

## IN THE SHADOW OF THE ACROPOLIS

When you travel to Athens, Greece, especially for the first time, a must- see destination is the Acropolis and its magnificent buildings. The Acropolis looms over this large metropolis and is a constant reminder of the legacy of Greece. Once you arrive at the base of the Acropolis, you begin your climb to reach the Parthenon. It is a long walk, but as you ascend it is easy to imagine the ancient Athenians taking this same walk to pay homage to Athena, patron goddess of the city. At the top of the hill, you see the exquisite buildings and the magnificent view of the city. You feel like you have stepped back to the fifth century BCE and the age of Pericles.

You begin your descent (which is much easier) and eventually find yourself in a modern day agora (market place) called the "Plaka." Here you find numerous shops selling their wares from fine jewelry, fine dining, to small souvenir shops filled with trinkets, kombologia, pottery and any items reminiscent of ancient Greece. You wonder, was the ancient agora similar to this? Did the Athenians follow these same paths? Did Pericles ever envision a thriving, busy metropolis "In the Shadow of the Acropolis?"

Come and travel through the agora where the past meets the present and you, too, can walk the steps of ancient Athens.

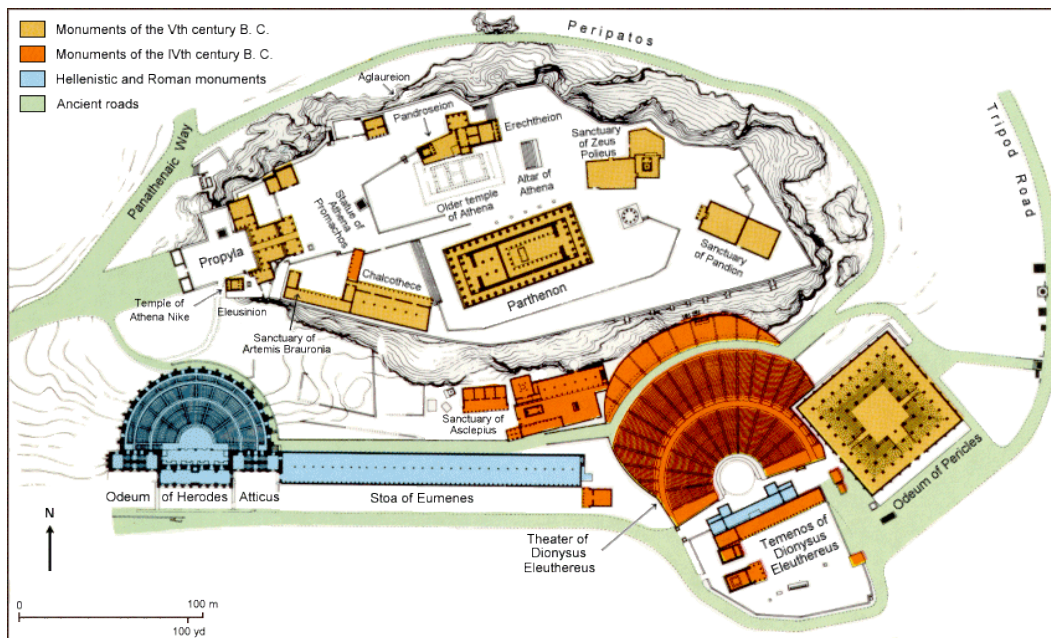
**WELCOME. ENJOY YOUR VISIT.**



# ΑΚΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ

## ACROPOLIS

Rising majestically above the Athenian skyline appears the imposing sight, the rock of the Acropolis. This was the heartbeat of ancient Athens and continues to sound after these many centuries. Fortified with high walls from the Mycenaean times, around 500 BCE, a palatial residence was built there and served as a place of worship still visible today. Since then numerous temples and statues were continuously added. After 480 BCE, when the Persians literally ruined the rock of the Acropolis, all the buildings were reconstructed and became the symbol of the triumph of Athens -- the Golden Age of Greece. In drama, philosophy, literature, art and architecture Athens was second to none. During this period Pericles, the leader of the city, began the largest public building project ever seen in Greece. Under the supervision of Phidias, the general director, and the greatest artists of the time, the Acropolis became the most important center of the known world and the symbol of ancient Greece's bequest to civilization.



