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ATHENS



In the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, with its 5000 years of history, home to the Olympics old and new games, birthplace of democracy, civilization and philosophy, global centre of learning and arts, Athens will conquer your soul with its fascinating contrast and mixture of antiquity and future.

No matter where you find yourself, you won't ever lose your direction: the white colonnade of the Parthenon will be your polar star on the intricate labyrinth of crowded market streets, traffic, Byzantines churches and other beauties.

**ATHENS AT A GLANCE - ACROPOLIS - TRANSPORTS - CLASSICS - FREE STUFF MARKETS & SHOPS OUZO AND OUZERIES - RESTAURANTS AND TABERNAS
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» ATHENS AT A GLANCE

Myths, science theories, theatre dramas, discoveries, arts were conceived under the Acropolis shadows on a relative brief period of time, four centuries before Christ. Afterwards, under the **Byzantine and Turkish eras**, Athens decayed into just an insignificant shepherds' village. Only in 1833 Athens became the Capital of the newly liberated Greece. A century later, in the twenties, Athens underwent massive changing in terms of **mass expansion** caused to the tragic **Greek-Turkish war** that produced almost a million of Greek refugees coming from Asia Minor that settled in suburban areas and villages around Athens and the Piraeus. Athens went through a second expansion after a few decades of wars and revolutions (German occupation in WWII, the civil war and the British occupation) and precisely during the 1950s, when the Government started a huge **industrial investment programme** attracting labour from the impoverished countryside. In 15 years the Greece Capital became an ugly modern city, called by its citizens the tsimendoupoli (city of cement) covering a continuous area from the

mounts on the north down to the sea.

Just consider that one half of the Greek industry is settled in the Piraeus and Eleusi areas that are so forth highly polluted. In the last 40 years old buildings were demolished in the name of quick-buck development to bear a population of 4 millions of inhabitants.

Only now, also due to the Olympic Games that brought European Community funds to the City, planning and preservation measures have been enforced. In fact, the **2004 Olympic Games** were the moment of a real modernization of the city after decades of inadequate public transport system that pollution and over-population pushed to its extreme limits. One of the most evident benefits of the partial restoration was the sense of peace brought to the most central areas -previously dogged by traffic chaos and poor air quality - by **creating pedestrian public spaces**.

Almost the entire transport infrastructure was renovated, a new gleaming airport built, squares and monuments restored and key places cleaned up but still the Greece Capital somehow preserves an aftertaste of Oriental charm. You will easily find it in its bustling streets, flea and food markets, cafes and narrow pathways.



For most visitors Athens fascination resides in the **stunning vestiges of its ancient history** which made it the cradle of the western civilization's way of living and thinking. Nonetheless, it would be reductive to visit Athens solely as the setting of ancient sites and museums. That's why we would like to mention a few areas that we are sure will leave you with a different and maybe more complete vision of this enchanting Capital.

PLAKA: A buzzing pedestrian area full of restaurants, tourist shops, and cafes, the Plaka extends to the southwest, up to the base of the Acropolis and it's the lone surviving quarter of the nineteenth-century. Though it is quite commercialized and touristy, it is also intriguing and Greeks hang out there too. The charm of it resides on those XIX-century preserved buildings hiding gardens and tabernas that were preserved from the mass building construction of the 50s. This small oasis from city pollution, noise, cars and crowds is a very centric point from where you can easily walk to all the desirable parts of central Athens. Its many street musicians, stands, flower sellers, ceramics shops, photographers, hidden Byzantine churches, little museums devoted to art crafts and cafes patios are not to be missed for any visitor and it is where we suggest to start your tour. Plaka's two main streets are Kydatheneon and Adrianou that will easily lead you to main city interesting places as Syntagma Square, Monastiraki, the Roman Agora and green areas of the archaeological excavations. We highlight a few places that are worth a visit: the **Children's Museum** (a very nice place if you are travelling with kids! They can experience Athens life dressing up in period costumes in a reconstructed Athenian room complete with old furniture and stuff, see the section devoted to the subway construction



