



Frequently Asked Questions

Turkey & Greece

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Many seasoned travelers are not aware that their health insurance may not cover them outside of the country. If you need to cancel your trip due to an unforeseen emergency or serious illness, most of your trip may be non-refundable if you are not insured. In the event you become ill during your travels, finding and receiving medical care may be very frustrating without insurance. Travel insurance also covers lost baggage and worldwide emergency assistance. For a minimal amount of money, travel insurance is a must. Speak with your Pilgrim Tours representative or your group leader for travel insurance options.

MEDICAL/DENTAL INSURANCE:

Check with your insurance carrier to confirm if you will be covered while in Turkey and Greece. If not, then you may want to consider the optional travel insurance.

PASSPORT AND VISA INFORMATION

Non-U.S. citizens are responsible to fulfill appropriate entry requirements of destination. Contact your consulate office for requirements.

Turkey

U.S. citizens need a valid passport with at least six months validity beyond their intended stay. Make two photocopies of your passport. Leave one copy at home and carry the other separately from your original.

Please Note: As of December 23, 2023, US Passport holders are no longer required to obtain a Turkey E-Visa for entry. If traveling from another country, please review entry requirements as Turkey Entry Visas must be completed

prior to arrival. Visas can be obtained in advance online using this link: <https://www.evisa.gov.tr/en/>. Failure to obtain proper entry requirements may result in the loss of tour membership and any resulting penalties.

Greece

U.S. citizens need a valid U.S. passport for entry into Greece. Make two copies of your passport. Leave one copy at home and carry the other separately from your original.

Non-US citizens may need a visa if not from a Schengen country. Take a moment to check the latest visa requirements from an official source or the Greek embassy in your country.

HEALTH CERTIFICATES

None required.

LANGUAGE SPOKEN

Turkey – Turkish. Kurdish is also spoken by a minority in the southeast. French, German, and English are widely spoken in cities.

Greece – Greek, English

VOLTAGE

Electricity is 220 volts. You will need to bring along a European plug adapter to operate any 120-volt appliances such as curling iron, cell phone chargers, etc.

The two types of plugs used in both Greece and Turkey are C and F, which are used in many European countries that use 230 volt current, instead of 110 as in the USA. See this

page from Wikipedia that has photos of each.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mains_electricity_by_country

When purchasing a converter, be sure that these two types of plugs are included in your kit.

MEDICATION

If you are required to take medications, you should notify the leader of your group in the event of an emergency. Ask your doctor to write an extra prescription to take with you in case your medication is lost.

Keep in original bottle with the prescription attached. If necessary, ask your pharmacist for small bottles with labels and take only what you need with a few days extra. Bring a list of the medications with the generic equivalent, as doctors in other countries may not be familiar with brand names. Your pharmacist should be able to provide this. Keep medications in carry-on bags. Have a note from prescribing physician for controlled substances, injectable medications, and multiple medications. Those who carry insulin should keep a copy of the written prescription with the medication. All medically necessary supplies for diabetes treatment are allowed on flights and can be administered if needed. Note that any container of insulin greater than three ounces must be declared at the security checkpoint.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER:

Check with the embassy:

This is the most reliable way to confirm if your prescription is legal in Turkey or Greece.

Bring Documentation:

Consider bringing a copy of your prescription from your doctor, especially if your medication is controlled.

Controlled substances:

If you are taking any controlled substances, be extra cautious and double-check regulations with the embassy.

BAGGAGE ALLOWANCE

Due to the size of baggage compartments in touring coaches, each passenger is restricted to ONE suitcase and ONE carry-on bag. Total dimensions of the bag to be checked on the airplane are not to exceed 62 inches (length x width x height) and should not weigh more than 50 lbs. Carry-on luggage should not weigh more than 20 lbs and is not to exceed the following dimensions: 22" length x 14" width x 9" depth. It must fit under the seat in front of you or in the overhead compartment of the plane. Pilgrim Tours recommends your carry-on bag be a backpack, which will be most practical for use while touring. Due to continuing changes in the air industry please check with your airlines for most current baggage information.

Be sure your luggage is clearly marked on the inside and

outside. If you are traveling with a tour group, you must use the Pilgrim Tours luggage tags provided along with your own once you arrive in Turkey.

TIME ZONE

Both Greece and Turkey are seven hours ahead of EST and two hours ahead of GMT.

