



CHANGING MINDS AND LIVES
MOUNT HOLYOKE EUROPEAN ALUMNAE SYMPOSIUM
ATHENS -GREECE OCTOBER 4-6, 2019

PRACTICAL INFORMATION - “ATHENS & BEYOND” CITY GUIDE

The organizing committee of the 15th Mount Holyoke European Alumnae Symposium in Athens / Fouguro have compiled practical information as well as an “Athens & Beyond” city guide.

The guide contains a lot of information which is practical for the weekend as well as if you are planning to stay longer. Note, however, that although we have tried to double-check the information provided, we cannot guarantee that things have not changed nor your experience.

Enjoy Athens and Greece! See you soon!

Anastasia Dimitropoulou '97, Maddy Hewitt '84, Martha Murray FP'91, Ioli Christopoulou '01, on behalf of the organizing committee

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Program overview

| Friday, October 4, 2019 | | Venue: Royal Olympic Hotel |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| 9:30 am - 6:00 pm | Symposium Registration, The Royal Olympic Lobby | |
| Optional Tours: All tours depart promptly from the Royal Olympic Hotel at the indicated time. Please gather 15 mins earlier . Your guides will bring you back to the Royal Olympic. | | |
| 10:30 am - 2:30 pm | Acropolis and Acropolis Museum | |
| 10:30 am - 1:00 pm | Experiencing taste, ritual and hospitality through food | |
| 1:30 - 3:00 pm | Under the City: Archaeological tour in Metro stations | |
| 1:30 - 3:00 pm | A Byzantine Tour of Athens | |
| 1:30 - 3:00 pm | A tour of modern Athens and places of memory and history | |
| 5:00 pm | Opening of 15th Mount Holyoke European Alumnae Symposium <i>Panorama Hall, Royal Olympic</i> Welcome reception & remarks A conversation on Change and Mount Holyoke College | |
| 7:30 pm | Gala Dinner <i>Ioannis Restaurant, Royal Olympic</i> | |

| Saturday October 5, 2019 | | Venues: FOUGARO and SEMELI Estate |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| 8:15 am | Gather at the entrance of the Royal Olympic to take buses to Fougaro | |
| 10:30 am - 4:45 pm | A day spent at Fougaro featuring three engaging panel discussions. Day will include Greek cuisine buffet lunch. | |
| 4:45 pm | Gather at Fougaro to take buses to Semeli Estate | |
| 6:00 pm | Semeli Estate: Tour of winery Wine tasting - Light dinner - Greek dancing | |
| 9:30 pm | Leave Semeli and return to the Royal Olympic in Athens | |

| Sunday, October 6, 2019 | | Venue: Panorama Hall, Royal Olympic Hotel |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| 9:00 am | Morning panel | |
| 10:15 -10:45 am | Coffee Break | |
| 10:45 am | Reflection session & Recognitions, Thanks, Announcement of next Symposium venue | |
| 12:00 | 15 th Mount Holyoke European Alumnae Symposium adjourns | |

Useful websites

Here are two websites filled with information, practical advice and suggestions on Greece:

mattbarrett-travel.com: Matt Barrett writes exclusively about Greece and his website provides a wealth of information about Athens and the rest of Greece; Matt also hosts a Facebook page at Matt Barrett Econopouly

ricksteves.com: Go to Explore Europe and select Greece. For questions select Travel Forum. Rick has a Facebook page and has collaborated with Matt Barrett to write about Athens at grecetravel.com

Reading list

<https://www.petersommer.com/greece/suggested-reading>: This site offers a long list of reading selections on Greece and its history.

taleaway.com/books-set-in-greece: This site lists both fiction and non-fiction selections

<https://theculturetrip.com/europe/greece/articles/11-books-based-on-greece-everyone-needs-to-read/>: This site offers a few additional listings

Dress code

We would like to keep the Symposium to be about you feeling good, so we will not have a strict dress code. If in doubt, elegant casual style is the safest option. We definitely recommend comfortable shoes.

If you are going on a tour on Friday, wear comfortable shoes and note that it may get warm, so dress accordingly with light layers.

