



Accessible Guide: National Garden of Athens and Surrounding Highlights

Former royal estate, the National Garden, is not just a beloved oasis for Athenians. It's encircled by many must-see city treasures, both ancient and modern.

This itinerary introduces you to a more contemporary slice of Athens. We'll begin from the Evangelismos metro station and proceed along one of Athens' most cultured avenues, passing the War Museum and shortly afterwards, the Byzantine and Christian Museum. This landmark-rich district is also home to Aristotle's Lyceum—the archaeological site of the fabled philosopher's academy.

As we near the heartland of our route, the National Garden, we will admire two important national edifices, the Maximos Mansion (seat of the Greek Prime Minister) and Presidential Mansion. Walking down Irodou Attikou Street, we can snatch some time for a stroll in the National Garden, enjoying a cool and peaceful reprieve from the spirited city centre. At the end of this prominent street, awaits the Panathenaic Stadium, also known as Kallimarmaro—meaning "beautiful marble" in Greek. This stadium was the site of the first modern Olympic Games in 1896.

General Accessibility

Returning to the National Garden to visit Zappeion, we can shift course to visit the archaeological highlight of the Olympieion and the imposing Temple of Olympian Zeus with its soaring columns, boldly etched against the urban skyline. Here, we will also gaze upon Emperor Hadrian's Arch.

Completing our itinerary, let's linger for a while in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Presidential Guard (Evzones) who stand silent sentinel outside the Hellenic Parliament. The hourly changing of the guards is one of the most photographed sights in Athens, after the Acropolis. The Parliament is now housed in the former palace of King Otto (which is why most of the streets in our itinerary are named after kings and queens).

This famous landmark is directly opposite Syntagma Square and the Syntagma metro station, from which we can depart.



- The itinerary has been designed to be predominantly downward. It is suggested that you do not attempt it from the opposite direction, since it is an ascent. The itinerary traverses around 3,5 km, without including the potential stroll in the National Garden.
- The first part of the itinerary is done via medium sized pavements with ramps. At some point there are no ramps, so we will navigate streets of light traffic. For the second part of the itinerary, we will be in a park with asphalt. If we choose to take a walk in the National Garden, we will meet soil, grass and fine gravel.
- Even though there are shorter ways to reach some points of interest, often there are no functional ramps. The suggested itinerary is step free.
- The lighting at night is sufficient to navigate.
- At each point of interest, the accessibility is indicated according to the information available on their website (without our verification).
- The itinerary starts from Evangelismos metro station (line 3, "Airport - Nikaia"). It ends at Syntagma metro station (also line 3, and line 2, "Anthoupoli-Elliniko"). All of the above stations provide adapted WCs, elevators and full access for a wheelchair. Boarding for wheelchairs is via the first and the last carriages, where there is no gap.
- If you are moving around by car, it is recommended to park in Aegli Zappeion where there are special disabled parking spots. From there, you can circle this huge block that includes most of the points of interest without using the metro, as demonstrated in the image below.

