

There are a lot of things to do in Athens. Famous of course for its ancient ruins and artifacts it is also home to a thriving food and cafe culture, a buzzing arts scene and some stunning outdoor venues, events and activities that cater to people of all ages and for all budgets. Its an affordable and eclectic city that is easy to get around and the friendly locals are always happy to welcome visitors to their extraordinary home.

PLANNING A TRIP TO GREECE?

Whether you've been before or it's your first time it can be hard to process all the information out there. Be sure to check out our complete [Planning Guide](#) as well as our [FREE 13-page downloadable itinerary](#).

If you are feeling really overwhelmed you might like a [Trip Consultation](#) perhaps!?

And come join our private [Facebook Group](#) where you can ask questions and get advice from real travellers!



The Acropolis

Number one on your list of course has to be The Acropolis. The Acropolis, which literally translates to “highest point of the town,” and was the location of the citadel originally occupied by the Mycenaen kings. As the centuries progressed, the Acropolis became home to several temples, shrines, and sanctuaries. The most famous of the temples is the temple

to Athena, the Parthenon. There is also a theater and sanctuary for Dionysus on what is now referred to as the Southern Slope.

Read our [Complete Guide](#) to visiting the Acropolis!

Tip: *To spare yourself from the long queues at the main entrance, head farther down the hilly street to the lesser-traveled south slope entrance. Also try to go either as soon as it opens or just before closing not just to avoid the crowds but also the sun, especially in Summer.*

