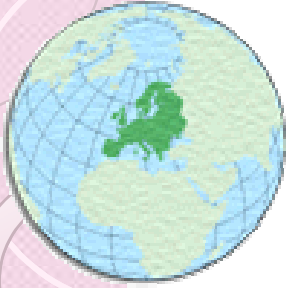




Greece



Europe



Europe covers about 10,180,000 square kilometres (3,930,000 sq mi), or 2% of the Earth's surface (6.8% of land area). Politically, Europe is divided into about fifty sovereign states. Europe had a total population of about 741 million (about 11% of world population) as of 2016.

Europe has a wide variety of climates and landscapes. The tundra of the far north gives way to a cool, wet, heavily forested region. The North European Plain is well-drained, fertile and rich in oil, coal and natural gas. The shores of the Mediterranean are generally warm, dry, and hilly, ideal for cultivating olives, citrus fruit, and grapes.

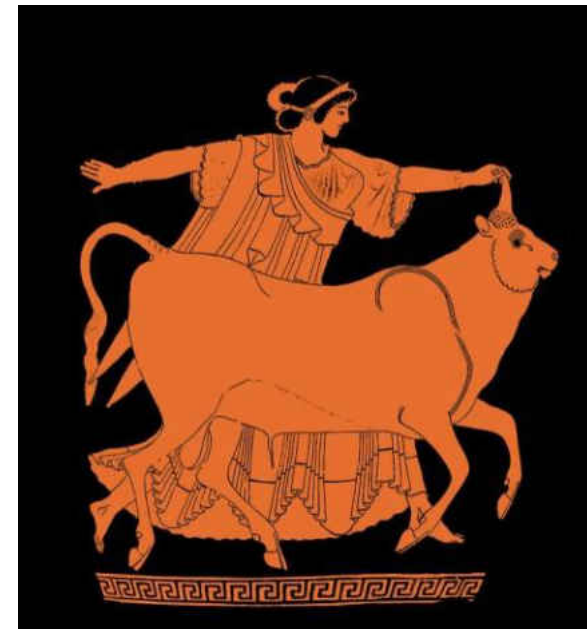
Europeans are mainly Christian - Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant - and speak a variety of languages, most of which spring from Latin (Romance), Germanic, or Slavic roots.



The Abduction of Europa by Rembrandt,
1632

The name Europe is perhaps derived from that of Europa, the daughter of Phoenix in Greek mythology. According to Greek mythology, Zeus spotted and fell in love with the young princess as she picked flowers. He changed himself into a handsome bull and carried her off to the island of Crete, where she bore their three sons.

Europa and bull on a Greek vase.
circa 480 BCE



Brief on Greece

OFFICIAL NAME

Hellenic Republic

DATE OF FORMATION

1829

CAPITAL

Athens

POPULATION

11 million

FLAG



Location



Greece or Hellas, officially known as the Hellenic Republic (Ellinikí Dimokratía). Country in southeastern Europe, occupying the southernmost part of the Balkan Peninsula. Famed for the beauty of its landscape, Greece is dominated by mountains and sea. The Aegean, Mediterranean, and Ionian seas constitute the country's eastern, southern, and western borders, and no part of mainland Greece is more than 100 km (60 mi) from the water. Islands constitute about one-fifth of the country's land area.

History

The first great civilization in Greece was the Minoan culture on the island of Crete around 2000 B.C. The Minoans were conquered by the Mycenaeans from the mainland in 1450 B.C.

