



**nileGUIDE**

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



# New Design in the Old City

## **New York City, Athens, 1 Day**

### Table of contents:

Guide Description 2

Itinerary Overview 3

Daily Itineraries 4

My List 11

New York City Snapshot 13

Athens Snapshot 15

# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** Plaka is generally known for being overrun with tourist traps and chintzy souvenir stores. Slowly this is changing as brave young designers are choosing this charming area for their showrooms. This guide takes you through the best of them along with some choice places to rest and regather your strength.

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - Athens

**DAY NOTE:** Start at the Acropolis Metro Station and walk with the Acropolis to your back. Vyronos Street is the gateway to Plaka. Everything on this list can be reached on foot, but some of the streets are sloped upward and can be challenging if you have limited mobility.

**Suggested Breaks:** After hitting Ippolito's leather accessories boutique, order an ouzo sampler from Bretto's to keep in the shopping spirit, in more ways than one.

Time your day so that you can end with tea and cake at Belle Epoque. On Nikis Street, one street over, buy a few organic goodies for your hotel room before returning from your eventful day of splurging. After a little rest, head back out for an economically friendly meal at Yiasemi where all of the home cooked meals are five euros.

Shop in Syntagma for organic living and holistic healing



### Thyreos

Modern Plaka meets ancient Greece



### Hellenic Art & Design

High design made in Greece, sold in Plaka



### Ippolito

Stylish, handmade leather bags and accessories



### Brettos Ouzeri

Plaka's favorite bar becomes a favorite restaurant



### Elliniko Spiti

Salvaged Furniture with Folk Art Flair



### Ioanna Kourbela

Modern Greek designer's showroom for flowy fashion



### The Seamstress

vintage dress with a twist on the main street of Plaka



### Oinoscent Wine Shop

Little shop, big selection!



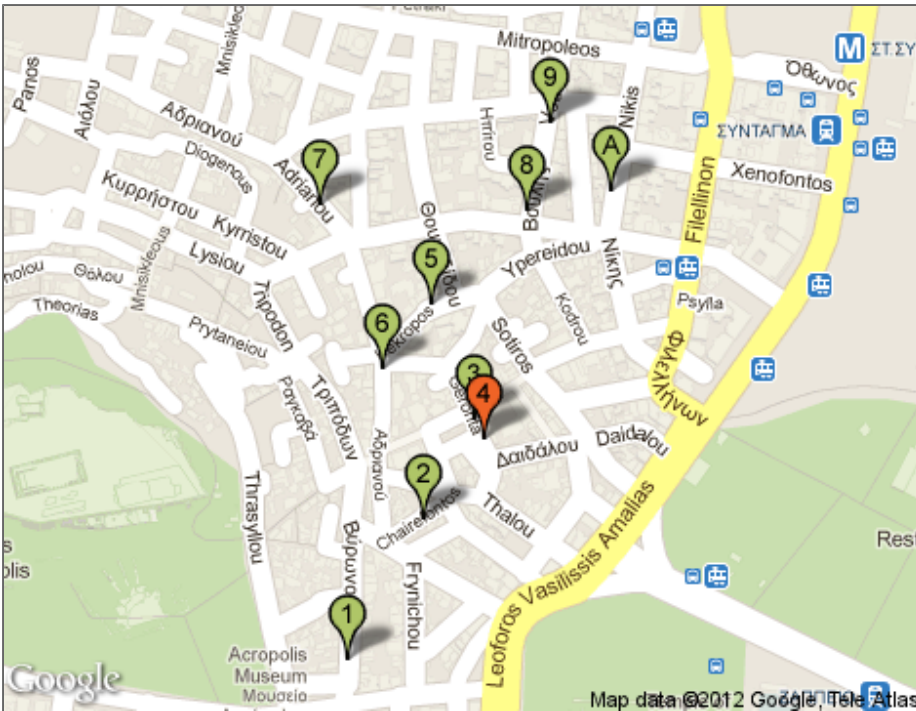
### Belle Epoque

Technicolor boutique, non fiction bookstore, and tea room



### Four Seasons Bio Shop

# Day 1 - Athens



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Start at the Acropolis Metro Station and walk with the Acropolis to your back. Vyronos Street is the gateway to Plaka. Everything on this list can be reached on foot, but some of the streets are sloped upward and can be challenging if you have limited mobility.

**Suggested Breaks:** After hitting Ipollito's leather accessories boutique, order an ouzo sampler from Bretto's to keep in the shopping spirit, in more ways than one.

Time your day so that you can end with tea and cake at Belle Epoque. On Nikis Street, one street over, buy a few organic goodies for your hotel room before returning from your eventful day of splurging. After a little rest, head back out for an economically friendly meal at Yiasemi where all of the home cooked meals are five euros.