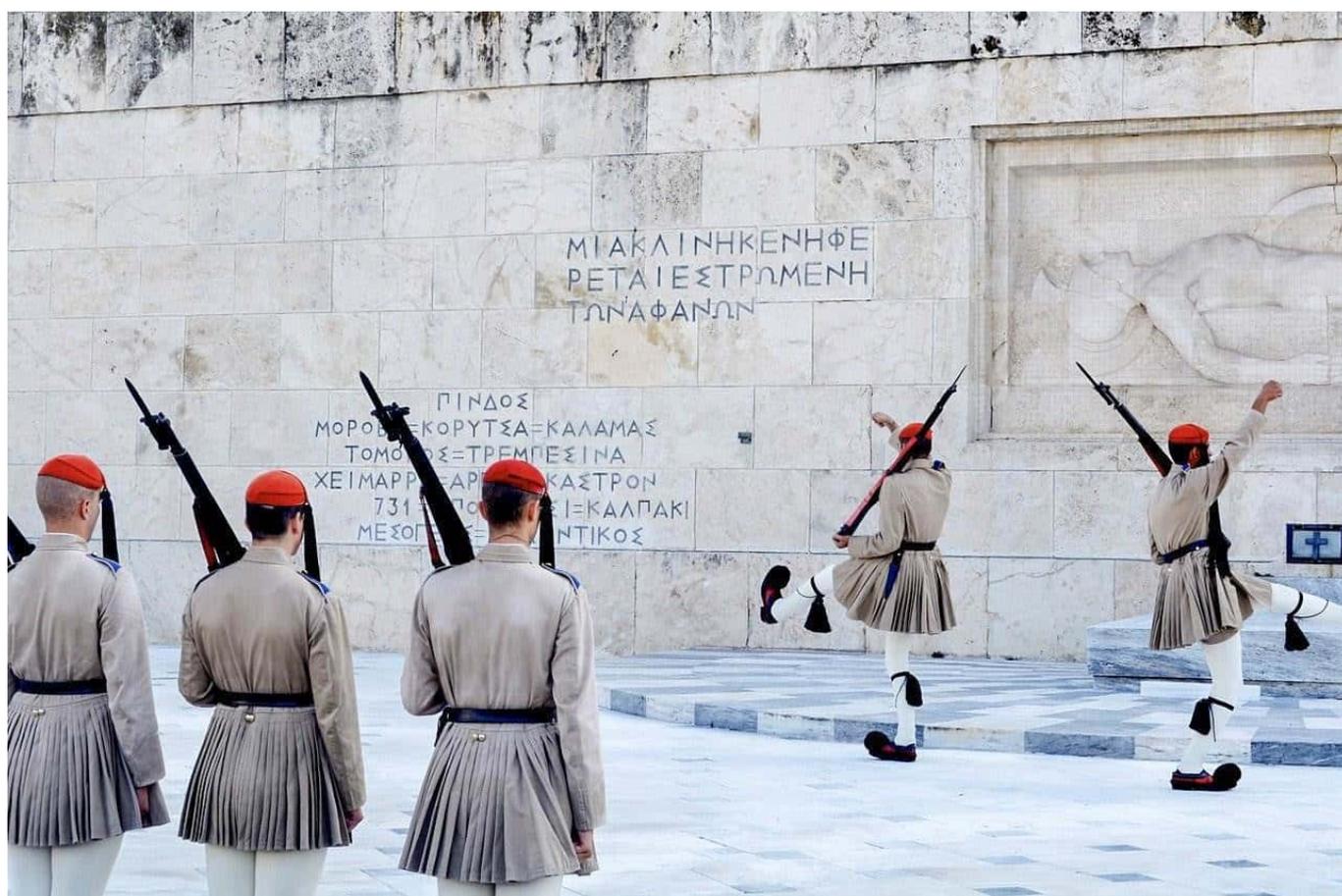


The Acropolis Museum

The first Museum of Acropolis was completed in 1874 and underwent a moderate extension in the 1950s. However, subsequent excavations on the Acropolis hill brought many new artefacts to light and the museum's capacity was significantly expanded and modernised in time for the 2004 Olympic Games. It includes the creation of a gallery for the exhibition of the Parthenon Marbles which to this day remain in The British Museum in London.

Read our [complete guide](#) to visiting the Acropolis and the Acropolis museum!

This is an excellent museum. Big, bold and home to some extraordinary artifacts as well as some real excavations. There are a couple of good cafes and it is easy to get around. I suggest you visit it on the same day as The Acropolis. Visiting hours and ticket information can be found [HERE](#)



Evzones

The [Evzones](#) is an elite unit of the Hellenic Army who, amongst other things, are known for their very distinctive uniform and elaborate walk. They are charged with guarding the Monument of the Unknown Soldier in front of the Hellenic Parliament and the Presidential Mansion.

The soldiers are selected according to their height, excellent physical condition, and psychological state as well as character and morality, and it is considered a great honour to serve as an Evzone, who are much admired.

Where: outside Parliament at the end of Syntagma Square

When: each hour, on the hour, and an official weekly ceremony at 11am on Sundays.

Cost: Free

Further reading : [The Elite Greek Presidential Guard](#)



Shopping

Not surprisingly the Greeks have some stunning fashion and are particularly experts at shoes and kaftans (Sandals and Togas !)

The first place most people head for shopping is the central pedestrian street of Ermou. Packed with all the high street brands you would expect such as Zara and H & M but also home to numerous independent stores including a plethora of shoe shops.

The biggest department store, Attica, can be found on Omonia Street, just off Syntagma Square. It has a huge range of brands and is housed in a beautiful neo-classical building. It is to Athens what Harrods is to London.

Dont forget the Greek owned jewellery store Follie Follie which can be found all around the world but its headquarters are in Athens. Other Greek brands to keep an eye out for are Korres beauty products and one of my favourite fashion labels, La Stampa.