The Acropolis is an ancient citadel located on a rocky outcrop above the city of Athens and today contains the remains of several ancient buildings of architectural and historic significance. The word acropolis is from the Greek word ακρόν (akron) and πόλις (polis) - akron means "highest point, extremity," and polis means "city." It covers 7.4 acres (3 hectares) and rises 490 feet (150 meters) above the city of Athens. It is a perfect example of how ancient architecture was adapted to a natural site. The only way to reach the top of the sacred rock is and always has been from the west side. On every other side, steep slopes serve as an inaccessible natural fortress. Today one can climb the sacred rock by way of a very old uphill slope.

The buildings of the Acropolis are a clear display of civic pride and the design of Doric and Ionic orders represent the greatest architectural achievement of the Golden Age of Greece.

# ACROPOLIS

## THE PROPYLAEA

The Propylaea was the gateway to the Acropolis of Athens and was located at the end of the ramp that connected the city to the Acropolis. This edifice, designed by Mnesicles, was used to highlight the holiness of the entire Acropolis area and was the only way to enter the Acropolis. Construction began in 435 BCE and three years later was suspended due to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War and was never actually completed. The main rectangular building, 60 by 82 feet (18 by 25 meters), is composed of a central hall with six Doric pillars, 26 feet high (8 meters), at the facade and two lateral wings. The north and south wings were uneven in dimensions according to the tradition of sacred spaces.



The north wing was decorated with painted panels. The south wing was the antechamber to the Temple of Athena Nike, and the ceiling was painted with gold and colorful decorations. The building was badly damaged in the 17th century. Restoration began in 1907 and is still going on today.

## THE TEMPLE OF ATHENA NIKE

The Temple of Athena Nike was perched on a platform on the southwest edge of the Acropolis. It is an almost square building with porticos at both ends, measuring 27 feet by 18 feet (8.27 by 5.44 meters), with four Ionic pillars over 15 feet high (4.66 meters), at both its front and back. The temple was completed in 430 BCE by Kallikrates. In its interior were statues and a frieze portraying the gods of Mount Olympus -- Athena, Zeus and Poseidon -- and the battles between the Greeks and the Persians. The majority of the frieze has been destroyed and a part of it is now in the British Museum.

The Temple of Athena Nike was the shelter for the statue of Athena holding a pomegranate, the symbol of fertility, in her right hand, and a helmet, the symbol of war, in her left hand. The temple has been destroyed twice, once after the Turks dismantled it in 1686 and once after 1936 when the platform crumbled. The temple is not open to visitors.

## THE STATUE OF ATHENA PROMACHOS

On the Acropolis one can see the remains of some important statues which once had formed a path up the hill. One of them was a gigantic statue of Athena Promachos (champion) which was the symbol of the victory and strength of the Athenians against the Persians. The goddess held a shield in her left hand and a spear in her right one. According to the historian Pausanias (second century BCE), the statue served as a guide for Athenian navigators, due to its enormous height of 29.6 feet (9 meters). The statue was taken to Constantinople by the Emperor Theodosius in A.D. 420 and was destroyed in 1204 by the city's inhabitants who blamed the statue for the Crusaders' invasion.