### contact:

tel: +30 210 3231701  
<http://www.thyreos.gr>

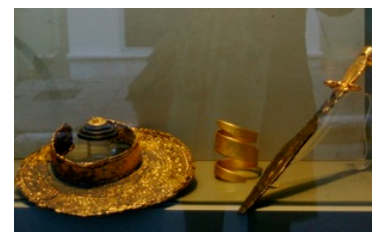
### location:

Dionysiou Areopagitou Street  
Athens Ece 24 Vyronos

## 1 Thyreos

**DESCRIPTION:** The artist and architect, Vassiliki Theodorakidi, has opened a gallery (called an "art and culture house" by the foundation) that functions like a museum, only better! What museum would let you buy the armor of King Philip of Macedonia? In it visitors can see archeological treasures such as armor, weapons, crowns and shields from all regions of Greece, as far as the northern regions of Macedonia and Trace and from deep south in the Peloponnese. On top of museum-perfect replicas, Vassiliki has created artistic pieces inspired by the genuine ones.

The atmosphere is cool, light and airy. It's located on the crossing of Vyronos Street and Aereopagitou (just behind the statue of revolutionary hero, Makrigiannis.)



Paige Moore

© NileGuide

**MY NOTE:** After you've explored Thyreos take a right outside of the shop. There are some shops selling traditional Greek hand painted pottery, some of which are stamped museum copies. Continue up until you reach a pretty sand square with the Lysikratous Monument. Look to your right for a great view of Hadrian's Arch. An Alphabank there has an ATM should you need it. Across is the church of Agia I Katerini. Walk on the left side and you'll arrive at the next stop.

**contact:**  
tel: +30 210 3223064  
<http://www.hellenicartanddesign.gr>

**location:**  
Chairefontos 10  
Athens Ece

## 2 Hellenic Art & Design

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Walk around the corner to see another young, Greek designer's shop of leather goods made in Greece, Ippolito.

**DESCRIPTION:** When every souvenir shop on Adrianou Street is starting to look like a cut and paste of the one before, it's time to move over to the little sliver of modernity that is found in "Hellenic Art & Design." Here you can find functional art and conversation pieces made by some of the top designers in Greece but all priced well within reason (many under 15 euros). Some of our favorites include polished, cut beer bottles that have been given a new life as drinking glasses, half porcelain stackable dishes, bound-by-hand graphic notebooks and quirky sculptures of Kiosk goods like Papadopoulos biscuits and Milko cartons. The store's founder, Kallirhoe Kallirrou, started the store as a way to work with customers more close at hand than in her previous life as a sought after interior designer. Many of the creations inside are her own concepts, including retro design furniture and the aforementioned recycled bottle drinking glasses, but when the store began to blossom she invited friends and designers from the rest of the country to include their creations.

Design books, decorative lighting, original art, and small handmade gifts all provide reason enough to veer off of the beaten path and explore, but Kallirhoe herself makes the best impression of all through her pleasant demeanor and enthusiasm for her work.

The shop is located on quiet Chairfontos Street across from St. Catherine's Church (Ageia Ekaterini) just behind Kydathinaion Square.

Store Hours: Tu: 10:30-3:30 and 5:30-8:00, W:10:30-3:30, Th:10:30-3:00,

F: 10:30-3:30 and 5:30-8:00, Sat: 12:00-8:00, Sun: 12:00-6:00  
Closed on Mondays.

Nearest Metro: Acropolis

© NileGuide

**MY NOTE:** Next to Hellenic Art and Design is a very old pharmacy. If it's open, go in and investigate the superb



Paige Moore

cosmetic lines of Korres and Aprivita, both made locally and only of natural ingredients. Take a left on Farmaki street when you're through and you'll arrive to Kydathineon Square. Take a right and walk under the vine shaded canopy until you reach Geronda street. Brettos is just in front of you; Ippolito is to the right.

**contact:**  
tel: +30 210 3315 051  
<http://www.ippolito.gr/>

**location:**  
Aggelou Geronda 10  
Athens Ece 105 58

### 3 Ippolito

#### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Should you arrive and the door is locked, Pavlina leaves her number posted to the glass. Don't be shy to call; she lives very close by and insists that you do.

**DESCRIPTION:** An understated sign reading "Ippolito" in simple type is the first indicator that this leather showroom is an orange amongst the apples of Plaka- typically associated with T shirts and cheap souvenirs from Athens. The store, like its timeless merchandise, proves one doesn't have to speak loudly to command attention. Owner and principal designer, Pavlina Papailiopoulos, was running the shop with her loving dogs, Jagger and Cohen the day we stopped by. "Fashion isn't a big deal," she says, and bags that women go crazy about should be able to work with any outfit and over most of the year. Her bags are about function, quality, the love of good design and attention to detail. She would know something of the subject- her training was in Milan, studying fashion and working on the ready-to-wear floor of the fashion house, Botega Veneta.