works or spend some time in the playground or the library), the **Music Museum**, the **Greek Folk Art Museum** and the **Jewish Museum**. An outdoor movie theatre (Cine Paris) right in the heart of Plaka will treat your nights with movies under the stars or, on a better note, under the Parthenon colonnades! Have a look at the shop inside dedicated to movies and cine stars: you might find something curious. A quarter in the quarter is **Anafiotika**, a very nice area built by the exiles from Anàki island in XIX century: if you are not leaving for any island this place can give you a taste of what you are probably missing... white little houses adorned with purple-red exotic flowers, silence and bright narrow lanes. Many tabernas are right there behind the corner too... Another interesting place to see is the **Tower of the Winds** or the Andronikos Kyristes' clock: an octagonal monument built during the 1st century B.C which housed a hydraulic clock. It is located just outside the eastern side of the Roman Agora going towards the Roman Market. It is called tower of the winds because each of its eight sides was decorated with representations of the eight winds and of course it is located in Eolou Street (Eolo was the god of winds in ancient Greece). In the afternoon unwind with a relaxing walk through less touristy streets of Tripodon, Epimenidou and Bacchou and get ready for the succulent dinner...

» ACROPOLIS:

The Greek capital takes its name from the goddess Athena so no wonder if the Parthenon was THE temple to her dedicated! We recommend taking a tour early or late in the day when the heat is not so exasperate and you can take marvellous pictures over the white great city or the Pireus with the blue sea at the horizon. Getting to the Acropolis (that literally means 'upper city') is easy and rather pleasant as you will walk through the green slopes of the hill or on the large avenues dotted with cafes and restaurants.



There are at least 3 sites that are worth a visit: the **Parthenon**, (built by Pericles in the fifth century BC) and the **Erechtheion** (we are sure you have in mind the Caryatids, the female shaped columns), the **Odeon of Herodes Atticus** (a roman Theatre built in 161 AD with room for as many as 5000 spectators still used today to guest the annual Athen Festival) and the **Museum of the Acropolis** where many magnificent sculptures discovered in the Acropolis hill are on display. Opening hours: 8am-630pm every day; can vary depending on the season. If you are in Athens during the full moon in summer ask if the archaeological sites are open!! Entrance: 12€ supposedly valid for a few days (also good for the ancient Agora, theatre of Dionysos, Kerameikos, Roman Agora, Tower of the Winds and the Temple of Olympian Zeus).

PSYRRI, THISIO AND KERAMIKES QUARTERS:

From the Plaka, heading down on Dionysiou Areopagitou, a stone-paved walkway beneath the Acropolis that will offer you amazing views, you'll easily get to Thisio, an area that now blooms with cafes and ouzeries. To the north-east of this area lies Psyrri, the heart of the city's nightlife scene. The labyrinthine alleys are packed with trendy bars and nightclubs. Still very nice and trendy but quieter and more residential is the Keramikès area -west of Psyrri-, home to a few chic restaurants and bars.

LICABETTO AND KOLONAKY.

To the northeast, the ritzy elegant Kolonaki quarter curls around the slopes of Lykavitus, with a funicular up the hillside to save you the final climb. Have a coffee in Kolonaki Square: one of the most enjoyable places to relax while watching people passing by. The neighbourhood is full of cafes and expensive shops, fancy restaurants for fancy people that will remind you

of the finest areas of New York or Paris. Check out the Kioupi restaurant across the street from the Square. Mount Lycabettus is a good place where to spend a romantic still lively night but no panic! There's no need to climb to the top of the mountain tough. The Funicular, a train that goes up and down the mountain, is easily reachable at the top of Ploutarchou Street and will make the rest just perfect! (Walking down will be easier and more relaxing!). On the top a gorgeous panorama on the Acropolis, Piraeus, Aegean Sea and islands will be your treat especially at sunset. Have an ouzo in one of the many ouzeries in the area to warm up the night and try your luck on the Athens News: you'll never know who is performing at the outdoor amphitheatre on the back side of the mountain.

OMONIA

Omonia (in full, Platza Omonias, "Concord Square"). This is the heart of the city for the ordinary Athenian, with department stores, computer software and discount-priced electronic goods attracting a lively trade on Saturday morning. Omonia's backstreets were not long ago compared to those around Piccadilly Circus or Times Square: more than a bit seedy, with fast-food cafes, gypsies, pickpockets and a scattering of porno shows and bordellos. This is rapidly changing, however, with the commercial success of Psyrri, the entertainment district to the southwest of Omonia square. Buildings have been renovated, local theatre groups have set up headquarters in old warehouses in Psyrri and a plethora of *trendy boutiques, department stores, ouzeries, cafes and clubs* is flourishing as in any European city.