# ΠΑΡΘΕΝΩΝΑΣ

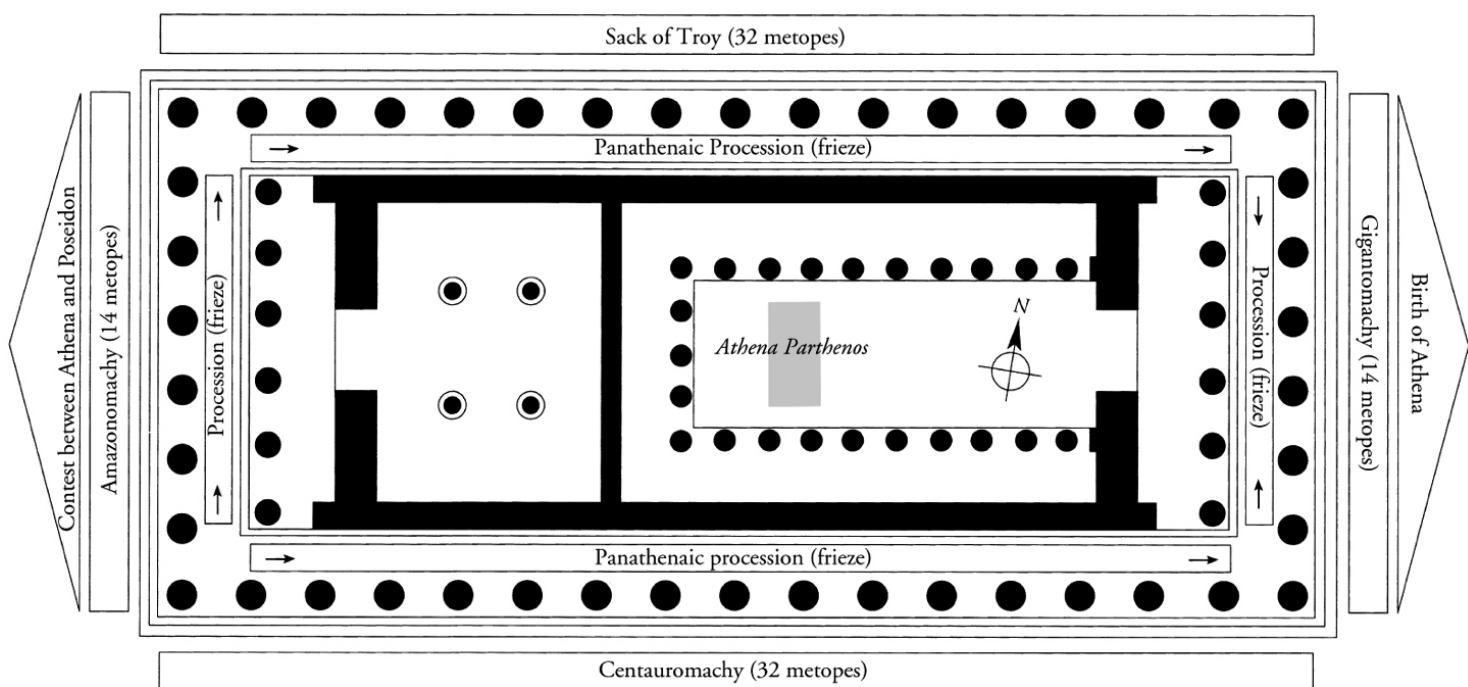
## PARTHENON

The Parthenon, a world famous sight, was built between 447- 432 BCE under the leadership of the statesman Pericles. The temple dominates the hill of the Acropolis and was built to honor the goddess Athena. It was the holiest of all monuments in Athens. Construction began in 447 BCE upon the ruins of an earlier temple to the goddess Athena which was destroyed by the Persians. Phidias served as the general director and sculptor, and Ictinus and Kallikrates were the architects. The Parthenon was completed in 432 BCE and it remained virtually unchanged for the next thousand years. Later in 1400, it was converted into a Christian church and in 1458 the Turks seized the edifice and turned it into a mosque. Few material changes were made except for the raising of a minaret at the southwest corner. During the bombardment of the Acropolis in 1687 by the Venetians fighting the Turks, a powder magazine located in the temple blew up destroying the center of the building. In 1801 through 1803 a large part of the sculptures that remained were removed by British nobleman Thomas Bruce, Lord Elgin, and sold to the British Museum in London. Elgin had received permission from the Turkish officials to remove these antiquities. Other sculptures from the Parthenon are now in the Louvre Museum in Paris and in the Copenhagen National Museum. When Greece regained its independence in 1821, all medieval and Turkish adornments were removed from the Parthenon. In 1930 the north colonnade was restored and further restoration continues to present day.

The Parthenon, like all Greek temples, was meant as a house for the god or goddess that it honored; it was not a gathering place for worshippers. In its general design, the Parthenon was representative of the standard architecture of Greek temples: a rectangular box with doors on a raised platform. The box was fenced in by columns all around. The columns were carved in the simple style called Doric. Only priests and priestesses could enter the temple, but public religious ceremonies took place around the altar outside its east end.

