

Tell Me Press



tell me

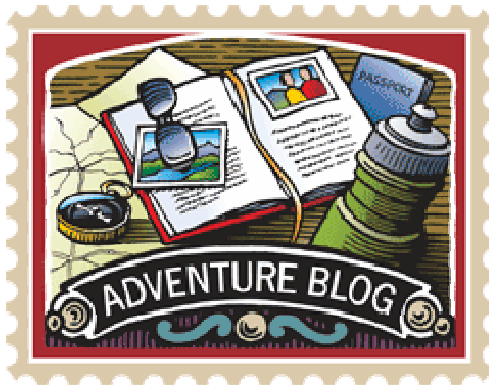
98 Mansfield Street
New Haven, CT 06511
203 562 4215
tellmepress.com



<http://www.austinlehman.com/blog/greece-is-open>

Greece is Open: Come and Sea for Yourself

Filed under: **Adventure Travel** – Barbara Bonfigli @ 3:28 pm



You probably don't need an excuse to go to Greece this summer since you've been dreaming about it long enough to have a PhD in procrastination. But here I am to wake you up and maybe tip you out of your hammock. Why would I do that? Because suddenly Greece is affordable and un-crowded. And as spectacularly beautiful as ever.

As everybody knows, the Greek economy is in trouble. Its debt is enormous thanks to a method of collecting taxes similar to Cleveland

asking LeBron James to stick around for old times' sake, or Phillip Morris asking the Marlboro Man to smoke lettuce. The good news for Greeks is that their new leaders are implementing a plan that is likely to turn things around, and the public demonstrations of the spring are now few, far between, and peaceful.

The good news for Americans is the very favorable euro/dollar equation. Everything you buy now, from a hotel room near the Acropolis, to a tour of Delphi, to an ouzo or a beer in a seaside taverna, is a lot cheaper than it was even a year ago.

Hard times in Europe and elsewhere means fewer tourists. Fewer Germans on beach beds, fewer Italians on the dance floor (sadly), fewer Japanese in your viewfinder – to mention some foolish stereotypes. Go to a Greek island this summer and you're sure to find an uncrowded ferry to a pristine beach, a perfect patch of sand for your beach towel, and a fresh octopodhi for dinner. Or wait until September or October when the seas are their warmest, pomegranates decorate the Pelion hillsides, and the natives of Hydra and Mykonos and Crete are surprised and thrilled to see you.

Beauty, as always, is everywhere: the weather, the architecture, the food, the smiles, the landscape. Blue Flag beaches - those that meet the high environmental standards of the FEEE (Foundation for Environmental Education in Europe) – are another crystal-clear reason to choose a Greek holiday. Because Greece really is a nation of islands, and tourism a top priority, the Greeks are conscious and careful about their seas and seashores. The Greek Aegean, home to dozens of fabulous islands, has far more Blue Flag beaches than its neighbors France, Italy or Turkey. Pack a snorkel and mask and flippers; the sea is free.

Finally, there's the language issue. Ok, you're Greek is spotty-i.e. "please" and "thank you" are distant lands. But Greeks speak English! I've been traveling there since the 70's and this is the biggest development since ice cubes. Everyone learns English in school and now practices it daily on Facebook and Google. So don't worry about that, unless you yearn for a heart-to-heart with a 90 year-old shepherd you happen to meet while walking to the beach under a breezy blue sky, through wild flowers and olive groves.

And if you do decide to get a phrase book for that memorable shepherd tête à tête, or just to show respect for your hosts, a couple dozen words will go a long long way. Not only are people grateful that you're making the effort, they will actually attempt to understand you. Try that on the French Riviera. But why would you? This year the cradle of Western civilization is rocking.

Barbara Bonfigli is the author of "Café Tempest: Adventures on a Small Greek Island" (cafetempest.com) and the host of a series of short, savvy [Greek Travel Tip videos](#).