» TRANSPORTS

Transports in Athens are **inexpensive**.

A subway and metro system links the city with Piraeus, suburbs and downtown Athens, whilst buses run regularly all over the city. A daily pass costs €3 and can be used on all these means of transportation.

The new **Athens International Airport** Eleftherios Venizelos at Speta, 26km east of the city-, is accessible via public transport provided by **express airport bus** connections with Athens center and the port of Piraeus on a 24/h basis. Although the time needed to reach it can be quite long, it offers good facilities as money-changing bureaux, a business centre, luggage storage service open round the clock, cafes, newsstands and fast-food restaurants.

The taxi fare is around €15 to central Athens or Pireus (make sure that the meter is switched on to Rate 1 not 2!).

For Express Lines E94-E95-E96, the ticket costs about 5€ and is valid for 24 hours on all public transport means (buses, trolley-buses and metro). Tickets should be bought from a booth beside the stops, or, if this is closed, can be purchased on the bus.

Line E94 express bus (every 15min 6am-8.30pm, half-hourly 8.30pm-midnight) from outside the arrivals hall to the centre connects the Ethniki Amina Metro Station with the Airport. Passengers can transfer from the Metro line to the Airport Bus at this departure point.

Line E 95 express bus (every 25min 6am-7.50pm; every 35min after 7.50pm) all the way to central Syndagma square, via the Hilton. It is the only on service after midnight till morning.

Line E 96 Piraeus - Airport Express (every 20min 5am-7pm, half-hourly 7pm-8.30pm, every 40min 8.30pm-5am): from Karaiskaki Square (the center of Piraeus), all the way to the airport

(via Posidonos Avenue, Varis-Varkizas, and Varis-Koropiou Roads- beach suburbs-)

In Athens, a car is more trouble than convenience. The traffic is heavy and finding a parking place is difficult. Since most of what you want to see and do in Athens is in the city center, it's easy to do most of your sightseeing **on foot**. Fortunately, Athens has nice pedestrian zones like Plaka and Kolonaki (bounded by Omonia, Syntagma, and Monastiraki squares) making strolling, window-shopping and sightseeing infinitely more pleasant. If you want to drive outside Athens, there are plenty of **rental agencies** south of Syntagma Square.

Radio taxi is a good option as most of taxis are always full. Some established companies include Parthenon (tel. 210/5814711), and Piraeus (tel. 210/41823335). Your hotel/restaurant can make the call for you and give the taxi driver your destination.

» CLASSICS

The Acropolis

(Daily 8am-7.30pm; entrance €12 or reduced €6; Mon. 11am-7.30pm). One of the world's most famous ruins, a sacred rock that has withstood the power of the elements for more than 2500 years, is the Acropolis or 'the upper city', overlooking Athens from its 500 feet high.

National Archeological Museum

(44 Patission St; metro: omonia; bus: n. 224, 226; open Monday: 13.30-20.00 Tuesday-Sunday: 08.00-20.00; Holiday: 08.30-15.00; Tickets 7 €, reduced 3€; Free admission for: Journalists, under 19, University students from Greece and the E.U.; Free days: 6 Mar, 18 Apr, 18 May, 5 Jun, 27 Sept; last weekend of Sept; Sundays (between 1 Nov.-31 March), National Holidays.

The National Archaeological Museum is the most important archaeological museum in Greece (and one of more than 50 museums which deal with antiquities in the Hellenic region). It has one of the richest archaeological collections in the world and holds culturally valuable remains from all the diverse cultures which flourished in Greece.

The Agora

(Daily 8am-7.30pm; entrance €4 or reduced €2; Mon. 11am-7.30pm)

Long ago, the Agora (or market) was the buzzing heart of ancient Athens. It was the focus of political, commercial, administrative and social activity, a religious and cultural centre and the seat of justice. Lowly Athenians would mingle with politicians, merchants with stall holders. More than 2,000 years later, the site is unsurprisingly a confusing jumble of ruins, but it's not difficult to conjure up the life that it had.

