

# Hopes for Greek Islands Holiday Boom in 2012

Greek tourism leaders are hoping that Greek island holidays will continue to buck the trend in the coming year. Positive figures for Greek tourism were the only bright spot in the gloomy landscape of the Greek economy in 2011. According to holiday surveys, 2011 was a year of recovery for the tourism market in Greece with the year notching up an overall increase in holiday visitors of nearly 10%.



The Greek islands of Kos (up 21.8% ), Rhodes and Crete led the way with double-digit rises, while the Cyclades island group recorded an increase in tourist visitor numbers of 13.1%, according to a survey by the Institute for Tourism Research and Forecasting, in collaboration with the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels.

The amount of German visitors grew the most, followed by the English and Dutch. Far greater numbers of travelers from Russia and Eastern Europe are now taking holidays on the Greek islands, although they are still some way behind German and UK visitors.



The Bank of Greece also reported that tourists are spending more on Greek island holidays with receipts up 12.6% in 2010. Flexible pricing and smaller VAT on accommodation for foreign tourists, are likely to have contributed to the good performance of the sector.

Greece is still one of the top tourism destinations in the world despite the economic woes of 2011. Lonely Planet places Greece among its top 10 destinations and the Greek Islands were voted the best island destinations in the world by Condé Nast Traveler readers in 2011.



Greek islands tourism has shown a steady increase over the last decade - from 14.2 million visitors in 2004 to more than 17 million people in 2010. Forecasters predict that in a few years this number will reach 20 million, almost twice the country's population. The rise in tourist numbers and the evolving profile of the modern tourist will demand a shift in tourism offerings and infrastructure projects, according to experts.

## 2011: The Best Year for Greek Tourism?

*2011 was the best year for Greek tourism, according to figures by the Association of Greek Tourist Enterprises (SETE) concerning the country's 13 largest airports. Tourist arrivals at airports throughout Greece rose by 8.65 percent in January-December 2011 in comparison with the same period in 2010, with arrivals totaling 11,528,782, surpassing total arrivals of 10,611,219 in 2010. The overall number of tourist arrivals in 2011 is projected to be around 16.5 million, with revenues from tourism rising more than 10 percent against 2010, corresponding to a 1 percent increase in GDP.*

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