CURRENCY

The currency in Turkey is the Turkey lira. The currency in Greece is the euro. If possible, exchange currency at a U.S. bank before you leave. Visa and Master Card are the most widely accepted credit cards and can be used at major hotels, restaurants, and tourist shops. Please be advised that the ATM machines in Greece dispense money in EURO ONLY - NOT U.S. DOLLARS and in Turkey they dispense TURKEY LIRA. You can check www.xe.com for the most recent exchange rates.

Turkey and Greece will both accept the US dollar and major credit cards, however, converting to the Turkish Lira and the Euro will make transactions easier.

There is a Western Union exchange office near the hotel in Istanbul where you can exchange in country. You can also exchange at a AAA or your bank here in the States. Please research and understand the exchange rates.

There are atm's in Greece where you can make debits in Euros. Please double check with your bank to see if they will waive the service fees for these transactions. There are also exchange offices in Greece or you can exchange at a AAA or your bank here in the States. Please research and understand the exchange rates.

Please note: Due to Turkey being labeled internationally as a high fraud country, ATM withdrawals may be limited to \$75.00 per day. Check with your debit/credit carrier for other restrictions or policies specific to your bank. We suggest you call your bank and/or credit card company before you leave to let them know you will be out of the country and using your ATM card or credit card.

CLIMATE

Prior to departure check the 10-day forecast on www.weather.com.

Greece:

April/May's weather is so warm, fresh, beautiful, and mostly sunny at low elevations that are perfect for touring Greece's extensive historical places and hiking, spring is actually the best time since tourism is moderate. Exceptions in Northern Greece, where it is a tad cooler with more rain.

For more details check:

<https://www.globalhighlights.com/greece/weather-in-april#wear>

Turkey:

April/May falls in spring in Turkey, and the weather in April and May is mild to warm, but not yet hot, throughout most of the country. The days are starting to get longer, with more sun and less rain as well. April/May weather is perfect for sightseeing, from the Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque, to the beautiful Bosphorus river which runs through the city. Warm, but not hot, temperatures make it a great time of year to visit the many ancient sites.

For more details check:

<https://www.globalhighlights.com/turkey/weather-in-may#wear>

PRE-FLIGHT

Leave your travel information with a family member or friend, including a copy of your passport, your flight itinerary, travel itinerary, hotel names, and phone numbers. In the event of an emergency, family members may contact Pilgrim Tours at 800-322-0788.

Dress comfortably for the flight, wearing clothes that allow freedom of movement and shoes that slip on and off easily.

Never leave your luggage unattended for any length of time, no matter how short. Do not accept packages from strangers to carry onto the plane for them.

Check-in time for international flights is normally three hours prior to departure. When checking in at the airport, a valid passport is needed as proof of identification for international travelers.

Bring along hand lotion as the air in the plane cabin is extremely dry. In order to avoid jet lag, limit caffeine, alcohol, and carbonated beverages. Rather, opt for natural fruit juices and water.

MEALS

For meals that are not included, check with your tour group leader or the front desk at the hotel for suggestions (be sure to mention the price range you are interested in). If you have never eaten Greek food before, you are in for a treat. Lamb, olive oil, and fish are the common ingredients in a Greek meal. Specialties include melitzanosalta (eggplant salad), tsatsiki souvlakia (lamb kebabs marinated in garlic), chtapodi (octopus salad) and baklava (a pastry made from filo dough filled with honey and nuts).

Food in Turkey is known to have a lot of spices in them. The most used spice is the red pepper. Turkey is widely known for their varieties of kebabs and saucy meals, like meat stew with onions. Yogurt is used in their cooking when making sauces and bread is one of their main nutritional items.

In order to avoid indigestion from eating foods that are unfamiliar to you, consider taking acidophilus or probiotic

tablets before, during, and after the trip. Consult your primary care physician for the best option for you.

As much as possible, drink only commercially produced bottled water, instead of tap water. If you order juice, ask if it was made with tap water or bottled water.

CULTURAL AWARENESS

As foreigners in a foreign land, one must take note regarding offensive dress. In Turkey this is apparent when visiting certain religious sites. For example, both men and women will need to remove their shoes before entering certain locations.

Ladies: Some religious sites will require you to wear a longer skirt, which will be provided on site. We do recommend that you pack a lightweight scarf for covering your head at any religious locations that require this.

Men: If you choose to wear shorts make sure they come to the knee.

SHOPPING

Check with your group leader or the front desk for the best shopping areas. In Greece, shop for handicrafts, lace, embroidery, pottery, and jewelry. Don't be afraid to haggle over prices - it's expected. Most shops are open from 8-9am to late in the afternoon.

In Turkey you will enjoy looking for traditional carpets made in the country. Copper-made handworks are also popular in shopping areas. Spices are enticing so look for a market to pick up something different and unusual.