Benaki Museum

(Daily from 9am-late afternoon; closed on Tue; free on Thursdays when it's open until midnight; tickets: €6 or reduced €3)

One of the leading museums in Athens, the Benaki Museum was founded in 1931 with the collections of Ant Benakis and other donors

If you feel tired of ancient ruins you might wish to visit some other museums displaying contemporary pieces of art and different items. The only museum of contemporary European painting in Greece, the Frissiras Museum, is housed in two neoclassical buildings in Plaka. The collections feature paintings, drawings, sculpture, and engravings by major European and Greek artists including Hockney, Auerbach, Blake, Pat Andrea, Rustin, Arroyo, Botsoglou,



Moralis and Dado (Daily; not Mon or Tue; all other days from 10/11am-5pm; entrance: €6 or 3€). If you are keen in contemporary art then you can admire a thousand paintings, sculptures, engravings and ceramics works by artists from Greece and Cyprus at the Dimitris Pierides Museum of Contemporary Art, open daily.

And to finish, make sure you visit the biggest picture and portrait gallery in Greece at the National Gallery of Art (open daily except Tue from 9am-3pm; €6,5 or €3). Not so contemporary, but still hosting a marvelous and inspiring collection of marble figurines that were used to be placed in burials in the Cycladic islands over 4000 years ago, is the Goulandris Museum of Cycladic Art (Sat-Thu 9am-2pm; entrance: € 2,40 or € 1,20). Always on a traditional note, the Museum of Greek Folk Art features an extensive collection that highlights the origins of modern popular Greek culture including embroidery from all over the country, folk theatre artefacts, gold and silverware, photographs, arms, tools and traditional costumes from around Greece (daily, Tue-Sun 9am-2pm; entrance €2).

» FREE STUFF

Maria Callas Museum (Mon.-Fri; 10am-3pm); Hellenic Childrens museum (daily 10am-2pm; Mon only schools); National Gardens (close half an hour before sunset) and Zappeion Gardens; Tactical Museum (closed on weekends); Shadow Theatre Museum Changing of the Guard (every hour on the hour, free); Museum of Greek Traditional Instruments (housed in an unadorned mansion built in 1842, this museum in the Plaka district of Athens displays the 1,200 folk instruments of the Anogeianakis collection. Every showcase has audio, so visitors get to enjoy example of music from the instruments on show. Open daily except on Monday).

» MARKETS & SHOPS

A crossroads between Europe and the Middle East Athens is an open air market where you can find almost everything from jewels, leatherworks, ceramics to local product delights as honey, olive oil, ouzo, pastries and much more. One for all: the charming old-fashioned *Kotsolis Pastry Shop* in the midst of the Plaka souvenir shops (Odos Adrianou 112) serves excellent coffee and sweets. If you wish to get something typical head to Plaka and Monastiraki and try look for less touristy corners and places.



You will easily find local shops selling olive soaps, instruments, traditional music cds, etc. A traditional food shop is *Pantopolion* (Mnisikleous Street 11). Another name and institution that you won't miss in Plaka for its punk-fashion items is "**Remember**", down Adrianou Street, a shop that has been visited by many rock stars, models, actors during the years as you will see in the photos on the walls! Right next door there is a very nice shop for women knitwear with a sort of ancient-Greek style still very modern and elegant: **Kourbela** (109, Adrianou Str.). In Plaka you will be able to find **antiques and art works** shops as well. There are also many vendors along the little lanes where jewels and small souvenirs can be purchased. If you are much more for international brands and **chain stores** head to Kolonaki which is the major **fashion shopping district**, pleasantly packed with local and unusual designers together with departments stores. Your streets are: Voukourestiou, Patriarhou Ioakim, Skoufa, Tsakalof, Kanari but the core is Plateia Kolonakiou. Another pedestrianized street where the international brands are showing off is right off Syntagma square: Ermou Street. If **flea markets** is what you fancy...then, plan to spend a Sunday in Athens and as early as possible go to **Monastiraki**, where a vast and jammed flea market will enchant the more enthusiastic treasure hunters from 6am till 2pm! You can get home with a real 1950's razor blade, a piece of pottery or an old toy airplane. It snakes around side streets and stretches west to the most flea-heavy section in Plateia Avissinias. On same day and time there is a less touristy but probably more authentic **flea market at Pireus**, stretching on Alipedou and Skilitsi streets, not far from the sea. There, you will find more every-day goods and more serious antique trading.

It will be also highly probable to bump into some **street markets** during the weekly days while walking in Athens: it a good occasion to buy some cheap goods for your trip (soaks, flip-flops, hats...) or some fresh fruit and snacks to let you go. They usually run from 7am to 2pm.