Store hours: open in the early afternoon Monday Wednesday and Saturday and 10-8 Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Should you arrive and the door is locked, Pavlina leaves her number posted to the glass. Don't be shy to call; she lives very close by and insists that you do.

© NileGuide



Paige Moore

**contact:**  
tel: +30 210 321 6981  
<http://brettosplaka.com>

**location:**  
9 Angelou Geronta  
Athens Ece 10558

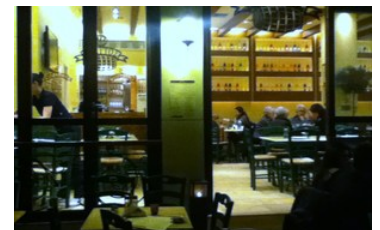
**hours:**  
12:30am-late

### 4 Brettos Ouzeri

#### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

For those who aren't fans of the anise based alcohol, go for a half liter of the very tasty, very reasonable house red wine.

**DESCRIPTION:** Brettos distillery has been a long time favorite bar of locals, tourists, guide books and Athens magazines, all who write about its unique charm and rainbow of liqueur bottles giving the place a bright atmosphere. Now Brettos has opened a new branch along shady Kidathineon Square (also spelled Kydathineon) and does for mezze style eating what it did for ouzo and flavor-infused brandies.



Paige Moore

The space has the same warmth and personality, if not the 100 year old patina of the Brettos distillery, still in its original location around the corner from the square. It's very clear that the restaurant has made a conscious effort to make delicious food with good ingredients, but also to be sensitive to the country's current economy; prices are well within reason in spite of being located in an area notoriously dense with overpriced, mediocre food targeted toward tourists. Dishes are all designed to be shared and categorized by price range, most under 10 euros. Try the bakaliaro with skourdia, salted, fried cod and a garlic aioli that warms the soul, not to mention giving a certain perfume to the breath. An Ouzo sampler is perfect for first timers to an ouzeri: olives, salted fish, local cheeses and fresh vegetables are accompanied with a bottle of ouzo for the perfect afternoon respite.

© NileGuide

**MY NOTE:** Hopefully by now you've worked up an appetite. Brettos is the perfect place to get a taste of Greek mezze, Continue down Geronda street and you'll reach Hatzimichali and the delightful store window of Poupee.

**contact:**  
tel: +30 210 32 35 924

**location:**  
14 Kekropos  
Athens Ece

## 5 Elliniko Spiti

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Mr. Koutelieris is always happy to show off his store, but he speaks only Greek. Should you want the full story it would be good to have an interpreter on hand.

**DESCRIPTION:** Looking for something truly unique in Athens that is sure to be one of a kind? Do you like things that are old, mysterious, and full of character? Are you a collector of rare pieces for your home? If you answered yes to all three of these questions you should certainly make it a point to find "Elliniko Spiti," housed in the store, workshop, and home of artist and former furniture restorer for the Ministry of Culture, Dimitris Koutelieris. It's full of old doors, heavy wooden tables and chairs, discarded window shutters and pieces of old ships that he's brought back to life and added his trademark paintings of symbolic images such as animals, eyes, mermaids and ancient coins.

To&nbsp;find it, walk down Voulis Street toward Plaka and take a right on Iperidou. Keep to the right when the roads split and you're on Kekropos. The shop is on the right and the windows filled with Dimitri's unusual work.

Hours 9am-2pm and 3:30pm to 9pm M-F

Credit Cards Accepted

© NileGuide

**MY NOTE:** Hatzimichalis Street and Kekropos make the shape of an "eye" on the map- ironic given that the eye is the most popular sale in Elliniko Spiti. It's a peaceful, scenic area of the city with well kept 19th century building facades, potted gardens



editor

and wisened cats. Take out your camera and have some fun before wrapping back to Adrianou Street.

**contact:**

tel: +30 210 3224591  
<http://www.ioannakourbela.com/>

**location:**

109 Adrianou  
Athens Ece

**6 Ioanna Kourbela**

**DESCRIPTION:** Ioanna Kourbela has made quite a name for herself in Athens and beyond as being an innovative designer with a look all her own. The pieces in her shop have an earthy, romantic quality but stay modern with asymmetrical lines, a muted color palette and unusual textures. Most pieces are able to be layered and rarely cling to the female form, making them ideal styles for the weather in Athens that can go from cool to burning in a single day.

There are two shops: one on Adrianou street and another around the corner on Hatzimichali 12. The store is operated by a team of friendly, multilingual personnel that is also able to help you put your own look together.

Monday through Saturday: 9:30-21:00

Sunday: 11:00-21:00

Nearest Metro: Acropolis

© NileGuide

**MY NOTE:** Be sure to catch the second shop around the corner where there are often great sales going on. Return to Adrianou Street and keep right toward "The Seamstress," currently without a sign so keep your eyes peeled. The shops between are mostly the stereotypical purveyors of cheap souvenirs but there are some quirky finds nonetheless.