In Monastiraki there is a famous sandal maker called Melissinos who counts a number of Hollywood celebrities as his customers

Where: Ermou street and surrounds

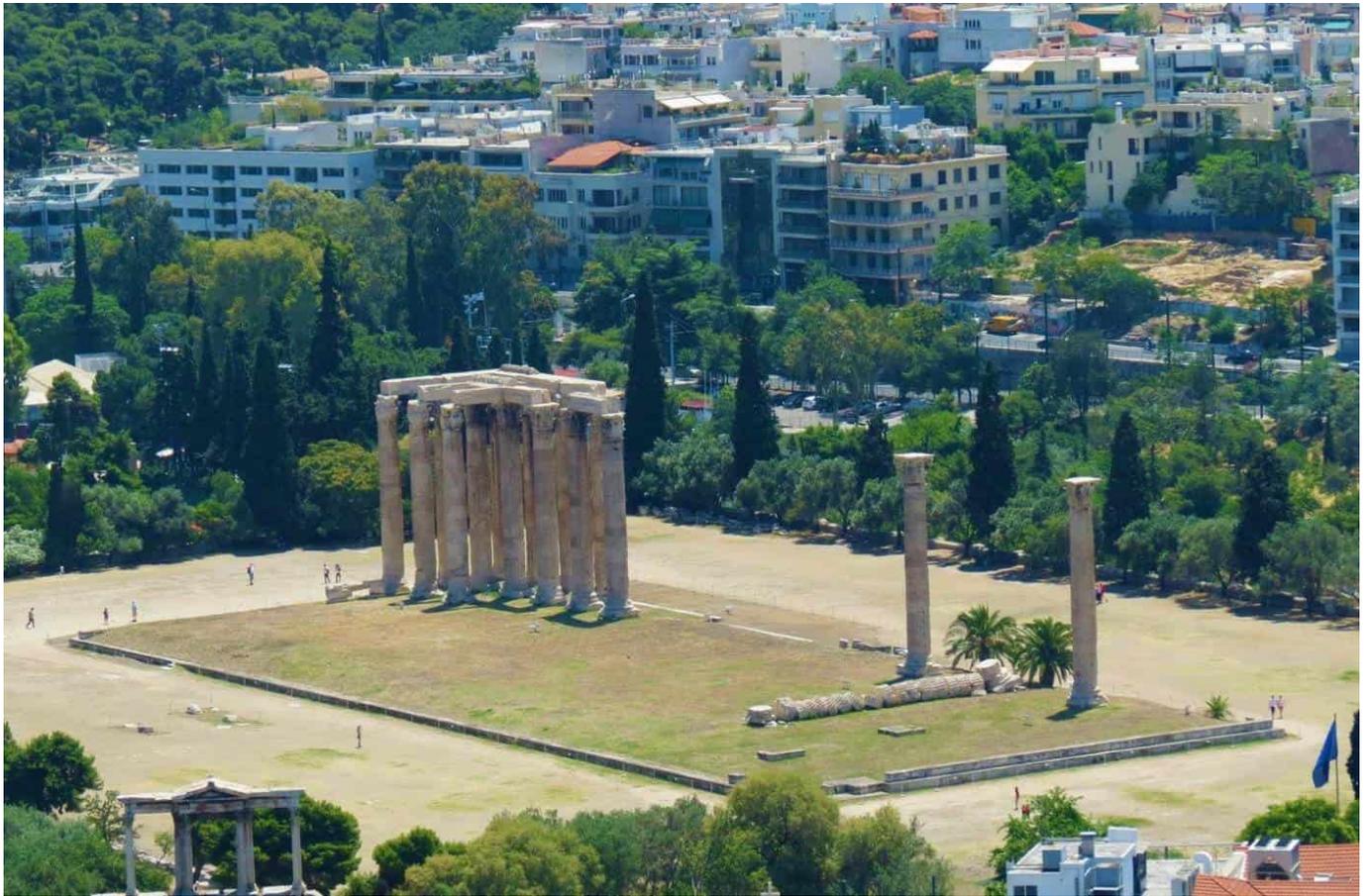
When:

Mon, Wed, Sat: 09:00-15:00.

Tue, Thu, Fri: 09:00-14:30 & 17:00-20:30.

All shops close on National Holidays. Souvenir shops and convenience stores near tourist sites open longer hours, usually 09:00-23:00 every day.

Cost: the sky's the limit!



The Temple of Olympian Zeus

The Temple of Olympian Zeus was completed in 132 AD after being partially built and in limbo for over 600 years after its original conception.

