Hilton Athens Hotel

Vasilissis Sofias Avenue 46, Athens 115 28, Greece

TEL: +30 210 7281000

FAX: +30 210 7281111

EMAIL: [sales.athens@hilton.com](mailto:sales.athens@hilton.com)



Hilton Athens is the perfect location to explore the beauties of Ancient Greece from a modern environment, easily accessible by taxi, metro or bus. The hotel is within walking distance from the famous Syntagma square, Kolonaki and Plaka districts- all full of cafes, Greek restaurants and taverns, shops and a lively night scene. The Evangelismos station, opposite the hotel, offers easy access to the Acropolis Monument and Museum in just a few minutes.

## How to reach the Hotel

### By Metro

Take the blue line towards Aigaleo and get off at "Evangelismos" station, which is situated 3-minutes' walking distance from the hotel.

You can reach the city centre for €10 (half price for under 18 or over 65, ticket good for 1.5 hours on other Athens transit); if you leave in less than a week you can get the two-way ticket for €14. Group tickets (2 or 3 persons) are also available and they provide some discount. To catch the Metro from the airport arrivals hall, go through exit #3, cross the street, escalate to the sky bridge, walk to the station to buy tickets, and follow *Metro* signs down to the platforms.

Be aware that tickets for the Suburban Trains (white tickets) are sold just next to the tickets for the Metro (blue tickets), so make sure you get the correct ones.

Don't forget to **validate your ticket** before going down to the platform and boarding a train (there are validation machines at the top of the escalators in the ticket hall). Failure to validate your ticket at the start of the journey can mean a fine of up to €120. The ticket inspectors are rigorous and won't hesitate to call for police assistance if you start to object.

The airport Metro line is an extension of Line 3 (blue line). Note that at the airport train station, two types of trains - metro trains and suburban trains - arrive at the same platform. You should take the metro trains (2 every hour, usually departing at :00 and :30, daily 6:00 to 23:30).

### By Bus

Take Bus Route X95 and get off at "Ilissia" station, which is right across from the hotel. The cost of the ticket is 6 EUR per person.

Bus tickets are sold at the info/ticket-kiosk (located outside the Arrivals between Exits 4 and 5), or onboard (ask operator) at no extra cost. Buses, unlike Metro, operate 24 hours a day. Express bus X95 runs 3 to 5 times per hour. Boarding is not permitted at intermediate stops on trips from the airport.

### By Car/Taxi

**We strongly advise you to use public transport.**

Take Attiki Odos Avenue and follow the Y1 exit to Katechaki Avenue, which leads to Messogion Avenue. When you reach the end of Messogion Avenue, turn left to Vassilissis Sofias Avenue. Follow the road for roughly 1 kilometer and the Hilton Athens hotel is on the left-hand side.

Taxis queue outside exit #3. According to a new law, taxis to the city centre cost 38 € during the day (5:00-24:00) and 54 € during the night (0:00-5:00). Be sure to ask if the flat fare includes toll costs and all fees.

### Shuttle

A private airport transfer can be also booked in advance. This service is especially convenient for large groups.

- [Athens Travel Service](#) offers luxury 7-seater mini vans fully equipped, with plenty of space for luggages at the flat rate of €80 from Athens Airport to Athens city center
- [Easy Private Taxi](#) has Athens Airport to the city centre at €115 for a minibus 12-seater, €150 for a minibus 18-seater and €187 for a bus 36-seater
- [Holiday Taxis](#) has Athens Airport to the city centre at £156.30 for a minibus 13-seater

### Hotel Parking

The Hilton Athens hotel features an onsite 170-space parking lot with secure, covered and self-parking facilities available.

## While in Athens

### Language

The official language of Greece is Greek, spoken by 99% of the population. In addition, a number of non-official, minority languages and some Greek dialects are spoken as well. The most common foreign languages learned by Greeks are English, German, French and Italian.

**Emergency Number: 112**

### Passport and Visa

[[http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/before\\_you\\_travel/passports\\_and\\_visas](http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/before_you_travel/passports_and_visas)]

Greece is a Member-State of the European Union and has signed the Schengen Agreement. While traveling within the E.U., you only need your Identity card. However, a passport is necessary for a number of other transactions, such as currency exchange, purchases, etc. Visas are not required by European citizens from countries that are part of the Schengen Area. Greece as a member of the Schengen Agreement, has abolished controls on common internal lands, at air and sea borders and allows Member-State citizens to travel around without a visa for a short stay period of up to three (3) months. However, keep in mind that airlines and other carriers require a valid passport and/or identity card.

Citizens coming from countries that have not yet joined Schengen Area may require a visa to enter Greece. The E.U. visitors from these countries can acquire further information from the Hellenic Embassies or Consulates in their countries, or from their travel agencies. Before visiting Greece, please consult the detailed information on the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website](#) and find out whether you require a Visa.

**Note:** During your stay in Greece, if you require a Visa, you are advised to have suitable insurance coverage for emergency medical or other needs.