Courtesy of Ioanna Kourbela

**contact:**

tel: +30 210 3250045

**location:**

67-88 Adrianou Street  
Athens Ece

**7 The Seamstress**

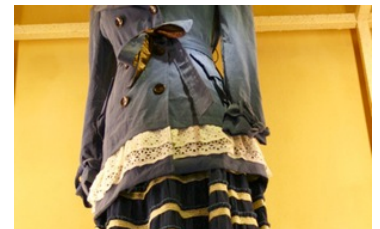
**OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**

Don't miss the shop during sales from January 15 to February 28 when prices are slashed to sometimes 3/4 of their original.

**DESCRIPTION:** Eirini Eleftheria scours the world for interesting, up and coming designers and brings them back to Athens for "sensitive, opinionated women." The last sentence is in quotation marks because according to the sales assistant, Katerina, those are exactly the sorts of women who shop in the store currently under the original sign of Naxos House- opened in 1976 by Erini's parents and dealing in traditional costumes. As the second-generation owner she's slated the store to be renamed "The Seamstress" in the near future.

The shop is small but not congested, allowing delicate floral prints, muslin dresses with embroidery, Indian coin belts, cloche hats to flirt with your senses, whimpering ever so slightly-matched with a playful pout- until finally you can't help but try them on in the mirror.

&nbsp;



editor

Most items in the shop have a price tag that reflects something special, but not overly dear. We noticed a small selection of children's clothing but the majority of inventory is women's apparel.

Located on Plaka's main shopping thoroughfare, Adrianou Street, where it can be difficult to spot amongst the repetitive rows of common souvenir shops but the exceptional window displays help it to stand out.

© NileGuide

**MY NOTE:** After trying on every wonderful dress in the Seamstress take a right down Apollonos Street, a scenic relic of 1960's era Athens with fish markets, junk shops and laundry businesses. Take a right on Voulis Street; Belle Epoque is up the steps of a blue and white neoclassical building.

**contact:**  
tel: 210 3229374  
<http://www.oinoscent.gr/>

**location:**  
Voulis 44

## 8 Oinoscent Wine Shop

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Accompany a bottle or two, or three, with a selection of small niblets; enjoy your wine on the sidewalk of Voulis Street by candlelight.

**DESCRIPTION:** Formerly known as Arkadiko Kelari, Oinoscent—a clever play on Oinos, the ancient name for wine—is run by brothers who have a shared passion of fine wines, Greek and beyond. Most people aren't even aware that Greece has competitive winemakers, but this is the land of Dionysus, the god of wine who blessed the soil of Attica himself! Don't you think you owe it to yourself to try some? Go and grab a stool. Let them pour you a few glasses of the different wines of the regions, explaining the differences between a Nemean wine and a Cretan wine while indulging in local cheeses and olives. Intimate, varied, and competitively priced. (Psst, they have amazing chocolates, ouzos and whiskey also! But no one has to know you didn't go for the wine.)



editor

**contact:**  
tel: +30 210 3239333

**location:**  
Voulis 34  
Athens Ece

## 9 Belle Epoque

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

All you will find in Belle Epoque is tea and more tea, so don't go hoping for coffee, cocoa, or Coke light.

**DESCRIPTION:** Maybe you've never been struck with a pressing urge to shop for vintage clothing, old maps, travel books, and globes, and have a cup of hand-blended tea in a delightful room with velvet couches and tree branches, or at least not all the same time. If ever you did, and even if you didn't, you'll be happy that Belle Epoque has opened its doors on Voulis Street by the marvelous Ms. Evi, daughter of the owners of a map and travel store further into the city on Panepistimiou.



Paige Moore

The shop is in a blue neoclassical building with high ceilings and original stained glass; it's certainly the oddity of the block, a neighborhood full of traditional bakeries, lighting shops, local cafes and travel agencies. One would expect to find Belle Epoque in Kolonaki, or to go further, Paris or London.

We are delighted by its frivolous impracticality and the whole experience, including the high quality green and black teas brewed and presented in colorful, ceramic teapots with a plate of almond cookies and, what else, teacake. A mellow, eclectic soundtrack gives modernness to a timeless ritual.

The Technicolor Boutique is in an adjacent room with bright clothes and accessories from the 60's and 70's for men and women.

The last room is full of old travel books in English and Greek for nearly every spot on the globe, or globes, which there are also several of, playfully lined up along the shelves.

Nearest Metro: Syntagma

Head down Mitropolios and take a left on Voulis Street. Belle Epoque on the right side of the street.

