

## ATHENS



Athens is the capital of Greece and of the Attika region. Athens is one of the world's oldest cities, with its recorded history spanning over 3,400 years and its earliest human presence starting somewhere between the 11th and 7th millennium BC. Athens is a center for the arts, learning and philosophy, home of Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum and it is widely referred to as the cradle of Western civilization and the birthplace of democracy. In modern times, Athens is a large cosmopolitan metropolis and central to economic, financial, industrial, maritime, political and cultural life in Greece. Athens is a global city and one of the biggest economic centres in southeastern Europe. It has a large financial sector, and its port Piraeus is both the largest passenger port in Europe, and the second largest in the world. The Municipality of Athens (also City of Athens) had a population of 664,046 within its administrative limits, and a land area of 38.96 km<sup>2</sup>. The urban area of Athens (Greater Athens and Greater Piraeus) extends beyond its administrative municipal city limits, with a population of 3,090,508 (in 2011) over an area of 412 km<sup>2</sup>.



## ATHENS ATTRACTION

The heritage of the classical era is still evident in the city, represented by ancient monuments and works of art, the most famous of all being the Parthenon, considered a key landmark of early Western civilization. The city also retains Roman and Byzantine monuments, as well as a smaller number of Ottoman monuments. Athens is home to two UNESCO World Heritage Sites, the Acropolis of Athens and the medieval Daphni Monastery. Landmarks of the modern era, dating back to the establishment of Athens as the capital of the independent Greek state in 1834, include the Hellenic Parliament and the so-called "architectural trilogy of Athens", consisting of the National Library of Greece, the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the Academy of Athens. Athens is also home to several museums and cultural institutions, such as the National Archeological Museum, featuring the world's largest collection of ancient Greek antiquities, the Acropolis Museum, the Museum of Cycladic Art, the Benaki Museum and the Byzantine and Christian Museum. Athens was the host city of the first modern-day Olympic Games in 1896, and 108 years later it welcomed home the 2004 Summer Olympics, making it one of only a handful of cities to have hosted the Olympics more than once.



The Parthenon is a former temple on the Athenian Acropolis, Greece, dedicated to the goddess Athena, whom the people of Athens considered their patron. Construction began in 447 BC when the Athenian Empire was at the peak of its power. It was completed in 438 BC, although decoration of the building continued until 432 BC. It is the most important surviving building of Classical Greece, generally considered the zenith of the Doric order.

Its decorative sculptures are considered some of the high points of Greek art. The Parthenon is regarded as an enduring symbol of Ancient Greece, Athenian democracy and Western civilization and one of the world's greatest cultural monuments. To the Athenians who built it, the Parthenon and other Periclean monuments of the Acropolis were seen fundamentally as a celebration of Hellenic victory over the Persian invaders and as a thanksgiving to the gods for that victory. The Parthenon itself replaced an older temple of Athena, which historians call the Pre-Parthenon or Older Parthenon, that was destroyed in the Persian invasion of 480 BC. The temple is archaeoastronomically aligned to the Hyades. Like most Greek temples, the Parthenon served a practical purpose as the city treasury. In the final decade of the sixth century AD, the Parthenon was converted into a Christian church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. After the Ottoman conquest, it was turned into a mosque in the early 1460s. On 26 September 1687, an Ottoman ammunition dump inside the building was ignited by Venetian bombardment. The resulting explosion severely damaged the Parthenon and its sculptures.



The Hellenic Parliament is the parliament of Greece, located in the Old Royal Palace, overlooking Syntagma Square in Athens. It is a neoclassical three-floor structure designed by Friedrich von Gärtner and completed in 1843, originally served as a palace for the Greek monarchs, hence sometimes still referred to as the "Old Palace". After suffering fire damage in 1909, it entered a long period of renovation.

The king and royal family moved to what was from 1897 until then the Crown Prince's Palace, from then on known as the "New Palace", one block to the east on Herodou Attikou Street, while some royals continued to reside in the "Old Palace" until 1924, when a referendum abolished the monarchy. The building was then used for many different purposes — functioning as a makeshift hospital, a museum, et al. — until November 1929, when government decided that the building would permanently house Parliament. After more extensive renovations, the Senate convened in the "Old Palace" on 2 August 1934, followed by the Fifth National Assembly on 1 July 1935. Although the monarchy was restored that same year, the building has housed Parliament ever since. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, guarded round the clock by the Evzones of the Presidential Guard, is located in the formal forecourt of the building. Construction of the monument began in 1929 and it was inaugurated on March 25, 1932.

The Academy from Athens is situated near the center of city of Athens. It was designed by the Danish architect Theophil Freiherr von Hansen, as part of his famous Trilogy of neoclassical buildings including the Academy of Athens and the original building of the Athens University. It was founded by Ioannis Kapodistrias. The original idea for establishing a National Library was from the philhellene Johann Jakob Mayer, in an August 1824 article of his newspaper *Ellinika Chronika*, published at Missolonghi, where Mayer and Lord Byron had been promoting Greece's independence. Mayer's idea was implemented in 1829 by the new Greek government of Ioannis Kapodistrias, who grouped together the National Library with other intellectual institutions such as schools, national museums, and printing houses.



These were all placed in a building on the island Aegina and supervised by Andreas Moustoxydis, who thus became director of the National Archaeological Museum of Athens, and director of the National School. In 1842, the Public Library merged with Athens University's library, and was housed together with the currency collection at the new building of Otto's University. The first director was Georgios Kozakis-Typaldos of the newly enlarged institution, retaining the job until 1863. At this time, the Library was enriched with significant donations and with rare foreign language books from all over Europe. With the royal charter of 1866, the two libraries merged, and were administered as the "National Library of Greece". The library has currently 4,500 Greek manuscripts which is one of the greatest collection of Greek scripts. There are also many chrysobulls and archives of the Greek Revolution.

The National Archaeological Museum in Athens 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 greatest museums in the world and contains the richest collection of artifacts from Greek antiquity worldwide.



It is situated in the Exarcheia area in central Athens between Epirus Street, Bouboulinas Street and Tositsas Street while its entrance is on the Patisson Street adjacent to the historical building of the Athens Polytechnic university.