



Buying property in Greece

Greece has been a well known destination for decades. In the last years, especially since Greece became a member of the European Union, it is not only an preferred destination for tourists, but also for people looking for opportunities to invest abroad or just acquire property in a land where land value has been increasing at a steady pace for the last 30 years.

The first step to acquire property in Greece, would be to hire a real estate agent or personally look for the suitable property in area where the potential buyer has chosen to purchase it. It is not uncommon in Greece, especially in places of touristic interest, to find a good deal just by personally searching in the area you are interested in and having personal contact with potential sellers.

After choosing the property to buy, the next step would be to hire a lawyer, who can take care of the issues relating to the purchase. Both parties to a purchase contract which has a value over 15.000 € must be represented by a lawyer during its conclusion. It is therefore recommended that both parties give their lawyer's contact details to the other party, so that lawyers can prepare the contract faster working together.

Before anyone, even a Greek citizen, can purchase real estate in Greece, that person must first obtain a tax number, known in Greece as AFM ("arithmos forologikou mitroou"). A lawyer can obtain this number in the tax office responsible for foreign nationals in Greece, if the buyer provides him with a power of attorney and a copy of the ID card or passport.

As a general rule, Europeans can purchase real estate anywhere in Greece. Foreign nationals from European countries have to obtain the prior approval though from the local prefecture, so as to acquire property in certain areas in Greece: some regions of northern Greece, Crete and Rhodes. This procedure is relatively easy and the approval can usually be obtained within a week or sooner. Foreign nationals from countries which are not members of the European Union have to obtain the prior approval from the Greek Ministry of Defence; this procedure usually takes longer though.

The buyer of property has to pay property transfer taxes before the final contract is concluded. These usually amount to 7-11% depending on several factors, like the distance of the property from certain public services (fire department), as well as the purchase price.

Real estate purchase contracts can only be concluded before a public notary, who acts as an independent official in Greece. If the buyer has the financial means available to pay the price, the final contract can be signed between the parties once all the formalities are settled. Should the buyer need to finance the purchase through mortgage or make a deal with the seller for payment with installments, a preliminary contract could be signed, which could be later executed from the buyer alone, if its requirements are met (e.g. payment of the price).

After the final contract is executed, the contract must be registered at the local Land Registry. According the Greek civil law, ownership of the property is conveyed legally to the buyer only after the notarized contract is duly registered at the Land Registry.

Regarding costs, a foreign national who buys property in Greece will be required to pay:

- The property transfer tax
- The public notary's fees
- The lawyer's fees
- The Land Registry fees
- The real estate agent's fees



Greek authorities are generally concerned about where a foreign national is obtaining money to purchase property in Greece. If the money is coming from abroad – which is the most frequent case – the buyer will need to obtain a certification from the bank, stating that he has wire-transferred money from abroad. If such a certification is not filed with the buyer's income tax declaration on the following year, Greek tax authorities will consider the price paid as net income and tax it accordingly.