Hours: 11am-9pm except for Saturdays: 11am-5pm

Closed Sundays

© NileGuide

**contact:**

tel: +30 210-3229078

**location:**

30 Nikis  
Athens Ece



## Four Seasons Bio Shop

**DESCRIPTION:** Evidence that Athens is moving into the 21st century can be seen on the little street of Nikis, tucked in a shady portico and radiating warmth from within. Four Seasons Bio Shop is packed tightly with the best in organic milks, cheeses, teas, honey, and a wealth of other local products as well as imported health bars and herbal remedies from Germany, Holland, and the UK.

It is one out of only a handful of places where certified organic produce can be purchased.

The main reason we like it is that the owners are well informed and able to answer questions on how to cure life's little maladies using herbs and eating a proper diet. They're gentle, welcoming, and multilingual, making a visit to this green grocer a delight under any circumstances.

Shop hours: 9-6 except Sunday

Nearest metro: Syntagma

Go down Mitropolios, turn left on Nikis. The shop is on the right just past Eleftherodakis bookshop.

© NileGuide



Paige Moore

**contact:**  
tel: +30 213 0417937  
<http://www.yiasemi.gr>

**location:**  
23 Mnisikleous  
Athens Ece

**hours:**  
10am-2am

## 1 Yiasemi

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

On Saturday and Sunday nights, live musicians from all over the world provide a mellow soundtrack meant to accompany drinking and conversation.

**DESCRIPTION:** Veering off the beaten path in even well-marked Plaka can be extremely rewarding. Should you wander up the steps of Mnisikleous Street, off of Lysiou Street, you'll find such a reward in the form of the charming cafe Yiasemi, or Jasmine. Green metal cafe tables are tiered on the steps and twinkle lights glow from within the cafe, decorated in rummage-shop treasures and mismatched chairs. All of the food is prepared in the small, on-site kitchen and the menu changes daily, but there is always plenty of vegetarian fare and freshly baked sweets—delectable orange and lemon pies being some of the most noteworthy.

The place starts filling up with locals drinking coffee in the early evening.

Prices are slightly high for a cafe, but according to the quality and atmosphere, certainly worth it.

© NileGuide



editor

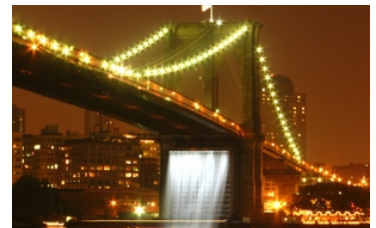
**contact:**  
tel: 212 484 1200 (Tourist information)  
fax: 212 245 5943 (Tourist information)  
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/motorist/bridges.html#brooklyn>

**location:**  
Off South Street Viaduct  
New York NY 11201

## 2 Brooklyn Bridge

**DESCRIPTION:** Opened in 1883, the Brooklyn Bridge is one of the oldest suspension bridges in the United States. It stretches 5,989 feet (1825 meters) across the East River and connects the boroughs of Manhattan and Brooklyn. At the time of its construction, it was the largest suspension bridge in the world and the first steel-wire suspension bridge. The bridge was designed by the New Jersey architect John Augustus Roebling, who died before construction began after he contracted tetanus from a wound sustained in a ferry accident during surveys for the bridge project. Built from limestone, granite, and cement, the Brooklyn Bridge is an example of Gothic-style architecture, with its characteristic pointed arches topping twin passageways through huge stone towers. Because Roebling designed a bridge and truss system six times stronger than he thought it needed to be, the Brooklyn Bridge is still standing, while many other bridges built around the same time have had to be replaced.

In the past, the inside lanes of traffic on the bridge carried the elevated trains of the Brooklyn-Manhattan Transport (BMT) Corporation from stations in Brooklyn to a terminal at Manhattan's Park Row. Streetcars shared the other lanes with other traffic until the elevated trains stopped using the bridge in 1944 and the streetcars moved to the center lanes. Six years later, the streetcars also stopped running, and the bridge was



wcities

rebuilt to its present configuration, with six lanes of automobile traffic. A separate walkway runs along the centerline for pedestrians and bicyclists, and boasts some of the best views of the Manhattan and Brooklyn skylines. © NileGuide

---

# New York City Snapshot

## Local Info

New York, New York: There's truly no other city in the world like it. The city reaches far and wide with neighborhoods and people changing at every block you cross. Don't let the Big Apple intimidate you though, it's got a little bit of everything for travelers of all kinds to enjoy. Shopaholics and fashionistas roam the pricey boutiques of Soho while downtown locals flock to the street food of Chinatown. View stately museums of the Upper East Side or challenge your knowledge of art browsing Chelsea, this sprawling metropolis offers the best of all worlds...and that's just the big city of Manhattan. Here's an overview of some of that island's noteworthy neighborhoods, as well as the basics on the outer boroughs, too—Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens and Staten Island. To dig deeper on any of these destinations, check out the relevant Neighborhood Information section.

