



Greece

AS WE HIT 10,000-KM MARK, GORGEOUS GREEK ISLANDS OFFER PERFECT SETTING FOR OUR FIRST REAL BREAK

About Greece

Greece has a coastline 9,385 miles long. It is made up of over 2,000 islands, but only 169 are inhabited. Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria and Turkey are its neighbours. Greek is the official language, but English is also spoken.



When To Visit

The tourist season stretches from April until around mid-October, peaking from June to August.

Visa Requirements

Citizens from a long list of countries can enter without a visa – check with the nearest Greek embassy. Greece will refuse entry to anyone whose passport indicates that, since November 1983, they have visited North Cyprus.

Getting There

Greece has 16 international airports and so many cheap flights to choose from that buses and trains from Europe aren't worth it.



Bahrain Connection

In 323 BC two of Alexander the Great's ships arrived and new trade routes were opened. It resulted in such a strong Greek influence that Dilmun (as Bahrain was then known) was renamed Tylos.

By Ali Hussain Mushaima

IF THERE IS ONE EUROPEAN COUNTRY I KNOW BETTER than any other, it is Greece. It's always been one of my favourite holiday destinations, and in recent years I have been averaging two trips to the islands every summer.

I have been blessed with some wonderful Greek friends and it is always a pleasure to meet them and catch up.

Unlike Turkey, which has something of a split personality (if countries can be said to have personalities), when you enter Greece, you *know* you are in Europe. We drove all the way from the border to Salonica, where we met good friend Dmitri Podas. Dmitri and his wife, sister and parents live in nearby Katerini, a popular tourist town I have often visited, and which in fact was our next destination.

The odometer on the Mitsubishi finally touched



The Mitsubishi gets its first service after completing 10,000 kms in Katerini.

10,000 kms while we were in Katerini, which meant it was time for the first service on the vehicle. The 4WD has performed flawlessly so far, something I am both delighted and relieved about. The last thing we needed was problems with the vehicle so far from



PAGE OPPOSITE: Greece has many stunning beaches, like the Mytros beach here in Cephalonia.

The island of Corfu is blessed with many beautiful beaches and gorgeous scenery.



Travel Tip
Do show reverence and respect for the elderly - it's a custom widely observed in Greece.



Ali with Rolandos in the artist's Corfu studio.



Hermes Hotel, where the Friendship Tour team camped while in Corfu.

home, but the Mitsubishi has given us absolutely no room for complaint.

Next stop in Greece was Corfu, my favourite Greek island and the perfect destination. It has lush greenery, huge mountains, beautiful beaches and the shopping is amazing. Little wonder it is such a favourite with tourists. (From past experience, I know August is the one month you should avoid the island if you're looking for a nice, quiet holiday... the resort is packed to the gills with Italian tourists).

Corfu gave us our first real chance for relaxation, we needed it after the long drive and the extreme heat of Jordan and Syria. We met friend and artist Rolandos Eanthopoulos, lazed on the beaches, feasted on mousaka and lamb, and bought olives from the local market. Corfu has arguably the best olives in the world.

While in Corfu, we stayed at the Hermes Hotel in





A potter applies finishing touches to one of her distinctive Greek mugs.



Mr Podas with his wife Galini, centre, and her sister Mary in Katerini.

the city centre. The architecture of the district is influenced by all the civilisations that once occupied the island such as the Venetians, the French and the English. It has a unique charm and character which reminds one of towns such as Naples.

It would be nice to spend a week or more here, but we aren't exactly on holiday.

There are many more countries to visit, many more miles to drive...





Another of
Corfu's fine
beaches.

Fast Fact
The peninsula that
constitutes mainland
Greece is surrounded
by more than 1,400
islands, of which 169
are inhabited.