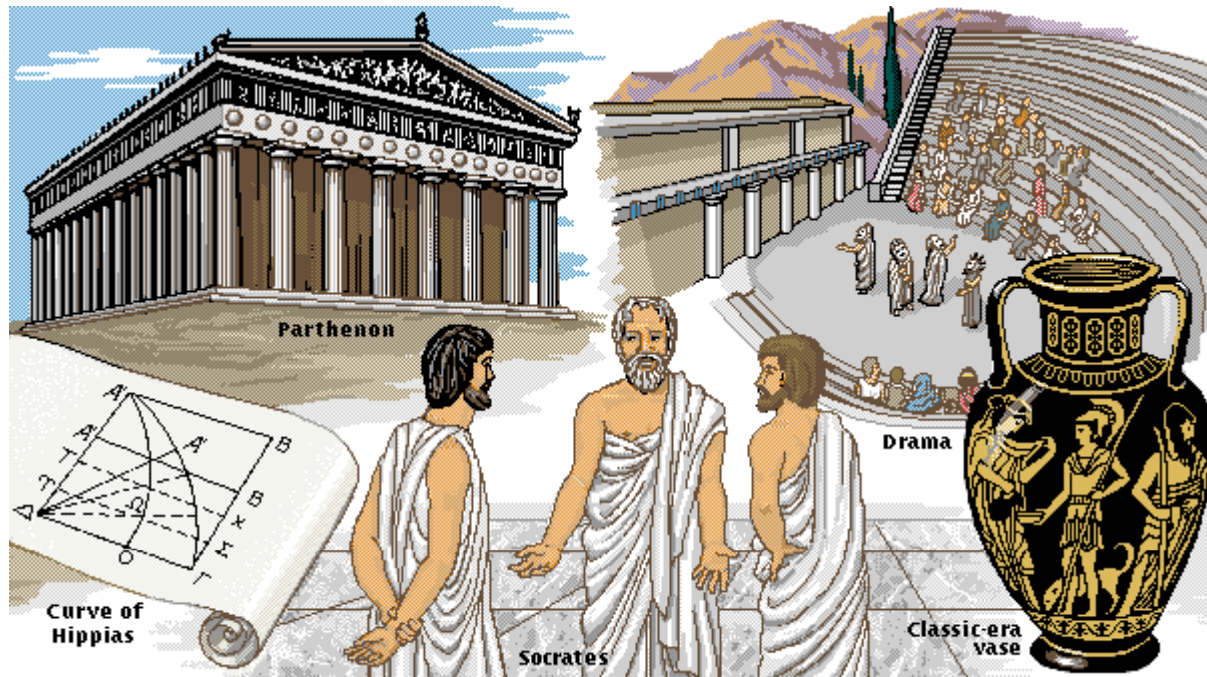
During ancient times the country was divided into city-states, which were ruled by noblemen. The largest were Athens, Sparta, Thebes, and Corinth. Each state controlled the territory around a single city. They were often at war with each other.

Athens became the most powerful, and in 508 B.C., the people instituted a new system of rule by the people called democracy. But during that time, only men could vote!

Greece was ruled by foreigners for over 2,000 years beginning with the Romans conquering the Greeks in the 2nd century. Then, after almost 400 years under Turkish rule, Greece won independence in 1832.



History time line



Greece has a history stretching back almost 4.000 years. The people of the mainland, called Hellenes, organised great naval and military expeditions, and explored the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, going as far as the Atlantic Ocean and the Caucasus Mountains. One of those expeditions, the siege of Troy, is narrated in the first great European literary work, Homer's Iliad. Numerous Greek settlements were founded throughout the Mediterranean, Asia Minor and the coast of North Africa as a result of travels in search of new markets.



During the Classical period (5th century B.C.), Greece was composed of city-states, the largest being Athens, followed by Sparta and Thebes. A fierce spirit of independence and love of freedom enabled the Greeks to defeat the Persians in battles which are famous in the history of civilization - Marathon, Thermopylae, Salamis and Plataea.

In the second half of the 4th century B.C., the Greeks, led by Alexander the Great, conquered most of the then known world and sought to Hellenize it.

In 146 BC Greece fell to the Romans. In 330 A.D. Emperor Constantine moved the Capital of the Roman Empire to Constantinople, founding the Eastern Roman Empire which was renamed Byzantine Empire or Byzantium for short, by western historians in the 19th century. Byzantium transformed the linguistic heritage of Ancient Greece into a vehicle for the new Christian civilisation.



The Byzantine Empire fell to the Turks in 1453 and the Greeks remained under the Ottoman yoke for nearly 400 years. During this time their language, their religion and their sense of identity remained strong. On March 25, 1821, the Greeks revolted against the Turks, and by 1828 they had won their independence. As the new state comprised only a tiny fraction of the country, the struggle for the liberation of all the lands inhabited by Greeks continued. In 1864, the Ionian islands were added to Greece; in 1881 parts of Epirus and Thessaly. Crete, the islands of the Eastern Aegean and Macedonia were added in 1913 and Western Thrace in 1919. After World War II the **Dodecanese islands** were also returned to Greece.



People and culture

Family life is a very important part of life in Greece. Children often live with their parents even after they get married. Greeks live long lives and it is thought that their varied diet of olives, olive oil, lamb, fish, squid, chickpeas, and lots of fruits and vegetables keep them healthy.

Nearly two-thirds of the people live in large cities. Athens is the largest city, with over 3.7 million people crowding the metropolis.