WHAT TO PACK

Comfortable, casual clothing that can be layered to match the weather is a good suggestion. Planning your wardrobe around one or two colors is also helpful. Dress throughout is casual. Be sure to include **comfortable walking shoes** and a **lightweight jacket** for mornings and evenings.

A **raincoat and rain hat** (or poncho) are easier to use when sightseeing than an umbrella. If you have sensitive skin, wear a sunhat, and cover up with long sleeves and long trousers or dresses.

Wear polarized glasses for the intense glare off the shiny pavements and the ruins.

Be sure to pack important items such as documents, money, medications, and keys on your person or in your carry-on luggage. Never pack these items in your checked luggage.

Do not make yourself a target by wearing expensive jewelry. A good way to conceal your money and valuables is by

purchasing an inexpensive, lightweight pouch that attaches around your waist and is worn under your clothes.

Do not over pack. Leave room in your suitcase for souvenirs.

If you are traveling with a companion, consider cross-packing your clothing with them. Put half of your items in your companion's luggage and vice-versa. This will ease the frustration of lost luggage.

Take along a small **backpack**. When you are touring, fill it with bottled water and daily necessities. It will also come in handy for carrying souvenirs.

Don't forget these **travel-sized necessities**: first-aid kit, tissues, toiletries, notebook and pen, plastic zip lock bags (for storing open bottles and containers).

In Greece and Turkey, laundry can be done at most hotels on a pay-per-piece basis. No self-service options are available.

ELECTRONICS

Could they bring a laptop computer or tablet if needed? Passengers are certainly free to carry their devices at their own expense/risk. Pilgrim leaves it up to the passenger's discretion to carry devices or not and they will be responsible for them.

Internet/ Wi-Fi:

Internet is available in most of the hotels that we use. Keep in mind that internet speed may not be as fast as you are used to at home or work.

Turkey: Passengers will enjoy Wi-Fi on the bus and the hotels

Greece: Passengers will enjoy Wi-Fi on the bus and the hotels

Cell phone:

If you have a cell phone with international capabilities, contact your company for costs and to verify that it will work in the areas you are touring. You can also download apps on your phone like WhatsApp for Wi-Fi calling/texting.

Emergency contact information is also included in your travel documents.

TIPPING

Basic tipping for the hotel staff, guide, and driver has been included in your tour package and will be taken care of for you by your pastor leader or our Pilgrim Tours representative. Tips can be given at the end of the tour with a thank you for services rendered. Tip taxi drivers at least 10-15% of the fare. Generally speaking, you should leave a 5-10% tip at a restaurant if the service is good.

Please Note: As a show of appreciation, and as only the minimum tipping amounts have been suggested, Pilgrim encourages travelers to provide additional tips to drivers and guides for their services provided. Remember that a tip or gratuity is earned for services rendered in a courteous and professional manner.

TOUR PAYMENT

The deposits are due on December 28, 2025
Final balance is due on February 6, 2026

Passengers may request an invoice link to pay on their tour if they wish.

WHEN IN TURKEY:

Turkish culture values respect, hospitality, and politeness.

Here are some cultural norms in Turkey:

- **Politeness:** Use polite language and address people with appropriate titles, such as "Bey" for men and "Hanım" for women.
- **Personal space:** Turks are generally warm and welcoming, but respect personal space, especially in more formal settings.
- **Punctuality:** Being on time is appreciated, but a slight delay is usually acceptable in social situations.
- **Modesty:** Wear modest clothes in conservative areas.
- **Greetings:** Shake hands with each person upon arriving at an office.
- **Small talk:** Turks engage in small talk before they begin business discussions.
- **Physical contact:** Turks are generally quite open, tactile people. It is common for friends of the same gender to kiss during greetings, or hug one another.

WHEN IN GREECE:

When traveling in Greece, you can expect to encounter a variety of cultural norms, including greetings, dining, and family values.

- **Shaking hands:** Shake hands with everyone at a business or social meeting, and again when leaving
- **Kisses:** Accept a greeting with two kisses on the cheek
- **Nodding:** Nodding your head "yes" is not polite, say "yes" instead
- **Serving:** The eldest person is usually served first
- **Eating:** Don't start eating until the host says it's time
- **Elders:** Elders are highly respected, and children care for their elderly parents
- **Filotimo:** (Also spelled Philotimo) means "love of honor." It is a core value that encompasses dignity, pride, honor, hospitality, and trust
- **Dress** is more informal than in most European countries
- **Punctuality** is not particularly important, but foreigners are expected to be on time for business meetings