

Eddie Murphy's holiday transport

Eddie Murphy reportedly chartered two private planes to transport his friends to Greece for a holiday.

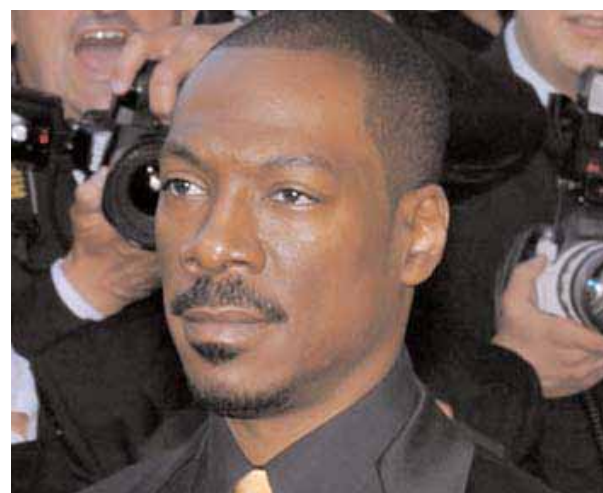
The 'Meet Dave' actor is said to have specifically demanded two separate airborne vehicles for the trip – one for adults and one for children.

However, while stars including P. Diddy are cutting down on their jet use in a bid to be ecologically aware, Eddie seemed less than concerned about his damage to the planet – and even failed to use all the seats in the aircraft.

A source said: "Eddie insisted on hiring a 12-seater plane because he said he wanted privacy, but there were only six adults travelling in it in the end. He also booked some more of his friends on a commercial flight to ensure he had a fun-filled holiday."

During his break, Eddie will tour around Greek Islands with friends in a huge lavish yacht. He is also planning trips to Athens on private planes.

Eddie is expected to return to America on September 7.



Greece: Pagans call on Athena to protect the Acropolis

Thrusting their arms skywards and chanting Orphic hymns, Greek pagans made a comeback at the Acropolis as they added their voices to protests against the imminent inauguration of the New Acropolis Museum.

Ignoring a sudden rainstorm and irate officials, white-clad worshippers gathered before Greece's most sacred site and invoked Athena, the goddess of wisdom, to protect sculptures taken from the temples to the new museum. It was the first time in nearly 2,000 years that pagans had held a religious ceremony on the site.

"Neither the Romans nor the Ottomans or any other occupational force ever took anything from this holy site," said Yannis Kontopidis, one of the high priests who officiated over the affair.

"It's scandalous that antiquities of such value, carved in honour of Athena, should be wrested from their natural environment and moved to a new locale."

Not since Pericles oversaw the construction of the Parthenon had any of its classical artworks been officially removed – until last year, when thousands of items were transferred by crane to the New Acropolis Museum beneath the citadel.

The £94m glass and concrete edifice, designed by the Swiss-American architect Bernard Tschumi in collaboration with Greece's Michalis Photiadis, has divided Greeks.

Supporters praise its cavernous space and have claimed the building will offer better protection of the antiquities and a superior viewing space for spectators, who previously had to negotiate the confines of a tiny museum atop the hill.

Government officials said its opening later this year should end the British Museum's argument that Athens has no place decent enough to house its



classical artworks, including the Parthenon sculptures on display in London since Lord Elgin seized them from the temples more than 200 years ago.

An Ipsos-Mori poll, conducted before the new museum's inauguration, recently showed that 69% of Britons believed the marbles should be returned to Greece.

However, opponents, including architectural purists, have argued that the new museum insults Greece's cul-

tural heritage, it being in the wrong location and far too big in grandeur and scale.

Yesterday's ceremony represented a major coup for Greek polytheists whose faith, which is described by the powerful Orthodox church as a "miserable resuscitation of a degenerate dead religion", has long been banned in the country that gave birth to the gods of Mount Olympus.

Helena Smith in Athens The Guardian

Greeks tried to outsmart IOC with 'rare' drug: anti-doping expert

ATHENS (AFP) — Over a dozen Greek athletes who failed doping tests prior to and during last month's Beijing Olympics thought a rare anabolic steroid would help them elude tests, a leading anti-doping expert said Monday.

But the International Olympic Committee (IOC) had been on the lookout for cheats from Greece ever since the drug, methyltrienolone, turned up in the results of 11 Greek weightlifters in April, Don Catlin, a member of the World Anti-Doping Agency's committee for science and medicine, told Ta Nea daily.

"The Greek case...involved the use of a particularly rare and dangerous anabolic whose use had not been officially recorded before," Catlin said.

"Whoever marketed it in Greece undoubtedly argued that it is not harmful and could not be traced, as only small quantities are needed for it to act."

In all, fifteen Greek athletes in three disciplines -- weightlifting, swimming and athletics -- have tested positive for methyltrienolone, severely embarrassing Greek authorities which on Monday tabled tougher anti-doping legislation in parliament.

"The (Greek) state wants clean athletes," Michalis Liapis, the Greek culture minister responsible for sport, told reporters.

The new regulations cut rewards for successful athletes to discourage drug cheating and toughen sanctions against providers of banned substances, corrupt anti-doping officials and sports officials.

The doping outbreak has already sparked a preliminary judicial probe here.

Among those caught is Fani Halkia, the women's 400m hurdles at the Athens Olympics, whose coach George Panagiotopoulos has now been sued by the IOC for causing damage to its reputation.

Catlin is a senior US chemist whose research led to the uncovering of the BALCO steroid scandal and the first test for THG, the once-undetectable drug that dope cheats had used with great success.

Conflict between Greek monks flares up

A conflict between a groups of monks has flared up on the holy mountain of Athos in Greece, following years of dispute. A group of extremely orthodox monks is threatening to blow itself up according to the Greek media.

The group has isolated itself from the 19 other monasteries on Athos because it fiercely opposes dialogue with the Roman Catholic church. The other groups of monks think they should leave the mountain because of this. But the extremist monks say they will blow their monastery up with dynamite, petrol and gas bottles if they have to. There were skirmishes on Sunday, when another group of monks tried to enter the rebel monastery.

There were similar incidents 18 months ago on the eastern peninsula of Chalkidiki, in which seven monks were seriously injured.