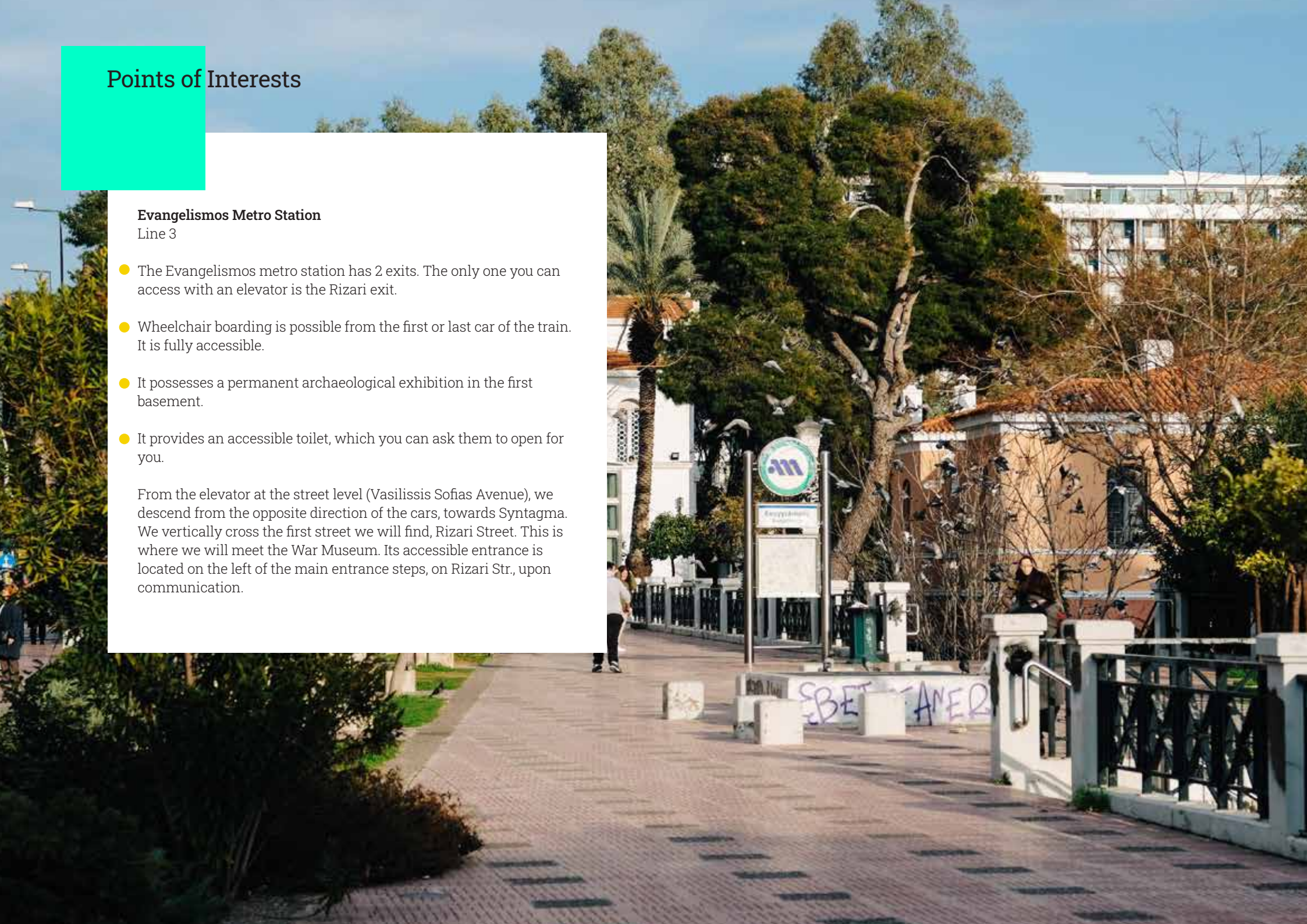
Points of Interests

Evangelismos Metro Station

Line 3

- The Evangelismos metro station has 2 exits. The only one you can access with an elevator is the Rizari exit.
- Wheelchair boarding is possible from the first or last car of the train. It is fully accessible.
- It possesses a permanent archaeological exhibition in the first basement.
- It provides an accessible toilet, which you can ask them to open for you.

From the elevator at the street level (Vasilissis Sofias Avenue), we descend from the opposite direction of the cars, towards Syntagma. We vertically cross the first street we will find, Rizari Street. This is where we will meet the War Museum. Its accessible entrance is located on the left of the main entrance steps, on Rizari Str., upon communication.



The War Museum

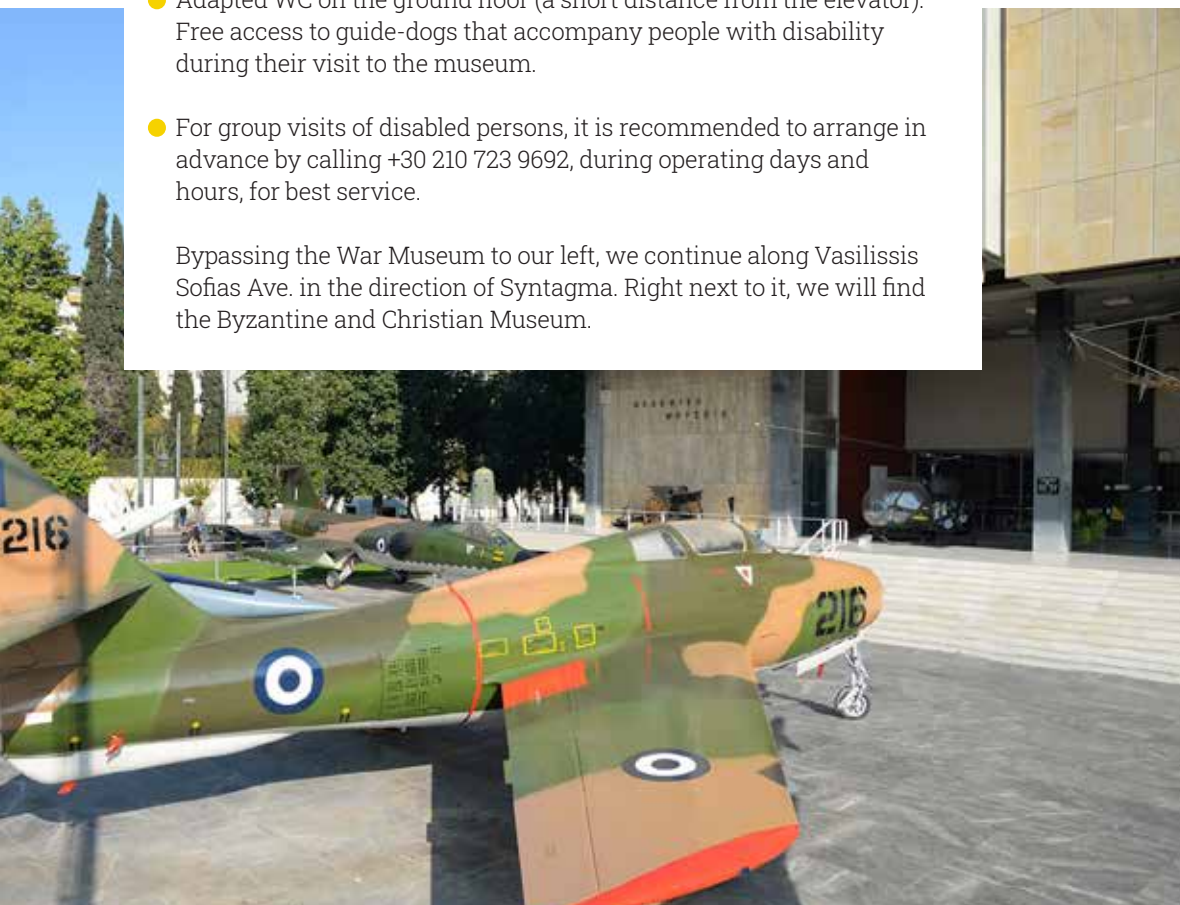
From mounted muskets, uniforms, and swords, to replica military aircraft, Greece's biggest museum of military history has interesting artefacts to see both inside and outside its imposing walls. The War Museum opened in 1974 as a 'monument to Greek valour and military prowess'.

