

Hostelworld Guide for Athens



For those who haven't been there before, it's hard not to envisage images of ancient sites and temples when thinking of Athens. But since a certain sporting event was held in the Greek capital in 2004, things have changed. This is a modern city. Cool, affordable restaurants abound, as do trendy bars that are buzzing at weekends. All this is in a city which is overlooked by one of Western Europe's most important archaeological sites and biggest attractions.

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The Essentials

Getting There

By plane: Athens International Airport is situated 27km north of the city centre. To get to the city there are two options - take the metro which costs €6 and takes 40 minutes or take bus X95 which takes between 40-60 minutes and costs €3.20.

By train: All long-distance trains going to Athens terminate at Larissa Station which is on the Metro Line 2 (red).

By bus: If you are travelling to Athens by bus you will arrive at Terminal A, Kifissou 100, or Terminal B, Liossion 260.

Getting Around

On foot: Central Athens is quite compact and all the main attractions are within walking distance of each other.

If you want to visit different neighbourhoods such as Gazi, you may need to use the metro.

By metro: Athens' metro network is efficient, easy to use, and there are stops in very convenient locations.

You can pay for single journeys for 80c but you are better off buying all-day cards for €3.

By bus: There is a public bus service operating in Athens but chances are you won't have to use it during your stay.

Useful Phrases

Hello: Geia sou
Goodbye: Antio
Please: Parakalw
Thank you: Eyxaristw
You re welcome: Parakalw
Yes: Nai
No: Oxi
Of course: Vevaia
Excuse me: Me synxwreite
Open: Anoixta
Closed: Kleista
What is your name?: Pio einai to onoma sas?
My name is.....: To onoma mou einai.....
How much?: Poso kanei?
May I have the bill?: Mporw na exw ton logariasmo?

Climate

Due to its southerly location, Athens enjoys a lot of sunshine. The most pleasant months to visit are between March and May. Once June arrives it gets considerably hotter, while temperatures soar in July and August. September and October are also good months for visiting, although September can be a showery month. Winters are mild.

Average Monthly Stats

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
C	9.5	10.5	12	15.5	20.5	25	28	28	24	19.5	15.5	11.5
MM	62	37	37	23	23	14	6	7	15	51	56	71
☀	4	5	6	8	9	11	12	12	9	7	5	4

C: Average Temp Centigrade

MM: Average Rainfall

☀: Average Hrs Sunshine

Good to know...

Language: Greek
Currency: Euro
Electricity: 220 Volts, 50 cycles
Country Code: 30 (Greece), 210 (Athens)
Emergency Codes: Ambulance 166 / Fire 199 / Police 100
Time Zone: GMT + 2
Central Post Offices: Eolou 100; Syntagma Square
Main Tourist Office: 2 Amerikis

Embassies

USA: +30 210 721 2951
UK: +30 210 727 2600
Canada: +30 210 727 3400
Australia: +30 210 870 4000
South Africa: +30 210 610 6645
Ireland: +30 210 723 2771
Germany: +30 210 728 5111
Spain: +30 210 921 3123
Italy: +30 210 361 7260
New Zealand: +30 210 6924 136*
France: +30 210 339 1000

*Consulate General

Cheap Eats

Koskimon, 119 Adrinaou, Plaka Located on a busy corner in the heart of Plaka, Koskimon is a great place to enjoy cheap Greek fare and an even better place to people-watch. Their Greek salads are fresh, and it's not only tourists who enjoy them. *Open daily from 6am-2am.*

Gyros or souvlaki?