On Friday evening, when the Symposium gala will take place, you are invited to wear something nice and elegant, cocktail style or a bit more formal, but not black tie.

On Saturday, we are going on a day-long excursion. Fougaro is an industrial site turned into a cultural center and Semeli is a winery in the countryside. So, dress accordingly, wear comfortable walking shoes (heels must be avoided) and bring a light jacket or a shawl as it may get cool in the evening.

From the airport to the city center

From the Athens International Airport the distance to city center of Athens is 30 km.

By Metro:

You can take the metro, Line 3 - Direction Agia Marina (Saint Marina) and get off at Syntagma square. Make sure that you take the metro and not the regional train.

The metro runs every 30 min from about 6:30-23:30. The journey to Athens is about 45 minutes.

Ticket price: 10 euro. Do not forget to validate your ticket.

You can get off at Syntagma. If you are staying near the Acropolis, then you can change to take line 2 direction Ag. Dimitrios/Elliniko and get off at the next stop 'Acropolis'.

* Watch out for your personal belongings at all time. Be very careful with your money, passport, and tickets. Don't place them in your pockets and hold on to your purse.

By Bus:

There is a direct route to Syntagma Square on the X 95.

Ticket price: 6 euro. Do not forget to validate your ticket on the bus. The journey is about 45-55 minutes.

If you are staying near the Acropolis, from Syntagma square, you can:

- 1) take the metro to take line 2 direction Ag. Dimitrios/Elliniko and get off at the next stop 'Acropolis'
- 2) walk
- 3) take a taxi, which should cost you less than 5 euros to the Royal Olympic/Acropolis area.

By Taxi:

The journey to central Athens is approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The cost should not exceed 40 euro, with an extra charge during the night.

Additional directions will certainly be available on your hotel's website.

For more information on this you can go to www.greektravel.com, Athens Survival Guide.

Practical Tips & Safety

Greece is one of the safest countries in Europe. You will find that Greeks are often very welcoming and helpful, and many speak English with varying degrees of proficiency. If you are lost, if you need help, just ask someone for help. That said, here are a few words of caution, since as you know, it's always good to be smart and alert when traveling.

- Athens is a wonderful, fun city; however, just like in any other big city, you have to be very carefully with your belongings; especially when taking the **metro** and the **bus** and around the main **touristic spots** and on crowded **pedestrian streets** like Ermou St. There have been increasing incidences of pickpocketing in Athens in recent years. The standard *modus operandi* is for several people to block the exit of the metro car or bus, making it difficult for their target to exit when they arrive at their designated stop. The perpetrators work in teams, and by the time you realize that your wallet is missing, it has already been passed off to one of their accomplices. Tourists in particular are targeted, although locals are also victims!
- Take the same precautions you would take in any large city. If you have a backpack, carry it in front of you, keep your hand on your purse when you are in crowds, carry a

small amount of cash in a pocket so you don't have to take your wallet out when you are buying tickets or coffee, and be careful when using ATMs. Most businesses accept credit cards and there is no need to carry your passport with you wherever you go, although if it makes you feel more comfortable, carry a photocopy of it with you.

- Latest model expensive cell phones are in high demand, so take care when you use yours and never leave it out on a table when you are having coffee in outdoor cafes or eating at tavernas. Other types of crime are negligible and if you use common sense, you should be perfectly safe in Athens.
- We recommend these sites for information and useful tips concerning safety and well-being while in Greece:
 - <https://safearound.com/europe/greece/athens/>
 - <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/greece/athens/safety>
 - www.greektravel.com → Athens Survival Guide
- In any case, it's a good idea to keep copies of your main travel documents in a separate place.
- In the touristic shops and the flea markets, you can always ask for a "better price."
- Greece's currency is the **Euro**. **ATM** machines are readily available in the city and airport. At Fougaro and Semeli there won't be an ATM in place, but if you would like to buy something at Fougaro or at Semeli, credit and debit cards are accepted.
- **Tip** is not included in the price of a meal, but there is no specific % for tipping. A small amount, as a token of appreciation (5-10%) is appreciated. You should leave the tip on the table, give it to the waiter or just say that you don't need change, especially if you are rounding off the amount.
- **Taxis** are generally cheap and you can both ask for one at your hotel or hail one in the street. Taxi drivers are generally nice and love to talk! However, there are some that will try to take advantage of tourists. Make sure the meter is on. A tip to a taxi driver is appreciated, especially if you have luggage. But, tip the driver (10%) only if you are happy with the service.