A perfect place for taking pictures and for saving money on food is the biggest food market of Athens: the **Central Market**, open every day except Sunday from 8am till 6pm. It's a covered market hall which occupies a whole block, with the fish market in the middle.

All around are butchers and spice shops, and around the market are several simple but good places to eat. Like onion soup in Paris, here the must is the tripe soup or pasta to ease the side effects of ouzo! From Monastiraki, take Athinas Street towards Omonia and you will find it on your right after a 5-minute walk!

» GREEK DELICACIES

Traditional tavernas serve hearty flavored dishes based on fresh, seasonal ingredients, virgin olive oil local cheeses and fragrant herbs and spices usually assembled to make plain dishes simply fantastic! Here some samples of what you will certainly eat.

Bekri meze: 'drunkard's snack', diced beef marinated in wine, cloves, cinnamon, bay leaves, olive oil and cooked slowly.

Memorizing this word '**mezes**' can help your liver survive when you will be drinking ouzos...

The dish that you will find anywhere and simply delicious is the **Moussaka** an eggplant casserole. There are other variations besides eggplant, such as zucchini or rice, but the eggplant version is most popular, so "moussaka" alone is assumed to mean "with eggplant". Be aware that they usually put cinnamon almost everywhere...

so if you don't like it with main courses you'd better ask... Another typical dish is the lamb slow-baked on the bone but first marinated in garlic and lemon juice: ask for **Kleftiko**. Other common grilled meat is the **Souvlaki** (chicken, pork often marinated in oil, salt, pepper, oregano and lemon) but it can also be swordfish, shrimp. And from the Italian tradition the **Pastitsio**: a baked pasta dish with a filling of ground meat and a Béchamel sauce top.

SWEETS

Baklava: a popular sweet dessert, of filo pastry layers with nuts, sugar, syrup, and cloves. Rather sweet...Yogurt with honey is simple and just a delicious way to start the day.

Melomakarona: cookies soaked in syrup of honey (meli) and sugar, topped with walnuts and almonds, also traditional during Christmas.



» OUZO & OUZERIES

In modern Greece, **ouzeries** can be found in nearly all cities, towns, and villages. These cafe-like establishments serve ouzo with appetizers (mezedes) such as octopus, salad, sardines, calamari, fried zucchini, and clams, among others. **Ouzo** (ούζο) is a Greek anise-flavored liqueur that is widely consumed in Greece. It is similar to French pastis, or Italian Anice and raki, but a little sweeter and smoother, and can be traditionally slowly sipped and drunk either "straight" or mixed with water or ice. The name dates back to the late 19th century, but is of uncertain origin however the island of Lesbos claims to be the originator of the drink and remains a major producer. Ouzeries are still a very nice place where to hang out and meet the locals! In Plaka there are many but you cannot avoid passing by Brettos' (Kydatheneon Street). Soft lights behind the coloured bottles make of this authentic place such a perfect place... many young people get there for an ouzo and the old silent owner will serve you directly from the barrels.



A nice shop specialized in Greek products and in particular in ouzo is the one in 120 Adrianou Street owned by Mr Angelo that will find an ouzo for you! A bottle of ouzo is always a typical funny souvenir to bring home to your family or friends. Fantastically kitsch, are the Parthenon-shaped bottles that for sure will make your people laugh.



» RESTAURANTS AND TABERNAS

For main meals, **Plaka's hills** and the whole area around the Roman Agora are for sure the places where you can find your spot, although as you can imagine, they are touristy. Nevertheless, any taberna there is quite ok.

A traditional taberna is a friendly cheap place where to eat with locals, not before 10 pm though! It serves hearty, highly flavoured dishes based on fresh, seasonal ingredients, extra virgin olive oil, local cheeses, and few fragrant herbs and spices. How to choose yours? Our first tip is to choose the one where the menu is not understandable and many people are sitting outside. Locals know where to go!

One of the most renowned, on the pedestrian street of Tripodon 14, full of tourists but still traditional, nice and also frequented by locals is **Sholarhio** that since 1935 has been offering a platter with 18 different Greek specialties to choose from. Dishes between 2,5 and 5 euros and free dessert (ph: 0030 210 3247605; open every day).

