

There are a lot of things to do in Athens. Famous of course for its ancient ruins and artifacts it is also home to a thriving food and cafe culture, a buzzing arts scene and some stunning outdoor venues, events and activities that cater to people of all ages and for all budgets. Its an affordable and eclectic city that is easy to get around and the friendly locals are always happy to welcome visitors to their extraordinary home.

## PLANNING A TRIP TO GREECE?

Whether you've been before or it's your first time it can be hard to process all the information out there. Be sure to check out our complete [Planning Guide](#) as well as our [FREE 13-page downloadable itinerary](#).

If you are feeling really overwhelmed you might like a [Trip Consultation](#) perhaps!?

And come join our private [Facebook Group](#) where you can ask questions and get advice from real travellers!

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### Top Neighbourhoods in Athens



The ancient centre of Athens, rich in history and culture, comprises several distinct neighbourhoods, each offering unique experiences.

**Plaka:** Known as the “Neighborhood of the Gods,” Plaka is the oldest district in Athens, nestled beneath the Acropolis. It features narrow, winding streets, neoclassical architecture, and an abundance of cafes, tavernas, and souvenir shops. Key attractions include the Tower of the Winds and the Lysicrates Monument.

This is a very pretty and gentrified area and is where many tourists choose to stay.

**Syntagma:** The central square of Athens, Syntagma is home to the Greek Parliament and the ceremonial changing of the guard. It serves as a transportation hub and gateway to other neighbourhoods.

The Square is lined with luxury hotels and the beginning of Ermou, the main pedestrian shopping street.

**Monastiraki:** Famous for its bustling flea market, Monastiraki offers a vibrant atmosphere with a mix of shops selling antiques, clothes, and local crafts. The area is also home to several historical sites, such as the Ancient Agora, the Roman Agora, and the Tzistarakis Mosque.

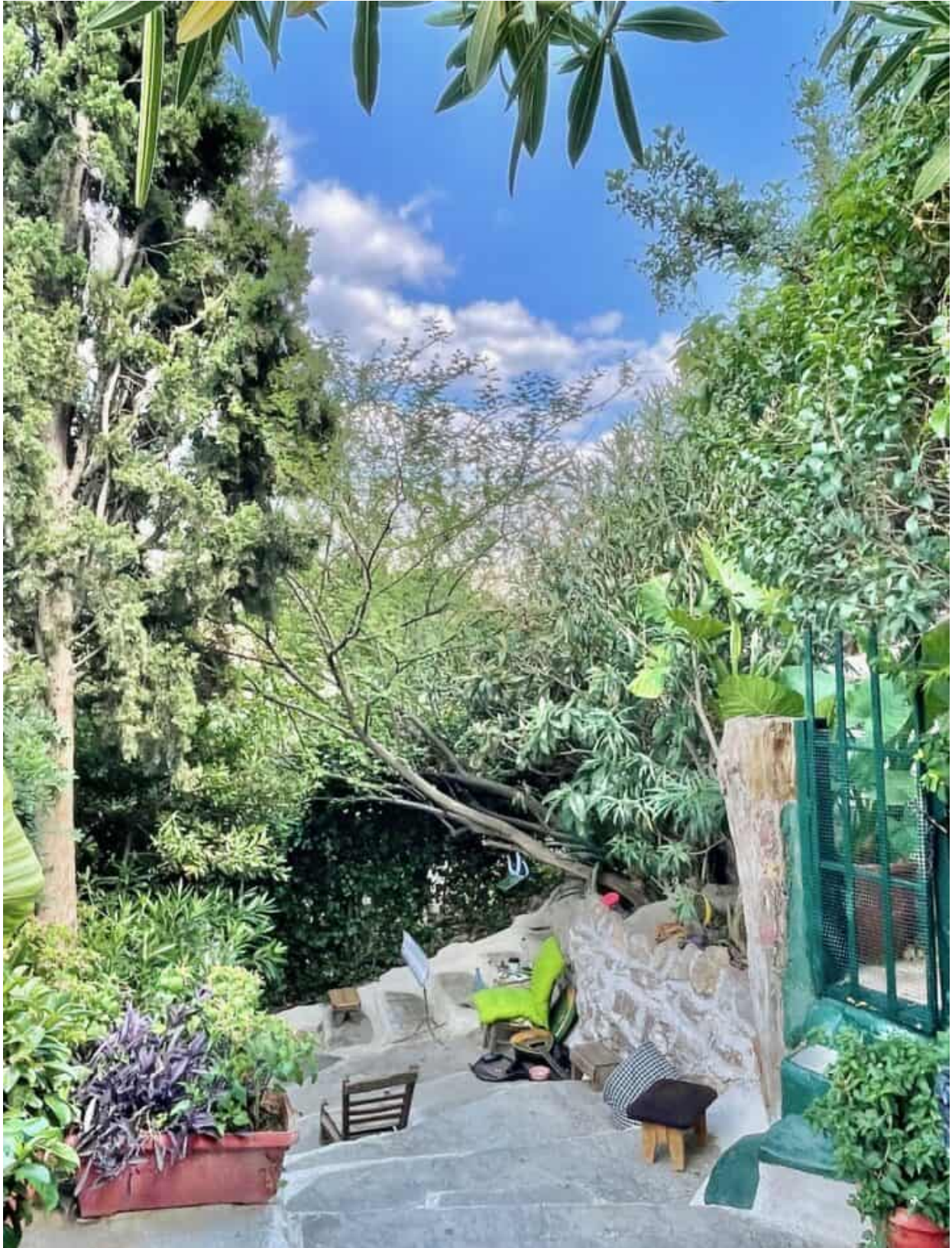
**Anafiotika:** A hidden gem within Plaka, Anafiotika resembles a Cycladic island village with its whitewashed houses, narrow alleys, and colourful shutters. Built by craftsmen from the island of Anafi in the 19th century, it offers a peaceful escape and stunning city views.