It was originally built with 104 Corinthian-style columns of which today there are only 15 left. You will notice the temple from many high vantage points across the city and it is only a short walk from the center of town.

Where: Leoforos Vailisis Amalias Road – a short walk west from the Acropolis and south from Syntagma Square/Parliament, just below the National Gardens.

When: Open daily 8am – 7:30pm

Cost: 2€



Ancient Agora

The word Agora means 'market' or meeting place in Greek and located on the Northwest slopes of the Acropolis you will find the ancient Agora of Athens.

For over 5000 years this thriving marketplace was used by millions over people to trade, reside and for recreational purposes and it was modified and rebuilt countless times during the various occupations by the Romans, Ottomans, Byzantines and more.

Today it is a ruin but you can still clearly see how and where people went about their days.

There are two buildings still standing, the Stoa of Attalos and the incredible [Temple of Hephaestus](#). Other things to see around the site are ancient drainage canals, altars, shrines, a bath and the remains of a prison as well as a roman statue. There is a very good museum on-site as well.

Location: Adrianous Street, west of Monastiraki Square

When: daily between 8 am and 3 pm

Cost : Adult: 8€ Student: 4€



Mount Lycabettus

Lycabettus hill is the highest point in Athens and its central location means it has the best views in the city. It can be accessed car/taxi, on foot from the inner suburb of Kolonaki or by Funicular.

At the top you can enjoy 360 degrees of Athens and can easily see the Acropolis, Temple of Olympian Zeus and the Panathenaic Stadium which is all especially beautiful at dusk when the lights all come on. You can see right out over the Aegean and the Saronic Islands.

There is a lovely restaurant at the top called Orizontes with incredible sunset views, and a Church and cafe as well.

Where : Corner of Ploutarhiou & Aristippou Streets, Kolonaki

When : the Funicular runs daily between 9:30am - 2:30am

Cost : 7 euro for a round trip



Athens Markets

For fresh food the biggest market is the Central Market also known as Varvakeios market. It's not only where the locals get their groceries, but also where the chefs get their fresh fish, nuts, vegetables and meat. There are some [excellent food tours](#) that include Athens Central Market in their itinerary.

The market is divided into two areas, the indoor area which sells fresh meat and fish where there are also some small traditional restaurants where you can order homemade dishes.

Across the road and in the area of the surrounding street are the vegetables and fruit stands with an abundance of olives, wine, nuts and small goods for sale.

Where : between Monastiraki and Omonia on Athinas street,

When : Monday through Saturday till 3PM.

Cost : free to look

Tip: There is also the famous Monistiraki Flea Market right behind Monastiraki Square and Metro Station. This is open every day but the casual stall holders come on Sundays which is the main market day. Browse through a treasure trove of vintage collectables, bric-a-brac, records, art work, furniture and more.



Walking Food Tours

There are several really excellent Walking Food Tours in Athens.

The local guides are extremely well connected and knowledgeable and will take you to carefully selected specialty food shops, where you'll taste some of the finest olive oil, cheese, and honey available in the city, as well as local delicacies such as pastourma cured meat and local drinks too.

On this [3.5-hour guided food tour](#) you'll stroll through traditional Athens neighborhoods and visit some wonderful pastry shops that serve tempting Greek sweets. You'll be immersed in the fragrances and colors of local spices, the secret behind renowned Greek dishes, and

aromas of Greek coffee as well.

Who: [Athens Food on Foot](#) - use the promo code 'grecetravelplanning' for a further 5% off

When: Daily

Cost: Varies

Further reading: [Food Tours and Cooking Classes in Greece](#)



Stavros Niarchos Cultural Centre

Opened in 2016 the Stavros Niarchos Cultural Centre is home to the Greek National Opera, the National Library of Greece and the beautiful Stavros Niarchos Park. It was funded by a

foundation founded by Greek Shipping Tycoon Stavros Niarchos.

