



Accessible Guide: Origins of Modern Athens

Athens is so much more than ancient relics. From neoclassical treasures to eclectic urban emblems, let's trace the contemporary face of the Greek capital.

Itinerary Overview

The historic centre of Athens isn't just about ruins. It also contains the beating heart of modern Greece—and this itinerary traces its most central artery, Panepistimiou Street. On Panepistimiou, we'll find the grand ambitions of Athens' "modern" urban planners captured in three fine monuments known as the Neoclassical Trilogy. Starting out from the Panepistimio metro station, we will admire the most imposing of the trio, the central building of the National Kapodistrian University of Athens, then turn our attention to the Academia and old National Library. We'll continue along the street towards eclectic Omonia to encounter the emblematic Rex Theatre, which hosts brilliant works by our National Theatre. Close to this area, we will pass the highly symbolic Polytechnio (National Technical University of Athens) to visit the Archaeological Museum which houses the ancient history of Greece.

Our journey ends at the urban landmark of Omonia Square and its cooling fountain. Here, we begin to travel back to an older Athens. This nostalgic square is a locus of the most important streets of the capital. Our last stop is the Omonia metro station.

General Accessibility

- The itinerary is mostly flat with a total distance of 2,1 km.
- It traverses one of the biggest highways in Athens, constructed with wide pavements. One part of the itinerary can connect with the "Great Walk of Athens" ("Megalos Peripatos"). This pilot project aims to transform the city-centre into a more pedestrian and cyclist-friendly experience. En-route, you'll find many sections of the street have been demarcated for use by pedestrians and cyclists.
- There are no steps in the itinerary, only ramps.
- The area of the route is very well illuminated.
- At each point of interest, the accessibility is indicated according to the information available on each corresponding website.
- Most of the shops/caferias/bars etc. that we meet along the way are not designed in accordance with the accessibility standards and do not provide wheelchair adapted toilets.
- The itinerary starts from the Panepistimio metro station (line 2 - red, "Anthoupoli - Elliniko") and ends up to the Omonia metro station, which belongs to line 1 (green, "Piraeus - Kifissia").
- All of the above stations provide adapted WCs, elevators and full access for a wheelchair. In line 2, the wheelchair boarding is from the first and the last car of the train, since there is no gap. In line 1, you can board from the first door of the first car. As the gap in this line is quite big, you can ask for a ramp and assistance.
- You can begin the itinerary from "Omonia" station and complete it in reverse order.





Points of Interests

Panepistimio Metro Station

Lines 2

- The Panepistimio metro station has many exits. The only one providing an elevator is the Korai exit.
- The wheelchair boarding is from the first or the last car of the train. It is fully accessible.
- It possesses a permanent archaeological exhibition.
- It provides an accessible toilet, which you can ask them to open for you.

From the Korai exit and the elevator, we cross the Korai Square upwards and we reach Panepistimiou Street. We will cross it via the pedestrian light controlled crossing (aka pelican crossing) to reach the opposite pavement.

This is where the “Great Athens Walk” begins, a pilot project to give residents and visitors much more space to walk, run, roam and cycle through the capital’s historic streets, by reclaiming public space and reducing traffic. One of the lanes has been demarcated with plants and is now only used by pedestrians (green signal) and bikes (yellow signal). Even though Panepistimiou Street features ramps on all of its pavements, it is safer to use the Great Walk.

Across the street we will find, from right to left, the Academy of Athens, the original building of the National Kapodistrian University of Athens (aka University of Athens) and the former building of the National Library of Greece. These edifices are, for the most part, closed to the public, but they loom large as cultural landmarks, due to their impressive neoclassical architecture and significance as proud symbols of a newly independent Greece.

Academy of Athens

The Academy of Athens is considered one of the most beautiful neoclassical buildings in the world, thanks to its perfect proportions and harmonious lines. Completed in 1885 and founded in 1926 as an Academy of Sciences, Letters and Fine Arts, its stately design echoes the classical architecture of the fifth century BC. The monumental sculptures and murals that grace this impressive site took a decade to complete and depict both ancient Greek mythology and 19th century Hellenism.

- The Study Hall of the Library operates from Monday to Friday from 9 am until 3 pm.
- The site is accessible to wheelchair users.
- The Academy is not currently open to the public. It is recommended to contact the site if you wish to schedule a visit.

National Kapodistrian University of Athens

The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, officially founded in 1837, forms part of the so-called Athenian Trilogy—the epitome of neoclassical Greek architecture on Panepistimiou Street. It was the first University of the newly liberated Greek state and the first one in Southeast Europe.

The building is open to the general public for visits.

- It is accessible for wheelchair users.
- We continue on the Great Walk towards Omonia, just as the cars go, crossing via the pelican crossing on Riga Fereou Street. On our right, we will find the National Library.

The National Library (Vallianeion)

Completed in 1902, this glorious neoclassical monument to the written word once housed over 2 million books and manuscripts (including hand-written renditions of works by Aristotle and Plato). The collection now has a new state of the art home at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Centre but the Vallianeion building still serves the public as a reading room.