**Thissio:** Located near the Ancient Agora, Thissio is known for its lively cafes and bars with excellent views of the Acropolis. Key attractions include the Temple of Hephaestus, one of the best-preserved ancient Greek temples, and the pedestrianized Apostolou Pavlou Street.

**Psiri:** Once an industrial area, Psiri has transformed into a trendy neighbourhood known for its vibrant nightlife, street art, and eclectic mix of restaurants and bars. It is a hub for creative and alternative culture.

This is where some of the best food is found in Athens and at very affordable prices. Despite being the next neighbourhood after Monastiraki it is mostly frequented by Greeks more than tourists.

Further reading: [A Complete Guide to Psyri](#)



Anafoitika



Psyri



Plaka

## **History and Archeology**

Athens is literally a giant museum with ancient wonders, ruins and sites at every turn, particularly in the ancient centre.

You could easily spend weeks exploring them all, but these are the main attractions:



## **The Acropolis**

Number one on your list of course has to be The Acropolis. The Acropolis, which literally translates to “highest point of the town,” and was the location of the citadel originally occupied by the Mycenaen kings. As the centuries progressed, the Acropolis became home to several temples, shrines, and sanctuaries. The most famous of the temples is the temple

to Athena, the Parthenon. There is also a theater and sanctuary for Dionysus on what is now referred to as the Southern Slope.

**Read our [Complete Guide](#) to visiting the Acropolis!**

**Tip:** *To spare yourself from the long queues at the main entrance, head farther down the hilly street to the lesser-travelled south slope entrance. Also try to go either as soon as it opens or just before closing not just to avoid the crowds but also the sun, especially in Summer.*



## **The Acropolis Museum**

The first Museum of Acropolis was completed in 1874 and underwent a moderate extension

