



Athens

for Art and Design Lovers

Art, fashion, food and design. If they're the reasons you travel, follow our insider's guide to experience the stylish side of Athens.

Athenians are hard-wired to appreciate art and beauty. The city is a living canvas of stunning ancient sculpture and architecture. If you're the kind of person who collects coffee-table books. If you're travelling in search of hot new design trends. And if you'd happily spend an hour searching for the perfect lunch spot, rather than settle on any old dive, read on. Here's how to spend 48 hours in Athens with the city's most stylish insiders.



Start your day with a perfect flat white while you browse the design magazines and homeware at **Philos**, a concept store and café in fashion-forward **Kolonaki**. The all-day brunch menu in this light-filled neoclassical townhouse is a knockout: try the open sandwiches, Buddha bowls, and eggs benedict. No time to linger? Make a beeline for **Queen Bee** bistro and kickstart your morning with a For Five coffee straight from Brooklyn and one of their **Parisian-style croissants or feuilletés**.

Relive a golden era of Athenian cultural life at the **Katakouzenos Museum**, an insider secret just off Syntagma Square. This former residence of power couple Angelos and Leto Katakouzenos was once an intellectual salon of the so-called "1930s generation" of Greek artists and writers. The couple hosted everyone from Albert Camus to Marc Chagall (clock the rare artwork by Chagall, Picasso, and local artist **Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika**, who has a whole museum dedicated to his life and work nearby).

You're only a few blocks away from the world's most impressive haul of ancient Cycladic art. Admire the exquisite collection of early Bronze Age statues and ceramics at the **Museum of Cycladic Art** and then pick up a marble replica from the excellent gift shop. You might also catch a modern art show by the likes of Ai Wei Wei or Cy Twombly. Take a tea break at the ultra-smart **museum café** before you hit the road.

A few blocks in one direction is the **Benaki Museum of Greek Culture** where you can admire intricate Greek folk costumes and decorative arts. Or step a few blocks the other way for the **Byzantine and Christian Museum**, a trove of religious art in a meditative, monastic setting. Extend the Zen factor with a stroll in the tranquil museum gardens.

Navine G. Khan-Dossos' mural in the Museum of Islamic Art's rooftop café.

Photo: Thomas Gravanis



Day 1

Lunch

Food's up. Head to **Nolan**, a sleek little restaurant where style-conscious dishes (think zucchini with miso and smoked eggplant) fuse the chef's Japanese and Greek heritage.

Can't get a table? Head around the block to **Ergon House, the perpetually buzzy deli** at Greece's first foodie hotel. Shop your way around the vast market of premium Greek produce, then have your organic cuts or seafood prepared your preferred way on the spot to enjoy inside the glass atrium. (Don't forget to add the mural by Greek graffiti artist INO to your Instagram feed).

A modern Greek lunch at Ergon House

Photo: Amalia Kovaïou



Day 1

Afternoon

Spend the afternoon shopping for local crafts, collectibles and contemporary Greek design. Attuned to the classics? Head to **Eclectica** in **Plaka**, a whimsical antiques shop laid out like a concept store (down to the Aqua Flor fragrances that sweeten the air). Or wander past the souvenir shops of Plaka to **Martinós**, a landmark building in **Monastiraki** where you might score anything from an 1830s gold clock to a Henrik Thor-Larsen egg chair. The space doubles as a **secret art gallery**, so check out the art on the walls too.

Greece-inspired fashion is making waves worldwide, so you'll want to dress the part. The **Ancient Greek Sandals** brand has legions of famous fans. Hit their first flagship store on Kolokotroni Street, where you'll find limited edition collaborations with hot Greek jewellery designers like Ileana Makri and Yannis Sergakis. Snap up one of **Evi Grintela's** cotton and silk shirt-dresses from her Akadimias Street showroom (you'll wear it forever). For all-out glamour, drop by **Vassilis Emmanuel Zoulas'** boutique on the same street (or book a fitting at his fourth-floor atelier for made to measure gowns). For urban staples and beach towels that will go the distance, pop into **Parthenis**, or sign up for a Greek Designers shopping tour with Alternative Athens for an insider take on the local labels to watch.

