

Title:

Athens Taxi Ride - Extreme Sports

Word Count:

505

Summary:

Athens is a huge, congested city and the local taxis are your main means of getting around. The average Athens tax ride is inexpensive, just bring your helmet.

Keywords:

athens, taxi rides, san francisco, new york, paris, eiffel tower, white knuckle, california, Europe

Article Body:

Athens is a huge, congested city and the local taxis are your main means of getting around. The average Athens tax ride is inexpensive, just bring your helmet.

Living on the Edge

I had just arrived in Athens with a couple who'll remain nameless. [He's now a respectable doctor and married to someone else.] My buddy, "John", had a Greek friend who lived in town named Stavos. We were going to stay with him and explore Athens before heading to the islands.

Stavos had gone to college with us in California and more or less been raised there. After experiencing the finer points of higher education [fraternity parties, etc.], he and his brother had started a snowboard company in Athens. Who could possibly be buying snowboards in Greece? It turned out Stavos and his brother were selling them throughout Europe, not in Greece.

Anyway, Stavos collected us in a friend's car and took us to his small studio. We decided to catch some winks and then head out for a night on the town. Thus, we would experience an Athens taxi ride for the first time.

Taxi driving is a competitive sport. I am convinced there is a World Cup of taxi driving and drivers practice on the streets of their location. San Francisco and New York taxi drivers are an elite group, while taking a taxi in France is a good way to see the Eiffel Tower while going the wrong way down a one-way

street. In Athens, it was all about speed.

Being an idiot, I yelled out "shotgun" as the taxi pulled to the curb. I should've guessed my triumph wasn't a good thing when Stavos just smiled. In we went and Stavos gave the driver our destination. For the next fifteen minutes, I feared for life itself. Mine and others.

Our driver was apparently convinced he would get a bonus if he beat a certain time. We peeled out at the curb and the race was on. Through the tight, winding streets of Athens we went. As is the nature of chaotic Athens, the roads are packed with cars, buses, people and very brave cyclist. Considering this an obstacle course, a driver whipped through the throngs at over 80 miles per hour. Most of the time was spent in the SLOW lane, where less cars were. I still have nightmares about the faces of cyclist staring at me as we passed them with maybe 5 inches to spare. Frozen pictures of terror. Throw in cars starting to pull out in the road and you have the white knuckle event of the year.

When we finally pulled up to the club, I started breathing again. As I pulled my hand off the handle on the door, I left impressions. Standing outside of the cab, Stavos asked me if I wanted to sit in the front on the way home and started laughing.

It took two drinks to calm my nerves. Come hell or high water, I was walking home.