### **Currency**

[\[https://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g189398-s601/Greece:Banks.And.Money.html\]](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g189398-s601/Greece:Banks.And.Money.html)

Greece is another one of several European countries that uses the Euro as currency. You will get much better deals when working with cash rather than your debit or credit card with merchants. Also - you will be charged less of a transaction fee if you withdraw Euro's from the numerous ATM machines (that can easily be found in any of the towns/cities in Greece) rather than credit card transactions (which can charge a 2-3% transaction fee or more for foreign purchases).

### **Using credit and debit cards**

Major card providers are accepted in larger cities and tourist areas in Greece. If you're in more remote areas, you might find that retailers don't take American Express.

Decline offers to be charged on your card in your home currency. If you choose to use your credit or debit card abroad, you should watch out for something called Dynamic Currency Conversion (DCC). With DCC, when you pay for the transaction, you can choose to see the cost listed in your home currency. You might notice the shop assistant or waitress might asking if you'd like to be charged in your home currency, for example. Though being billed as a convenient service for customers, it's not a great idea for your pocketbook.

If you use DCC, then the exchange rate applied to your purchase will be decided by the bank who operates the payment system. This will never be as good as the rate your home bank would offer you. After all, your home bank has incentive to keep you happy - foreign banks, less so. Always opt to be charged in the local currency - euros - to get the best exchange rate.

### **Money Exchange**

Greek banks have limited hours: Monday-Thursday from 8:00 AM - 2:30 PM and Friday from 8:00 AM - 2:00 PM. Some branches are open extra hours in the evenings and on Saturday mornings. It's important to bring your passport and patience, as you'll undoubtedly experience at least one long line. Larger hotels, travel agencies and "authorized" bank agents will exchange money, but beware the extra fees and commissions. Travelers' checks and small-denomination foreign-bank notes are the safest forms of money to carry.

Before you exchange your money, research the [mid-market exchange rate](#) and use it to see if you're getting a fair deal.

## Tipping

[<https://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g189398-s606/Greece:Tipping.And.Etiquette.html>]

Many Greek hotel stays include breakfast in the room rate. A 16% service fee is included in the bill at restaurants, bars etc., but is not displayed separately. The service fee should be written on the menu - look for it towards the end, along with municipal taxes and other charges. An additional tip is not obligatory, but it is common to round off the amount, especially when paying in cash. For example, you may choose to pay 20 Euro for a 18,60 Euro bill, if you are satisfied with the service. Such tips can be left on the table, or you may tell the server that you don't expect to be given any change.

## VAT refund

If you have a permanent non-EU residence and are planning to do some shopping during your stay in Greece, please visit <http://www.globalblue.com/tax-free-shopping/greece/tax-free-shopping-in-greece1> to learn more about how to get your refund at the airport before flying back.

## Electrical Appliances

[<http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com/greece/>]

In Greece the power sockets are of type C and F. The standard voltage is 230 V and the standard frequency is 50 Hz.

Below you find pictures of the applied power sockets and corresponding plugs. And we provide more information about the voltage and frequency.

In Greece the power sockets used are of type C and F. Check out the following pictures.



*Figure 1: On the left, Type C: this socket also works with plug E and F Type. On the right, F Type: this socket also works with plug C and E.*

## Climate

[<https://wikitravel.org/en/Athens>]

The climate of Athens falls within the *subtropical Mediterranean* classification, with moderate rainfall.

Winters are mild and moderately rainy, though slightly cooler than other places in similar latitudes in the Mediterranean Sea, due to the city's proximity to Siberia. On the one hand there can be warm days when the wind blows from the south, bringing highs up to 20°C (68°F) and lows around 10°C (50°F). On the other hand when cold air masses arrive from Siberia, you should expect lows around freezing (0°C or 32°F) and highs not above 11/12°C (51/53°F). However, due to the urban heat island effect and being positioned in the sea, temperatures rarely bottom -5°C (23°F). The city is sometimes affected by, what's called, *sea effect snowfall*. The origins of cold fronts from Siberia are dry, but they gathers up moisture from the much warmer Aegean Sea so that they can bring moderate to heavy snowfalls in eastern Greece including Athens and the rest of Attica. Snow more commonly falls in the northern suburbs, but flurries reach the city centre roughly every year. Major snowfalls are uncommon and happen every 5-6 years, but when they do, they can cause major disruption with the last occurrence being on 9-10th January 2017.

## 2. Attractions

At first glance, Athens seems entirely to be composed of four- to six-story concrete buildings, lacking character and badly in need of a paint, but if you look beyond that, you will find little gems tucked in amongst the grey. The areas at the foot of the Acropolis, Anafiotika, Plaka, Monastiraki and Thissio are home to many wonderful Neoclassical buildings, trendy and traditional cafes and shops, narrow winding streets, and incredible views of the Acropolis. Little Greek Orthodox churches are tucked in amongst the concrete, often in the most unexpected places.

As a guide, please refer to:

[https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attractions-g189400-Activities-Athens Attica.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attractions-g189400-Activities-Athens_Attica.html)

<https://wikitravel.org/en/Athens>

A visit to the Akropolis museum is already included as part of the cultural visit in our meeting agenda.