Olive trees have been cultivated in Greece for over 6,000 years. Every village has its own olive groves.



Daily life and social customs

In the hot summers, social life in Greece tends to be outdoors. In small towns and villages the tradition of the volta continues, when at sundown much of the population strolls up and down the main street or, on the islands, along the shore.

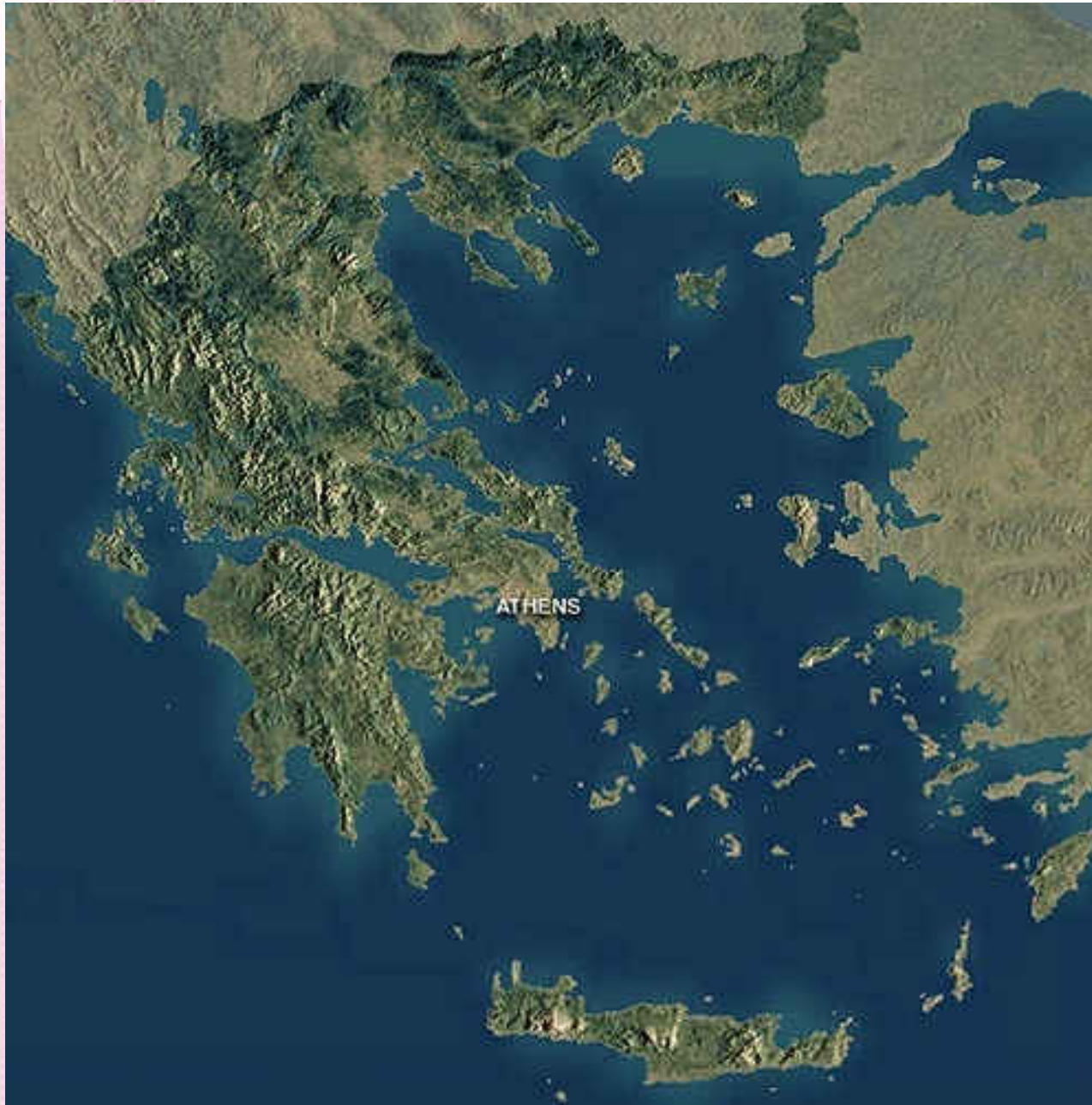
In summer and winter much leisure time is passed in the numerous cafés and coffee shops, both of which have been traditionally a male preserve. It is also not uncommon to find in a single village one coffee shop where the adherents of a particular political party congregate. Television, the Internet, and forms of video entertainment have to some extent undermined these traditional leisure patterns.