The Parthenon was extraordinary in its great size and was truly remarkable in the innovation of its refined architecture and elaborate sculptural decorations. It contains no straight lines and no right angles, a true feat of Greek architecture. Constructed from twenty thousand tons of Attic (Pentelic) marble, it stretched 230 feet (69.5 meters) in length, 100 feet (30.9 meters) in width and 59 feet (18 meters) in height. The colonnade stands on a stylobate (a platform of three levels) with eight Doric pillars on the east and west ends and seventeen on the north and south sides. These outer Doric columns were 34 feet (10.4 meters) high and 6.2 feet (1.9 meters) in diameter. Originally there was a double row of columns on the east and west ends. The east and west ends include the pediment, the triangular section displaying two sets of statues: to the east "the birth of Athena" and to the west the "quarrel between Athena and Poseidon to become the deity of Athens." The baseless columns support an entablature or roof structure below the pediment. It consists of a frieze, metopes and an architrave. The frieze runs a continuous line around the

exterior wall of the cella (interior chamber) and depicts the people of Athens. The metopes were 92 square, carved plaques of marble located above the columns. They represent a warlike theme. The architrave is the plain, horizontal band of stone between the metopes and the columns. The colonnade enclosed a walled interior chamber called the cella, 98 feet (29.8 meters) by 63 feet (19.2 meters). The cella had six Doric pillars on each of its smaller sides, whereas its interior was divided into four parts and served as the place for keeping the most precious offerings made to the goddess Athena. The eastern side, approximately 98 feet (30 meters), was its most sacred part. It was divided into three large naves; the central nave ended in three pillars which surrounded the colossal statue of Athena Parthenos.