### Midtown

This is the beating heart of the Big Apple, complete with towering skyscrapers, packed streets, and many of the city's top destinations for sightseeing, shopping, and entertainment, including Times Square, the United Nations, the Empire State Building and Rockefeller Center. This is must-see New York, but make sure to spend some time outside this neighborhood if you want to breathe a bit more freely.

### Central Park

Nestled between the Upper West and Upper East Sides, this 843-acre oasis is the most visited urban park in the country. Among its many charms are miles of winding pathways, several lakes and ponds, two skating rinks, a zoo, and a conservatory. Visit in the summer if you can, when the park hosts free concerts and plays.

### Times Square/Theater District/Hell's Kitchen

The once seedy Times Square zone is all cleaned up and packed full of chain restaurants and other tourist-friendly attractions. Catch a Broadway show in the Theater District, or head west to Hell's Kitchen, also cleaned up from its seedier days and full of dining and nightlife options.

### Chelsea

Chelsea has been the center of the city's art scene since the mid-1990s, with more than 200 galleries centered mostly in its western reaches (near 10th and 11th Avenues). In addition to the High Line, a newly opened public space along an old elevated railway, it also boasts some of the city's hottest nightclubs, is chock-full of busy restaurants and bars, and has long been seen as the heart of gay-friendly New York. □

### Gramercy/Flatiron/Union Square

This central neighborhood has a little of everything, from pedigreed Gramercy Park to bustling Union Square (site of the city's largest greenmarket). It's also home to a number of the city's most popular restaurants, and the dining options abound on Park Avenue South and the area around Madison Square Park, near the iconic Flatiron Building.

### Greenwich Village/West Village

With its labyrinthine (compared to the Midtown grid) streets and historic townhouses, the Village is classic New York. Its eastern region contains Washington Square Park and New York University, while the charming, formerly bohemian West Village is home to increasingly upscale shopping and restaurants. Head further west to the Meatpacking District, now a mecca of expensive dining/nightlife options.

### East Village □

The East Village stands out for its young, arty, funky (though nowhere near as edgy as in years past) vibe, on display in its many shopping, dining and nightlife options. History buffs will appreciate landmarks like St. Mark's-in-the-Bowery Church, while a cleaned-up Tompkins Square Park offers great people-watching.

### Lower East Side

□ Go below Houston Street on the east side and you'll find even more restaurants, boutiques and bars lining the streets of the ever-more-upscale Lower East Side. Though this area was once home to some of the city's worst slums, its gritty past has made way for a vibrant shopping, dining and nightlife scene. Learn about the neighborhood's past at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum (it's free!) or check out the historic Orchard Street Shopping District.

### Soho

Though many galleries have moved to Chelsea, Soho still boasts its own art scene. Shopping is the real draw in this neighborhood, however, from high-fashion boutiques to the chain stores that line Broadway. At the eastern end of Soho, Nolita is perfect for shoppers who favor smaller, more unique stores. A plethora of kitschy Italian restaurants still draw tourists to the lively neighborhood of Little Italy, around Mulberry Street, including the throngs attracted by the annual San Gennaro Festival.

### Lower Manhattan

This diverse zone encompasses Chinatown (with its designer knock-offs and dim sum), swanky Tribeca, family-friendly Battery Park City, and the bustling (at least during the week) Financial District. Must-see spots include South Street Seaport, Wall Street and the New York Stock Exchange, and the World Trade Center site.

### Upper East Side □

The Metropolitan, the Whitney, and the Guggenheim are only the biggest players in this stately, museum-filled neighborhood, which also boasts some of the city's best high-end shopping (Madison Avenue) and some of its highest-priced real estate (Fifth Avenue along Central Park, Park Avenue).

### Upper West Side

The beautiful Upper West Side, historically a mecca for New York City artists, writers and intellectuals, is also one of the city's most family-friendly neighborhoods, with brownstone-lined streets, brunch spots, shops galore, and easy access to Central Park. It's also home to Lincoln Center, the Museum of Natural History, architectural gems like the Ansonia and the Dakota, and (a bit further north) Columbia University.

### Harlem

Long a vibrant center of African-American history, music and culture, Harlem has changed a lot in recent years, as a diverse new crowd of residents have started calling its stately old brownstones home. It's still a great destination for soul food (try stalwarts like Sylvia's) as well as live jazz and nightlife at historic spots like the Cotton Club or the Lenox Lounge.

## New York City Snapshot continued

### Brooklyn

From the galleries of Williamsburg to the brownstones of Brooklyn Heights, from family-friendly Park Slope to kitschy Coney Island, devotees of this borough wouldn't live anywhere else. Walk across the Brooklyn Bridge and check out the views from the Promenade, or stroll in Prospect Park, for just a taste of what Brooklyn has to offer. But don't neglect this outer borough on your next visit, there's plenty reason for Brooklyn to be worth your while.

