

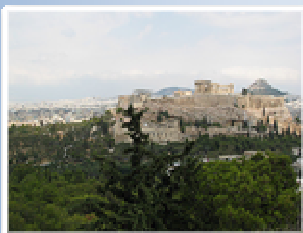
ATHENS

Athens, the capital and largest city of **Greece**, dominates the Attica periphery; as one of the world's oldest cities, its recorded history spans around 3,400 years.

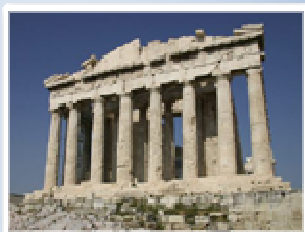
A bustling and cosmopolitan metropolis, Athens is central to economic, financial, industrial, political and cultural life in Greece. It is rapidly becoming a leading business centre in the **European Union**.

Classical Athens was a powerful city-state. A centre for the arts, learning and philosophy, home of Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum, Athens was also the birthplace of Socrates, Pericles, Sophocles and its many other prominent philosophers, writers and politicians of the ancient world. It is widely referred to as the cradle of Western civilization and the birthplace of democracy, largely due to the impact of its cultural and political achievements during the 5th and 4th centuries BC on the rest of the then known European continent.

The heritage of the classical era is still evident in the city, represented by a number of ancient monuments and works of art, the most famous of all being the **Parthenon** on the **Acropolis**, widely considered a key landmark of early Western civilization. The city also retains a vast variety of Roman and Byzantine monuments, as well as a smaller number of remaining Ottoman monuments projecting the city's long history across the centuries.



The Acropolis is the ancient "**high city**" of **Athens**, a prominent plateaued rock perched high above the modern city with commanding views and an amazing array of ancient architecture, mostly from the Classical period of **Ancient Greece**, the most famous of which is the **Parthenon**. A visit to Athens is not complete without visiting the Acropolis - hundreds of tourists each day accordingly make the pilgrimage.



The Parthenon is a temple of the Greek goddess Athena, built in the 5th century BC on the Athenian Acropolis. It is the most important surviving building of Classical Greece, generally considered to be the culmination of the development of the Doric order. Its decorative sculptures are considered one of the high points of Greek art. The Parthenon is regarded as an enduring symbol of ancient Greece and of Athenian democracy, and one of the world's greatest cultural monuments.

The agora had private housing, until it was reorganized by Peisistratus in the 6th century BC. Although he may have lived on the agora himself, he removed the other houses, closed wells, and made it the centre of **Athenian government**. He also built a drainage system, fountains and a temple to the Olympian gods. Cimon later improved the agora by constructing new buildings and planting trees. In the 5th century BC there were temples constructed to Hephaestus, Zeus and Apollo.

Syntagma Square is the capital's central square, lying adjacent to **Parliament** and the city's most noted hotels. **Ermou Street**, an approximately 1 km-long pedestrian road connecting Syntagma Square to **Monastiraki**, has traditionally been a consumer paradise for both Athenians and tourists. Complete with fashion shops and shopping centres promoting most international brands, it now finds itself in the top 5 most expensive shopping streets in Europe.

Plaka, lying just beneath the Acropolis, is famous for its plentiful neoclassical architecture, making up one of the most scenic districts of the city. It remains a traditionally prime tourist destination with a number of picturesque tavernas, live performances and street salesmen.

The National Archaeological Museum houses some of the most important artifacts from a variety of archaeological locations around **Greece** from prehistory to late antiquity. It is considered one of the great museums in the world and contains the richest collection of artifacts from Greek antiquity worldwide. It is situated in the Exarhia area in central Athens between the streets Epirus, Bouboulina and Tositsas while its entrance is on the **Patission Avenue** adjacent to the historical building of the Athens Polytechnic.

INFORMATION

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