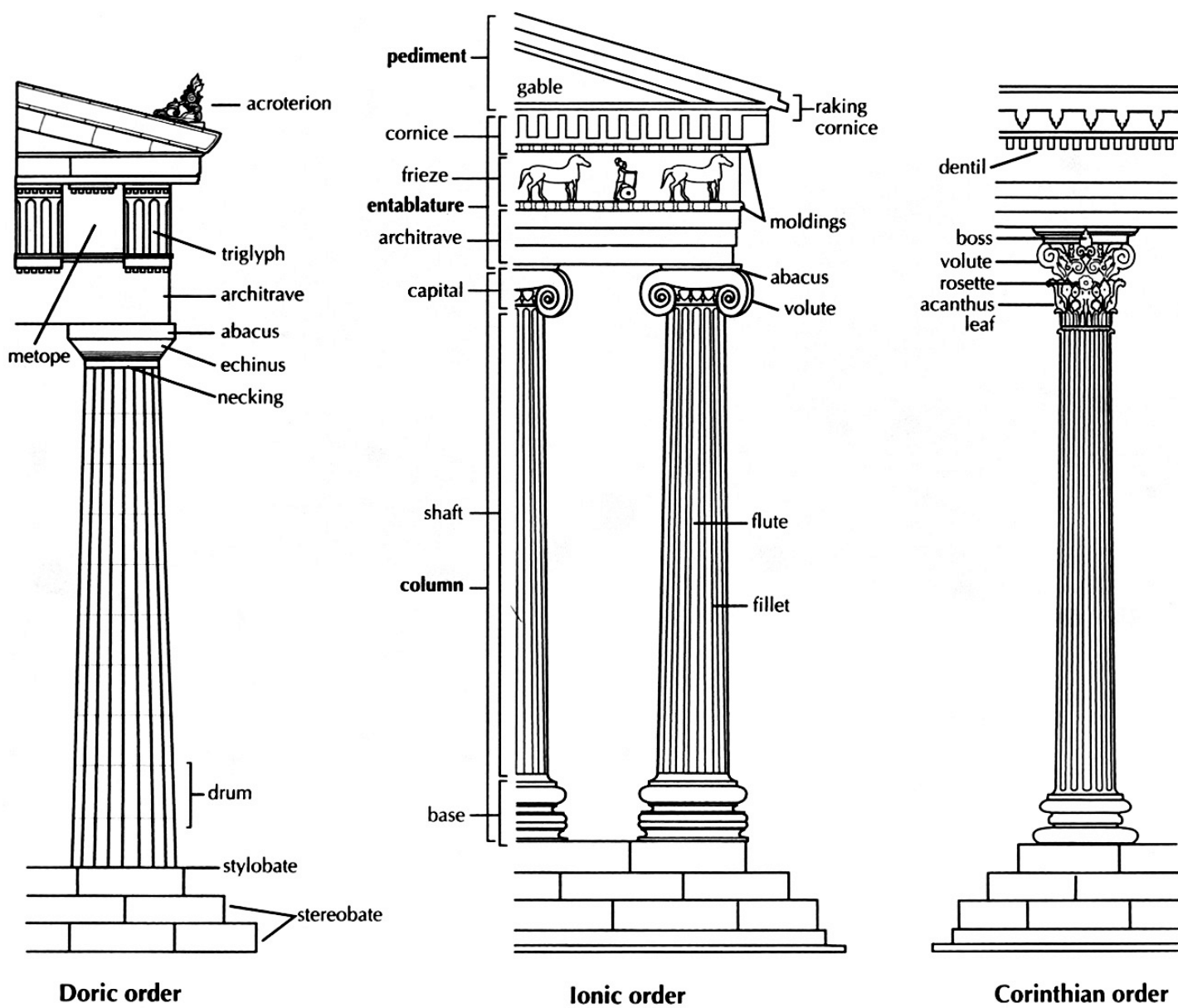


Subtle curves and inclines were built into the Parthenon to produce an optical illusion of completely straight lines: horizontal lines curve in the middle; the columns bulge in the center and taper at the top and lean slightly inward. These technical refinements made the Parthenon appear ordered and produced an optical harmony unprecedented in the ancient world.

The sculptures decorating the Parthenon rivaled its architecture: carvings of gods and giants battling; Greek centaurs; a Panathenaic procession of citizens honoring Athena; the birth of Athena; Athena and her contest with Poseidon, are all examples of complex composition and clarity.

An extremely expensive building, it is difficult to calculate the cost of the Parthenon. Historians estimate that it cost 469 silver talents. There is no modern monetary equivalent, but it is interesting to note that one talent would build one trireme, a warship for the Athenian naval fleet.

The Parthenon is a world famous sight and combines the Doric and Ionic orders. Its architectural and structural details and the precision in the carving of the marble are a testament to the expertise of the artisans that created it. The decor of the Parthenon and its surrounding monuments had a profound and lasting influence on Western art. The artistic innovations fueled developments that influenced the art of Hellenistic and Roman times as well as the Renaissance, Baroque, Romantic and Neoclassic periods.



# ΑΘΗΝΑ ΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΣ

## ATHENA PARTHENOS

Athena Parthenos (virgin), a free-standing sculpture created by Phidias, was a colossal statue and originally stood in the center of the Parthenon. Built from 447 BCE to 438 BCE the statue, including the base, stood approximately 50 feet (15 meters) high and dominated the Parthenon. The statue's skeleton was wooden, the base members ivory and the clothes and military equipment were covered with forged gold leaf. The goddess was standing and on her bosom was an aegis (breast shield) with the gorgon; on her head the helmet was decorated with sphinxes and winged horses. With the right hand resting on a pillar, she held a statue of Nike (Victory). In her left hand she held her shield which bent slightly to the ground. A representation of the Gigantomachia (the battle between the gods and the giants) decorated the inner part of the shield, together with the serpent of the Acropolis; the outer side pictures a battle against the Amazons. The fight of the centaurs appeared on her sandals. The relief marble base of the statue in gold figures depicted the birth of Pandora.

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In 426 BCE the statue was transported to Constantinople where, according to one version, it was destroyed in a fire. Today we have a very precise image of how the statue looked, both from numerous descriptions as well as from several archaic copies in smaller dimensions.

Ancient writers gave the weight of the gold as 40 to 44 talents (over a ton) and the cost of the whole statue likely to have been somewhere between 700 and 1000 talents. This is more than twice the cost of the Parthenon itself.

Athena Parthenos, the goddess of wisdom and war, was the adored patroness of the city of Athens. To this day travelers from all over the world walk the rocky steps to view the Parthenon, the temple built in her honor.