Stou Kynou (4, odos Angelou Geronta): just behind an Irish pub on the bottom of a small alley, you will find this typical taberna, where they will grill you just anything on their giant fireplaces... Traditional genuine music often played by elder musicians that gathers there and after a ouzo or two they just embrace a guitar and the accordion and start playing. Tables on the quiet inside garden. Portions: not too abundant but good prices. Right behind the Cine Paris! Closed on Sat and Sun (ph. 0030 210 32 21 065).

Strofi (25, odos Robertou Galli, ph.0030 210 9214130; closed on Sundays) in the acropolis area. They offer excellent meze and traditional dishes. Fantastic view, budget prices. Located

at number 12, odos Lissiou e Mnisikelous, the vegetarian restaurant **Eden**, specialized in moussaka, is rather budget. (Closed on Tuesdays; ph. 0030 210 3248858). **Giouvetsakia** (Adrianou 144 & Thespidos, ph. 0030 210 3227033) sits are on the busiest intersection in Plaka, at the corner of Kydathenaion and Adrianou streets. There the people-watching is spectacular. Try the lamb with pasta cooked in a ceramic dish.

Taberna o Platanos (4, odos Diogenous; closed on Sundays; ph: 0030 210 3220666), in a very nice square, will offer you one of the best resin wines. The restaurant has been serving good food for more than 70 years, and the lamb with green peas is delicious. Budget prices.

Ouseri Kouklis (odos Tripodon, 14; ph: 0030 210 3247605): Greek customers, nice patio, many hot or cold mezes to choose from. Better service in low season!

Taverna Thespidos (18, Thespidos street) is one of the best restaurants in the Plaka, up away from the Plaka crowds in a quiet little square where you can just feel the good old days in Athens. Its tables are all down a series of breezy terraces. Try traditional specialties like pork with spicy sauce (daily 11-24, ph: 0030 210 3238242).

Last but not least, two door-to-door restaurants serving good food with a friendly service are the **Byzantino restaurant** and the **Plaka Taverna** in the small park-main square on Kydatheneon. Packed with locals for the delicious oven baked food at lunch or grilled meats in the evenings.



» CAFES & FRAPPES

Greek coffee is coffee prepared by boiling finely powdered roast coffee beans in a pot, possibly with sugar, sometimes cardamom, cold water and serving it into a cup (similar in size to Italian espresso or Japanese sake cups), where the dregs settle. Athenians do love café or Frappe, a foam-covered drink derived from spray-dried instant coffee that is consumed cold. In brief, an iced coffee that you will simply love in the heating of the Greek summer! A curiosity: **Frappe** dates back to the 1957 International Trade Fair in Thessaloniki where a representative of a famous coffee brand, was looking for a way to have his usual instant coffee during his break but he could not find any hot water. So he made the decision to use cold water and a shaker, creating the first frappe coffee. From that day on, this simple invention became so popular to become the national coffee of Greece. It is available in any cafes. Around central square in Plaka and in Monastiraki there are a lot of nice spots where you can enjoy your frappe, watching people walking by and read your pocket guide tips and newspaper. They could be a little pricy but still affordable and worth for the view.

Gallery Cafè (restaurant and bar) in Adrianou 33, in front of the Library and the Acropolis...very nice interiors. Live classical music on Sunday mornings and exhibitions... very European!

On the same note, on your way to the Acropolis, in Adrianou 1, another music café: **Plakafe**. If you are missing your espresso, that's a good place to try. Jung people!

The Cafe Dioscouri makes excellent coffee and it is a good spot to watch the people go by during Sunday flea market. Come early. (39, Andrianou).

Tristrato is a lovely traditional milk and pastry shop (galatadiko), furnished in antiques, where they serve lots of different coffees and pastries or where you can enjoy a great yogurt with fruit, nuts, honey or all of the above (corner of Geronda and Daedelou).

Also the **Kapni Karea Cafè** offers many different kinds of coffee on its outside tables or in the beautifully-decorated inside spaces. For lunch, there are many international dishes to choose from (Hristopoulou street, between Ermou and Metropolis street).

The **Kydatheneon** is a beautiful old taverna-ouzerie, serving great coffee and frapouzo, on the trees shade in the little park. Good breakfast too with a variety of food, yogurt with fruit, or ice-cream (Farmaki, 1 in Filomouson Square, Plaka).