Tickets: General admission €6. Persons with disability and their escorts are entitled to free entrance.

Accessibility of the museum according to their website:

- Special ramps at the foyer of the Museum.
- Elevators on every level.
- Adapted WC on the ground floor (a short distance from the elevator). Free access to guide-dogs that accompany people with disability during their visit to the museum.
- For group visits of disabled persons, it is recommended to arrange in advance by calling +30 210 723 9692, during operating days and hours, for best service.

Bypassing the War Museum to our left, we continue along Vasilissis Sofias Ave. in the direction of Syntagma. Right next to it, we will find the Byzantine and Christian Museum.



The Byzantine and Christian Museum

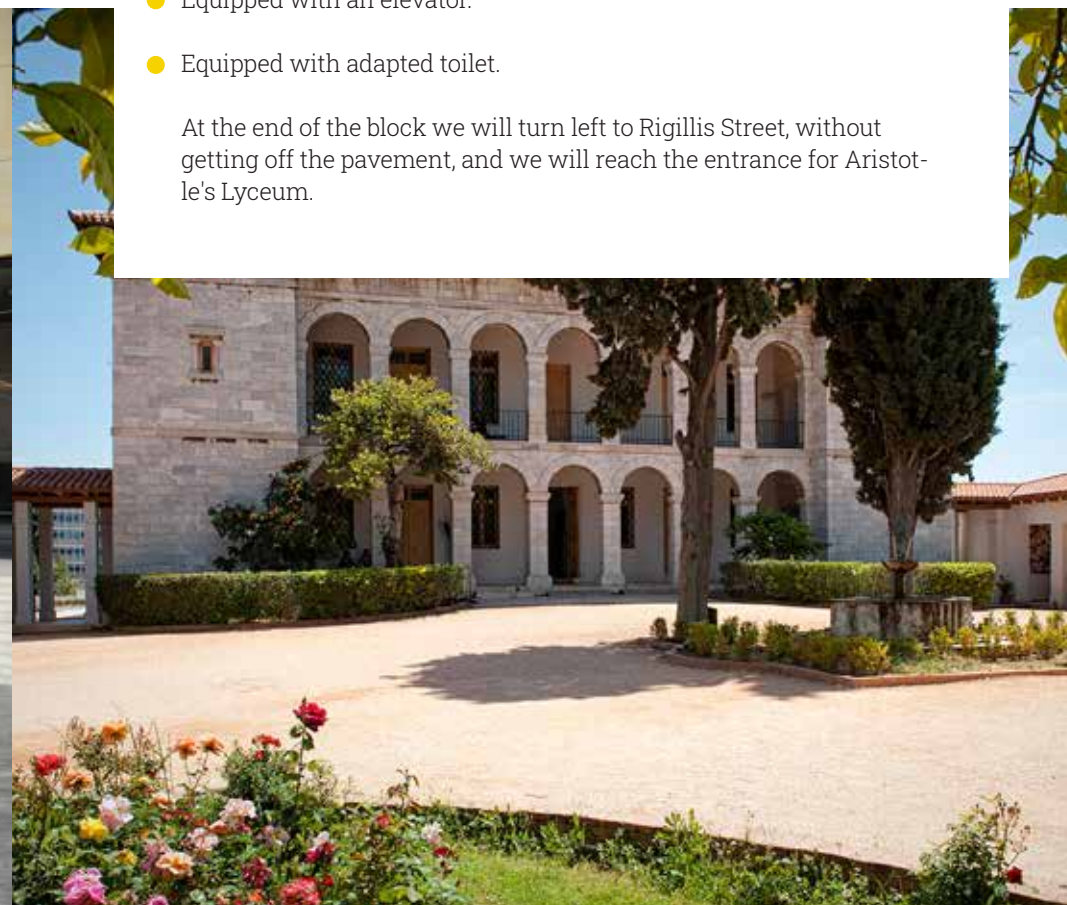
Constructed in 1848, in the style of a Florentine palace, this captivating trove of more than 25,000 religious art and artefacts from the Byzantium also houses an enchanting "secret" garden.