Bairaktaris, 2 Pi Monastiraki, Monastiraki

When in Athens, eating a gyros or a souvlaki is just as much a part of the experience as visiting the Acropolis. The only problem is, you may not know the difference between the two! It's quite easy - effectively, they're both the same thing. It's just that you sit down when having a gyros, while a souvlaki is a take-away sandwich. This restaurant is something of an Athens institution and the best place to sample the Greek speciality. *Open daily from 10am-4am.*

Ovelistirio, 216 Agion Anargiron, Psiri A huge selection of Greek specialities and friendly staff make this one of the best places to rest and refuel in Athens' vibrant Psiri district. With low prices on souvlakis and other typical Greek dishes, two people can treat themselves to a meal out for a very reasonable price. *Open daily from 12 noon-1am.*

Tapas Bar, 44 Triptoleμου, Gazi If you're looking for conventional tapas as most of us know it, you won't find it here. Sure, chorizo is on the menu, but the rest of it is comprised of dishes such as chicken burritos and stuffed pita bread. Located on a lively street in Gazi, it's the perfect spot for a bite before beers. *Open daily from 3pm-4am.*

Byzantino, 18 Kydathineon, Plaka Another favourite in Plaka, Byzantino specialises in Greek fare at good prices. Dine there in the evening and you may even be entertained by local musicians playing traditional music. *Open daily from 7am-2am.*

After Dark

Hoxton, 42 Voutadon, Gazi Named after the east-London suburb synonymous with good times, Hoxton is where all the cool kids go in Gazi. Pumping out funky tunes on weekends, it can get busy inside. Many are there to order drinks while others are there to gaze at the unique paintings on the walls. *Open daily from 12 noon-6am.*

Oinopneymata, 21 Miaouli, Psiri Just as much a place to eat as a place to drink, this venue on Psiri's main strip is the area's most popular. There are a number of seats inside, but forget about them. It's all happening outside, with people mingling together, watching life go by and puffing on shisha pipes. *Open daily from 6pm-6am.*

Gay / Lesbian Athens

When compared to other European capitals, Athens' gay scene isn't as active as others. But there are still a number of gay bars and clubs scattered throughout the city. The best known of these is **Alekos Island** (42 Tsakalof) as this is the city's oldest gay bar. Other popular bars include **Kirkis** (31 Apostolou Pavlou) and **Bee** (6 Miaouli). **Lamda** (Lembesi 15) is the city's biggest gay club.

Bar Teresa, 25 Koloktoroni, Syntagma 'Variety is the spice of life' they say, and if this bar is anything to go by, they're right. As you walk down the archway in this bar, you are first greeted by an open courtyard with locals chatting over their drinks. Doesn't sound like your kind of place? Maybe the bar to the left with tunes thumping is more up your alley? Or the chillout room to the right? Something for everyone. *Open daily from 6pm-6am.*

Loud Mansion, 116 Ermou, Psiri One of Athens' most popular clubs, Loud Mansion attracts those who like to party until sunrise at the weekends to the sounds of the world's most popular DJs. *Open Thurs-Sun 11pm-late; admission €12 approx.*

Brettos, 41 Kydathineon, Plaka While it is by no means the liveliest of bars, Brettos is one of Athens' most intriguing and is worth visiting if only to check out the multicoloured collection of bottles facing you as you walk in. *Open daily from 10am-midnight.*

Liquid, 27 Miaouli, Psiri One of Psiri's late bars, things don't get going here until after 2am. But once they do clubbers are presented with a happy alternative to some of the city's other clubs. *Open daily from 10am-4am.*

Don't Miss

Acropolis, Plaka Dominating Athens' skyline, the Acropolis is one of the most important ancient sites in the Western World. First occupied in Neolithic times, walk in at the entrance beside Akropoli metro station, then pass the Theatres of Dionysus and Herodes Atticus, before climbing the steps to the site's main attraction, the Parthenon. *Open daily from 8am-7.30pm (Mon 11am); admission €12 (for Acropolis Pass).*

Temple of Olympian Zeus, Vas Olgas, Plaka Dating back to the 6th century BC, this is the largest temple of its kind in Greece and took over 700 years to complete. Of the temple's original 104 columns, only fifteen remain - one lying shattered on the ground after breaking in a gail in 1852. *Open daily from 8am (Mon 11am)-7.30pm; admission €4.*

Roman Athens, Monasteraki Also known as the Roman Agora (Roman Market), this section of Athens was constructed using funds provided by Julius Caesar and Augustus. Its focal point is the Gate of Athena Archegetis which was constructed in the 1st century and is supported by four columns. *Open daily from 8am (Mon 11am)-7.30pm; admission €2.*

Under lock and key



The National Archaeology Museum, 44 Patission, Exharia

Greece's largest museum houses over 20,000 exhibits in five permanent exhibitions and is where you will find the world's best collection of Greek artefacts. Housed in an imposing neoclassical building from the 19th century, it gives a fascinating insight into Greek civilisation. *Open Mon 12.30pm-7pm, Tues-Sun 8am-7.30pm; admission €7 (free for students).*

Syntagma Square Athens' biggest square is home to students, shoppers, pigeons and, on occasion, protestors. It is overlooked by the imposing Parliament building which is the best place to witness 'evzones' (Greek infantry) on patrol.

