



Insider's Guide to Wellness in Athens

Here's everything you need to know to keep up your healthy lifestyle in the Greek capital.

Athens is a fast-paced city, but you'll find plenty to soothe your senses too. Bathe in a thermal lake, enjoy spa treatments based on ancient Greek remedies, and dine on healthy Mediterranean food. Follow our Athens wellness and fitness itinerary to experience the ancient Greek ideal of "healthy body, healthy mind".

MINDFUL WORKOUTS AND FREE EXERCISE CLASSES

Want to keep up your workout routine on holiday? **NYSY Studios**, a studio for yoga, Zen meditation and Pilates, was founded by a former filmmaker from San Francisco. Drop in on a wealth of different yoga classes, from aerial to pre-natal, at their new Aiolou Street premises, or sign up for a Pilates class at their Nikis Street headquarters. English sessions are available at both locations.

Soma Yoga hosts regular yoga classes in the National Garden. But if you're in town for more than a couple of nights, you might want to consider a special class at the foothills of the Acropolis or the Temple of Poseidon. You can't get more spiritual than that.

The **Zen Centre Athens**, on Agia Irini Square, offers yoga, Zen meditation and Pilates sessions, suitable for English-speaking participants (as well as regular meditation weekends). The calming space is on the first floor of The Perianth, a design hotel in a Bauhaus landmark, and classes are free for guests.

If you'd rather work out in the Athenian sunshine, head to **Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Centre**, a beacon of green design. Outdoor fitness classes are held throughout the year. Join the locals at a free morning yoga or mat Pilates class in the park. Breathe deeply: the scent of oregano, thyme, lavender and rosemary from the Mediterranean garden will boost your wellbeing. Early birds can catch the sunrise (and Olympian views of both city and sea) from the solar-powered Lighthouse.

Get your zen on in a natural setting with Soma Yoga.

Courtesy: Soma Yoga.



A top-down view of a white bowl filled with a healthy meal. The bowl contains sliced avocado, a central pile of chickpeas, and dried cranberries. The bowl sits on a dark wooden desk. To the left, a portion of a silver laptop is visible, showing the keyboard and trackpad. Below the laptop, a pair of black headphones with a microphone is resting on the desk. In the upper right corner, some green leafy herbs are visible. A white text box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing text about juice bars in Athens.

GET YOUR VITAMIN KICK AT A JUICE BAR

Juice bars are popping up everywhere in Athens. Join the digital nomads at **Join Juice Bar** on pedestrianised Romvis Street. It has the feel of a campus club with a funky soundtrack. Their Rambo smoothie (pear, spinach, organic matcha and pollen) will put pep in your step. Or pop to **Pura Vida**, a perky sit-down space on nearby Perikleous Street, run by a friendly brother and sister. Sip on a detox juice (celery, cucumber, green apple and lemon) from a glass pineapple. For great value fresh juices, check out **Vitamin Point** on Stadiou Street.

A bowl full of goodies at Join Juice Bar.

Courtesy: Join Juice Bar

LET OFF STEAM AT A DAY SPA

Athens has plenty of pampering day spas. The **Apivita Experience Store** in Kolonaki is part beauty emporium, part spa, part juice bar. Book a Mediterranean skin food facial or deep tissue massage at the **Beehive Spa** (built from upcycled beehives). Then shop for cosmetics made with Greek plant extracts and bee products, create your own bespoke beauty products, or tend to holiday tresses at the chemical-free hair salon (there's a barber for gentlemen's grooming, too).

For a luxury spa experience, treat yourself at the **GB Spa** at the landmark Grand Bretagne Hotel. Take an herbal steam bath, laze by the indoor pool, enjoy a prickly pear facial or personalised massage, or refresh your senses in the ice fountain. These are just some of your options at this opulent holistic oasis.