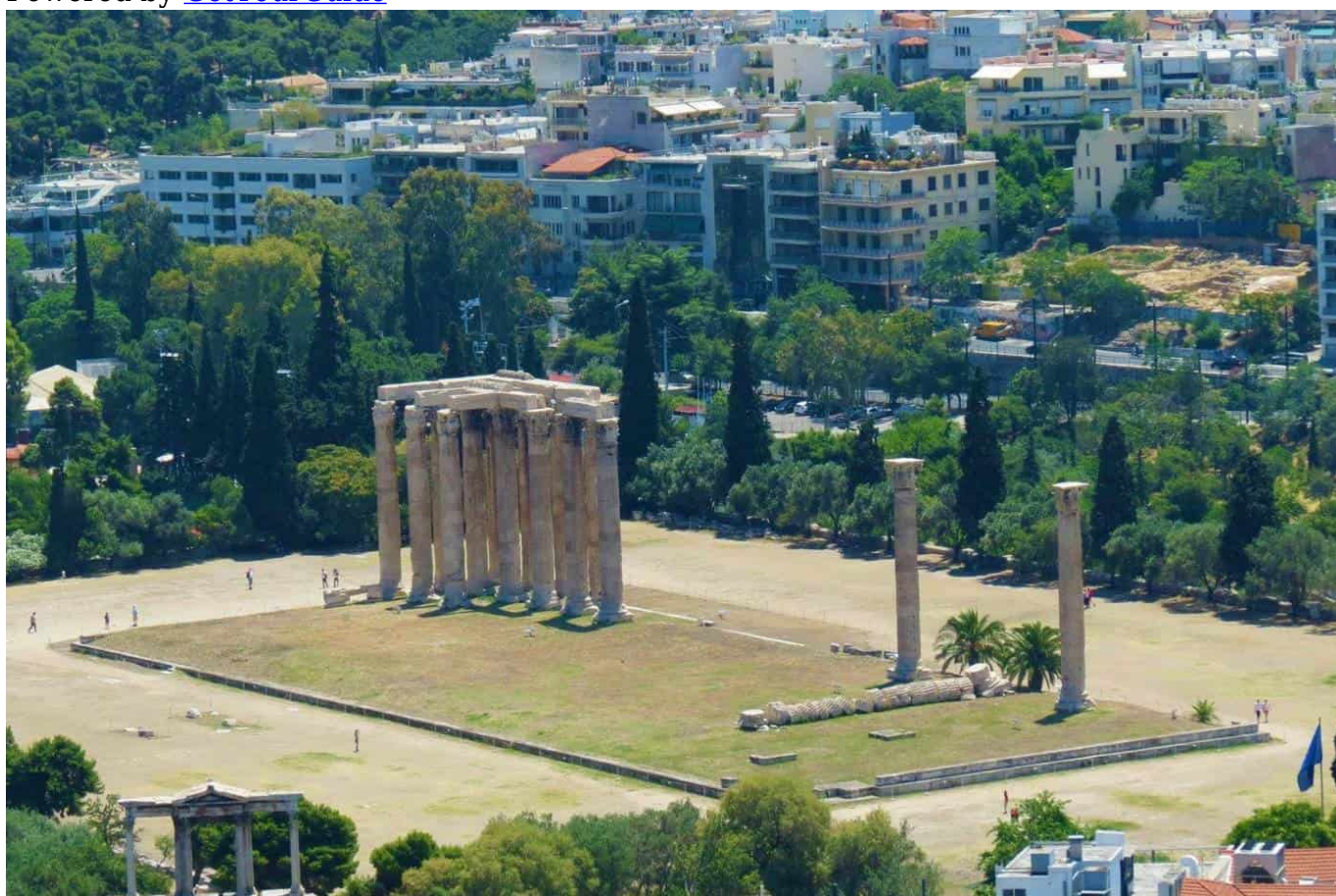


in the 1950s. However, subsequent excavations on the Acropolis hill brought many new artefacts to light and the museum's capacity was significantly expanded and modernised in time for the 2004 Olympic Games. It includes the creation of a gallery for the exhibition of the Parthenon Marbles which to this day remain in The British Museum in London.

**Read our [complete guide](#) to visiting the Acropolis and the Acropolis museum!**

This is an excellent museum. Big, bold and home to some extraordinary artifacts as well as some real excavations. There are a couple of good cafes and it is easy to get around. I suggest you visit it on the same day as The Acropolis. Visiting hours and ticket information can be found [HERE](#)

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## **The Temple of Olympian Zeus**

The Temple of Olympian Zeus was completed in 132 AD after being partially built and in

limbo for over 600 years after its original conception.

It was originally built with 104 Corinthian-style columns of which today there are only 15 left. You will notice the temple from many high vantage points across the city and it is only a short walk from the center of town.

**Where:** Leoforos Vailisis Amalias Road - a short walk west from the Acropolis and south from Syntagma Square/Parliament, just below the National Gardens.

**When:** Open daily 8am - 7:30pm

**Cost:** 8€ for adults, €4 concession



## **Ancient Agora**

The word Agora means 'market' or meeting place in Greek and located on the Northwest slopes of the Acropolis you will find the ancient Agora of Athens.

For over 5000 years this thriving marketplace was used by millions over people to trade, reside and for recreational purposes and it was modified and rebuilt countless times during the various occupations by the Romans, Ottomans, Byzantines and more.

Today it is a ruin but you can still clearly see how and where people went about their days.

