

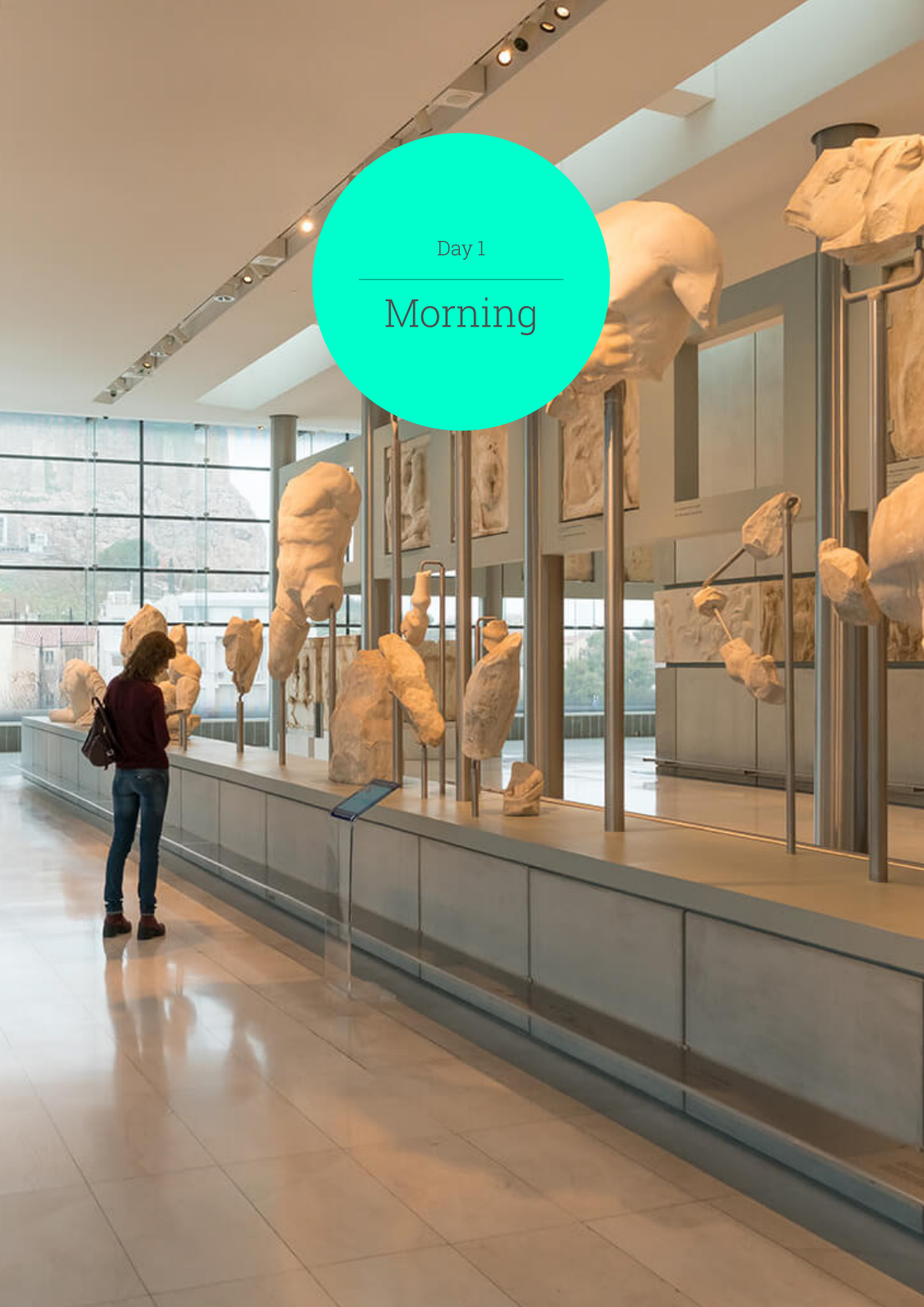


# How to Do 48 Hours in Athens

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Only have two days in Athens? Here's our 48 hour itinerary to help you see everything you can, from the classic sites to the best nightlife.

Athens is one of those cities that you have to visit at least once in your lifetime. Even if you only have two days here, there's enough time to check off the classical sights and world heritage landmarks, and get a taste for the city's legendary nightlife and seaside magic. Hit neighbourhoods from Plaka to Exarchia and eat at the city's traditional tavernas. Our breakdown of the city's greatest hits will help you make the most of a 48-hour stay in Athens.



Day 1

## Morning

Start where it all began. Beat the crowds with an early-morning visit to the **Acropolis**—Athens' sacred rock, inhabited since Neolithic times—and its iconic pinnacle, the **Parthenon**. Be sure to pick up a **multi-site ticket** that allows multiple entry to most major archaeological sites, including the **Ancient Agora** and **Keramikos Cemetery**, both just a short walk along the marvellous pedestrian promenade that circles the Acropolis.

You've explored Athens' 2,500-year-old ancient wonder. Now put it into context at a modern architectural marvel—the **Acropolis Museum**. This unmissable landmark ranks among the world's top museums. Don't leave until you've seen the ingenious Parthenon Gallery on the top floor and paused for coffee at the glass-walled café, in full view of the leading lady herself.