### Queens

The largest borough, Queens is also the most ethnically diverse, boasting arguably the best food in the city, from Greek in Astoria, to Indian in Jackson Heights, to Chinese and Korean in Flushing. It is also a popular destination for sports (Citi Field--new home to the New York Mets--and U.S. Open tennis) and culture (check out P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center in Long Island City).

### The Bronx

Though New York's northernmost borough is best known to many as the home of Yankee Stadium, the Bronx offers a good deal more than meets the eye. Explore

its beaches and museums, its world-famous zoo and botanical garden, its own Little Italy, quaint City Island, and more parkland than any other borough.

### Staten Island

The breathtaking views from the free Staten Island Ferry are just the beginning of this borough's charms. With a more suburban feel than any of the other boroughs, Staten Island boasts a number of parks, as well as a zoo, a children's museum, a botanical garden, a minor league baseball stadium, and a restored colonial village.

© NileGuide

# Athens Snapshot

## Local Info

Athens is best known for the Acropolis—the leveled hill serving as the platform for some of humanity's greatest artistic achievements; temples dedicated to the warrior goddess Athena. In spite of pushy early Christians, swords, cannons, bombs, negligence and theft, those temples are still standing on the sacred rock high above the modern city streets. The city is alive with yellow cabs and honking horns, leather vendors and leathery latterna organ players, gypsy balloon sellers, ancient theaters, modern theaters, snap-happy tourists, street performers in cobblestone squares, posh cafes, souvlaki stands, evzones, flower markets, fish and flea markets, sweeping views from hilltops, caves of furies, fruit vendors and tri-wheeled trucks driven by "paliozits," the collector of old things... weaving in and between the towers of white concrete and neoclassical facades.

Athenians are generous, helpful souls on one side, opinionated rebels on the other, but wholly colorful. They are famous throughout the world for their intellect and hospitality. They love to share their stories of heroism and tragedy while displaying their love of simple pleasures: good food from the earth and surrounding themselves with friends and family.

No one can wonder how Athens has attracted travelers for the last two millennia, or why, in spite of every kind of trouble, she will continue to draw visitors throughout the next.

## Syntagma Square

"Syntagma" is Greek for "constitution." It is the place where the citizens of the city stood outside of the palace and demanded their rights. Today, still, it is where all of the action is, always a buzz with taxis, shoppers, people sitting at cafes, and, yes, the occasional demonstration. Cross Amelias Avenue to watch the Evzones change post every hour on the hour. Feed the pigeons or dip into the National Garden for some shade. It is home to the magnificent Hotel Grand Bretagne other five star hotels and is the starting point of the pedestrian shopping district of Ermou

Street. The Syntagma Metro station is like a museum, full of archeological treasures found during construction. It provides easy access to the Acropolis Metro station and the Panepistimiou station along the red line. The blue line takes you to the airport.

## Plaka

What once was called the "Turkish Quarter" is now affectionately titled "Plaka" and is the area for wandering amidst narrow cobblestone roads, low, hundred-year-old houses, pots of basil and rosemary, traditional Greek eateries or "tavernas" and more souvenir shops than you can shake a stick of souvlaki at.

Some areas of Plaka have been inhabited for thousands of years. Walk down Tripodon Street to see the Lysicrates monument and follow it to the Theater of Dionysus, one access point into the mighty Acropolis. Or head up toward Anafiotika to get lost in an island in the middle of the city. Plaka is pure romance.

## Monastiraki

Monastiraki, or "little Monastery" is a great place for people watching. The courtyard and narrow roads that lead to the Roman Agora are always full of street performers, artists and antique vendors. Go on Sundays for treasure hunting at Avyssiain Square, or just wander around the flea market any day of the week. Buy fresh fruit from the kiosk and enjoy it while gazing at the remains of Hadrian's Library or the Tower of the Winds. Jump on the Kifissia/Piraeus railway for a nostalgic train ride to the very north or very south of Athens, respectively.

## Psirri, Thissio and Gazi

Psirri has been home to the free thinkers and Bohemians since the start of the 20th century, when sad-eyed Rembetika singers belted their woes to the accompaniment of a line of instrumentalists, all sitting in wooden chairs, while people smoked and drank beneath the stage. While it still holds a certain grungy appeal to the modern-day Bohemian, the streets are lined with trendy cafes and eateries that make it also palatable to more mainstream visitors, or

even those with a dazzled eye pointed toward the "live for the day" world of the artists and non-conventionalists of Psirri.