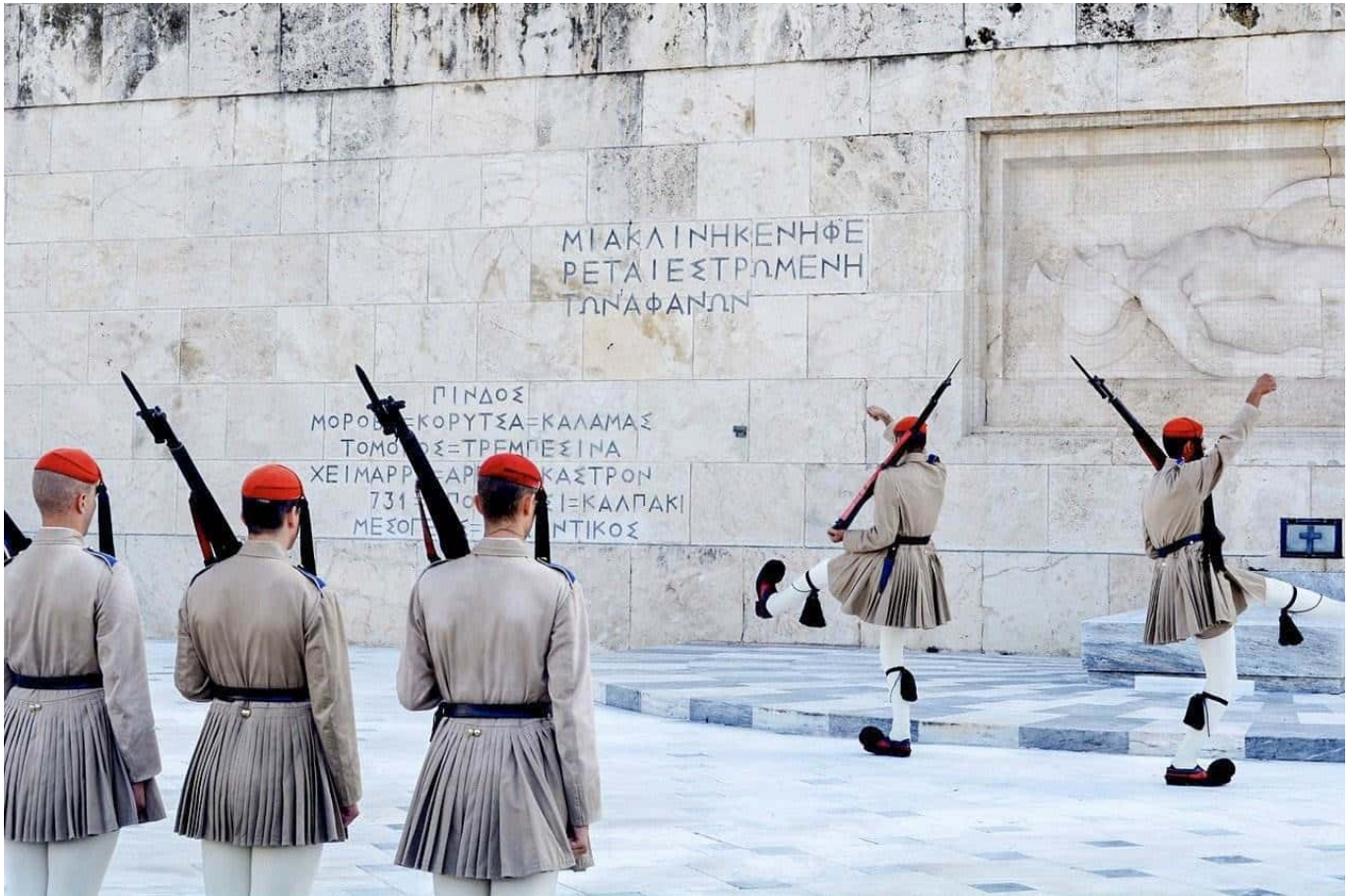
There are two buildings still standing, the Stoa of Attalos and the incredible [Temple of Hephaestus](#). Other things to see around the site are ancient drainage canals, altars, shrines, a bath and the remains of a prison as well as a roman statue. There is a very good museum on-site as well.

**Location:** Adrianous Street, west of Monastiraki Square

**When:** daily between 8 am and 3 pm

**Cost :** Adult: 10€ Concession: 5€

## **Food, Shopping & Culture**



## Evzones

The [Evzones](#) is an elite unit of the Hellenic Army who, amongst other things, are known for their very distinctive uniform and elaborate walk. They are charged with guarding the Monument of the Unknown Soldier in front of the Hellenic Parliament and the Presidential Mansion.