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:

- It is accessible to wheelchairs via the ramps provided.
- Equipped with an elevator.
- Equipped with adapted toilet.

At the end of the block we will turn left to Rigillis Street, without getting off the pavement, and we will reach the entrance for Aristotle's Lyceum.



Aristotle's Lyceum

Along with Plato's Academy, Aristotle's Lyceum is one of the oldest gymnasia (or philosophy schools) in Athens. Founded around 330 BC, it was only discovered in recent years, during the aborted construction of the Goulandris Contemporary Art Museum on that site. Aristotle taught here over a period of about twelve years, the most productive period of his life.

Tickets: Disabled people upon presentation of their ID card or passport and Disability Certificate are admitted free of charge. In case of 67% disability or more, one escort also has free entrance. This site is included in the combined 5-day ticket of Acropolis & Slopes, Ancient Agora, Roman Agora, Hadrian's Library, Olympieion, Kerameikos, Aristotle's School with a cost of €30.

Accessibility of the site according to their website:

- There is access for disabled people.
- The Archaeological Site of Lykeion is wheelchair accessible through the main entrance, at P. Mela square (assistance by a companion is recommended)..

We remain on the pavement and as soon as we pass the Military Officers' Club in Sarogleio Mansion, we turn left onto Rigillis Street.

We will descend Rigillis Street and in approximately 200 metres we will find the Athens Conservatoire on our left. We will use the ramp for the cars at its entrance to access the pavement. We will use the street—that has relatively light traffic—with caution, until the Presidential Mansion.

We continue to descend Rigillis Street until the junction with Vasileos Georgiou B Street. There we will turn left. In about 150 metres, after bypassing Meleagrou Street, we can get onto the left pavement from the parking entrance of the Presidential Mansion and the gatehouse.

While the Presidential Mansion is on this side of Vasileos Georgiou B Street, the Maximos Mansion is located on the opposite side of the street.



Maximos Mansion

Once a garden for the royal palace, this modestly-sized neoclassical abode has been the official seat of the Prime Minister of Greece since 1982. It houses the offices of the Head of the Greek Government, but it is not currently the residence of the Prime Minister.

- It is not open to the general public.

At the junction of Vasileos Georgiou B Street and Irodou Attikou Street we turn left.

The Presidential Mansion

This pleasingly symmetrical, three-storey mansion is the official residence of the President of the Hellenic Republic—and yet another fine example of the neoclassical splendour that German-born architect Ernst Ziller stamped all over Athens in his bid to elevate the newly-independent Greek state. Previously, the property was the Royal Palace, until the abolition of the monarchy in 1973.

- It is not open to the general public.
- On the pavement, we will find the Evzone guard standing still in front of the gatehouses, symbolically guarding the Presidential Mansion. Every one hour the change of the shift takes place and the two Evzones, widely known as tsoliades, leave the spot with coordinated moves.

At the spot, there is a ramp which we use to cross the street and reach Irodou Attikou Street. There, we will be able to locate one of the accessible entrances to the National Garden, if we want to visit it now.



We continue the descent from the right pavement of Irodou Attikou Street. In 200 metres, we find on our right an entrance to the Zappeion Megaron, paved with asphalt. From this point, after our visit to the Panathenaic Stadium, we will enter the park that leads to Zappeion and the National Garden to continue our itinerary. We meet 2 adapted toilets in distinct prefabs. The functional ones are those in purple.

We now have an uninterrupted view of the Panathenaic Stadium, or Kallimarmaro, meaning "beautiful marble" in Greek. In this area, there are pedestrian crossings with modern traffic lights that allow unimpeded movement to everyone, so we can safely cross the street to reach the stadium.

The Panathenaic Stadium

This remarkable all-marble stadium was first laid in 330 BC as a venue for ancient athletics and gladiatorial clashes. It was reworked to host the first modern Olympic Games in 1896 and today, it's the finishing line for the world-famous Athens Marathon.

