



## **Accessible Guide:** Origins of Modern Athens

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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.

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 of the city 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.
- The second part of the itinerary features tactile paving with colour contrast on a wide pavement.
- In the area of the National Archaeological Museum, the tactile paving no longer uses colour contrast and is made of the same material and colour as the rest of the floor.
- The area is very well illuminated at night.
- At each point of interest, accessibility is indicated according to the information available on each corresponding website.
- The itinerary commences from Panepistimio metro station (line 2-red, “Anthoupoli - Elliniko”) and ends at Omonia metro station, which belongs to line 1 (green line, “Piraeus - Kifissia”).
- All of the above stations provide adapted WCs—open upon request—and elevators with voice output.
- The Omonia metro station provides access to its interior via tactile paving.







Points of Interests

### **Panepistimio Metro Station**

Lines 2

We exit from the “Akadimia” exit of the “Panepistimio” metro station using the stairs. We turn right and get off the pavement.

We now step onto the protected area for the pedestrians that forms part of the “Great Athens Walk”. We turn right once again, so that we move in parallel with the street and in the same direction as the cars, having the pavement on our right.

On our right, while we remain on the pavement, we have 3 emblematic edifices of the city centre, appearing from right to left: the Academy of Athens, the central building of the National Kapodistrian University of Athens and the National Library.

### **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 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.

We continue straight ahead, on Panepistimiou Street (which is actually an avenue, also called Eleftheriou Venizelou), bypassing metal benches on our right every once in a while. On our left, there is a continuous fencing with jardinières as a form of demarcation, dividing the pedestrian area from the street.

In front of us, we find Riga Fereou Street, which we vertically cross. We continue straight, using the curbside of the right pavement to guide ourselves. On the pavement is the historical building of 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.

This particular building is accessible but not open to the general public. The base of the National Library has been transferred to Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Centre, a fully accessible space, with tactile pavings, elevators with voice output, audiobooks library, braille printers and reading magnifiers.

In front of us, is Ippokratous Street which we will vertically cross. We continue straight, still using the curbside of the right pavement for orientation.

In front of us we now find and vertically cross Charilaou Trikoupi Street. We continue straight, with the assistance of the curbside. A little bit further down the road, on our right, the entrance of the National Theatre - Rex can be located on the pavement (48 Panepistimiou Street).





## 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.

Continuing straight ahead, we find Emmanouil Benaki Street in front of us and we vertically cross it. We proceed straight, still using the curbside of the right pavement for orientation.

While we continue straight, we bypass the end of the Themistokleous pedestrian street on our right. In a few metres, the Great Walk ends, so we step upon the right pavement of Panepistimiou Street before finding the next perpendicular street in front of us.

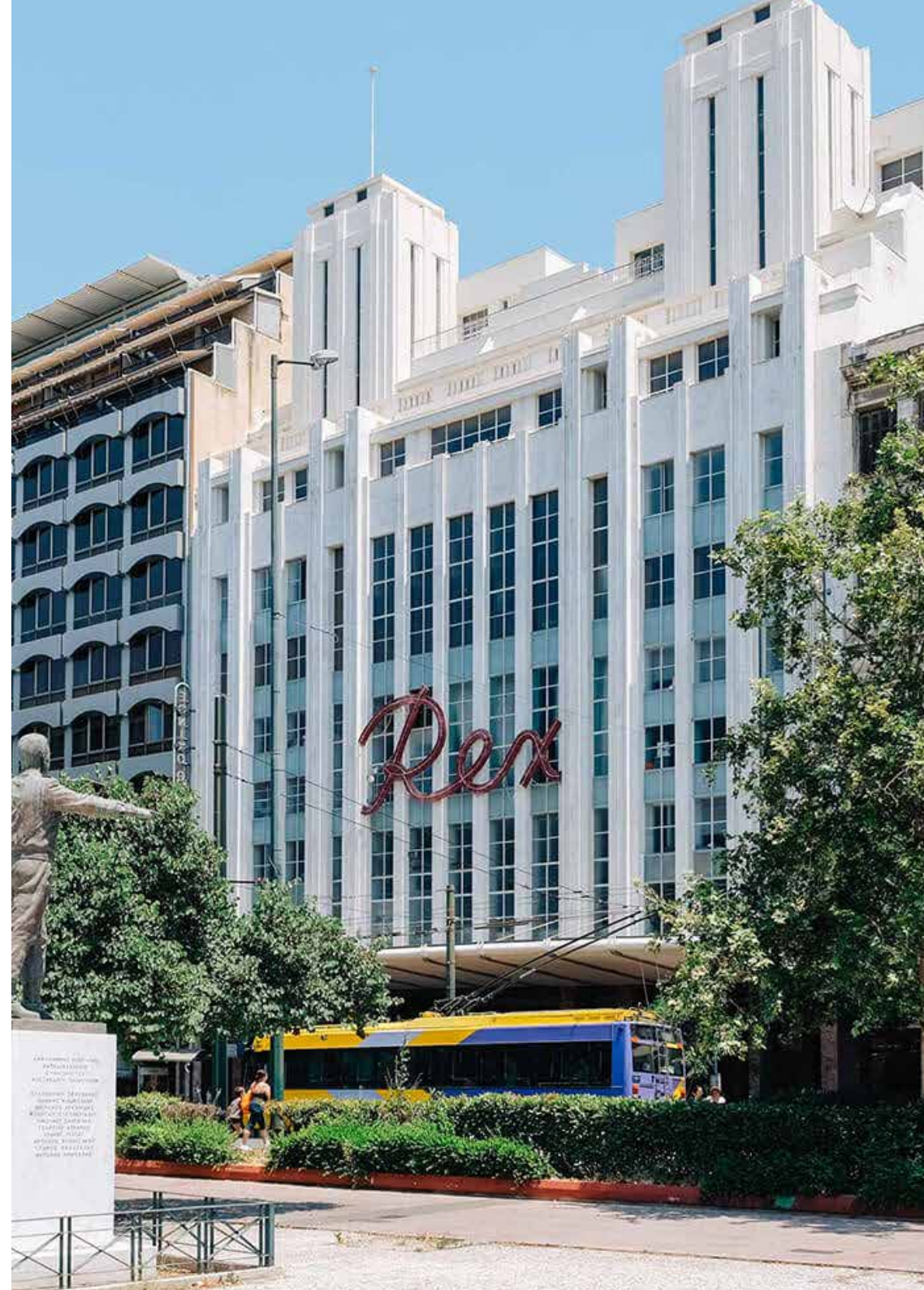
We locate the wall on the interior side of the pavement, position it on our right hand and turn right onto Patission Street (which is actually an avenue, also called 28 Oktovriou Street). On 28 Oktovriou Street, we locate and follow the tactile paving. We remain on the right pavement of the street. It is a wide pavement that ensures comfortable movement.