The soldiers are selected according to their height, excellent physical condition, and psychological state as well as character and morality, and it is considered a great honour to serve as an Evzone, who are much admired.

**Where:** outside Parliament at the end of Syntagma Square

**When:** each hour, on the hour, and an official weekly ceremony at 11am on Sundays.

**Cost:** Free

Further reading : [The Elite Greek Presidential Guard](#)



## Shopping

Not surprisingly the Greeks have some stunning fashion and are particularly experts at shoes and kaftans ( Sandals and Togas !)

The first place most people head for shopping is the central pedestrian street of Ermou. Packed with all the high street brands you would expect such as Zara and H & M but also home to numerous independent stores including a plethora of shoe shops.

The biggest department store, Attica, can be found on Omonia Street, just off Syntagma

Square. It has a huge range of brands and is housed in a beautiful neo-classical building. It is to Athens what Harrods is to London.

Dont forget the Greek owned jewellery store Follie Follie which can be found all around the world but its headquarters are in Athens. Other Greek brands to keep an eye out for are Korres beauty products and one of my favourite fashion labels, La Stampa.

In Monastiraki there is a famous sandal maker called Melissinos who counts a number of Hollywood celebrities as his customers

**Where:** Ermou street, Plaka, Monastiraki and surrounds

**When:**

Mon, Wed, Sat: 09:00-15:00.

Tue, Thu, Fri: 09:00-14:30 & 17:00-20:30.

Most shops close on National Holidays. Souvenir shops and convenience stores near tourist sites open longer hours, usually 09:00-23:00 every day.

**Cost:** the sky's the limit!

Further reading: [What to buy in Greece](#)



## **Mount Lycabettus**

Lycabettus hill is the highest point in Athens and its central location means it has the best views in the city. It can be accessed car/taxi, on foot from the inner suburb of Kolonaki or by Funicular.

At the top you can enjoy 360 degrees of Athens and can easily see the Acropolis, Temple of Olympian Zeus and the Panathenaic Stadium which is all especially beautiful at dusk when the lights all come on. You can see right out over the Aegean and the Saronic Islands.

There is a lovely restaurant at the top called Orizontes with incredible sunset views, and a Church and cafe as well.

**Where** : Corner of Ploutarhiou & Aristippou Streets, Kolonaki

**When** : the Funicular runs daily between 9:30am - 2:30am

**Cost** : 10 euro for a round trip



## Athens Markets

For fresh food the biggest market is the Central Market also known as Varvakeios market. It's not only where the locals get their groceries, but also where the chefs get their fresh fish, nuts, vegetables and meat. There are some [excellent food tours](#) that include Athens



Central Market in their itinerary.

The market is divided into two areas, the indoor area which sells fresh meat and fish where there are also some small traditional restaurants where you can order homemade dishes.

Across the road and in the area of the surrounding street are the vegetables and fruit stands with an abundance of olives, wine, nuts and small goods for sale.

**Where** : between Monastiraki and Omonia on Athinas street,

**When** : Monday through Saturday till 3PM.

**Cost** : free to look

*Tip: There is also the famous Monastiraki Flea Market right behind Monastiraki Square and Metro Station.*

*This is open every day but the casual stall holders come on Sundays which is the main market day. Browse through a treasure trove of vintage collectables, bric-a-brac, records, art work, furniture and more.*



## Walking Food Tours

There are several really excellent Walking Food Tours in Athens.

The local guides are extremely well connected and knowledgeable and will take you to carefully selected specialty food shops, where you'll taste some of the finest olive oil, cheese, and honey available in the city, as well as local delicacies such as pastourma cured meat and local drinks too.

On this [3.5-hour guided food tour](#) you'll stroll through traditional Athens neighborhoods and visit some wonderful pastry shops that serve tempting Greek sweets. You'll be immersed in the fragrances and colors of local spices, the secret behind renowned Greek dishes, and aromas of Greek coffee as well.

**Who:** [Athens Food on Foot](#) - use the promo code '**grecetravelplanning**' for a further 10% off

**When:** Daily

**Cost:** Varies

**Further reading:** [Food Tours and Cooking Classes in Greece](#)



## **Stavros Niarchos Cultural Centre**

Opened in 2016 the Stavros Niarchos Cultural Centre is home to the Greek National Opera, the National Library of Greece and the beautiful Stavros Niarchos Park. It was funded by a foundation founded by Greek Shipping Tycoon Stavros Niarchos.