Topography

Greece is a mountainous, stony country with a highly indented and crenellated coast. According to a Greek myth, when god created the world he distributed all the available soil through a sieve and when he had provided every country with enough of it he tossed the remaining stones from the sieve over his shoulder - and there was Greece.





More than two thirds of the country is classified as hilly and mountainous. The **Pindos range** traverses the Greek mainland from N.W. to S.E. dividing it in two. The mainland coastline is 4,000 km long while 9,841 islands, 114 of which are inhabited, add another 11,000 km of coastline.

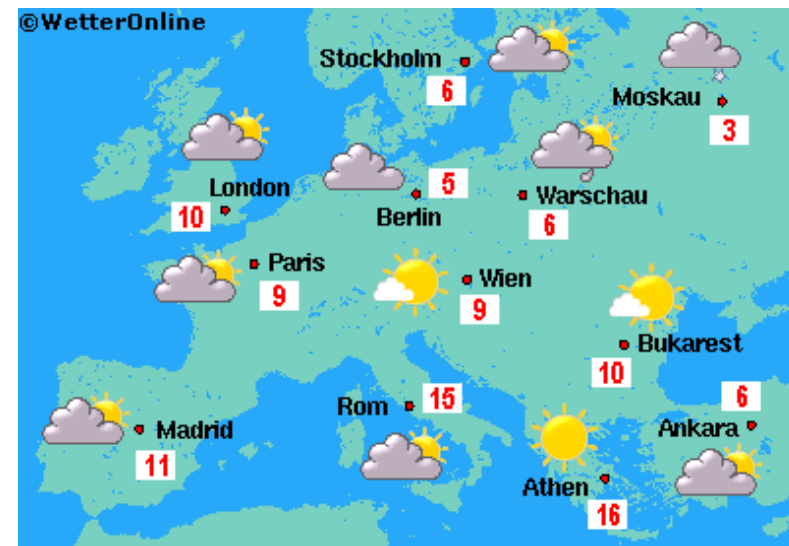
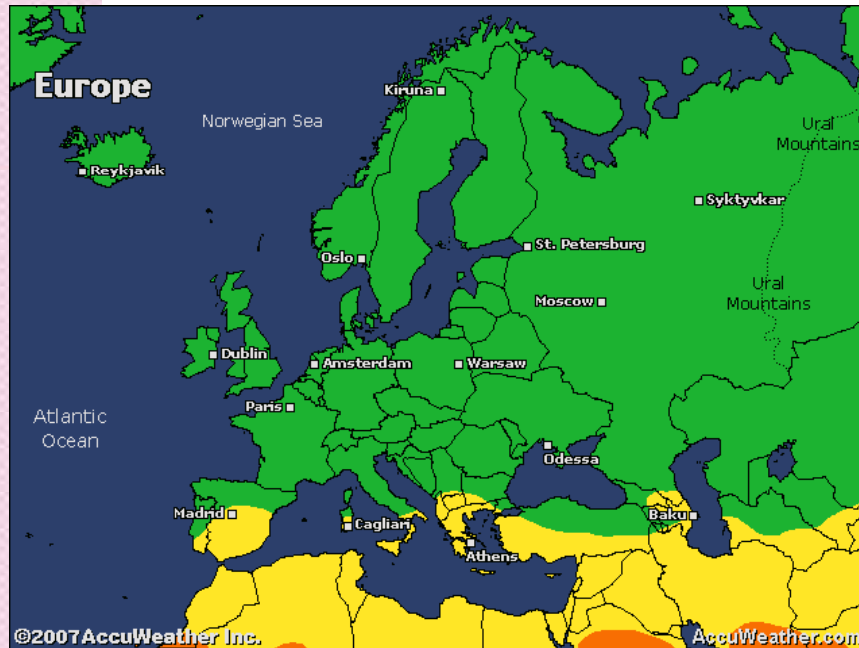
The highest Greek mountain is **Mount Olympus** (2,917 m.), believed to be *the seat of the 12 Gods of ancient Greek mythology.*

Islands. An essential element of the Greek tourism product peculiarity is the island phenomenon. A total of 227 inhabited islands (of which 164 are washed by the Aegean Sea) are part of the Greek territory. Still, only 78 islands have more than 100 inhabitants. 59.9% of the whole country's hotel units, 62.2% of the available rooms and 62.2% of the hotel beds is concentrated on the Greek islands.