It is a remarkable feat of architecture designed by the famous Italian architect Renzo Piano and offers a variety of outdoor activities as well as tours during the week.

Activities in winter include ice-skating and throughout the year there is bike hire, cycling, dancing fountains, art installations, exercise classes, festivals and concerts as well as Opera and Ballet performances indoors.

Where: Evripidou & Doiranis St, Kallithea

When: Vary but the visitor's centre is open from 8:30am to 10pm.

Cost: many are free (for all events see [official website](#))



Visit a Hammam

One of the great legacies of the Ancient Greeks and the Ottomans are the Turkish-style bathhouses found in several places in Greece, including Athens.

These Hammams are very impressive with big, marble treatment rooms with hot and cold plunge pools and a big range of services including a 'royal hammam treatment' which involves a full body exfoliation and scrub with Turkish Royal coffee and rosewater and a whole body mask of honey and sesame seed. Then a massage and stretch with a hair wash and scalp massage.

You will never be cleaner!

We love [Old City Hammam](#) near the Acropolis Museum and [Polis Hammam](#) near Monastiraki Square, but there are several other excellent ones as well.

image credit: Polis Hammam

Day Trips from Athens



Sounion and the Athenian Riviera

There are a number of [incredible day trips](#) that you can do from Athens.

One of the most popular is down to the Sounion Peninsula where the amazing Temple of Poseidon sits proudly looking out to sea. Its fantastic to visit at sunset and you can also pop into the Vouliagmeni Cave and lake up the road as well.

If you have time you can make a full day of it and spend some time at one of the beaches in the area known as the Athenian Riviera.

You can either take a private tour or taxi or its possible to do all this by public transport.

A private sunset tour is really something quite unforgettable and they can be tailored to suit your interests and agenda. It's also possible to book one for an entire group (up to 7) and you can be picked up and dropped back to anywhere in Athens, including the cruise ship port.



Meteora

Meteora is a [World Heritage Site](#) in central Greece that consists of towering rock pinnacles with a number of monasteries built on top.

People come from all over the world to marvel at both these amazing natural and man-made

elements and to visit the Monasteries, beautiful in their own right and a fascinating insight into the monastic orthodox life. You can also spend a few days exploring the area which is in Thessaly, the food bowl of Greece and full of agriculture, history and beautiful, authentic, rural settings.

Whilst it is preferable to stay a night or two in Kalambaka at the foot of the towers it is possible to visit Meteora in a single, albeit very long, day.

There are a number of ways you can [visit Meteora](#) including by train, car or [private tour](#). It really is one of the most extraordinary places you will see, anywhere!



Delphi

Another very popular day trip is to the [UNESCO world heritage site](#) of Delphi, once believed to be the center of the world and home to the Oracle, a significant figure in Ancient Greek history.

Positioned at the foot of Mount Parnassos with breathtaking views out to the Corinthian Gulf it is a long day including 5 hours of driving, but well worth it. There are a number of [day tours to Delphi](#) that are available.

If you have an extra day you can include an overnight stay further north to see the unbelievable monasteries of [Meteora](#).

Further reading: [A Complete Guide to Delphi](#)



The Saronic Islands

The Saronics are the closest group of islands to Athens and are really worth a look if not a stay. These islands wrap round the Saronic gulf which protect them well from inclement weather so they are a good all round destination too.

The main islands to visit are [Aegina](#), Poros, [Hydra](#) and [Spetses](#) but there are several lesser known islands as well.

You can either catch public ferries out to one or several of them, or take an [organised cruise](#) which visits several and includes lunch and transfers.

Home to Leonard Cohen for almost 20 years and still the playground for many rich Athenians there are no cars on Hydra so transport is either by foot, water taxi or donkey !



The Athenian Riviera

The stretch of coastline that runs along the western side of Athens is often referred to as the 'Riviera' and is home to several upmarket beachside suburbs, numerous shops and restaurants, and some excellent beach clubs, several of which would rival those on the islands.