Don't stop now, you're on a roll. If beautiful homeware and furniture are your thing, scout out the designer treasures at **Indigo**, **Anaktae**, **Myran**, **Roma 5**, **Antiqua**, all located in **Kolonaki**.

An assortment of antiques and curious at Eclectica

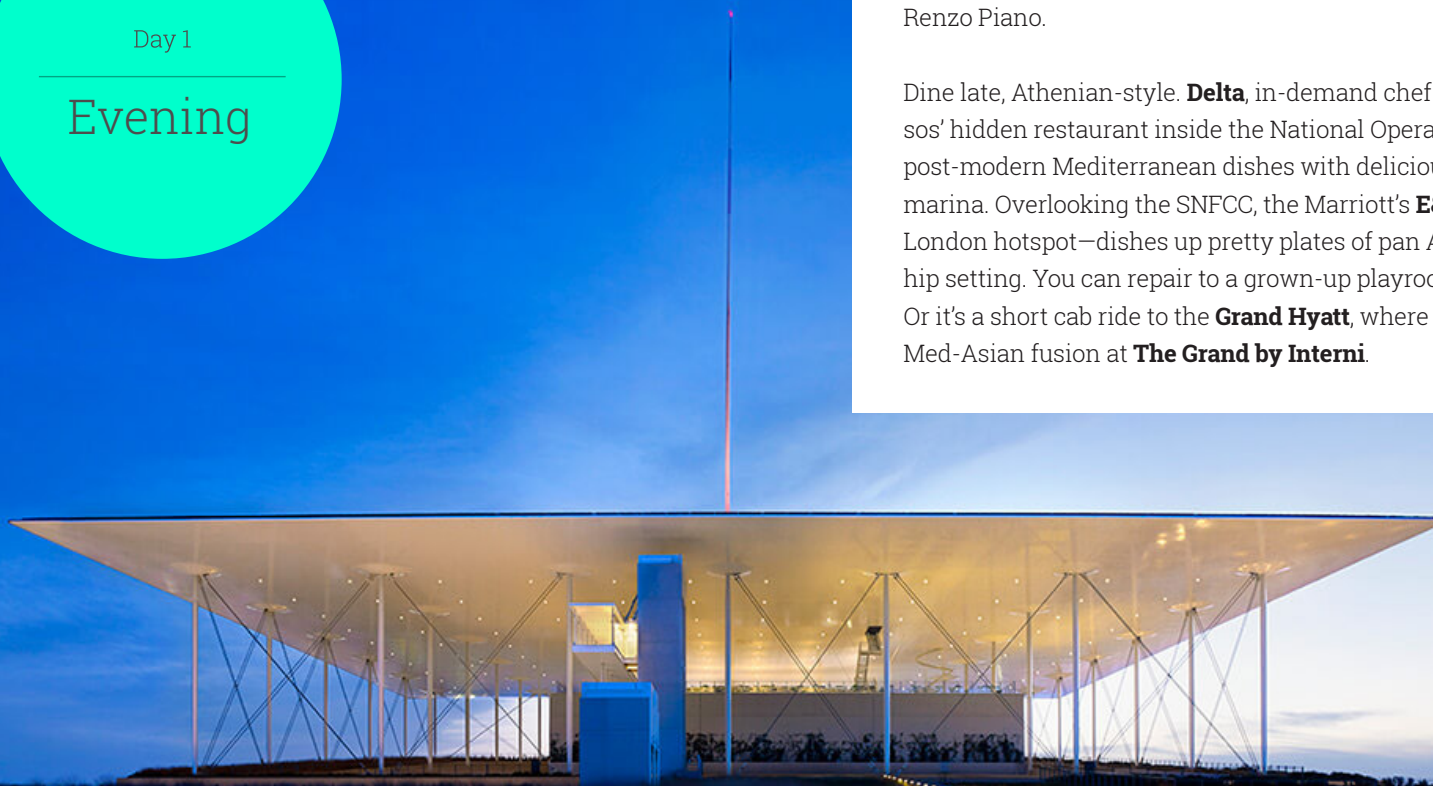
Photo: Thomas Gravanis

Day 1

Evening

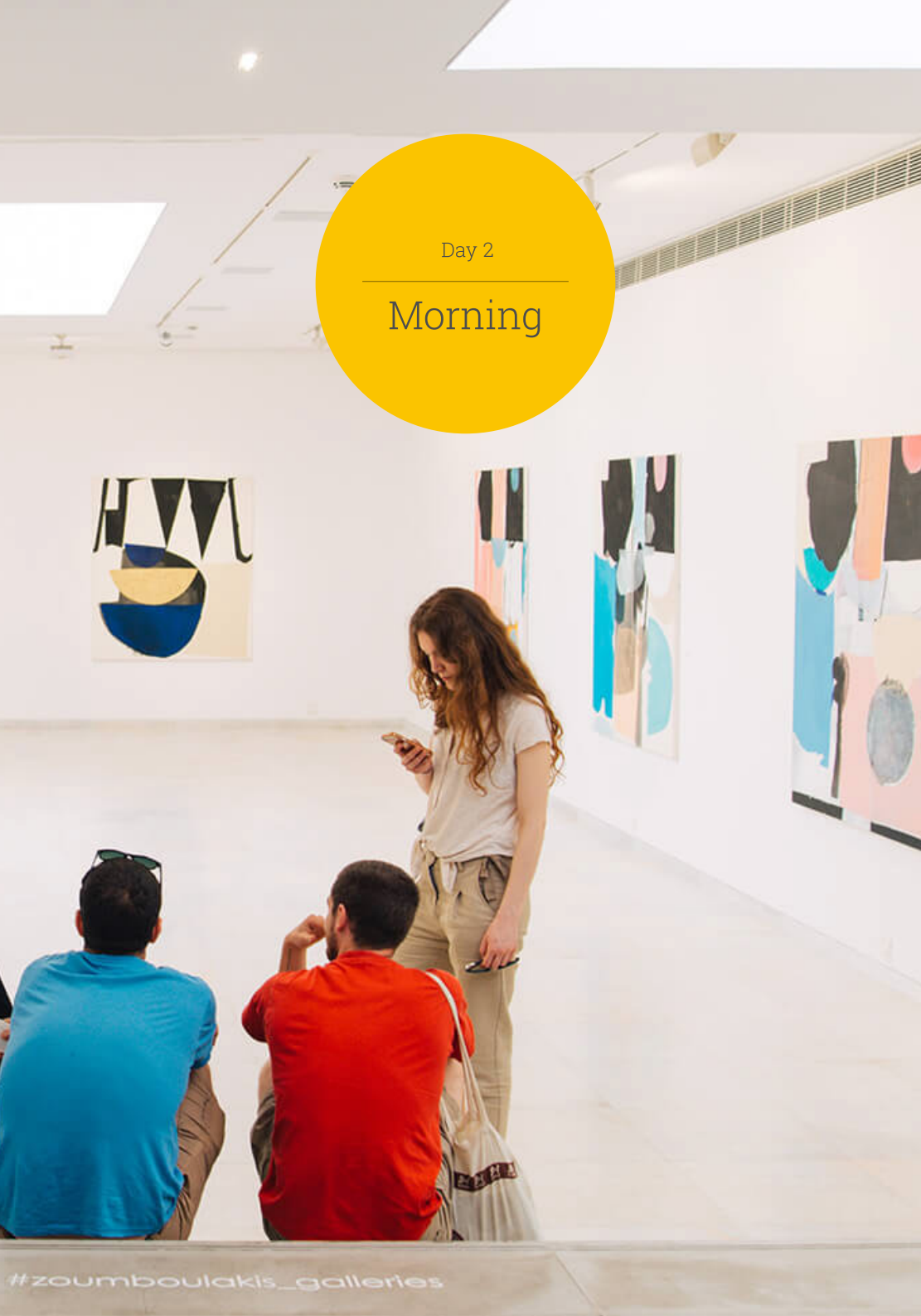
Explore the dazzling modern architecture at the **SNFCC**, before taking in an opera or ballet in the cherry red concert hall designed by Renzo Piano.

