



## Where in the World Is Greece?

Yasu from Greece! That's how we say "hello." I'm Alexandra, and this is my twin brother, Yiorgos (YOR-gohs). Thousands of years ago, Greek lands were the center of a very important **civilization**. My own name, Alexandra, is about 3,000 years old! Many of Greece's

inventions and ideas about politics, science, sports, and art are part of modern Western life today. Even our stories, called **myths**, about monsters, magical creatures, and the gods Greeks worshipped long ago are famous. Come on—let us show you around!

### Fast Facts:

- Greece covers 50,949 square miles (131,957 square kilometers).
- Greece is in Europe on the **Balkan Peninsula**. To the north are Albania, the Republic of Macedonia, and Bulgaria. Turkey lies to the northeast. Italy is to the west.
- The **Mediterranean Sea** surrounds Greece's mainland on three sides.
- Greece has more than 2,000 islands that make up nearly 20 percent of the country's land. People live on only about 170 of them.
- Mountains cover 80 percent of Greece. The tallest, **Mount Olympus**, is 9,570 feet (2,917 meters) high. In our myths, it is the home of the ancient gods.





Many families in Greece are close-knit, and members of multiple generations often live close to one another.

## Home Sweet Home

We live in Athens. It is a busy city! Like many of our friends, we leave the city on weekends and holidays. We visit our *yia-yiá* (yah-YAH, grandmother) in her village. She is my father's mother. Family is very important in Greece. Older family members are treated with respect.

In many ways, families hold Greece together. Kids usually live with their parents until getting married in their late 20s or early 30s. In addition, many businesses are small and run by families. When people are sick or lose their job, they often turn to their families for help.



Freshly picked olives

About one out of five people in Greece live in the countryside. There are a lot of family farms! Everyone pitches in. Even small children can collect eggs from a henhouse or feed the sheep. Feta, a salty, crumbly cheese, is made with sheep's milk. Olives, mostly used to make oil, are the most common crop on family farms. They are also the most traditional. In fact, olives have been grown in Greece for more than 5,500 years!

## Pride and Respect

*Filotimo* is a Greek word that can be translated as "to be proud." To us, it describes how we live our lives. Here are four ways we carry it out:

- 1 **Doing good deeds**, even (and especially) if no one will notice.
- 2 **Treating our elders respectfully.**
- 3 **Taking pride** in our family's and country's history and culture.
- 4 **Welcoming others** with generosity and hospitality.



Grandfather and grandson



## Let's Eat!

In Greece, breakfast may be a *koulouri* (KOO-loo-ree), a bagel-like ring of bread covered in sesame seeds. A *tiropita* (tee-ROH-pee-tah), a cheese pastry, is also popular for breakfast. Of course, we might just have a bowl of cornflakes. For lunch, we sometimes have a spinach-cheese pie called *spanakopita* (spah-nah-KOH-pee-tah) or lentils. Our mom also makes *moussaka* (moo-sah-KAH). This dish has layers of eggplant, ground meat, and spices, with a creamy topping!

Seafood—from sea bass to shrimp—is a big part of our diet. Mussels, a relative of clams, are our father's favorite. People might also grab a *gyro* (YEE-roh) for lunch. It has slices of roasted pork inside pita bread. Onion, tomato, and a creamy yogurt-cucumber sauce called *tzatziki* (tsah-TSEE-kee) are added on top.



Dinner is a big event. Greeks eat late and linger with friends and family over large meals. We have small dishes to start. *Taramasalata* (tah-rah-mah-sah-LAH-tah) is a dip made from fish eggs. Another favorite is *dolmades* (dohl-MAH-dehs), grape leaves stuffed with herbs, rice, and sometimes meat. *Kolokithokeftedes* (koh-loh-kih-thah-kehf-TEH-dehs), fried zucchini balls, are also popular.

After that we might share a whole grilled fish with string beans and tomatoes topped with feta. *Domates yemistes* (doh-MAH-tehs yeh-MEES-tehs), tomatoes stuffed with rice and meat, may come with it.

We finish with dessert. My favorite is *baklava* (bah-klah-VAH), a crunchy pastry with crushed nuts that oozes with honey. Yum! Sometimes, we like to go for fast food, just like you.

## All About Olives

**Olives are stone fruits**, just like plums and cherries. But don't try to eat an olive right off a tree. They're so bitter! Most olives you eat are soaked with lye and salt to remove the bitterness. There are dozens of kinds of Greek olives.

**Our favorites are:**

**Kalamata**—They are purple-black. They can't be eaten if they are picked green.

**Amfissa**—These are also dark in color. They are soft and have a mild taste.

**Halkidiki**—This olive is only picked when green and has a bit of a pepper flavor.