The most popular suburbs are Alimos, Glyfada, and Vouliagmeni. This is an area we often

suggest people stay on their last night or two in Greece, especially if they have already visited the ancient centre. Why not enjoy your last night by the beach instead of at an airport hotel? In fact this area is closer to the airport than the ancient centre, especially the southern end, so it can be a good [airport hotel alternative](#).

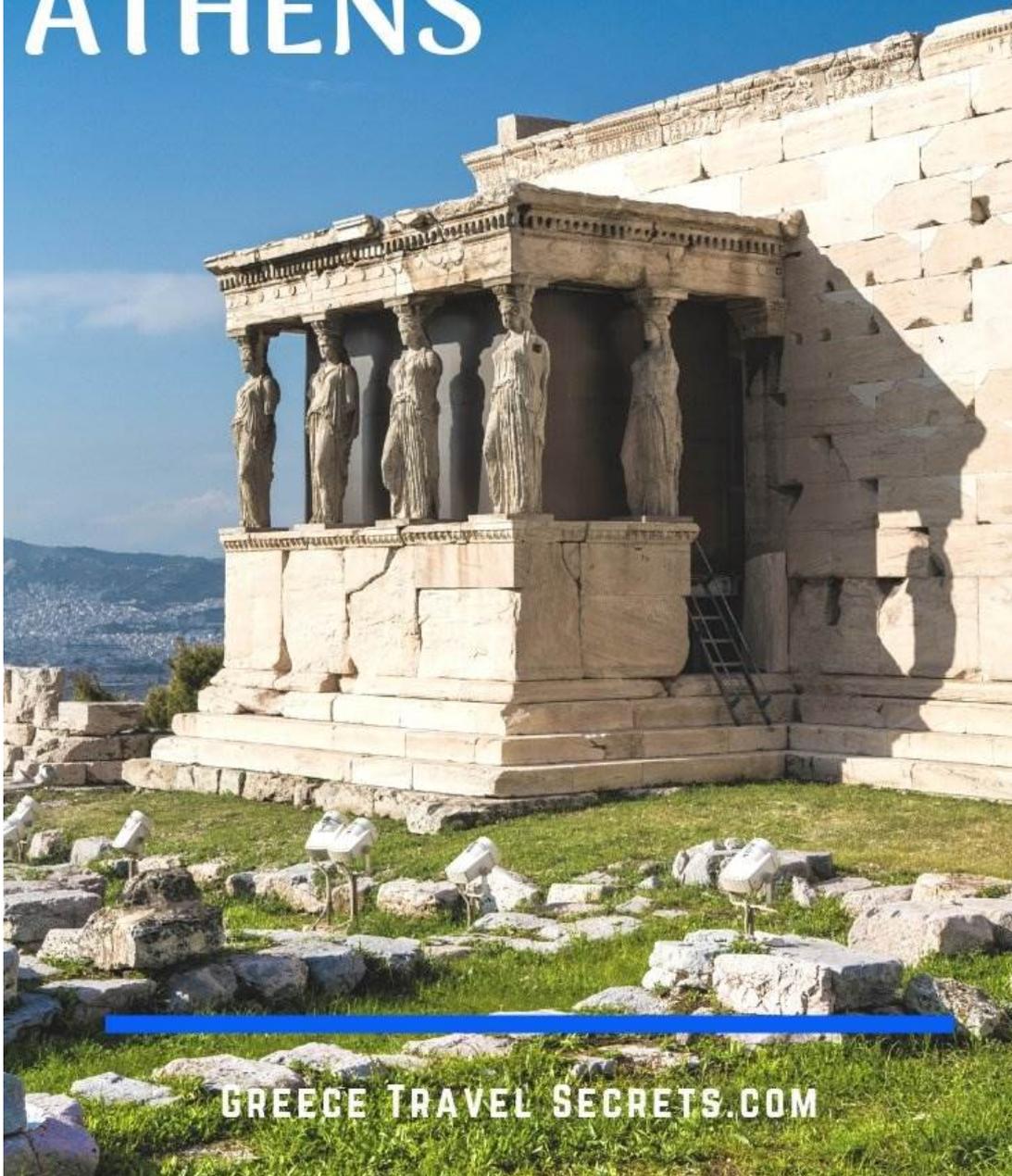
Alimos is home to Kalamaki Beach and famous [Bolivar Beach Bar](#), a popular playground for Athenians which hosts international DJs year round, and there are plenty of water sports and activities on offer along the beach. You can get there by taxi, bus, or drive or the tram runs right from the ancient center (Syntagma) along the coast to Voula, with numerous stops along the way.