Surrender to the healing properties of extreme steam at **Hamмам Baths**, an elegant bathhouse in Plaka, at **Al Hammam** (located in one of Europe's oldest streets) also in Plaka, or **Polis Hammam** in Psirri. The ancient Greeks embraced this oriental practice as the "silent healer of daily life".



Sweat out those toxins at Al Hammam.

Courtesy: Al Hammam

GO LOCAVORE WITH GREEK SUPERFOODS

Healthy eating is a cinch in Athens. The Mediterranean diet is proven to help prevent everything from heart disease to depression. Just about every taverna serves Greek superfoods like horta (wild greens) that come in nearly 30 varieties: from dandelion and beet greens to black mustard leaves. And yes, Greeks love their meat; but there are lots of great places for **vegan** and **vegetarian food** in Athens, too.

To sample more local ingredients, graze your way along **Evripidou Street**, gateway to the **Athens Central Market**. There's much to arouse healthy appetites here: heaps of fresh fruit and seasonal vegetables, nourishing nuts and seeds, colourful spices, barrels of olives, dried herbs and teas foraged from the Greek mountains.

For a light lunch, people watch from a pavement perch at **Lotofagos** the **Salad Island** while you relish vegan soups and novel Mediterranean salads. Or sit down to a feel-good feast at **Rakor** in Keramikos with a lively crowd of local foodies (and perhaps some live jazz). Tuck into vegan dishes like fava with sea fennel and herb oil, or smashed eggplant salad. If you want to fall off the wellness wagon, there are craft beers aplenty.

A green feast at the Athens Central Food Market.

Photo: Thomas Gravanis





TAKE A BREAK FROM SIGHTSEEING

The shaded paths of **Philopappou Hill** make a peaceful backdrop for a nature walk. Head to the pinnacle of this pine-clad hill for what might be Athens' most ravishing view. This is where the locals come to walk their dogs and jog among the ruins.

Afterwards, take time out with a good book, a pot of tea, or a home-made lemonade at **Little Tree Books & Coffee**. This cosy bookshop café is just around the corner from the **Acropolis Museum**. If you're in the Kolonaki area, make for **To Tsai**, a Japanese-style shrine to tea with Zen design, classical music and local and Asian infusions. Or take a mindful moment in the lovely gardens of the **Byzantine Museum**, surrounded by aromatic herbs, cooling fountains and archaeological finds.

Trek up Philopappou Hill and marvel at the amazing view of the city.

Photo: Thomas Gravanis

SEASIDE SPORTS AND SPAS

Who doesn't feel healthier by the sea? Athens' brilliant climate means swimming and watersports are on the menu for most of the year. From May to late September, ignite your adrenaline with a waterskiing or stand-up paddleboard session at one of the many water-sports clubs in Athens or take a few days to learn **windsurfing** or **kitesurfing**.

At **Vouliagmeni Lake**, you can take the plunge in the healing waters of a flooded limestone cave fed by underground mineral currents that hover at a welcoming 22-24°C, even in winter. Or ramp it up and experience the rush of **winter swimming** with the aquaholics of the Poseidon Winter Swimmers Club.



Surf's up on the Athenian Riviera.

Photo: Manos Chatzikonstantis



Prefer a less energetic wellness fix? Harness the therapeutic power of the Aegean at the **Divani Apollon SPA & Thalassotherapy Centre** in Kavouri and let their invigorating massage jets do the work for you. This coastal spa also offers body contouring, reshaping and weight loss treatments.

For the ultimate luxury, cocoon yourself in the **Four Seasons Astir Palace** hotel's all-white spa on the Vouliagmeni peninsula. It's where Jacqueline Onassis and Melina Mercouri came to unwind. Rejuvenate with a tension-relieving massage using organic herbs grown in the resort's grounds, an anti-ageing green caviar facial, or a purifying dip in the adults-only hydrotherapy zone—an instantly relaxing space with soothing sea views.

he seaside spa at the Four Seasons
Astir Palace

Courtesy: Four Seasons Astir Palace