

# Greek Tortoise

*Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff*

Also known as the Spur-Thigh Tortoise, the Greek Tortoise is found in many different areas of the world. Because its natural environment varies so much, there are over 20 subspecies within this species. If cared for properly, they can live a very long time.

## Species Profile: Greek Tortoise

<b>Scientific Name:</b>	<i>Testudo graeca</i>
<b>Natural Environment:</b>	Southern Spain, Northern Africa, Eastern Europe, Middle East
<b>Average Size:</b>	6" - 7"
<b>Average Life Span:</b>	More than 50 years.
<b>Appearance:</b>	Because there are so many subspecies of the Greek Tortoise, the appearance varies widely. Color can range from olive with dark spots in the middle of each scute to a golden variety that is almost all yellow in color. In all subspecies, the male is smaller than the female.
<b>Habitat</b>	
<b>Size:</b>	An adult Greek Tortoise needs a minimum of a 4 foot long by 2 foot wide by 1 to 2 foot deep enclosure.
<b>Lighting:</b>	<a href="#">Incandescent basking bulbs</a> and <a href="#">infrared bulbs</a> can be used to provide both heat and light. <a href="#">Full spectrum fluorescent lights</a> that provide UVB light should be used during the day for 12 to 14 hours.
<b>Temperature:</b>	The basking area should be approximately 95°F, and the rest of the enclosure should have temperature gradients ranging from 75° to 85°F. Nighttime temperature should be about 75°F.
<b>Humidity:</b>	Greek Tortoises are native to dry environments, so the humidity should be no more than 30% to 50%. A humidity level that is too high can cause a number of health issues.
<b>Housing:</b>	Because of their intolerance for a high humidity level, Greek Tortoises are one of the few tortoise species that actually do better when housed indoors. However, you should still set up an outdoor pen for days when the weather is warm, dry, and not humid.
	Glass aquariums are not recommended for Greek Tortoises

because they do not allow for proper air circulation. Plastic garden ponds, wading pools, and turtle tables are all suitable enclosures. A screened-in terrarium can also be used.

In the enclosure, you will need to provide a hide spot that is at the opposite end from the basking area. It can be made from rocks, wood, or plastic containers, or you can purchase a commercially made hide spot.

Place a water dish in the enclosure for drinking and soaking. Be sure to use a shallow dish, as Greek Tortoises cannot swim, and they will drown in a deep dish that they cannot easily get out of.

**Substrate:** Sand/soil mix, aspen shavings, [coconut fibers](#), compressed recycled paper, grass hay.

**Diet/Feeding:** Greek Tortoises are strict herbivores, and they need a diet high in fiber and calcium and low in protein. Their daily diet should consist of dark, leafy greens and natural grasses and hays. They can have an occasional piece of fruit. Greek Tortoises need a [calcium supplement](#), which can be sprinkled over their food. Be sure to supply fresh water at all times.

**Behavior/Interaction:** Male Greek Tortoises are territorial, so it's best to house one male with one or more females if you are going to keep more than one. Regardless of what their sexes are, always be sure to provide plenty of hide spots and sightline breaks if there is more than one tortoise in the enclosure.