It is a remarkable feat of architecture designed by the famous Italian architect Renzo Piano and offers a variety of outdoor activities as well as tours during the week. Activities in winter include ice-skating and throughout the year there is bike hire, cycling, dancing fountains, art installations, exercise classes, festivals and concerts as well as Opera and Ballet performances indoors.

**Where:** Evripidou & Doiranis St, Kallithea

**When:** Vary but the visitor's centre is open from 8:30am to 10pm.

**Cost:** many are free ( for all events see [official website](#))



## Visit a Hammam

One of the great legacies of the Ancient Greeks and the Ottomans are the Turkish-style bathhouses found in several places in Greece, including Athens.

These Hammams are very impressive with big, marble treatment rooms with hot and cold plunge pools and a big range of services including a 'royal hammam treatment' which involves a full body exfoliation and scrub with Turkish Royal coffee and rosewater and a whole body mask of honey and sesame seed. Then a massage and stretch with a hair wash and scalp massage.

You will never be cleaner!

We love [Old City Hammam](#) near the Acropolis Museum and [Polis Hammam](#) near Monastiraki Square, but there are several other excellent ones as well.

*image credit: Polis Hammam*

Further reading: [Our favourite Athens Hammams](#)

## **Beaches and Nature**



## Visit the Athenian Riviera

The famous Athenian 'Riviera' starts at Flisvos Marina and Edem Beach, just 15 minutes from the ancient center by car and easily accessible by public transport.

On the 'Riviera' on the west coast you will find beach clubs, bars, and restaurants to rival any you will find on the islands, and a lot more on offer too. It's a great spot to spend a few days, especially on your way home, as it is only 20-30 minutes from the airport too.

Alimos is home to Kalamaki Beach and famous [Bolivar Beach Bar](#), a popular playground for Athenians which hosts international DJs year round, and there are plenty of water sports and activities on offer along the beach.

Vouliagmeni is home to many Athenian celebrities, politicians, and VIPs, and there are a number of upmarket hotels and resorts there including the only [Four Seasons in Greece](#). Upmarket [Astir Beach](#) has a high end beach club, an archeological site and some excellent restaurants such as [Ithaki](#).

Vouliagmeni is also where you will find [Vouliagmeni Lake](#), a thermal lake with healing properties that has a health spa, sunbeds and a restaurant so many people make a day of it here. It is right across the road from the beach and suitable for people with limited mobility too.

**Further reading: [Top Athens Beach Clubs](#)**

Check [tram](#) and bus timetables for more information.

On the east coast, there are even more beaches, right up along the coast of [Attica](#) and beyond. Many of these are quite close to the airport - a 10 to 15 minute taxi ride can get you to the coastal towns of Porto Rafti and Poria and numerous beaches, beach bars, and even archaeological sites.

Further reading: [A Complete Guide to the Athenian Riviera](#)



## **National Gardens**

The National Gardens in Athens are located between the Greek Parliament/Syntagma Square and the Temple of Zeus and offer a lush, serene escape in the city's heart.

Established in 1840 by Queen Amalia, the Gardens span 38 acres and features a variety of flora, including Mediterranean and exotic plants.

Points of interest within the National Gardens include ancient ruins, statues, and a charming duck pond. The Gardens also house a small zoo with various animals and a botanical museum, offering educational insights into the region's natural history. Several shaded paths and benches provide perfect spots for relaxation or quiet contemplation.



One of the most notable landmarks within the Gardens is the magnificent Zappeion Hall, a neoclassical building constructed in the late 19th century. The Zappeion serves as a conference and exhibition center and has hosted numerous important events, including meetings during the first modern Olympic Games in 1896.

Families love the traditional-style children's library and café, where they can enjoy refreshments amid the greenery and the Gardens have several playgrounds, making it a family-friendly destination.

**When:** open daily from sunrise to sunset,

**Cost:** Admission is free

## Day Trips from Athens



## **Sounion and the Athenian Riviera**

There are a number of [incredible day trips](#) that you can do from Athens.

One of the most popular is down to the Sounion Peninsula where the amazing Temple of Poseidon sits proudly looking out to sea. Its fantastic to visit at sunset and you can also pop into the Vouliagmeni Cave and hike up the road as well.