Vouliagmeni is home to many Athenian celebrities, politicians, and VIPs, and there are a number of upmarket hotels and resorts there including the only [Four Seasons in Greece](#). There are two main beaches - Vouliagmeni public beach which has a small entry fee and lots of organised activities and amenities. There is also the more exclusive [Astir Beach](#) which has a very upmarket beach club, an archeological site and some excellent restaurants such as [Ithaki](#).

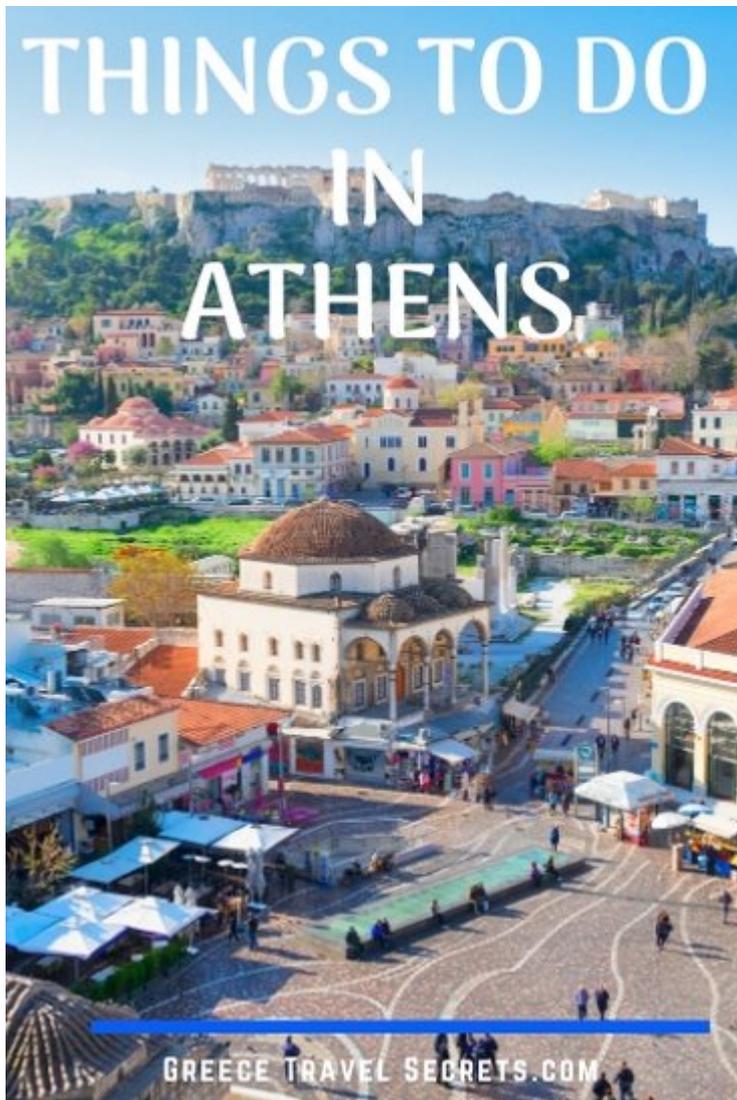
Vouliagmeni is also where you will find [Vouliagmeni Lake](#), a thermal lake with healing properties that has a health spa, sunbeds and a restaurant so many people make a day of it here. It is right across the road from the beach and suitable for people with limited mobility too.

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