# EPEXΘEION

## ΕΡΕΧΘΕΙΟΝ

The Erechtheion is located on the most sacred part of the Acropolis and was the sanctuary where all the ceremonies of Poseidon and Athena took place. The Erechtheion took its name after Poseidon killed Erechonius, a mythical king. The temple was part of Pericles' project and is located on the north side of the Parthenon.

It is an amazing example of the Ionic architecture, composed of three basic parts: the main temple, the northern and the southern porches. The two parts of the main temple are respectively dedicated to Athena and Poseidon. The northern porch of six columns leads to the Temenos of Pandrossos, the place where the sacred gift of Athena to the city, the olive tree, grew.

The northern porch of the temple is the most famous since it is the one with the Caryatids, the six women serving as the columns that support the marble roof. The Caryatids were the sculpted young women from Karyai (Karyes), a village of Lakonia.

The Erechtheion has suffered a troubled history of misuse and neglect, but with its prominent position above the city and the porch of six Caryatids, it remains one of the most distinctive buildings from antiquity.





# ΚΑΡΥΑΤΙΔΕΣ

## CARYATIDS

A caryatid (KARR-ee-AT-id) is a sculptured female figure serving as an architectural support. The figure takes the place of a column and supports the entablature on her head. The Greek term karyatides literally means “maidens of Karyai,” an ancient town of Peloponnese in Laconia where Sparta is the capital. Karyai had a temple dedicated to the goddess Artemis: “... she rejoiced in the dance of the walnut tree village of Karyai. Those Karyatides, who in their round dance, carried on their head baskets of live reeds as if they were dancing plants.”

The best known and most copied examples are those of the six figures of the Caryatid porch of the Erechtheion on the Acropolis. Although of the same build and height 12.04 feet (3.67 meters) including the base, and similarly attired and coiffed, the six Caryatids are not the same. Their faces, stance, draping and hair are carved separately. The three on the left stand on their right foot, while the three on the right stand on their left foot. Their bulky, intricately arranged hairstyles serve the purpose of providing static support to their necks which would otherwise be the thinnest and structurally weakest part.

One of the original six figures, removed by Lord Elgin in the early 19th century, is now in the British Museum in London. The Acropolis Museum holds the other five figures which were replaced on the porch by replicas. The five originals are on a special balcony in the museum that allows visitors to view them from all sides. The pedestal for the caryatid removed by Lord Elgin remains empty.



# AKROPOLIS

## THE SOUTHWEST SLOPE OF THE ACROPOLIS

This area of the Acropolis is where all public buildings were built and where all major artistic, spiritual and religious activities of the city occurred. The most important monuments standing on this area were:

**1. THE THEATER OF DIONYSUS** - In the sixth century BCE the cult of Dionysus was introduced in Athens, and a small temple on the foot of the Acropolis was built to honor him. At the end of the century Dionysian festivals began with musical and theatrical performances. Wooden benches were installed and the space where the performances took place was converted into the shape of a perfect circle. The stage adopted the name *orchestra*, from the verb *orchoumae* which means to dance, and the chorus danced around the *thymeli*, the god's altar. In this theater Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides directed their tragedies and Aristophanes his comedies. During the fourth century BCE, the wooden benches were replaced by 64 rows of porous stone seats divided by a semicircle corridor into two levels, many of which remain today. It has been calculated that the theater could seat 17,000 people. During the next centuries the structure underwent changes and additions but later were destroyed by invaders. Some sculptures, a detailed marble floor and the parapet around the stage can still be seen today.

**2. THE TEMPLE OF THRASYLLOS** - The temple was standing on the *katatome*, the great rock that had been artificially vertically leveled for the construction of the Theater of Dionysus. The only remains of this temple are the two Ionic columns standing above the tiny chapel of the Panagia Chrysospiliotissa (Our Lady of the Cavern).

**3. THE STOA OF EUMENES** - This long colonnade built of stone and marble was used as a shelter and promenade way for the people entering the theater.

**4. THE ASKLEPEION** - This sanctuary is located on the top left of the wooden steps leading to the Theater of Dionysus. It served as a healing center by the sacred spring waters of Asklepios, the healing god.