If you have time you can make a full day of it and spend some time at one of the beaches in the area known as the Athenian Riviera.

You can either take a private tour or taxi or it's possible to do all this by public transport. Private tours generally go late in the day to enjoy the amazing sunset and then you can enjoy dinner at one of the great fish tavernas nearby.

Further reading: [Visit the Temple of Poseidon](#)



## **Meteora**

Meteora is a [World Heritage Site](#) in central Greece that consists of towering rock pinnacles with a number of monasteries built on top.

People come from all over the world to marvel at both these amazing natural and man-made elements and to visit the Monasteries, beautiful in their own right and a fascinating insight into the monastic orthodox life. You can also spend a few days exploring the area which is in Thessaly, the food bowl of Greece and full of agriculture, history and beautiful, authentic, rural settings.

Whilst it is preferable to stay a night or two in Kalambaka at the foot of the towers it is possible to visit Meteora in a single, albeit very long, day.

There are a number of ways you can [visit Meteora](#) including by train, car or [private tour](#). It really is one of the most extraordinary places you will see, anywhere!



## **Delphi**

Another very popular day trip is to the [UNESCO world heritage site](#) of Delphi, once believed to be the center of the world and home to the Oracle, a significant figure in Ancient Greek history.

Positioned at the foot of Mount Parnassos with breathtaking views out to the Corinthian Gulf it is a long day including 5 hours of driving, but well worth it. There are a number of [day tours to Delphi](#) that are available.

If you have an extra day you can include an overnight stay further north to see the

unbelievable monasteries of  [Meteora](#).

**Further reading:** [A Complete Guide to Delphi](#)



## The Saronic Islands

The Saronics are the closest group of islands to Athens and are really worth a look if not a stay. These islands wrap round the Saronic gulf which protect them well from inclement weather so they are a good all round destination too.

The main islands to visit are [Aegina](#), Poros, [Hydra](#) and [Spetses](#) but there are several lesser known islands as well.

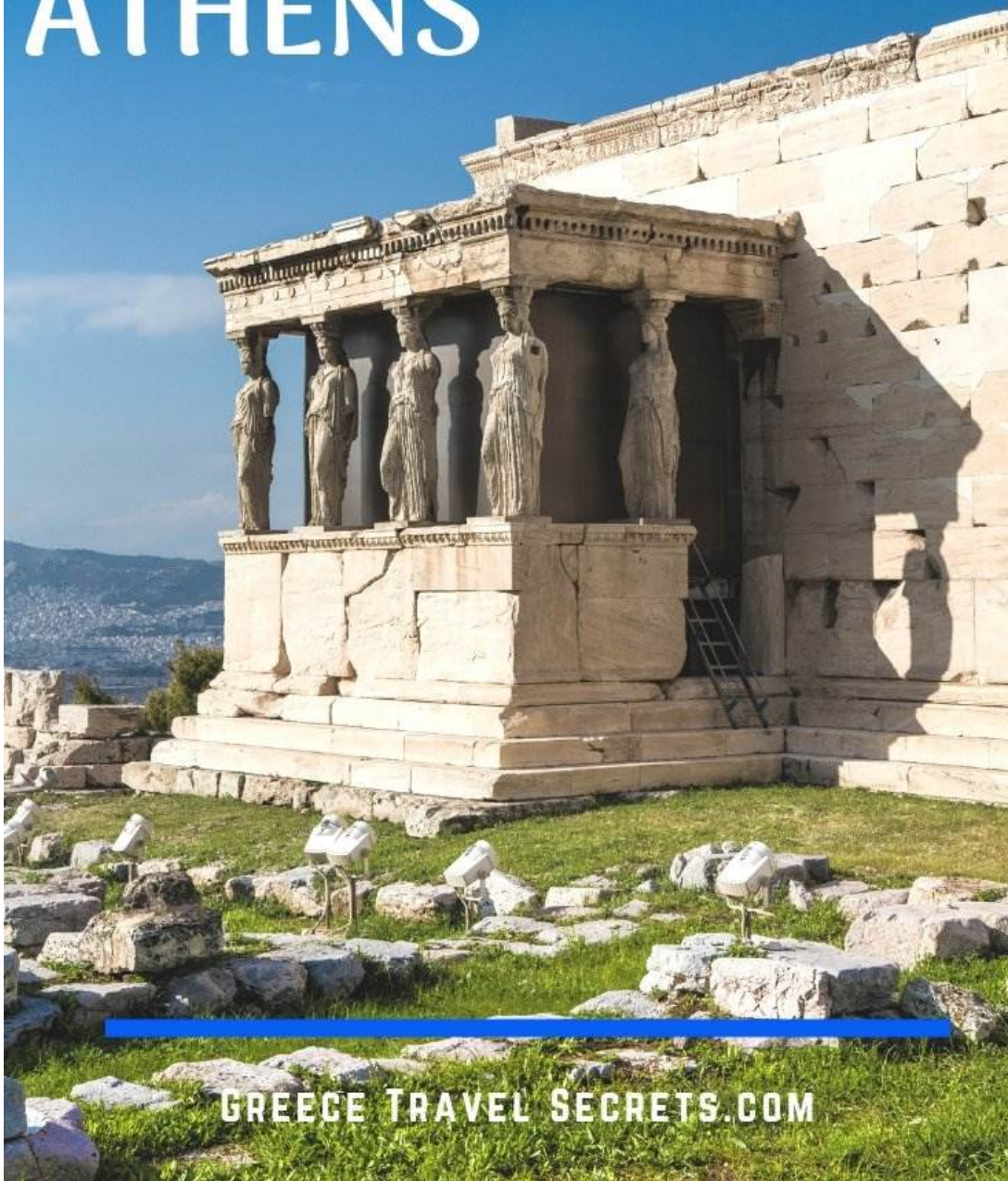
You can either catch public ferries out to one or several of them, or take an [organised cruise](#) which visits several and includes lunch and transfers.