Stroll along what is probably the most beautiful street in Athens: Dionysiou Areopagitou. Admire neo-classical and art deco architecture on one side of the street, as you tick off ancient monuments like the **Theatre of Dionysus** (the birthplace of Greek drama) and the **Odeon of Herodes Atticus** (still used as a **summer venue**) on the other.

Take a left at the 16th century chapel of **Agios Dimitrios Loumbardiaris** and wander up the forested slopes to the **Pnyx**. Stand on the spot where democracy took root: the ancient speaker's corner, where great orators like Pericles and Demosthenes held court.

Explore the countless treasures  
of the Acropolis Museum

Photo: Orestis Seferoglou



Day 1

## Lunch

If all this history and hiking have made you hungry, stroll downhill to **Steki tou Ilia**, a classic Greek taverna on a peaceful pedestrian street. Or seek out **Café Avissinia**, a bohemian sanctuary amid the hustle of Monastiraki antiques and flea market on Avissinias Square. The views from the top floor are Instagram gold, and the people-watching at ground-level is quintessential Athens.

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Vintage charm at Café Avissinia in the heart of the flea market

Courtesy: Café Avissinia



Day 1

## Afternoon

Scout for everything from kitsch souvenirs to antique prints, second-hand-vinyl and **vintage** army surplus in **Monastiraki flea market**. Top up on culture and caffeine at **TAF** (The Art Foundation), an Ottoman dwelling re-booted as a fashionable gallery and courtyard café, with a brilliant Greek design emporium thrown into the mix.

For sophisticated **souvenirs**, edible gifts, **hand-made sandals** and accessories, hit Adrianou Street, the main shopping street in the old town of Plaka. Or simply amble along Plaka's twisting, pastel-coloured lanes with no other agenda than to watch the Acropolis play hide and seek between the Byzantine churches, neoclassical mansions, whitewashed cottages, and touristy but irresistibly quaint tavernas.

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Handmade leather sandals along  
Adrianou Street

Photo: Manos Chatzikonstantis



Day 1

## Evening

Athens' legendary sunsets signal that it's cocktail hour. Drink in the city's red-hot **cocktail scene** at one of the rooftop bars hidden high above the narrow streets around Syntagma and Monastiraki. Or jump in the cable car and whizz up to the summit of **Lycabettus Hill**, the city's highest peak and a classic spot for sunset selfies.

Athenians eat late (never before 9 pm), so follow their lead—you don't want to dine in an empty restaurant. But be sure to make a reservation at one of the **creative Athenian restaurants** where a new generation of chefs are deconstructing classic Greek dishes in surprising new ways.

Bedtime? Forget it. Athenians are just getting started for the evening. Whether you're in the mood for sampling **cocktails made with Greek spirits**, listening to **live music**, or going full Greek cliché and dancing on the tables at a **bouzouki club**, Athens has all the ingredients for a great (and very long) night out.

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In Athens the night is still young at midnight

Photo: Pinelopi Gerasimou



Day 2

## Morning

Although **brunch in Athens** is a new trend, most locals make do with a takeaway coffee and a cheese pie from their **local bakery** for breakfast.

There's one morning ritual in Athens that hasn't changed since 1868. Every hour, on the hour, the changing of the **Presidential guard** takes place outside Parliament on **Syntagma Square**. (On Sundays at 11 am, you'll catch the evzones in full traditional dress.)

One of Athens' best cultural double-bills awaits a stone's throw away on stately Vassilisis Sofias Avenue. First stop? The **Benaki Museum**, a superb showcase of Greek civilisation from the Bronze Age right up to the 20th century. A couple of blocks away, the **Museum of Cycladic Art** contains a thrilling collection of early Bronze Age art, including enigmatic marble figurines that have inspired the likes of Picasso and Giacometti.

Marble figurines at the Museum of Cycladic Art

Courtesy: Museum of Cycladic Art



Day 2

## Lunch

Athens has the longest coastline of any European capital—but it's only about 10 kilometres from downtown to **Piraeus harbour**. As well as the gateway to the **Greek islands**, Piraeus is home to some of the **best seaside restaurants** in Athens. Choose between Michelin-starred seafood restaurants in pretty Mikrolimano or more casual hotspots in budget and family-friendly Hatzikyriakeio and Akti Themistokleous. From May to October, you can combine seaside lunch with a swim. Just head along the glittering **Athens Riviera** to **Kavouri** or **Vouliagmeni** and take your pick from traditional fish tavernas or five-star seafood.

Lunch by the sea is a quintessentially Athenian experience

Courtesy: Manos Chatzikonstantis



Day 2

Afternoon

There's always something exciting happening at Athens' shiniest new cultural and recreational landmark, the **Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Centre** (SNFCC). While away what's left of the afternoon exploring Renzo Piano's beacon of sustainable design, which is home to the **Greek National Opera**, the **National Library**, and a Mediterranean park. Rent a bicycle and tour the grounds on two wheels, catch a concert in the scarlet auditorium, or enjoy one last sunset from the solar-powered Lighthouse.

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Dizzying views from the observation deck of the SNFCC

**Photo:** Yiorgis Yerolymos  
**Courtesy:** SNFCC



Day 2

## Evening

Toast your last night in Athens at one of the city's hip **wine bars**. Check out neighbourhood favourites **Warehouse** in Exarchia or **Materia Prima** in Koukaki and sample the charismatic Greek wines earning global accolades. The night is still young in Athens...

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A pretty pasta and a glass of wine at Warehouse

Photo: Orestis Seferoglou