**5. THE THEATER OF HERODES ATTICUS** - This theater was built by Herodes Atticus, a wealthy Roman. He created this architectural miracle in A.D. 160. in memory of his wife, Regilla. The theater had marble seats for 5000 spectators. It was discovered in 1857 through 1858 and restored beginning in 1950 through 1961. The summer Athenian Festivals for musicals, dancing and plays take place there every year.

# ΠΕΡΙΚΛΗΣ

PERICLES



Pericles, an important and prominent Greek statesman, orator and general, was born in 495 BCE and died in 429 BCE. He was largely responsible for the full development of both Athenian democracy and the Athenian empire. He made Athens the cultural and political focus of Greece. He had such a profound influence on the Athenian society that historian Thucydides named him “the first citizen” of democratic Athens. His era is also often referred to as the Age of Pericles or broadly as the Golden Age of Athens.

Born in Athens to an aristocratic family, Pericles’ father was a respected war hero and politician, and his mother was a member of a powerful and influential family. His nobility, wealth and family prestige allowed him to pursue his education in any field he chose. He read widely and was the first politician to credit great importance to philosophy as a valuable subject of learning. His name, Pericles, means “surrounded by glory,” and he lived up to his name by making Athens the greatest city-state of Greece through freedom of thought and expression of the people.

As a young man, he was introverted and not given to speech-making. Later with his consort Aspasia of Miletus’ encouragement and help, he developed his speech writing and oratorical skills. One of his most famous speeches was given as the funeral oration following the First Peloponnesian War. Related by Thucydides, his speech resonated in his advocacy for a free and democratic state and the benefits such a system offered. He eulogized:

*“Grief is felt not so much for the want of what we have never known  
as for the loss of that to which we have been long accustomed.”*

Pericles led the Athenians during the first two years of the Peloponnesian War and in doing so expanded the empire as a strong naval power. The Peloponnesian Wars began in 431 BCE after the Persian War ended. The war saw the two major city-states of Greece, Athens and Sparta, in a protracted conflict. Athens included most of the islands and coastal states around the northern and eastern shores of the Aegean. Sparta was the leader of the independent states that included the Peloponnese, central Greece and Corinth. Athens was the stronger naval power and better prepared financially while Sparta had the stronger army.

Pericles encouraged freedom of expression and the arts, literature and philosophy flourished. Under his influence Athens became the hub of art, culture, education and democracy. Artists, sculptors, playwrights, poets, architects and philosophers considered Athens a haven for their work. Hippocrates practiced medicine in Athens, while sculptors like Phidias and Myron carved statues in marble and stone. Playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes created the basis for modern day theater during this period. The “father of logic and philosophy,” Socrates lived in Athens at this time. His dialectic method of inquire known as the Socratic method laid the ground work for Western thought. Perhaps Pericles’ greatest accomplishment during this era was the building of the glorious Parthenon. He conceived Athens as “an education to Greece.”

In 430 BCE Athens experienced a major setback when the Plague of Athens broke out. Between one-third and two-thirds of the Athenian population died. In 429 BCE Pericles and several members of his family succumbed to the plague. His death, as well as the large number of Athenian casualties to the plague, weakened Athens in its conflict with Sparta.

With the death of Pericles the golden age of Athens began to fade; however, the profound influences of that age and Pericles’ legacy continue today. The city’s empire, which stretched at its peak from the western Mediterranean to the Black Sea, left an indelible mark and lasting legacy on democracy, literature, drama, architecture and philosophy.

*“Pericles, strong in repute and intellect...conspicuously incorruptible.”*

*–Thucydides*

# ΠΛΑΚΑ PLAKA

Stretching from the base of the Acropolis is the Plaka (old) or the Agora of Athens. Located on the northwestern side of the Acropolis, the area was the center of ancient Athens' public life in the same way the Acropolis was the center of the religious life. The Athenians assembled there, and as the word *agora* (marketplace) reveals, it was a large, open meeting place for citizens, full of buildings and people. It was here in the agora that the most important Greek concept - Athenian democracy - took root and flourished. It was here where Socrates taught and died. It was a gathering place for the commercial, political and social activities of the ancient Athenians. Today it is a major archaeological site with many ancient ruins visible.