Dine late, Athenian-style. **Delta**, in-demand chef Dimitris Skarmoutsos' hidden restaurant inside the National Opera House, serves post-modern Mediterranean dishes with delicious vistas of Faliró marina. Overlooking the SNFCC, the Marriott's **E&O**—an outpost of the London hotspot—dishes up pretty plates of pan Asian flavours in a hip setting. You can repair to a grown-up playroom between courses. Or it's a short cab ride to the **Grand Hyatt**, where you can feast on Med-Asian fusion at **The Grand by Interni**.



The always-impressive SNFCC

Photo: Yiorgis Yerolymbos
Courtesy: SNFCC



Day 2

Morning

Bone up on the Athens art scene on a contemporary art tour with Arthens. They can also set you up with private views at artists' studios. Or take the **Modern Muses gallery tour** with Discover Greek Culture.

Prefer to explore at your own pace? Take a gallery walk in Thissio & Petralona. Pause on your wanderings with a coffee pit stop at the **Museum of Islamic Art's** rooftop café. British artist Navine G. Khan-Dossos' floor-to-ceiling mural and the views over the ancient **Keramikos Cemetery** are both Instagram gold.

(Pro tip: if the non-profit **NEON art foundation** is staging one of their site-specific installations anywhere in Athens, make a point to check it out.)

Visitors take a quick break at the Zoumboulakis Galleries

Photo: Thomas Gravanis

Lunch

Courtesy: Cherchez La Femme

Day 2

Afternoon



No chance of skipping the **Acropolis Museum**. Bernard Schumi's bold structure displays ancient treasures in thrilling ways that throw these priceless objects into three-dimensional relief.

Afterwards, wander through **Koukaki**, a trendy neighbourhood full of cool cafés. Opt for the industrial vibe at **Kinonó**, or join the hipsters gossiping over smoothies and croque monsieurs at **Bel Ray**. Check out cool **design shops** like **Mon Coin**, **Val Gaoutsi**, **Trabala** and **ME THEN** for locally-made jewellery, ceramics and fashion—some of it produced on the premises. Then make a date with a glass of natural Greek wine at **Materia Prima**, paired with glazed sweet potato with gorgonzola and pear.



Tiles for miles and cool streetwear at Sou-Sol in Koukaki

Photo: Thomas Gravanis



Check out what's happening at the **Onassis Stegi**, a contemporary cultural centre with a boundary-pushing programme of Greek and international performers.

Digest it all over outstanding food and wine pairings at **Scala Vinoteca** in Kolonaki. Play it casual on a stool at the counter of Athens' hottest sushi restaurant, **Sushimou** (be sure to book a fortnight in advance). Or enjoy feeling in the know at the secret supper club in the basement of on-trend cocktail bar **Frater & Soror**.

Athens isn't done with you yet. Late night drinks are compulsory **in a city where cocktails are an art form**. Try **Birdman** for impeccable martinis; **Galaxy Bar** for the spirit of old Athens hidden inside a downtown arcade; or share a bottle of luscious Haritatos wine at the roof garden of **The Foundry Suites**, a design hotel in Psirri. (Bonus: it's right next door to one of the hippest bars in Athens right now, **To Lokali**.)

You'll enjoy all kinds of cultural events at Onassis Stegi, from music to dance

Photo: Nicolas Mastoras
Courtesy: Onassis Stegi