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About Athens

The city of Athens took its name in the antiquity after Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom and daughter of Zeus. She was the protector deity of the city. It has been the official capital of the country since 1834 and is also the only city of Europe with such an oriental touch. Athens is considered as the cradle of modern civilization and is of course one of the few capitals of Europe with a history of thousands of years.

Besides its historic importance, it is the most important commercial centre of the country and the main Greek port, Piraeus, one of the biggest and more important of the Mediterranean, lies a few km to the south. Due to its rich historical past, Athens is a great place for sightseeing. Apart from the world famous Acropolis, which stands on the highest point of the town and has become the trademark of the whole Greece, there are many other ancient, Medieval and Byzantine remains to see.

The city of Athens might discourage the newly-arrived visitors with its disorganised, slightly brutal appearance. Nevertheless, it has a lot more to offer than it seems, while great efforts have been made to reorganise the city since the Olympic Games of 2004.

Many Neoclassical buildings adorn the centre of the town, which have been renovated presently and house mainly public services or cafeterias. Such buildings are found in Omonoia square, Panepistimiou avenue, Thissio area and Monastiraki. These areas are also famous for their picturesque atmosphere and many people go there, especially in Thisio and Monastiraki, to relax under the shade of the Acropolis.

Also visitors will discover a lot of fun activities to do, apart from sightseeing, even if they travel with kids. Besides the famous archaeological sites and museums, such as the recently-constructed Acropolis Museum, Athens has many pedestrian lovely streets, nice neighbourhoods, parks and hills covered with pine trees, numerous restaurants and a vivid nightlife.

In a close proximity from the center of Athens, you will also find many nice beaches to enjoy a swim. Most of these beaches are well organized and have calm waters. The most famous are Porto Rafti, Lagonisi, Varkiza and Schinias.

Except for the capital of Greece, Athens is also a transportation hub, as it is so close to the Port of Piraeus and plus it has an International Airport.
Best Villages in Athens

**Plaka** (Rating: ★★★★☆ by Greeka members)
**Location:** Between Syntagma and Monastiraki, metro station Monastiraki

**Description:** Plaka is the most picturesque quarter in the heart of Athens. Paved streets, Neoclassical houses and gift shops distinguish this relaxing neighbourhood.

**Sightseeing:** Canellopoulos Museum, Children Museum, Church of Panagia Gorgoepikoos, Frissiras Museum, Monument of Lysicrates, Museum of Childrens Art, Museum of Folk Instruments, Museum of Greek Folk Art, Tower of the Winds

**Thissio** (Rating: ★★★☆☆ by Greeka members)
**Location:** Close to Monastiraki and the Acropolis, metro station Thissio

**Description:** Thissio is a lovely neighbourhood right in under the Acropolis. With many outdoor cafeterias, this is a favourite coffee spot for locals and visitors. Next to Thissio, there is the Ancient Agora.

**Sightseeing:** Ancient Agora, Church of Agia Marina, Church of Agios Dimitrios Loumbardiaris, Church of The Holy Apostles, Herakleidon Museum, Museum of Alex Mylona, National Observatory, Philopappos Hill, Pnyx Hill, Stoa of Attalos Museum, Temple of Hephaestus
**Monastiraki** (Rating: ★★★★☆ by Greeka members)

**Location:** In a walking distance from Syntagma and Omonoia, metro station Monastiraki

**Description:** Monastiraki is a picturesque neighbourhood in the heart of Athens. It is famous for its Neoclassical houses, the ancient sites and the open market with souvenirs and antique shops.

**Sightseeing:** Church Of Agia Irini, Library Of Hadrian, Roman Agora

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**Syntagma** (Rating: ★★★★☆ by Greeka members)

**Location:** The centre of Athens, metro station Syntagma

**Description:** Syntagma, whose name means Constitution, is the central square of Athens. It distinguishes for the Parliament House and the beautiful Neoclassical buildings that surround it. Most sites are within a walking distance from Athens.