Welcome to Athens

Welcome Symposium Delegates!

Whether you're visiting Athens for the first time or you've been here many times before, you'll inevitably feel a bit of awe knowing you are visiting the birthplace of the most vital forces and influential movements in modern civilization. What better place to experience this reverence than the Acropolis, the shrine of Western civilization and the symbol of the greatness of the ancient Athenians. There, as you stand on the heights of this celebrated limestone rock and look down upon the mundane world below, close your eyes for a moment and you will feel a sense of peace and serenity. The lasting impression is of a sanctuary, a sublime expression of religious dedication.

In fact, the **Acropolis** was a special place for the ancient Athenians. In the fifth century BC, the Acropolis was an impressive sanctuary sacred to the gods, especially glorious Athena, the patron goddess of the city. But the average Athenian spent most of his time elsewhere. The busiest place in the city was the agora, the gathering place, located northwest of the Acropolis.

If the Acropolis was the soul of the "polis", the **agora** was its heart. Everything took place in the agora; political, religious, social and commercial activities were all mixed together here. Crowded around the hub of the open square were outdoor markets, small shrines, various government buildings, and even barber shops and wine shops. Everywhere men strolled and gathered and strolled and gathered again, discussing the issues and ideas of the day. Here, as you stand amidst the ruins of the shaded walks that crisscrossed through the agora, close your eyes---you won't feel the tranquility and stillness of the Acropolis, but instead will hear the hustle bustle of news, ideas, and gossip being exchanged side by side with goods and currencies.

You know, if you really think about it, little has really changed from the world of the ancient Athenians to our modern age. The basics have stayed the same. Don't we too have our centers of worship and consecrated places where we seek peaceful refuge from everyday life? Aren't our downtowns all bursting with stores and boutiques and office buildings? Yes, we too have come here to discuss the issues of the day.

So, since we're in Athens, doing essentially what the great Athenian civilization did 2500 years before us, why not take a look back and see what the ancient Athenians have to offer us on the issues we will be tackling these next few days---**knowledge, wellness, and leadership.**

The ancient Athenians possessed an insatiable love of knowledge and a determination to see things as they really are. They had a burning desire to be able to give rational explanations of everything in heaven and earth. Hence, the paramount importance of mathematics, a science based on pure logic. Initially, mathematics' relevance was expressed in philosophical terms; Pythagoras' doctrine saw mathematics as one of the three ways in which man's soul could be purified and thus liberated from its imprisonment in the human body.

Gradually, however, mathematics grew into a body of knowledge of its own. In the short span of 350 years, from Pythagoras to Euclid to Archimedes, the Greeks laid down principles, fixed terminology, and invented methods. Moreover, they did this with such certain-

ty that through the ensuing centuries there has been no need to reconstruct, or to reject as unsound, any essential part of their doctrine.

Despite their unquenchable thirst for knowledge, the ancient Athenians did not consider the intellect to be the whole of life. The Athenian ideal was that of a **balanced** education, a training both of the mind and of the body, a development of the "whole man", ("whole person," our emphasis now). The ideal was encouraged by Pericles who supported the middle way, the virtuous path between the excesses of either the physical or the intellectual side of life.

Guided by the principle of "nothing to excess", the Athenians divided their time equally between discussion in the agora and exercise in the gymnasium. The belief in a sound mind in a firm body was further exemplified by the Olympic games, which began as a contest of warriors, but evolved into a friendly competition.

Whether their holistic approach was the key to the Athenians' greatness may be debated, but that which is undeniable is that fifth century BC Athens produced some of the noblest poetry and art, the finest political thinking and the most vital philosophy known to the world. The man who led and nourished this prominence was Pericles, the great statesman whose dignity, intelligence, and courage embodied all that was Athenian. Over and above his enormous success at stimulating growth in the wealth and power of Athens, perhaps Pericles' grandest accomplishment was leading the citizenry in their quests for democratic interests and ideals.

