

## TRAVEL

# ATHENS MONUMENTS RECALL RICH HERITAGE

Capital of Greece is a treasure trove of historical delights

By Mansoor Ladha

For centuries, Greece has been regarded as the cradle of democracy. A visit to Athens will provide ample evidence of that democratic heritage in monuments, relics and shrines. The city is endowed with history and civilization of thousands of years.

Athens is not only the capital of Greece but it's also at the heart of ancient Greece, reflecting a powerful civilization and empire. The city is still dominated by the fifth-century BC landmarks such as the Acropolis, a hilltop citadel, containing the remains of several ancient buildings of great architectural and historic significance. What would a visit to Athens be without going to the Acropolis and see the most famous Parthenon?

It is believed that in the fifth century BC, the Athenians, empowered from their victory over the Persians, carried out an ambitious building program under the leadership of the great statesman Perikles, comprising a large number of monuments including the Parthenon, the Erechtheion, the Propylaea and the temple of Athena Nike. These monuments were developed by an exceptional group of architects and sculptors, who transformed the rocky hill into a unique complex, heralding the emergence of classical Greek thought and art.

This hill is the birthplace of democracy, philosophy, theatre, freedom of expression and speech, which provide the intellectual and spiritual foundation for the contemporary world and its values. The Acropolis' monuments, having survived for almost twenty-five centuries through wars, explosions, bombardments, fires, earthquakes, sackings, interventions and alterations, have adapted to different uses and the civilizations, myths and religions that flourished in Greece through time.

Acropolis is the best place to either take a tour with an English-speaking guide or wander around yourself. Reaching the Acropolis is made more pleasant because the pedestrian streets have been turned into avenues full of cafes and restaurants. However, visitors to the Acropolis are cautioned to time their visit to either early or late in the day because it can be very hot up there and one may gasp for breath, spoiling one's enjoyment.

Acropolis means upper city and hence many of Athens' monuments are around the Acropolis where inhabitants can



PHOTOS BY MANSOOR LADHA

Architectural remnants of ancient Greece are plentiful in Athens, providing a feast for those with an interest in history.

go to seek refuge in times of invasion. It's considered to be the safest and secure place in town. At the entrance of the Acropolis, there are stationed licensed guides who will give a tour of the place and explain its significance for 50 euros so that you may leave the area more informed than before. If you are coming from a cruise ship, then the best way to visit the Acropolis is by taxi as your time is limited and most ships require the passengers to return by 5 p.m.

In 2009, the new Acropolis Museum was inaugurated where most of the original sculptural and/or architectural pieces of

the monuments are conserved.

My favourite area in Athens, located close to the Acropolis, is the Plaka, which is a village within the city, providing a microcosm for those who don't have time to visit the Greek islands.

The Plaka, the oldest section of Athens, is closed to traffic but one has to keep a watchful eye for a speeding motor bike or

a delivery truck. The Plaka is full of restaurants, cafes, tourist shops and jewelry stores. The area is highly commercialized but tourists can enjoy what Athens has to offer in terms of food and souvenirs.

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A Greek dancer claps while her colleagues perform.

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Proper nutrition is a building block for a healthy mind and body. Seniors who eat nutrient rich foods have increased mental and physical energy. Eating well can also protect against chronic illness and help repair the body after a surgery or ailment.

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Looking for more ways to eat healthier and feel better? Join us at our next Café Chat "Eating Well as You Age" on Thursday March 16th

### #1 Shop Smart »

Supermarkets offer a lot of choice, but foods are not always as healthy as they seem. Read the ingredients and nutritional labels. Purchase foods that are low in sodium, trans and saturated fats. Try to eat fruits and vegetables that are in season. Choose dark green or brightly coloured produce for the healthiest options.

### #2 Schedule your Prep Time »

Prepare meals during your most energetic time of the day (even if it's morning). Make bigger portions so you can put single servings in the freezer for another day.

### #3 Set the Stage »

Choose a comfortable place to enjoy your meals. Try creating an inviting eating space with flowers, nice music and your favourite place setting.

### #4 Invite a Friend »

Ask someone to come and join you for a meal. It can be a family member, a friend or a neighbour. This will get you thinking about cooking something special and force you into the grocery store to see all that's fresh and in season. If this seems too daunting, make it a potluck and invite two friends!

### #5 Meet a Friend at a Restaurant (or Order Take Out) »

Lots of restaurants have healthy choices on the menu and many offer seniors discount rates. Consider treating yourself once a month and order something you would rarely cook for yourself!

### #6 Consider a Retirement Community »

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