- The building is accessible but not open to the public.
- The National Library Collection has been transferred to the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Centre, a fully accessible space for wheelchair users.

We continue our stroll from the pelican crossing on the Great Walk, as we cross Ippokratous Street vertically. When we arrive at Charilaou Trikoupi Street, we will carefully get onto the pavement via the ramp, if we want to visit the next point of interest (the National Theatre). Otherwise, we will remain on the Great Walk.



National Theatre - Rex

Athens' first New York-style skyscraper, this massive building originally housed a cinema, theatre and ballroom, before becoming one of the National Theatre's main stages. Its striking façade and Art Deco elements have earned the Rex a place as one of Athens' most cherished architectural landmarks.

Some of the stages are not accessible. We recommend that you contact the venue before purchasing tickets.

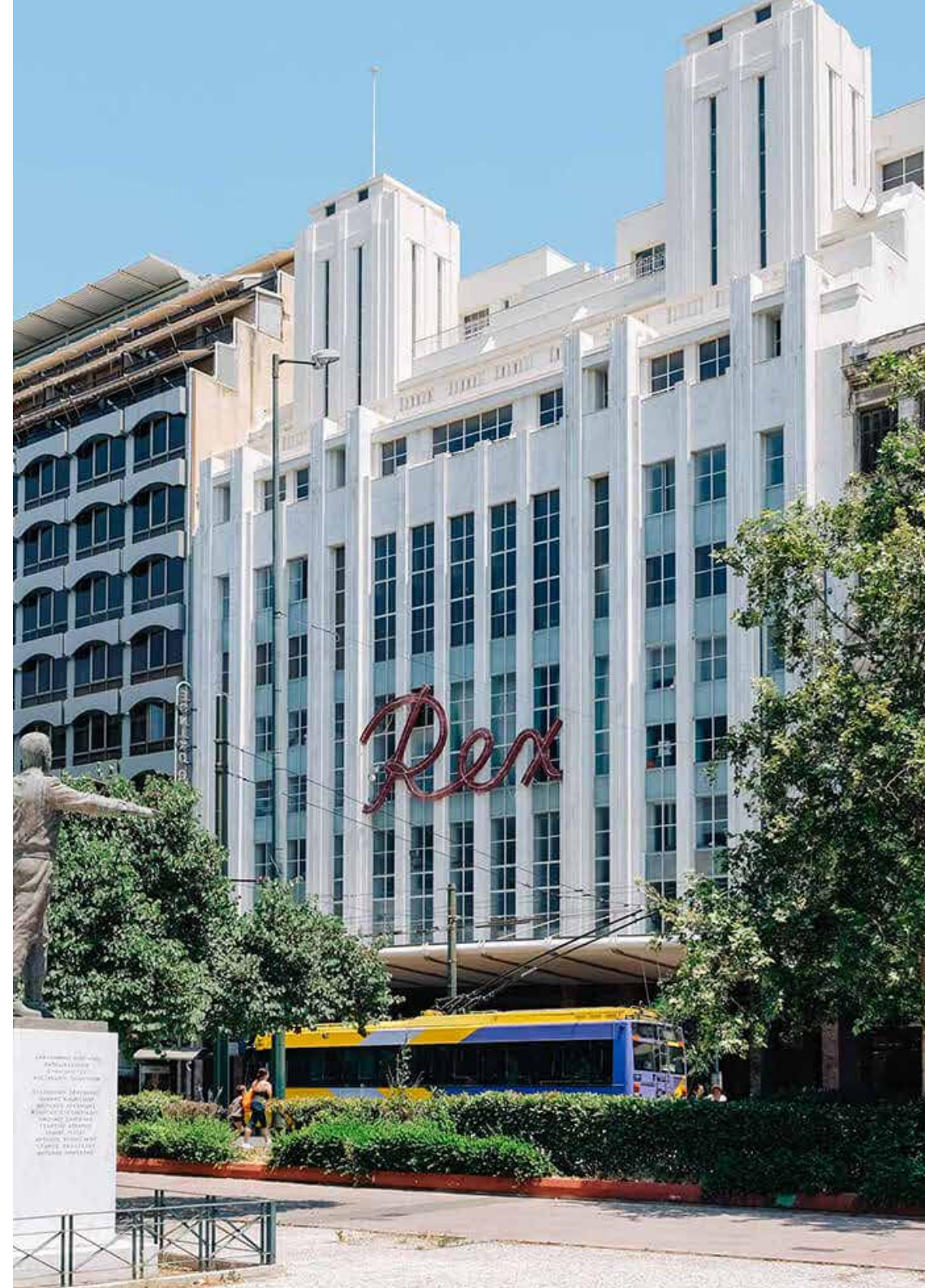
We continue our itinerary from the Great Walk until the next perpendicular street, Emmanouil Benaki Street. This is where we will use the ramp to get onto the pavement, since the Great Walk follows different specifications from now on, and it is possible that we might be bothered by illegally parked cars and the lack of ramp at its end.