Mark Your Calendar

January - Epiphany On the final day of Christmas (January 6th) devoted men jump into the icy waters of Piraeus to retrieve a large crucifix thrown into the sea.

February/March - Apokries (Carnival) Athens' annual Apokries festival lasts four weeks and sees hundreds of fancy-dress parties take place throughout the city together with all types of performances.

March - National Day Greece's national day on March 25th is both a national and religious holiday. Schools and the military alternate each year for the day's parade which marches along Akadimias.

May to June - Eco Festival First held in 1999, this annual festival tries to make the world a cleaner place through dance, music, theatre and more. Taking place in locations all over the city, it grows in popularity every year.

May to September - Athens Festival Spanning over a grand total of five months, there is something for everybody at this annual arts festival. Dance, theatre, music and other performances take place in venues throughout the city.

June - Anti-Racism Festival This festival takes place over three days and aims to create awareness of human rights organisations as well as help people recognise the work of immigrants living in Greece.

June/July - Rockwave Festival Greece's premier rock music festival has been attracting the world's top acts for years. Some of the bands who have played in the past include Metallica and Marilyn Manson.

August - Night of the Full Moon On the 'Night of the Full Moon' the city of Athens' opens its main archaeological sites to the city free of charge, including the main attraction, the Acropolis.

October/November - Athens Marathon The Greek capital's annual marathon is one of the world's most famous as Greece is where the first marathon was run. Attracting thousands of athletes, it ends in Panathenaic Stadium.

December - Santa's Neighbourhood Athens' Syntagma Square is transformed into a winter wonderland for the month of December thanks to lots of Christmas decorations and festive entertainment.

Neighbourhood Watch

Monastiraki Home to the Ancient and Roman Agoras, Monastiraki is in the heart of the city centre. It's good for shopping as this is where you will find the city's best flea market along with Ermou, Athens' best shopping street. Worth visiting at night too as some of the city's coolest bars and clubs are here. *Metro: Monastiraki*

The Chic Greek



Kolonaki Literally meaning 'Little Column', this small neighbourhood just north of Syntagma Square is where you will find the Greek capital's more elite residents. Coffee shops, juice bars and boutiques abound on every corner, most of which are populated by the city's beautiful people. To join them locate Valaoritou, the heart of this chic district. *Metro: Syntagma*.

Psiri Ask locals where all the action is after dark and one of the places you will hear mentioned time and time again is Psiri. After you find it on the map and start wandering its streets you might want to know what they were on about, as not all its streets are lined with bars and restaurants. One is though - Miaouli. Right beside Monastiraki metro station, it's a safe bet for a good night out. *Metro: Monastiraki*.

Plaka As this neighbourhood is situated at the foot of the Acropolis, it will come as no surprise to discover it's the most touristy part of the Greek capital. But this part of the city is still one of the most pleasant areas of Athens to wander through with its noisy squares, tacky shops and plethora of restaurants. *Metro: Akropolis*.

Gazi Another district better-known for its nocturnal activities, Gazi is a small part of town, but still very lively. As you exit Kerameikos metro station you have a choice of two strips - Voutadon and Triptolemu. Both are lightly peppered with places to eat and others to drink. *Metro: Kerameikos*.

Retail Therapy

Hondos Centre, Omonia Square, Omonia While it's located on arguably the seediest square in the city, this monstrous shopping centre is perfect for those who like to do all their shopping under the one roof. Spread out over 9 floors, you will find everything here from underwear to camera accessories. Those who don't find anything enticing should make the most of their visit and go to the rooftop for the views. *Open daily from 9am-9pm*.

