



# THE NEW ADVENTURES OF OLD ATHENS

*THIS ANCIENT CITY HAS BECOME A MODERN TREASURE*

BY GREG FREITAS AND NATALIE COMPAGNO

**W**hen you're one of the oldest cities in the world, you're bound to experience some ups and downs. Witness Athens, historically 3,400 years old but probably many thousands more.

Anyone who might have visited Athens — say, during their college years with a backpack on the way to the islands — may have decided they had seen enough. It is time to reconsider, as today's version of Athens is bold, seductive, and full of fun.

Less expensive than many European capitals and orders of magnitude friendlier, Athens is having its day in the sun again. With an excellent subway system thanks to the 2004 Olympics and bustling neighborhoods to rival Paris or Barcelona, the city of Athena is ready for her close-up. A perfect weekend in Athens awaits.

## FRIDAY

It isn't as important which hotel you choose, but that it has a rooftop swim-

ming pool and bar to fully appreciate the Parthenon lit up at night. After sundowners, head out for an evening symposium — the name for “social gathering” in Ancient Greece.

**Psyri** has a fun fit for all types of gods and titans. The quiet quarter becomes electric after sundown, with tables spilling onto the streets and so many different tavernas and ouzerias, it would take weeks to visit them all. It's nightlife without the nightclubs, a festive wandering experience where every street unlocks a new find.

It's also a prime shopping area for boho thrifting. The stores don't stay open very late, so you'll want to return during the day. Don't miss **Remember Fashion**, the punk retro shop that has been there since 1978.



## SATURDAY

Have a late brunch at **Tzitzikas & Mermigas** — from Aesop's *The Cicada and the Ant* — serving Greek classics with a modern twist in a bright, airy spot with plenty of outdoor tables. Take a leisurely stroll through the **Plaka**, Athens' poshest neighborhood, and then it's time for some culture and history.

**The Acropolis Museum** opened in 2009 to worldwide acclaim. Finally, Greece had a museum to match the grandeur of its artifacts. It's a wonderful place to visit and can be combined with tours of the **Parthenon** and the **Temple of Olympian Zeus**. In the agora, take the short peaceful walk around the **Temple of Hephaestus**, one of the best-preserved ancient temples in Greece, and conjure up the days of the empire. Toast yourself after the history lesson with a dry rosé on the museum's expansive terrace.

For a taste of the new, visit the **National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens (EMET)**. Although there is plenty of international art as well, the EMET is the only museum in Athens to focus on Greek contemporary art and inhabits the sleekly redesigned site of the former Fix Brewery.

Have dinner and a nightcap at **The Clumsies**, the oddly named, fantastic cocktail lounge that reached No. 3 on the world's top bars list. The mixology program is Mediterranean-inspired and whimsical, with a fresh take on the classics.

## SUNDAY

This is a beach day, and the **Athenian Riviera** has several great sandy strips. Check out **Artemis Beach** or **Voula Beach** for golden sand and blue water. The subway goes all the way to **Piraeus**, then hail a car for your beach of choice. You can certainly stay longer, and you should. But these three days in Athens will make any visitor feel like Zeus or Hera when done. **3**

Opposite page: Bring the ancient world to life at the Greek ruins. Above: Check out the Anafiotika neighborhood in Athens. Bottom: Enjoy an Eden Garden cocktail.





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