Home to Leonard Cohen for almost 20 years and still the playground for many rich Athenians there are no cars on Hydra so transport is either by foot, water taxi or donkey !

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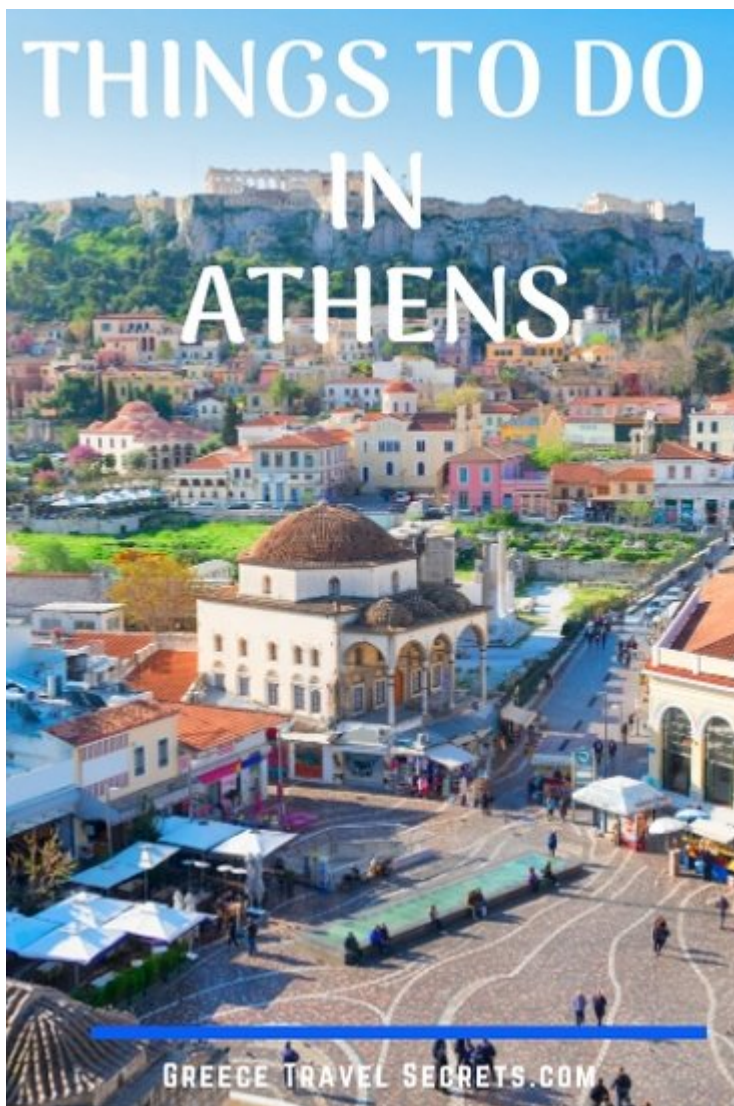
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