We continue our stroll on the right pavement of Panepistimiou Street and we cross the Themistokleous pedestrian street. At the next junction with 28 Oktovriou Street, we will turn right heading towards the Archaeological Museum.

At this point we encounter Omonia Square and the metro station in front of us, which we can use to depart if we do not wish to proceed with the itinerary. Additionally, we can begin from this point if our only goal is to visit the Archaeological Museum and/or the National Technical University of Athens.

At the junction of Panepistimiou Street and 28 Oktovriou Street we turn right. There is no Great Walk anymore, so we move onto the pavement which features a ramp at every crossroad. The ramps are relatively well constructed for independent use.

After quite some metres, we will meet Stournari Street with its marble inscription. On our right, the famous neighbourhood of Exarchia now begins.



Exarchia

Wedged between exclusive Kolonaki and residential Kypseli, gritty Exarchia is a bohemian enclave where students, intellectuals, artists and long-standing residents march to their own counter-cultural beat.

- Exarchia is a quite uphill district, with narrow streets and hard-to-find parking.
- The newest pavements have ramps, but the older ones are not accessible and sometimes they are quite narrow.
- There are many spots (cafeterias, restaurants, bars) that do not follow the accessibility standards, but you will be able to find some that feature outdoor seating.

Back on our itinerary, on the junction of Stournari Street and 28 Oktovriou Street, we will arrive at the historical building of the National Technical University of Athens (Polytechnio).





National Technical University of Athens

This mid-19th century gem is also a potent national symbol known locally as the Polytechnio. It has shaped politics and society ever since the 1973 student uprising that precipitated the collapse of Greece's military dictatorship. Every November 17, Greeks flock to lay red carnations at the official commemoration ceremony here "in honour of the victims".

- There is no accessibility information.
- The National Technical University of Athens continues to operate as an educational institution and does not encourage touristic visits, apart from the monument of the student uprising which is located in the yard.

Continuing our way along 28 Oktovriou, on the same pavement, we will come to the National Archaeological Museum. There is a ramp on the pavement which leads us to the forecourt of the museum.

National Archaeological Museum

One of the greatest museums in the world with the richest collection of Greek artefacts from neolithic to classical times, spread out over some 8,000 square metres of exhibition space. You may need more than one visit to digest this extraordinary panorama of Greek civilisation and achievement.

- There are stairs to enter the museum. When we reach the first steps, we will turn left to find the ramp path which will lead us closer to the entrance.
- As soon as we reach the main entrance and the next steps, we will see an accessibility sign which directs us towards the left of the museum.
- This sign leads us to the following path. At its end, there is a door on the right, leading to the ramp of the accessible entrance of the Museum. The ramp is 40 metres long, non-slippery, with a double railing and 3 landings.
- This entrance is passable by the side street of the museum as well, Vasileos Irakliou Street. It features the same, slightly upward inclination.

Tickets: Disabled people upon presentation of their ID card or passport and Disability Certificate are admitted free of charge. In case of 80% disability or more, one escort is also entitled to free entrance. This site is included in the combined 3-day ticket valid for the National Archaeological Museum, the Epigraphic Museum, the Numismatic Museum and the Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens.

Accessibility as stated in their site:

- There is a separate entrance for wheelchair users on the side of Vas. Irakliou Street, accessed either by a ramp from the main view of the Museum or directly from the pavement of Vas. Irakliou (see map plan).
- Also, at the basement level there is a WC for disabled visitors with all the appropriate infrastructure.
- There are lifts for access to the underground level and the first floor.
- A wheelchair is also available in the museum's information desk.



To conclude the itinerary, we will return to the junction of 28 Oktovriou Street and Panepistimiou Street via the same route, at the end point of the Great Walk.

At this corner we will cross 28 Oktovriou Street from the pedestrian crossing. A few metres later, we will find the pelican crossing to turn left and cross Panepistimiou Street, to reach the heart of Omonia Square.

The ramps at these pelican crossings are fordable.

Omonia Square

Emblematic Omonia Square is not just a traffic thoroughfare but a social one too: it's the nostalgic symbol of the modern city, where migrants from the provinces arrived, and football fans celebrate their team's championship victory. This popular meet-up point has had many makeovers over the decades and its last redesign was May 2020 when its iconic fountain was restored.

To leave the square, we once again cross via the pelican crossing of Panepistimiou. On our left we have the elevator of the Omonia metro station, which belongs to the lines red (line 2 "Anthoupoli - Elliniko") and green (line 1 "Pireas - Kifisia"). This specific station has more than one elevator.

Omonia Metro Station

Lines 1&2

- The Omonia metro station has many exits with elevators. For this specific itinerary we use the Panepistimiou exit and its elevator.
- Wheelchair boarding is possible from the first or last car of the train on the red line 2 and from the first door of the first car on the green line 1.
- It is fully accessible.
- It is equipped with an adapted toilet, which can be opened upon request.