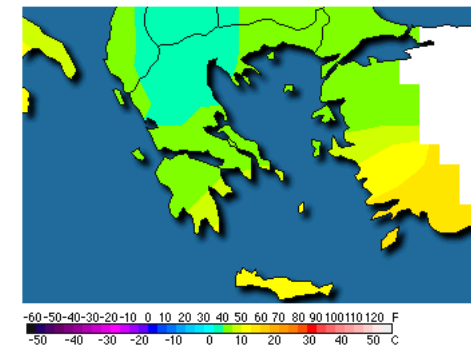
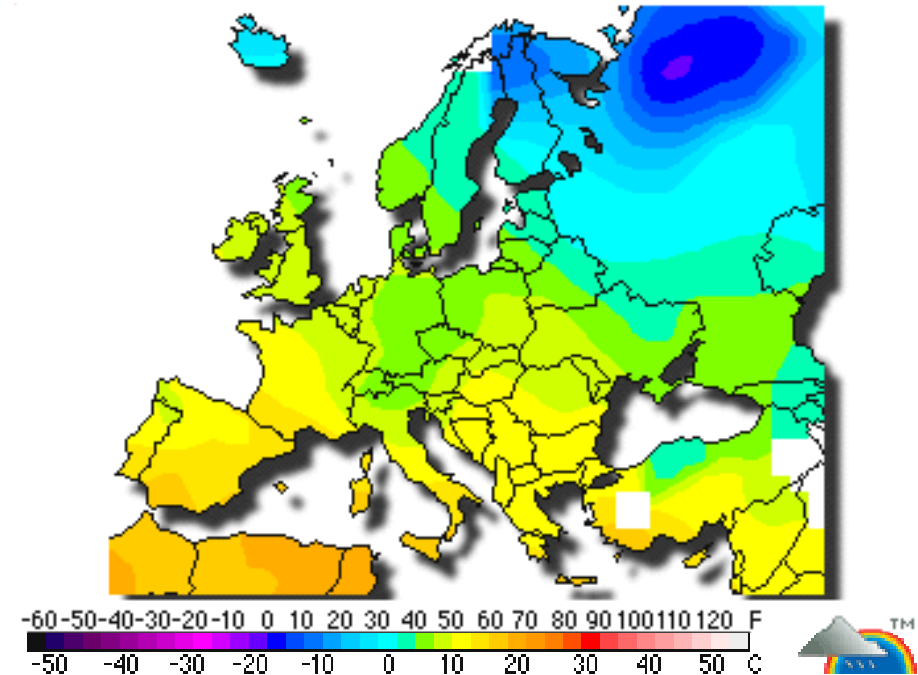


Climate

Mediterranean. Summers are hot and dry, winters usually mild. Most of the rain falls in autumn and winter.



There is plenty of sunshine, mild temperatures and a limited amount of rainfall. Due to the country's geographical position, its rugged relief and its distribution between the mainland and the sea, there is great variation in Greece's climate. In summer, the dry hot days are cooled by seasonal winds called the meltemi, while mountainous regions have generally lower temperatures. The winters are mild in lowland areas, with a minimum amount of snow and ice, yet, mountains are usually snow-covered.



Flora

Flora: Trees include white poplars, spearheaded cypresses, chestnut, pine, fir and olive trees. Of special beauty are the cultivated and wild flowers of Greece, many of which are mentioned in classical poetry and mythology, such as evosmon, anemone, violets, tulips, peonies, narcissus, parthenium, primrose and chamomile.



Fauna

Fauna: Wild animals include boar, bear, wild cat, brown squirrel, jackal, fox, deer, wolf. A number of 358 species of birds are found throughout Greece, two-thirds of which are migratory. Among the birds of prey are the golden and imperial eagle, and several species of falcons. Other indigenous varieties of birds are the owl, pelican, pheasant, partridge, woodcock and nightingale.



Marine Fauna

Marine Fauna: Some 246 species of marine life have been identified in Greek seas. Among the best known one species such as red mullet, lobster, squid, octopus, shrimp, crab, oyster, mussel and cockle. River fish are rare. Dolphins, so familiar in the legends and sculpture of antiquity, are still present in the Greek seas.



National Anthem

I know you by the sharp blade
Of your terrifying sword
I know you by the form you made
Taking the earth as victor lord.

Sprung from Grecian bones scattered
Hallowed on every vale
With your old valor unshattered,
Liberty, hail to you, hail!



