

LOCATION

Country: Greece

Town: Athens

Base: Embassy of Canada to Greece

Other info to Consider:

- Family (non-dependents) can visit and stay 90 days **without a visa** (Schengen Area)
- Embassy position (MPSS)

POPULATION

Size: Athens's population is estimated at 3,153,355 (2020)

Ethnicity: Like most of Greece, Athens has a homogeneous population. The main recognized minority is the Muslim minority.

LANGUAGE(S)

Official language: Greek.

Prevalence of French or English speaking: Very limited. Some will speak a second or third language, but limited. The official language of Greece is Greek, spoken by 99 per cent of the population. In addition, several 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.

COST OF LIVING

- Exchange rate to consider: Euro

QUALITY OF LIFE

Climate and potential for severe weather, natural disasters:

- Athens has a hot-summer Mediterranean climate. The dominant feature of Athens' climate alternates between prolonged hot and dry summers and mild winters with moderate rainfall.
- Athens is affected by the urban heat island effect in some areas which is caused by human activity.

Laws and culture:

- Canadians with dual citizenship or who are eligible for Greek citizenship may be subject to compulsory military service and other aspects of Greek law. Canadians should obtain a document certifying their status from the Embassy of Greece before travel.
- Penalties for possession, use or trafficking of illegal drugs are severe. Convicted offenders can expect jail sentences or heavy fines.

Safety and security:

- Petty crime, such as pickpocketing, purse snatching and luggage theft, is common in tourist areas and on public transportation. This includes the trains to and from Athens International Airport.
- In Athens, do not walk in the Monastiraki and Omonia districts or, after dark, around the Larissa and Peloponnese railway/bus stations.
- Demonstrations and strikes take place regularly in Athens, and occasionally in other parts of the country.
- You must carry a valid Canadian driver's licence and an International Driving Permit.
- Athens is one of the most polluted cities in Europe.

Level of isolation:

- There is only one Canadian family posted to Athens
- Language challenges can cause a high level of isolation, particularly among spouses.

HOUSING

- As arranged by the embassy, no HHT or DIT, falls under Global Affairs Canada (GAC)
- Unfurnished

EMPLOYMENT

Are there employment opportunities for spouses? Due to tax and legal implications, spousal employment in Greece is not a realistic option.

- Limited opportunities and language barriers



HEALTH CARE

Access:

- Greece's healthcare system was ranked by the World Health Organization as one of the best in the world.
- English services are available but are limited. French is very limited.
- All bills associated with the care of dependents are the member's personal responsibility and are to be claimed through PSHCP

Resources for children with special needs:

- Very limited in English or French
- Depending on the language required (English/French), area of specialization and degree of support needed, it is highly advised that the family consult with Medical Screening Officer in Canada and/or the Canadian Element to ensure that the required services are readily available in either English or French before accepting a posting.

Consideration for pregnancy/birthing: Healthcare for pregnancy and birth is available locally, and privately.

Dental: Dental care can be accessed in town. You are required to pay upfront, and you can then claim your expenses

SCHOOLING

- Schooling is typically through the St. Catherine's British Embassy School (IB) for grades JK-8, the Campion School of Athens (IB) for grades JK-8, Byron College for grades JK-8, the American Community Schools of Athens Inc. (IB) for grades JK-12, (IB), the International School of Athens for grades JK-12, or the Lycée Franco-Hellénique Eugène Dellacroix for grades JK-12.
- The British curriculum is only deemed compatible up to grade 8; access to the British curriculum beyond grade 8 requires WG B approval.

Curriculum vs. Canadian curriculum:

- The curriculum varies depending on the choice of school.
- Canadian history or geography is not available.

Resources for special needs children:

- Access to special needs services depends on the choice of school, language required (English/French), area of specialization and degree of support needed, so it may be very limited.
- Consult with CEM/GAC and the school before making any commitments.

CHILDCARE

- Local childcare is available.
- When choosing local childcare, there is no guarantee that staff will speak English or French.
- Some schools will offer before and after-school programs, either free or fee-paying

TRANSPORTATION

- Athens's International Airport (ATH)
- You must carry an international driving permit and a valid Canadian driver's licence to drive in Greece.
- Penalties for drinking and driving are severe. The legal blood alcohol limit is 0.05 per cent. Impaired drivers could face immediate detention and convicted offenders can expect fines and jail sentences.
- Traffic jams are the norm in the centre of Athens even during late night hours.
- Traffic in the centre of Athens is restricted, partly to alleviate traffic jams, but mostly to minimize pollution. The area is defined by a sign with a prominent "Δ" and is in effect from September through June.
- Cars with license plates that end in odd numbers are allowed in the "daktylios" (or ring) on odd days, and cars with license plates that end in even numbers are allowed to drive in the centre of Athens on even days.
- Diplomatic – plates. Restrictions don't apply
- The Athens public transport system is affordable, reliable, and covers most of the city and suburbs.

RESOURCES AND AMENITIES

Is there a Military Family Services centre available in that location?

- No, but remote services are available under MFS(E) Riga & Remote.

Psychosocial/mental health resources:

- Not at the post, and the MFS(E) SW is for dependents only. The CAF SW/Mental Health Team for members and families is located in Geilenkirchen, Germany. The chaplain is located in Italy.

Communications (e.g. quality of Internet connection): The quality of Internet connection depends on the location and can vary.

ACTIVITIES

Access to sports or other leisure activities:

- Yes, on the economy. Very limited in English/French

Availability of playgrounds: Yes, but quality depends on area/location. School grounds/playgrounds are locked outside school hours.

RESTRICTIONS TO CONSIDER

Are common-law relationships recognized? Yes, but only between two-non Greek people.

Are same-sex couples recognized? Yes, Greece joined this list in late 2015 when it agreed to begin recognizing same-sex civil partnerships despite opposition from the Greek Orthodox Church.

Medications that are illegal in the country: use without a prescription of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances is illegal.

Other considerations:

- Postal services from Canada Post to CDA/ MPSS personnel are managed by the embassy.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- European Commission Country Reports (2022)
https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2022-european-semester-country-reports_en
- Canadian Travel Advisories
<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>
- CIA World Factbooks (One pager from the US)
<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/greece/>
- Living Abroad (from Gov.UK)
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-greece>
- Consumer Price Index (CPI)
<https://data.imf.org/?sk=4FFB52B2-3653-409A-B471-D47B46D904B5>

For more comprehensive information, please feel free to reach out to the resources below;

- MFS(E) Social Worker Andrea Liss at liss.andrea@cfmws.com
- CAF Social Worker: GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca
- MFS(E) Riga Remote: + 371 231 16 869, MFSE.Rigaremote@cfmws.com
- MFS(E) Regional Office: +49 (0) 2451-717-173, MFS.Europe@cfmws.com