The stadium is located in the background of an enormous square, which has 2 steps with portable steel ramps in the middle. At the entrance, there are 2 more steps with a portable steel ramp. We suggest that you approach the stadium from the left or the right side, where there are no steps, to avoid the ramps. At the sides, the square is flat and there are also gates to enter the stadium from the same level.

Tickets: General Admission ticket €5. Free admission for disabled visitors and persons accompanying them.

Accessibility:

- Because of the marble, the temperature in the Stadium during summer can be very high. The best hours to visit the Stadium during summer months are in the morning and late afternoon, when temperatures are milder.
- On warm days, it is suggested that you bring along a bottle of water and sun protection.
- The Panathenaic Stadium provides access for disabled visitors. There are accessible toilets on the square, on the right side, for a fee.

We return from the same route to reach the junction of Petrou Aravantinou Street and Irodou Attikou Street. From this point we will enter the park.

Attention: On the map you will note some itineraries for various points of interest that appear shorter, but unfortunately these routes are not fordable due to lack of functional ramps.

This specific entrance to the park is paved with asphalt. Entering and continuing a little further on, we will encounter the Aegli open air cinema on our left. Disabled people can freely park their vehicles in front of it. Next to the cinema, Aegli restaurant is accessible and provides adapted toilets for use.

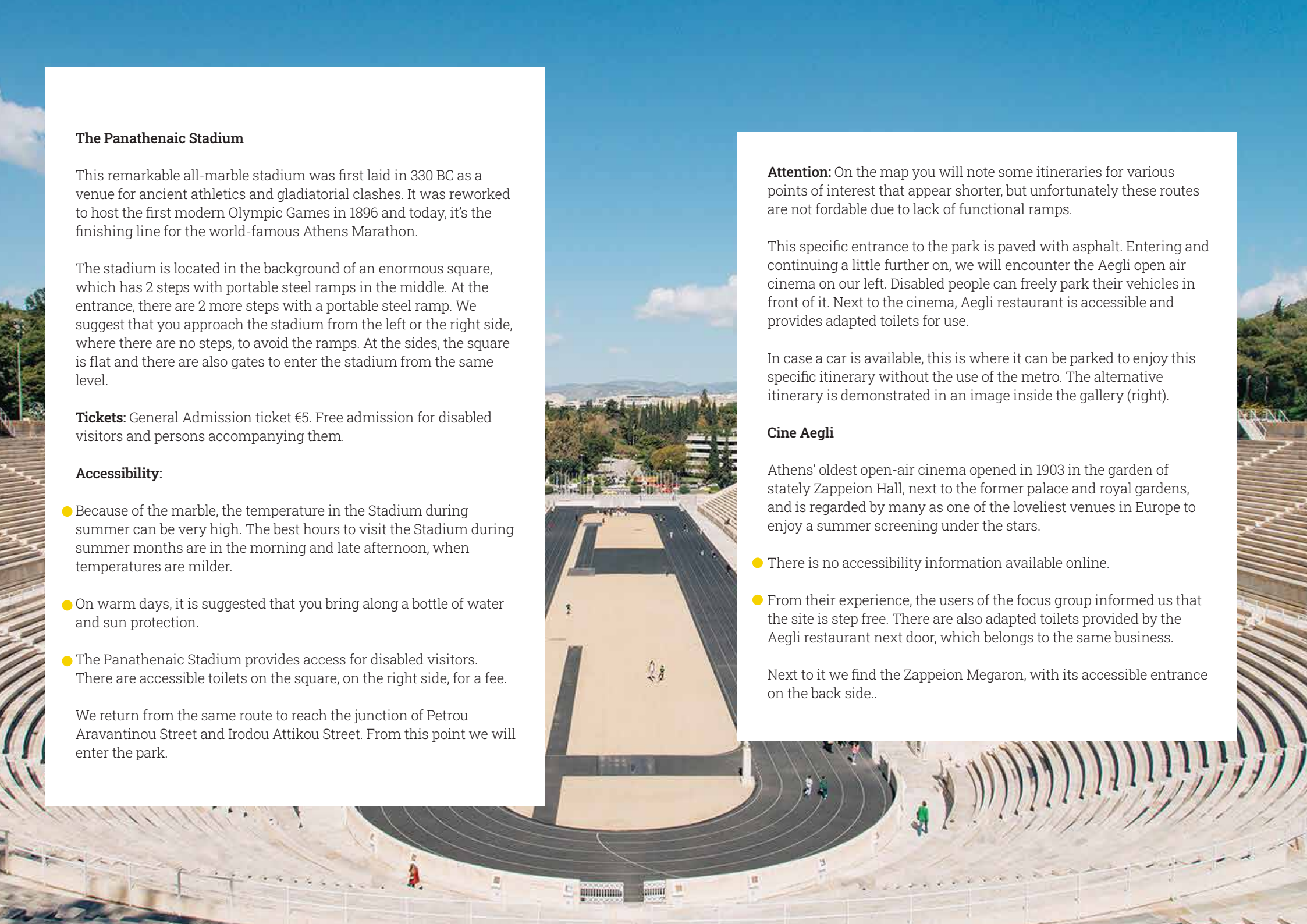
In case a car is available, this is where it can be parked to enjoy this specific itinerary without the use of the metro. The alternative itinerary is demonstrated in an image inside the gallery (right).