Presently the large city of Athens is made up of numerous small neighborhoods that over the years have melded together to form a major metropolis. The Plaka is the most ancient, original part of the city where archaeological sites and modern day life come together. Tourist and local Athenians visit the many churches, restaurants, theaters, tavernas, shops and ancient sites located in the Plaka.

## **THE ACROPOLIS MUSEUM**

Descending from the Acropolis, the first modern building that comes into sight is the Acropolis Museum. It is a museum focused on the archaeological site of the Acropolis of Athens. It is located by the southeastern slope of the Acropolis on the ancient road that led to the "sacred rock" of classical times. Opened to the public on June 20, 2009 it is a soaring glass-walled structure with a direct view of the Parthenon. The museum exhibits approximately 4,000 artifacts found on the Acropolis and surrounding areas from the Greek Bronze Age to Roman and Byzantine Greece. The site itself covers an area of 25,000 square meters and the exhibition space is 14,000 square meters and lies over the ruins of a part of Roman and early Byzantine Athens.

The entrance floor to the museum is built over an extensive archaeological site. This floor is glass and then extends into the main floor interior so that visitors can see the excavation below. The extensive collection is exhibited on three levels. Two levels display artifacts from the slopes of the Acropolis and its surrounding buildings. The top level, the most spectacular of all, replicates the Parthenon. Here the artifacts are displayed exactly as they appear in the Parthenon but with blank spaces where the marbles taken by Lord Elgin now displayed in the British Museum.

The Acropolis Museum, one of the most important archaeological museums in the world, is a fitting conclusion to a visit on the Acropolis. Here a visitor is able to read the history of this magnificent area and how it came to be the center of the ancient world.

## **ANAFIOTIKA**

On a hill above the Plaka, under the flank of the Acropolis, is the tiny village of Anafiotika (little Anafi) unique because of how it came to be. In 1841 King Otto I of Greece encouraged workers to come and help transform the new capital of independent Greece into a modern metropolis and to refurbish his palace. Carpenters and masons from the Cycladic island of Anafi came along with other workers. They took over the rocky terrain located just below the north slope of the Acropolis. They hastily erected houses, taking advantage of an old Ottoman law that decreed if you built a structure between sunset and sunrise, the property became yours.

The neighborhood was built to resemble the architecture of the Cyclades islands with stark, white-washed cubic houses built of stone, flat roofs and brightly painted shutters and doors, giving the feel of being in an island village. Bright magenta bougainvillea spills over the walls and the narrow alleyways often end in dead-end terraces. Some of the houses have roof-top patios with gardens of potted plants and an occasional shady tree. Anafiotika is an example of the many unique, unusual sites to be seen in the Plaka, today's agora.

## **AGIOS NIKOLAOS RANGAVAS**

Near the Anafiotika neighborhood, is the church of Agios Nikolaos Rangavas, a landmark Greek Orthodox Church. It is the oldest church with Byzantine architecture in Athens, built during the 11th century. It was part of the Rangavas family estate who counted among their possible ancestors Byzantine Emperor Michael I Rangabe (811-813). The name Rangavas is inscribed on a column found in the dome.

The history of the church is a turbulent one. In 1687 during the siege of the Acropolis by the Venetians, part of the monument was destroyed by a cannon ball. The church was repaired in the 18th century and restored again in the 1970s. Like most of the Athenians churches, Agios Nikolaos Rangavas has seen many architectural interventions. Among others, the chapel of Agia Paraskevi was added to the south side. The north side and the dome of the church still survive from the Byzantine period. The church incorporated ancient marble columns and other remains of ancient buildings in its external walls. Even though it has seen many changes through the years, Agios Nikolaos Rangavas is considered one of the most important Byzantine edifices in Athens.



Agios Nikolaos was the first church in Athens to receive a bell after the War of Independence in 1821. This bell, which is now kept inside the church, was the first to ring out after the city's liberation from the German occupation on October 12, 1944.

The Acropolis Museum, Anafiotika and Agios Nikolaos are just three of the many, many sites flourishing from ancient times to contemporary Athens. They continue to make the Plaka a vibrant, living agora – “the beating heart of Athens in the Shadow of the Acropolis.”



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