



Athens on a Budget: The Ultimate 2-Day Itinerary


No money? No problem. Here's how to make the most of Athens in two days, if you're on a tight budget.

Athens is home to priceless antiquities, but it's also one of Europe's more affordable capitals. It's easy to explore on foot, the sun and sea don't cost a thing, and you can find budget eats in every neighbourhood. Here's how to spend 48 hours in Athens on a shoestring.



Day 1

Morning



Skipping one of the world's most famous landmarks? Not an option, no matter how broke you are. The peerless **Parthenon** never disappoints and you can save with a multi-site **Acropolis** ticket that includes six other archeological sites.

If you're only going to fork out for one museum in Athens, make it the **Acropolis Museum**. The Parthenon Gallery on the top floor makes an unforgettable impact. At just €10 to enter (€5 off-season), it's one of the best value museums of its calibre in the world.

Take a scenic, ten-minute stroll to Mnisikleous Street in **Plaka** and unwind on the café-lined stairs that have starred in countless Instagram moments. Settle in with a coffee, milkshake, cold beer or glass of house wine (in Greece, drinks commonly arrive with complimentary nibbles like olives, biscuits or little squares of tea cake).

There's a **This is Athens** with a local walk for every whim—whether you're a classicist, urban fox, night owl or foodie.

This view won't cost you a thing

Photo: Thomas Gravanis



Day 1

Lunch

Did someone say food? Athens is packed with great places where you can refuel on delicious cheap eats for around €5-10 a head. You'll find everything from belly-filling street food to family-run **pastry shops**.

There's nothing like Greek food and there are plenty of **traditional tavernas** to choose from in the city centre and beyond, where you take potluck with whatever tasty dishes are in play that day. For a moveable feast, hit up one of the regular **farmer's markets** that are a staple of every neighbourhood. Or head to the **lively Athens Central Market**, and rustle up a locavore's picnic of cheap seasonal produce, olives and cured meats. At cheery **Karamanlidika tou Fani**, just by the central market, you can purchase delicious salami and cheese to go, or eat them in-house.

Greek salad, one of the traditional dishes you have to try while in Athens

Photo: Manos Chatzikonstantis



Day 1

Afternoon

Even if you're short on funds, shopping need not be a spectator sport in Athens. While away the afternoon digging for second-hand bargains in the city's thriving **vintage shops**. Monastiraki flea market has bargains galore, especially on Sunday morning when many traders sell bric a brac on the streets around Avissinia Square and Thissio station. Protogenous Street in hip **Psirri** is heaven for dedicated vintage shoppers. There's the added bonus of the out-of-this-world ice-cream at **Kokkion** (try the dark chocolate with passionfruit).

Not into shopping? Take a free guided tour with a friendly Athenian. There's a **walk with a local** for every whim—whether you're a classicist, urban fox, night owl or foodie.

You just might stumble upon your new favourite vintage find in Monastiraki or Psirri

Photo: Thomas Gravanis

The window at Ecolatca is stuffed with antiques

Photo: Thomas Gravanis



Day 1

Evening



Sunset hour is upon you. Embark on the Athenian pastime of an early evening volta (aimless stroll). Beautiful **Dionysiou Areopagitou** street has it all: neoclassical mansions, Art Deco architecture, street performers and ancient monuments.

Feel like you've been whisked away to a Greek island in the picture-perfect lanes of **Anafotika**, the hidden village underneath the Acropolis. The cats wandering the whitewashed lanes make perfect **Instagram portraits**. Then **catch an Athenian sunset up on the Areopagus**, a rocky perch below the Parthenon. Stretch your precious funds further in Romvis Street with a round of cocktails-to-go from TYCO (prices start from just €5). Sip them very slowly and spice up your night with one of their regular live DJ sets.

Set out for some extended night manoeuvres in **Keramikos**. This happening neighbourhood comes alive after dark and has many pocket-friendly places to experience **Athenian nightlife** first-hand. (Try **Cabazon**, where you can nosh on comfort food and dance into the small hours in a typical Greek courtyard. Or **Louis Kafenio**, one of the best—and best value—places in Athens to acquire a **taste for ouzo and mezze**). If your bank balance is running on empty, buy a beer from the nearest periptero (**the ever-present Greek kiosk**) and go hang out at Technopolis Square for **Gazi** nightlife on the cheap.

The periptero will have everything you need for a late night. Or any time, really

Photo: Thomas Gravanis



Day 2

Morning

A day without bread is unthinkable for most Greeks. Grab the classic Athenian breakfast-to-go: a freshly-baked koulouri (sesame bread ring), or a warm, flaky tiropita (cheese pie), along with **the city's favourite coffee fix**, the freddo cappuccino. Or settle in at a traditional **kafenion** for a Greek coffee and front row seat on everyday Athenian life. (Hint: it may involve a backgammon board or two).

Catch the free shuttle bus from Syntagma Square to explore the range of free activities and performances at the **Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Centre** (SNFCC). Picnic on your **bakery goodies** in the park, check out the petanque players (or ice skaters in winter; the rink is free with pre-booking) beside the vast canal, play in the sound garden, or use the free work stations in the **National Library**. Don't leave without taking in the splendid panoramas of city and sea from the Lighthouse.

Renzo Piano designed
Greece's National Library

Photo: Thomas Gravanis

Day 2

Lunch

How does lunch by the Aegean sound? Hop on an A2 bus from Syntagma Square to visit the **Athens Riviera** and its crown jewel **Vouliagmeni**, where it always feels like summer. Hit up **Tylixto Greek Wrap** or **Zaxos** on the main Vouliagmeni strip to sample Greece's two most famous street food staples: **souvlaki and gyros**. Take your food to go and cross the road to the free pier in front of **En Plo** cafe where you can join (or watch) the **year-round swimmers** in the bay after your alfresco lunch.

Swimmers and sunbathers at Vouliagmeni

Photo: Manos Chatzikonstantis



Day 2

Afternoon

Hungry for some cost-free culture? All archaeological sites and monuments in Athens are free the first Sunday of each month from 1 November to 31 March. Other leading museums, such as the **Benaki Museum of Greek Culture**, grant free admission weekly (read our **25 Free Things to Do in Athens** to find out more).

Athens' modern metro system is not only a super cheap way of **getting around** (as are buses, trams and trains for that matter), it's also a free archaeological museum and art gallery rolled into one. Follow our **art on the underground guide** to see ancient artefacts unearthed during construction, along with works by modern Greek artists like Yiannis Moralis and Costas Varotsos.

Contemporary art lovers can go on a gallery walkabout with the help of our **Insider's Guide to Athens' Art Galleries**. Or stroll through the edgy downtown neighbourhoods of Psirri, Keramikos and Exarchia for a free viewing of Athens' electric **street art scene**. For something more traditional, head to Syntagma Square to observe the **evzones' changing of the guard**, in all their pomp (and pompoms). It takes place hourly outside the Greek Parliament.

The metro in Athens is also a free archaeological museum and art gallery

Photo: Georgios Makkas



Day 2

Evening

Buckle up for a final ride with Athens' committed barflies. Your destination is **Platia Mavili** (Mavili Square) in **Ambelokipi**, the heart of the city's after-hours bar scene. Tuck into a top-notch pizza at **Flower**, or jive to funk and soul sounds at classic neighbourhood bar **Briki**. All Mavili Square evenings end with a visit to the legendary **all-night canteen** that dishes out vromiko ("dirty") sandwiches and hot dogs to Athenian revellers until dawn.

There's no shortage of cheap eats—and drinks—in Platia Mavili

Photo: Thomas Gravanis