Cine Aegli

Athens' oldest open-air cinema opened in 1903 in the garden of stately Zappeion Hall, next to the former palace and royal gardens, and is regarded by many as one of the loveliest venues in Europe to enjoy a summer screening under the stars.

- There is no accessibility information available online.
- From their experience, the users of the focus group informed us that the site is step free. There are also adapted toilets provided by the Aegli restaurant next door, which belongs to the same business.

Next to it we find the Zappeion Megaron, with its accessible entrance on the back side..



Zappeion Megaron

This stately conference and events venue next to the National Garden was originally built in 1888 for the first modern Olympic Games and is named for its benefactor, the great Greek philanthropist Evangelos Zappas.

Accessibility:

- Virtual Tour.
- Only open when hosting events and conferences.
- Wheelchair Accessible.
- Adapted toilet.
- For wheelchair users, the entrance is at the rear.

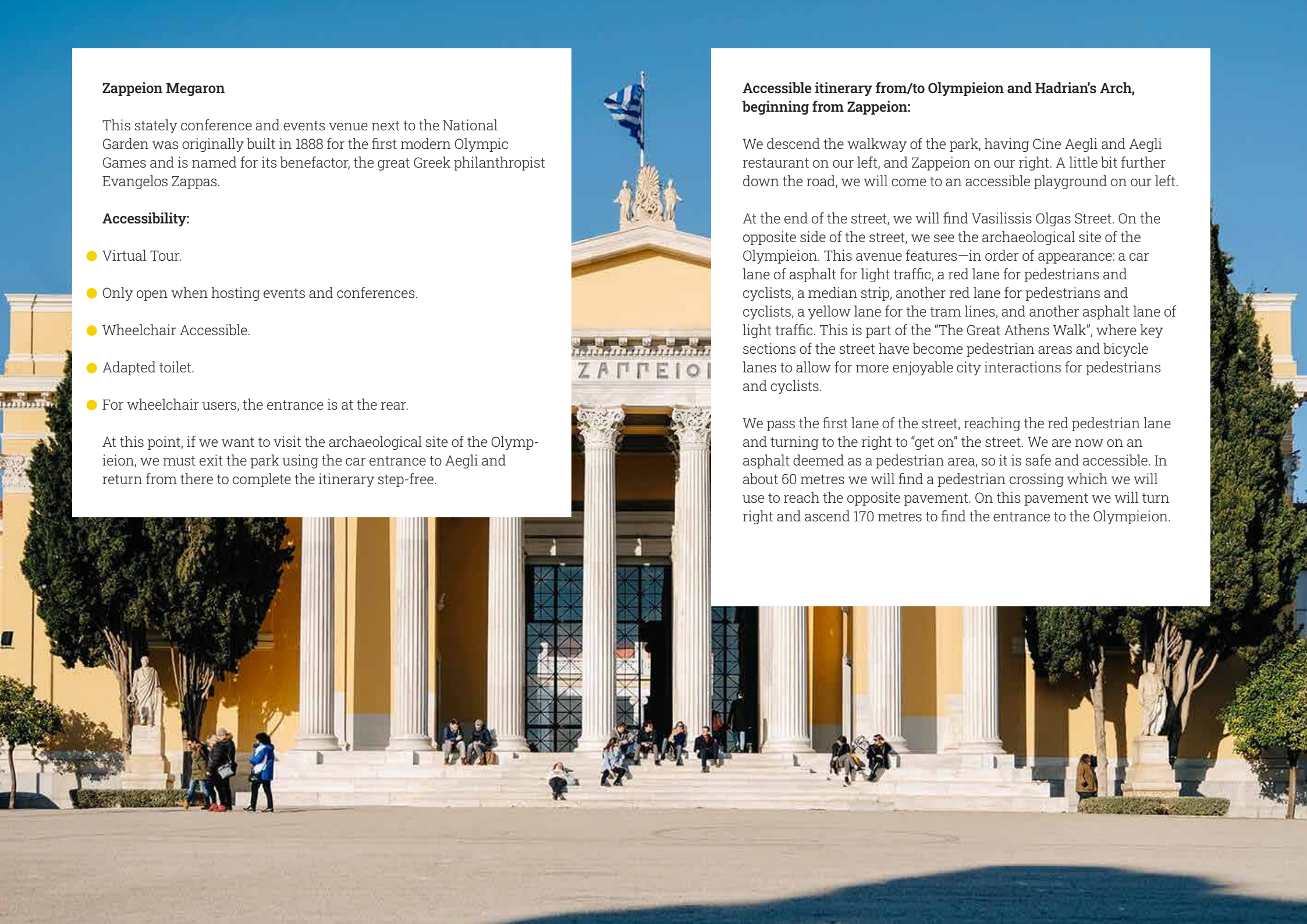
At this point, if we want to visit the archaeological site of the Olympieion, we must exit the park using the car entrance to Aegli and return from there to complete the itinerary step-free.