On the junction of the tactile paving, with an option to the right towards the Gladstonos pedestrian street, we continue straight on Patission Street.

As we continue, we find in front of us Veranzerou Street and we vertically cross it. If we follow Veranzerou Street to the right, it leads us to Kaniggos Square. On our left, while remaining on Veranzerou Street, number 31, we can find the head office of the Panhellenic Association of the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind.

Walking on Patission Street, we find Chalkokondili Street in front of us and we vertically cross it. Straight ahead, Kapodistriou Street is in front of us and we vertically cross it. Proceeding straight, we find and vertically cross Solomou Street.

Straight ahead we find the perpendicular Stournari Street. If we turn right, it will lead us to Exarchia Square, which has many places for coffee, food and entertainment.





## 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.
- Very few pavements feature tactile pavings and sometimes these are quite narrow.

Back to our itinerary, we vertically cross Stournari Street and we keep straight on Patission Street. Extending along our right, we now have the facilities of the National Technical University of Athens and the monument in honour of the victims of the Athens Polytechnic uprising.







## **National Technical University of Athens**

This mid-19th century gem is also a potent national symbol known locally as 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".

- The National Technical University of Athens continues to function as an educational institution and therefore, does not offer touristic visits, apart from the monument of the student uprising which is located in the yard.

Continuing straight, we bypass Tositsa Street on our right, which is a street of light traffic.

We now have the fencing wall of the National Archaeological Museum on our right.

We follow the tactile paving straight ahead, until we meet a junction with the option to continue straight or turn to the right. We take the right branch and we now move in the direction of the National Archaeological Museum.

The tactile paving no longer has colour contrast.

Continuing straight, we find a junction on the tactile paving with the option to continue straight or turn to the right. If we continue straight, we will reach the cafeteria of the museum in front of us. We turn to the right following the tactile paving towards the museum.

At some point, the tactile paving is interrupted by 7 steps which we climb. We find the tactile paving once again and we follow it until the next steps. There is a handrail on our left which we use for support, as we step up 15 more steps. We leave the wall on our left and follow it as it goes. It leads us to the main entrance of the National Archaeological 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.

**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 of the museum according to their website:

- There are organized educational programs and services for groups of people with total or partial loss of vision (tactile thematic tours and workshops), with deafness and special educational needs, implemented by archaeologists of the National Archaeological Museum, depending on the demand of the interested persons in the context of special anniversaries.
- People with total or partial loss of vision can request a list of 20 exhibits of the Sculpture Collection that can be accessed via museum information.



After our visit to the museum, we retrace the itinerary backwards, until we reach the junction of the two avenues, Patission and Panepistimiou. At this point we locate the pedestrian crossing and we turn right, crossing Patission Ave. and proceeding on the opposite pavement of Patission. We leave the buildings on the interior side of the pavement on our right and we continue straight, being on the pavement of Panepistimiou Ave. now, having the street on our left.

We continue straight and we seek out the tactile paving. We follow it towards the right to reach the Panepistimiou entrance of the Omonia metro station of lines 1 and 2.



## 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 latest redesign was May 2020 when its iconic fountain was restored.

## Omonia Metro Station

Lines 1&2

- Omonia metro station has many exits with elevators. For this specific itinerary we use the Panepistimiou exit and its elevator.
- Line 1 provides tactile pavings in its interior.
- It is fully accessible and features elevators with voice output.
- It is equipped with an adapted toilet, which can be opened upon request.