Thissio, on the other hand, is a well-sculpted garden surrounding the Ancient Agora and is well known for its posh places to enjoy a beverage for a few hours with a view on the Acropolis. The expansive pedestrian road of Apostolou Pavlou (Apostle Paul) circles around until it connects with Aereopagitou, making for lovely strolls. The pedestrian road ends at the ancient cemetery of Keramikos. From here you can see some strange metal structures puncturing the sky. This is the wildly popular area of Gazi, named for the gas factory whose buildings are now used as edgy cafes, tavernas and art centers. Organized graffiti decorates the walls and beautiful people fill the tables. The cultural center of Technopolis is where you can spy up-and-coming Greek talent in every field.

## Museum Mile

An exceptional collection of privately run museums can all be found along V. Sophias Avenue amidst the embassy buildings and various official ministries. The eclectic Benaki Museum shows off iconic pieces to represent several periods of Greek history spanning 8,000 years. The Museum of Cycladic Art displays all of the neolithic artwork of the Cycladic islands. The Byzantine Museum presents the riches and religious art associated with medieval Greece, and the nearby War Museum gives a detailed history of the country through artifacts of warfare from ancient until modern times. A vast collection of art acquired from Greek collectors and by Greek artists is at the National Art Gallery.

## Kolonaki

The streets around Kolonaki Square feature the most elegant boutiques in Athens. The square itself (officially named Filikis Eterias) is the favorite meeting place of celebrities and beautiful people. They can be seen hanging out at any of Kolonaki's numerous cafes after a shopping spree or in the excellent gourmet restaurants and chic

## Athens Snapshot continued

bars at night. Kolonaki lies on the slopes of Lykavittos Hill, the city's best vantage point.

### Exarhia

The scenery changes just a few blocks away from elegant Kolonaki. The area around Exarhion Square is dominated by rock music bars, jazz clubs and traditional tavernas which are frequented by students and intellectuals. This area should be avoided during city-wide demonstrations due to its active involvement in politics, but otherwise is a distinctly "Athens" neighborhood where you can see how the locals live.

### Panepistimiou and Stadiou Streets

These two streets connect Syntagma Square with Omonia Square. In addition to shops and restaurants, they feature some of the city's most beautiful 19th-century buildings. Among them is the so-called Panepistimiou Street (officially named El. Venizelou Street), along with the university and National Library. The historic Iliou Melathron Mansion now houses the Numismatic Museum; the home has been beautifully restored and is worth a trip. Cut past Attica department store (back toward Syntagma), and you'll come upon the National History Museum, located in the old parliament building on Stadiou and Voulis.

### Omonia Square

Omonia is considered part of "downtown" Athens where the locals go to buy common household goods and clothing and pay

less. It is now home to the majority of the immigrant population of Athens and has seen a rise in crime, particularly petty theft and recreational drug use. A surge of modern hoteliers with an emphasis on design has hit Omonia and could breathe new life into a logistically well-located base for the city center.

### Patission Street

Patission Street (officially named 28 Oktovriou Street) is one of the city's major thoroughfares. At No. 42 is the majestic Technical University, a splendid example of 19th-century architecture. Next door is the National Archaeological Museum, one of the world's greatest museums, housing an outstanding collection of ancient Greek art. Many fine boutiques can be found further north, past Kodringtonos Street. The best place to rest after a shopping spree is in any one of the numerous cafés and tavernas of the Fokionos Negri pedestrian zone in Kypseli.

### Piraeus

Piraeus- the port town of Athens- is located on a peninsula, 10 kilometers southwest of central Athens. It features a busy commercial port and a Sunday flea market in the streets near the metro station. The most picturesque part of Piraeus is the Mikrolimano fishing harbor, with its row of traditional fish restaurants. Other good places for eating fish are the numerous seafood eateries along Akti Themistokleous Street, on the peninsula's eastern coast. Traces of the area's 2,500-year old history

can be found at the Piraeus Archaeological Museum.

### Glyfada and Vouliagmeni

The city's southern suburbs are located along the Apollo Coast and feature a string of beaches as well as numerous restaurants and nightclubs. One of these suburbs, Glyfada, boasts a golf course, an excellent shopping area on Metaxa Street and elegant restaurants and bars. Further south lies the exclusive resort town of Vouliagmeni renowned for its luxurious hotels, sophisticated restaurants and sailing clubs. The resort also features excellent beaches and water sports facilities at the Astir Beach Club.

### Kifissia

An urban retreat for the wealthy since the times of Herodes Atticus (the mega-millionaire of ancient times responsible for the Kalimarmara Stadium and the Herodus Atticus Theater), Kifissia is a shady, upscale neighborhood full of elegant hotels, restaurants, and elite businesses. Kolokotroni Street and Argiropoulou Street are good destinations for serious shoppers, as they're lined with boutiques from the biggest names in fashion and luxury. The Pentelikon hotel is an elegant place to stay to experience it, but the Semiramis Hotel, designed by Karim Rashid and part of the Design Hotel group, is a better choice for an appreciator of modern art and design.

© NileGuide