Accessible itinerary from/to Olympieion and Hadrian's Arch, beginning from Zappeion:

We descend the walkway of the park, having Cine Aegli and Aegli restaurant on our left, and Zappeion on our right. A little bit further down the road, we will come to an accessible playground on our left.

At the end of the street, we will find Vasilissis Olgas Street. On the opposite side of the street, we see the archaeological site of the Olympieion. This avenue features—in order of appearance: a car lane of asphalt for light traffic, a red lane for pedestrians and cyclists, a median strip, another red lane for pedestrians and cyclists, a yellow lane for the tram lines, and another asphalt lane of light traffic. This is part of the “The Great Athens Walk”, where key sections of the street have become pedestrian areas and bicycle lanes to allow for more enjoyable city interactions for pedestrians and cyclists.

We pass the first lane of the street, reaching the red pedestrian lane and turning to the right to “get on” the street. We are now on an asphalt deemed as a pedestrian area, so it is safe and accessible. In about 60 metres we will find a pedestrian crossing which we will use to reach the opposite pavement. On this pavement we will turn right and ascend 170 metres to find the entrance to the Olympieion.



Olympieion / Temple of Olympian Zeus

The Temple of Olympian Zeus was once a massive monument devoted to Zeus, bang in the centre of Athens. Construction spanned over seven centuries as successive rulers ensured it was big enough to reflect the mighty god's stature. Almost 100 metres long and nearly 50 metres wide, the Olympeion was ultimately the largest ancient temple on the Greek mainland—but by the 15th century, only 20 columns remained standing. Today, there are 15.

Tickets: Disabled people upon presentation of their ID card or passport and Disability Certificate are admitted free of charge. In case of 67% disability or more, one escort also has free entrance. This site is included in the combined 5-day ticket of Acropolis & Slopes, Ancient Agora, Roman Agora, Hadrian's Library, Olympieion, Kerameikos, Aristotle's School with a cost of €30.

Accessibility of the site according to the website:

- The archaeological site is accessible to people with physical disabilities.
- Accessible toilets are available.
- The Archaeological Site of Olympieio is wheelchair accessible at its largest part through the main entrance, Vasilissis Olgas Av. (assistance by a companion is recommended).

From the entrance of the Olympieion, if we turn left and continue ascending for 200 metres more on the pavement, at the junction with Vasilissis Amalias Avenue, the pavement becomes quite downhill and the slabs will give way to soil. This is Hadrian's Arch.