Plaka It isn't that difficult to find a miniature Parthenon that doubles as a bedside lamp in this city. If you're looking for something like that, one of the stores along Adrianou in Plaka is where to track it down. Greek soccer tops, prints and other bits and pieces can be picked up too.

Ermou Wondering where Athens' young and restless go to do their shopping? Look no further than Ermou, and in particular the strip between Monastiraki and Syntagma. Here you'll locate stores belonging to those brands we're all too familiar with. There's a Replay store, a Benetton store, a Zara store...the list goes on.

On the run



Monastiraki Flea Market, Ifastou, Areos & Pandrosou Located in the heart of Athens' city centre, this is the Greek capital's best-known daily flea market. Here you will find stalls and stores selling clothes, mugs, DVDs, shisha pipes, tourist kitsch, watches and, in particular, trainers. Whether its skate shoes, running shoes, or those just to make you look cool, you'll find them here at decent prices. *Open daily from 11am-11pm*.

Kolonaki Granted, you may not be able to afford to treat yourself to something new from Louis Vuitton or Burberry, but not all stores in Athens' flashiest district will be beyond your budget. Worth going to for window shopping at least.

Budget Tips

Visit a free museum Athens has many free museums where you'll see a whole host of different exhibits covering Ancient Greece and much more. A couple of these free museums are the **Epigraphical Museum** (1 Tosita, Exarhia) and the **Museum of Greek Costume** (7 Dimokritou, Kolonaki).

Chill out at the beach Athens is a city that boasts a lot of sunshine. It is located at the southern end of Europe after all. Thus, if you fancy doing something for the day that won't cost a cent, lie in the sun for a couple of hours, take it easy and enjoy some sunshine at the beach. The closest one is at Pireaus, located just over 30 minutes from the city centre by bus.

The best view in the city



Climb Filopappou Hill Located just 15 minutes walk from the gates of the Acropolis, Filopappou Hill is the best place in Athens to get a view of the Parthenon, meaning it boasts the best view in the city. Entrance to the site is free and the climb isn't that strenuous. There's a good view of the rest of the city from the top also. *Open daily from 8am-6pm*.

Buy the Acropolis Ticket Entrance to Athens' number one attraction the Acropolis is €12. But the price of the Acropolis Ticket is €12 also. The difference between the two? The Acropolis Ticket also grants you entrance to the Temple of Olympian Zeus, the Ancient and Roman Agoras and Keramikos Cemetery. Worth investing in, obviously.

Relax in a city centre park Athens city centre is notoriously noisy. If you want to get away from it all, visit one of the city-centre parks that are free to enter. The best-known is Areos Park north of the centre, while another place to seek refuge from the city are the National Gardens in Syntagma.

A Day in Athens...



Beat the crowds and visit Athens' top attraction the Acropolis first thing. Marvel at the Parthenon and savour views of the Greek capital.



Afterwards take the short stroll to the Temple of Olympian Zeus. Dating back to the 6th century BC, it is the largest temple of its kind in Greece.



Take a breather in the pleasant area of Plaka (below). Try a Greek salad in one of the district's many restaurants.



Take some time out to explore this quaint part of town. Wander down Adrianou en route to Monastiraki. Pick up a miniature Parthenon on the way as a memento!



Explore another two of the city's best-known ancient sites, Ancient Agora and Roman Agora. These were two of the city's most vibrant areas in ancient times.



Treat yourself to something in the city's Monastiraki Flea Market. Whether it's a rip-off DVD, a pair of skate shoes, or a shisha pipe, you'll find it here.



While Monastiraki's market is the best in the city, Ermou is the undisputed number one shopping street. Stroll down it, then reach Syntagma Square at the end.



No visit is complete without trying a gyros or a souvlaki. Try one in Bairaktaris, one of the city's famous restaurants. After check out one of the bars on nearby Miaouli in Psiri.



Finish your day off in the Greek capital in one of the city's clubs. If not, go to another of Athens' most vibrant neighbourhoods, Gazi, where 'Hoxton' is the coolest hangout.