The outside tables of the old neo-classic mansion **Diorofo café** are a good peaceful spot where to start the day reading the news on the main pedestrian streets of Athens (corner of Aiouli and Evripidou streets, next to the City Market).

» NIGHTLIFE

First of all, as we always suggest, get a copy of the **city magazines** where you can find the weekly events in town!

The Athens News in English or the Herald Tribune (with an English insert of Athens newspaper) will list the major events, concerts and information on the city. For more specific information on all city events, art performances, clubs, places, shops you can also try the **Athenorama**, the **Odyssey** or the **Ozon Magazines**. This one is free and quite accurate! Second suggestion: after dinner

head to the **central areas like Psiri, Plaka, and Thission** and you won't miss a thing!

Outdoor cinemas: one of the most popular entertainments during the hot summer months in Athens! There are plenty spread in almost every neighbourhood of the capital. Foreign films are not dubbed and shows usually start at dusk, around 9 pm, with a later showing at 11pm. Very nice option to see those movies that you have missed during wintertime! And... what about a garden and a starlit sky as a frame? The most centric we can think about is the Cine Paris right in Plaka with a terrace and tables (22, Kydathinaion Street; ph: +30 3222071/ 3248057). Same thing for **Athinaia Ericsson** (20, Haritos Street; ph: +30 7215717) or the **Dexameni** (Dexamenis Square; ph: +30 3623942) in Kolonaki featuring garden, bar and tables or **Cine Psyrri Lipton Ice** in Thissio (40-44, Sarri Street; ph: +30 3212476). Cine or clubs, your night would start with no doubt in any ouzerie in **Psiri**, the heart of the city's nightlife scene packed with trendy bars... just to be ready for music and dance afterwards. Wish to dance some **Rebetiki**? One of the holy temples for it is the **Stoa Athanaton** (19, Odos Sofokleus, at the general markets) which is closed on Sundays. Better reserve in advance a table: shows generally begin at around 11pm and you can get a drink or even dinner. Very authentic! But if you are on your last days of your trip in Greece and wish to get some different vibes, then you have to try a mojito at the always popular **Latin club Cubanita**: a restaurant and a live music club where international performers will ensure you will have a perfect time there! (cubanita.gr; Karaiskake, 28; ph: +30 210 33 14 605). Feeling blue? Here our [pocket jazz club section](#)! Seven nights a week **Parafono** features jazz and blues performers!

Located near the centre of Athens, at Licabettus foot, it is probably the most renowned music club where jazz and blues musicians meet and play (1, S.Kirinis str & 130a Asklipiou str; 9pm-3am; entrance fee 8-15€; ph: +30 210 6446512; parafono.gr).

Try also the **Half note** (halfnote.gr) for good live jazz, blues and R&B but not before 11pm! It is close to the stadium and the city cemetery at 17, Tribonianou. Another good spot is the **Blues People** (Kelsou 5-7 and Bouliagmenis, 63; ph: +30210 924-69) or the **Guru Jazz Club**, a jazz club that opened on the top floor of Bar Guru Bar in November 2004 (Plateia Theatrou 10; ph: +30 2103246530; bargurubar.gr).

For young people please note that many **disco-clubs** during summer move to the beaches of Glifada, Alimos or Voula. If you wish to dance on funk, soul or rock music notes we suggest the **Rodon** in the University area, the **Empleon** (20, Laskaratou, Ano Patissia) for Latin and Caribbean fiestas or the **Camel Club** playing 80s music (Heraklion Str. 74 and Pireus Str. 7; ph: +30 210 3476847; camelclub.gr).

For ongoing **concerts** either classical or pop, please visit the official page of the Athens Concert Hall (www.megaron.gr) whilst if you are keen on **opera** your place is the National Opera house which is the oldest theatre in Greece! See all details at www.nationalopera.gr.