Hadrian's Arch

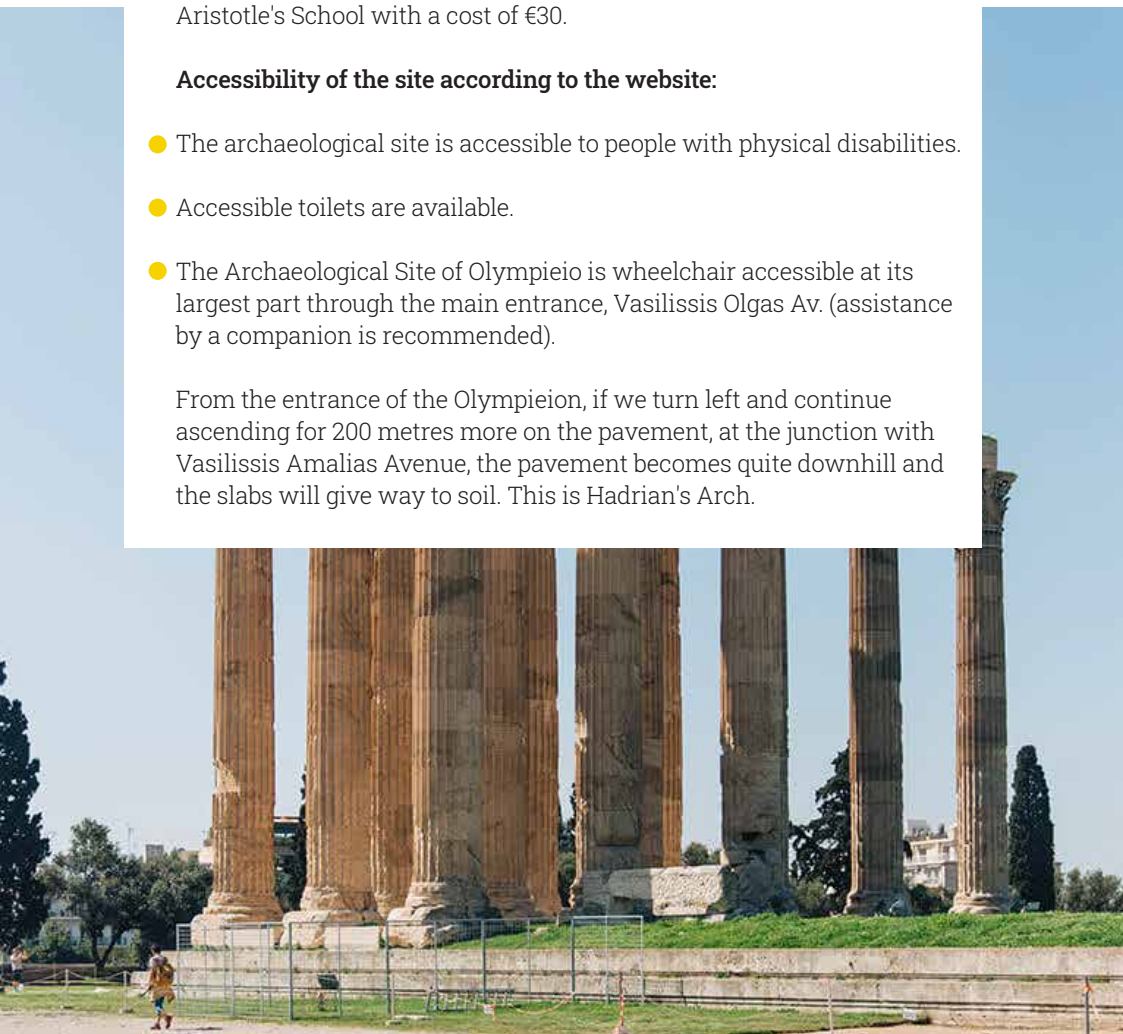
Eighteen metres tall and sculpted from solid marble, Hadrian's Arch (built c.131-134 AD by the Emperor Hadrian) is the monumental gateway to two eras: step back, or east, into Greek antiquity and forward, or west, towards Roman Athens.

Accessibility:

- The arch is unguarded.
- The site has soil, fine gravel and grass.

Return: Similarly, we return to Zappeion to continue the rest of the itinerary step-free. The shortest way is to follow Vasilissis Amalias Avenue from the right pavement following the direction of the cars, to find the main entrance of the park and the Hellenic Parliament. In this case, we must know that at some point there is no ramp and we will have to climb the step of the pavement that has been marked on the map (see gallery images.)

Our goal is to reach the main entrance of the National Garden, located on Vasilissis Amalias Ave.



National Garden

A national treasure fit for a Queen, this former royal garden was created in the mid-1800s and has been a focal point of Athenian life ever since it was declared a public space in 1927. You'll find an impressive trove of plant and bird species in this 158,000-square-metre park, along with wrought-iron gazebos, turtle ponds and shady secluded nooks, perfect for picnics and lovebirds.

Accessibility:

- The main entrance has no step.
- The ground is paved with stones and after that there is soil with fine gravel.
- There are some spots with steps in the garden, but also step-free paths.
- It closes its gates at sunset.

Exiting from the main entrance of the National Garden, on Vasilissis Amalias Avenue, we turn right to reach the Hellenic Parliament.

As we pass the parking entrance, we will find, next to a marble column with a copper shield, the accessible entrance to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.



The Hellenic Parliament / The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

The Hellenic Parliament and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier are guarded by the Evzones, aka tsoliades—and together, they form one of the city's most-photographed spectacles. Excerpts from the funeral oration of Pericles are chiselled into the marble as a poignant reminder of the cost of war, while the The Presidential Guard, or Evzones, resplendent in traditional 19th-century male costume, symbolise the Greek military (their distinctive kilts have 400 pleats, one for each year of Ottoman rule).

- The Parliament is not open to the general public.
- The change of the guards' shift takes place every one hour on the square.

To complete the itinerary, we will depart from Syntagma metro station. Unfortunately, the elevator is located on Syntagma Square. To use it, we must cross Vasilissis Amalias Ave. via the pedestrian crossing which is next to the parking of the Parliament.

This is where we will find Othonos Street and we will remain on its right pavement, as we descend. At the bottom part of the pavement, we will make a 180° turn, enter the square and descend it to reach the elevator of the metro station.





Syntagma Metro Station

Lines 2&3

- Syntagma metro station has many exits, but the only one you can access with an elevator is the Syntagma Square exit.
- It connects the blue line (line 3, "Airport-Nikaia") with the red line (line 2, "Anthoupoli-Elliniko").
- Wheelchair boarding is possible from the first or last car of the train.
- It is fully accessible.
- It possesses a permanent archaeological exhibition in the first basement.
- It provides an accessible toilet, which you can ask them to open for you.