The hellenic national anthem has the title **“Hymn to Liberty”**. It consists of 158 stanzas. It was composed by national poet Dionyssios Solomos in 1823. Composer Nikolaos Mantzaros set it to music in 1845 and in 1865 it became Greece’s national anthem. These two first stanzas are sung in public holidays or other official occasions

Greek Flag



The number of the lines is based on the number of the syllables (9) in the Greek phrase: Eleftheria H Thanatos (Freedom or Death).

The line pattern was chosen because of their similarity with the wavy sea that surrounds the shores of Greece. The interchange of blue and white colors makes the Hellenic Flag on a windy day to look like the Aegean Sea.

The Greek Square Cross that rests on the upper left-side of the flag and occupies one fourth of the total area demonstrates the respect and the devotion the Greek people have for the Greek Orthodox Church and signifies the important role of Christianity in the formation of the modern Hellenic Nation.



CAPITAL: Athens

The enchanting capital of Greece has always been the birthplace of civilization. It is the city where democracy was born and most of the wise men of ancient times. The most important civilization of ancient world flourished in Athens and relives through superb architectural masterpieces.

Athens is situated in the prefecture of Attica. It is built in a low land and mountains rise in a semicircle around the city. They include the peaks of Parnitha (Párnis), Pendéli, and Hymettos (Imittós). At least one of these peaks can be seen from nearly every street in Athens.

Athens is located just a few kilometers from the port of Piraeus, the central commercial port of the capital.



POPULATION.

The greater Athens metropolitan area had an estimated population of about 3.2 million in 2003, nearly one-third of the total population of Greece. Athens expanded rapidly during the 20th century and today covers nearly the entire Attic Plain.

In addition to ethnic Greeks, the Athens region is home to many thousands of immigrants. The city's high population density has contributed to urban problems such as traffic congestion, air pollution, and overcrowding.



Modern Athens was constructed around the walls of Acropolis. Today it is the political, social, cultural, financial and commercial center of Greece.

Athens is a city with different aspects. A stroll around the famous historic triangle (Plaka, Thission, Psyri) the oldest neighborhoods, reveals the coexistence of different eras. Old mansions, other well-preserved and other worn down by time.

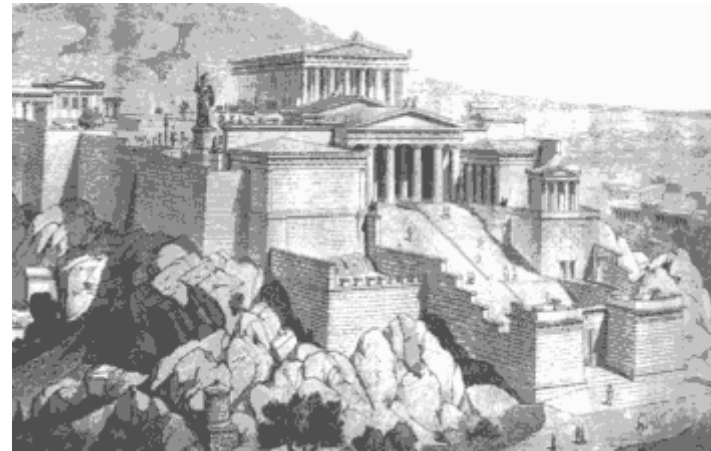
Luxurious department stores and small intimate shops. Fancy restaurants and traditional taverns. All have a place in this city.



The Parthenon

It is the most important and characteristic monument of the ancient Greek civilization and still remains its international symbol. It was dedicated to Athena Parthenos, (Athena the Virgin), the patron goddess of Athens. Although partly in ruins today, it remains a masterpiece of Greek architecture, especially of the Doric order—the earliest and simplest of the classical Greek styles.

It was built between 447 and 438 B.C. and its sculptural decoration was completed in 432 B.C. The construction of the monument was initiated by Perikles, the supervisor of the whole work was Pheidias, the famous Athenian sculptor, while Iktinos and Kallikrates were the architects of the building.



The Parthenon was a large, rectangular marble temple with 17 columns along each of its sides and 8 columns on each end. It measured about 31 by 70 m (102 by 230 ft). The tilt and the dimensions of the columns reflect remarkable awareness of certain optical distortions. For example, a perfectly straight column would appear to lean outward, and so the builders inclined the columns slightly inward to compensate for this distortion. In addition, they curved the columns somewhat so that the columns would appear to be straight as they tapered upward.



The Parthenon, one of the finest examples of Greek classical architecture, was built about 2,500 years ago. It stands at the top of the Acropolis, a hill with fortifications in Athens, Greece.





Sources

Britannica
National Geographic