» GREEN GREEK

As usual, we integrate our city pocket-guides with a paragraph dedicated to the green resting areas usually longed for by tired, trouble-free backpackers and travellers. For sure, one of the best places in Athens is **Filopappou Hill** where you can get a breathtaking view of the acropolis or the **National Gardens**: a sprawling, peaceful stretch of green amidst the noise and traffic of the city centre where kids can find a playground and a small zoo. Open sunrise to dusk, the Gardens' main entrance is on Amalias Avenue, next to the Parliament. On the right-hand side, just entering the park, you get to **Zappeio Park** and the Zappeion exhibition Hall. Finally, the romantic, already mentioned **Lycabettus Hill** that stands 277 metres above the city offering a green shelter from the hottest summer days. An absolute must for any visitor to Athens. Not to worry: you can reach the top by means of a funicular! A large park by Athenian standards, **Kifissias Park**, has water fountains and lush greenery where an impressive flower show is organized every May. Another green spot with a playground and its occasional peacock is **Pedion tou Areos** on the corner of Patission and Alexandras Avenue. Open sunrise to dusk.



» TRIPS TO THE ISLANDS

Planning to leave the continent to a lively beach in Mykonos or a remote one in Serifos?

Here some advices: go to the tourist office at Amerikas 2 to pick up a schedule of departures from Pireus, or consult the official website with boat timetables (gtp.gr) or book directly your trip at the agencies in Syndagma Square a day or two in advance.

Ferries leave from the Harbour in Pireus or from Rafina early in the mornings, but you might want to book a cabin and sail during the night to save some time.

Ask your agent to find the best solution in terms of time tables and costs: there are different lines offering the same route.



» CITY EVENTS

Bank holidays and Religious Festivities: New Year's Day (1 January), Epiphany (6 January), Lent (March; date varies), Greek Independence Day (25 March), Easter week (Good Friday, Easter Sunday, and Easter Monday: date varies), May 1st (labour day), Holy Spirit Day (early June), Assumption (15 August), Ochi Day (28 October), Christmas Day (25 December), and Boxing Day (26 December).

February/March: Carnival with numerous events, both traditional and modern...very crowded and crazy in the Plaka area...where we suggest you buy a giant plastic hammer or a sponge club to protect yourself from others' attacks!! Crazy!
April: Athens French Film Festival: for a couple of weeks the French Institute of Athens together with the Apollon-Renault Cinema Theatre celebrate the French cinema.

April-May: The Athens International Film +Video Festival, an institution after almost 40 years, features in 1 week almost 150 films and events! Most of the films are on competition and free. Especially in the afternoons they are projected for free. The schedule and reductions of course may vary so have a look at the official site: athensfest.org/index.html and enjoy!

May: Eco Festival: This festival aims to promote a different way of living more respectful of nature and its rhythms: performances on the theme include music, theatre, exhibitions and other green activities...

Almost worthless to say, Athens major festivals and events are concentrated during its hot touristy summer from June to September.

Have a look at the following events:

• **21-23 June: European Music Day:** for a couple of days and with more than 100 free public performances to entertain the crowds, Athens and the European Music Day network celebrate each summer solstice

• **Athens Festival:** an exciting programme of cultural events such as classical and modern music concerts, opera, dance shows and theatre representations are held every year.

Location: the 2,000 year-old open air Roman Herodus Atticus Odeon at the foot of the Athens Acropolis Fantastic scenery where, beside the show, you can cherish a superb view on the Pireus, the white roofs of the city and the sea. (For all info see: hellenicfestival.gr);

• **Lycabettus Festival:** an outdoor theatre on a hill over the city is such a gorgeous location for this summer arts Festival that offers a programme of exciting music and theatre events.

• **Rockwave Festival** is probably considered the best annual music event in Greece, with international stars performing at Terra Vibe.

• The annual **Festival in the Shadow of the Rocks-held** in the beautiful Theatre of the Rocks "Melina Merkouri" - entertain the public with ancient comedy and tragedy performs along with more modern productions.

• Every summer Athens celebrates the **Traditional Greek Dance Festival** on another hill, Philopappou Hill, the backdrop of the Athenian Acropolis. It is held in the renowned Dora Stratou Theatre where dancers, traditional costumes, ancient songs and dances performing make every night a unique one! It is possible to buy your tickets on the very day of the show at the adjacent ticket office. Prices vary.

• The 4-months-running **International Petra Festival** features a lot of events for each month from percussion music groups and singers to dance and theatre performances of artists from all over the world.

» USEFUL EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Country code: +30

Area code: 210

EOT tourist office:

Vas. Amalias Av. 26

Syntagma: +30 210 331 0392;

www.eot.gr

Emergency: 112

Ambulance: 166

Fire: 199

Police: 100

Tourist Police: 171

On-Duty Pharmacies:

210 921 1434



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