**Sightseeing:** Arch Of Hadrian, Church of Panagia Kapnikarea, Cycladic Art Museum, Greek Parliament, Historical Museum, Jewish Museum, Kallimarmaro Roman Stadium, National Gardens, Temple of Olympian Zeus, Zappeion
**Best Sightseeing in Athens**

**Acropolis Hill**  
**Location:** Acropolis  
The Acropolis is also known as the Sacred Rock. Famous all over the world as the symbol of Greece and the Greek culture, the Acropolis stands on the highest spot of the city. Just opposite the site, there is the new Acropolis Museum.

**Acropolis Museum**  
**Location:** Acropolis  
The New Acropolis Museum was inaugurated in June 2009 and it is housed in a modern building right opposite the site of the Acropolis. The items displayed in the New Acropolis Museum were all found on excavations on the Acropolis. The most famous display is the frieze of Parthenon Temple. The unfortunate thing is that pieces of this frieze are missing, as they are housed in the British Museum in London.

**Theatre of Herodes Atticus**  
**Location:** Acropolis  
The Theatre of Herodes Atticus, or else Herodeion, is one of the most impressive monuments of Athens. Located on the southern slopes of the Acropolis, the theatre was built in 161 BC by Herodes Atticus, a wealthy Roman general in memory of his wife, Regilla. It has exceptional acoustic capacities and can sit up to 5,000 spectators. Performances of the Athens-Epidaurus Festival are held there in summer.
Temple of Olympian Zeus
Location: Syntagma
The temple of Olympian Zeus took 700 years to be built. The work was completed by the Emperor Hadrian in 131 AD. The huge Temple was composed of 104 columns of Corinthian style, 17 m high each. Today only 17 columns have survived.

Arch Of Hadrian
Location: Syntagma
This impressive arch was built by the Emperor Hadrian in 132 AD to mark the limit between Ancient Athens and his new city. It is located at the end of Amalias Avenue, right next to the temple of Olympian Zeus.
Kallimarmaro Roman Stadium
Location: Syntagma
The Roman Stadium stands next to the National Garden and Zappeion Megaron. It was originally constructed in the Roman times and it is entirely made of marble. Excavated in 1870, this stadium was renovated to host the first modern Olympic Games in 1896. It is also known as Panathenaic or Kallimarmaro Stadium.

Ancient Agora
Location: Thissio
The Ancient Agora was the social and political centre of ancient Athens. This is where the people of Athens used to meet to talk about social issues. The temple of Hephaustus is the most distinctive spot of Ancient Agora, which is located between Thissio and Monastiraki.

Archaeological Museum
Location: Patission Ave
The National Archaeological Museum of Athens is the largest and most important museum in Greece, and its exhibits are between the finest collections of prehistoric items, sculptures, pottery and minor art, bronzes and Egyptian art, everything followed by detailed explanations in English. It is located near Omonoia square.
**Roman Agora**  
**Location:** Monastiraki  
The Roman Agora lays between Monastiraki and Plaka. In this area, the Romans used to trade their goods, so it was used as a marketplace.

**National Gardens**  
**Location:** Syntagma  
Located right next to the Parliament, Syntagma Square, the National Garden is a lush area with trees, fountains and a small zoo. Although it is right in the heart of the town, this garden offers a nice spot to relax, away from noise.
Diving in Athens

Aqua Divers Club
Location: Anavissos
Aqua Divers Club, a Padi 5* Gold Palm Resort, located at the Calypso Hotel, km 48.5 Athens – Souniou Avenue is a stones throw from Athens. The club offers a comprehensive selection of PADI diving courses with all the necessary multimedia equipment for teaching/training purposes, daily boat and shore fun dives, and equipment for rental or sale. The diving club operates all year round, seven days a week, and is situated in one of the most beautiful bays on the Attica coast. All diving courses offered, Bubblemaker through to Dive Master rating, follow PADI standards and lead to certification.

Credits
Greeka.com would like to thank the following members for their valuable contribution, as some of the photos included in this guide belong to them.
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