Pericles continually extolled the virtues of democracy: government by majority rule; ability rather than class determining a citizen's chances for promotion; equal justice for citizens; and, the reign of freedom of speech and action.

Thus, one might say, the interest of ancient Athens is not only historical; it is full of instruction for the future, too.

(From the NESAs Archives)

[What to do and what to see](#)

Athens—spreading across the Attica plain, shimmering as far as the eye can see—is a city of paradoxes, of stark beauty butting up against a jumble of steel and cement. Somehow it brings out the best in people, first because it constantly reminds one of a time when humans achieved so much—after all this was the cradle of Western civilization, and second because in a place of such periodic chaos, citizens must rise to extraordinary heights of tolerance, patience, and good humor. Those who get to know Athens are quick to detect the underlying current of hedonism that fuels the city, and Athens is most rewarding for the visitor who abandons a tight schedule to indulge in idiosyncrasies and quirky rhythms.

Syntagma and Parliament

The best way to get to know Athens is on foot. Walk to **Syntagma** or Constitution Square. On the way you'll pass the remaining columns of the **Temple of Olympian Zeus**, begun in the 6th century BC and completed 700 years later, by Emperor Hadrian, surpassing all other temples in Greece in size, only to be destroyed when the goths invaded. You'll also see Hadrian's arch, built by the same emperor. The Royal Olympic, our Mount Holyoke Symposium Hotel where we'll host our Gala dinner Friday night, also has spectacular views of these monuments.

Not far from **Hadrian's Arch**, at the upper end of Syntagma sits **Parliament**, formerly the royal palace where in 1843 King Otto claimed Greece's first constitution from a balcony. At the tomb of the unknown soldier in front of parliament, watch the changing of the ev-zone guards, stalwart men dressed as the freedom fighters that felled the Ottoman Empire.

It's said there are 400 pleats in their *foustanelles*, one for each year of the Ottoman occupation. They solemnly execute an elaborate step-and-shuffle ceremony every fifteen minutes (There's a longer version on Sunday). Next to Parliament is the **National Garden**, (formerly the Royal Garden) a luxuriant tangle of green for those who want a welcome relief on a hot day.

Plaka

Backtrack to **Plaka**, the old quarter, and its narrow streets winding past pastel neoclassical houses, tiny Byzantine churches and a dizzying array of shops where the merchandise ranges from stunning gold jewelry to plastic Parthenon music boxes. You'll come across such sights as the graceful 1st century BC Tower of the Winds, a combination water clock/sun dial/weather vane and the Monument of Lysicrates, erected in 335 BC in honor of a dramatic chorus, then built into Capuchin convent and finally used as Lord Byron's temporary study. You can also stop in the lovely Museum of Greek Folk Arts with its extensive costume collection covering Sarakatsani shepherd wear to Balkan Bridal gowns and a constructed village with paintings by primitive artist Theophilis, a 19th century eccentric who stalked Athens in Independence War gear.

Expect to spend a few hours exploring Plaka's nooks and crannies before continuing up to the Acropolis. On the way climb nearby **Filopappou Hill**, following the cobbled path off Dionysos Areopagitou, past the miniscule 11th century church Agios Dimitros for a resplendent view of the Parthenon, purple hued Ymettos mountain and the entire Attica plain.

Acropolis

The rock of the Acropolis and the ruins of the Parthenon dominate the Athens skyline; indeed no one is allowed to build higher, so that the monument is visible from all corners of the city center. The Athenian leader Pericles intended the temple to be a symbol of the city's imperial might; today it symbolizes the emergence of Western civilization. The sight was one of the earliest settlements in Greece, with a Neolithic community around 5,000 BC. In Mycaenean times, huge walls enclosed the royal palace where the cult of Athena was introduced, and in the 9th century BC, it became the heart of the first Greek city-state. The Parthenon, built in 438 BC was originally red and blue with marble roof tiles, but now it's a gleaming white, blinding in the afternoon sun, rosy at twilight. When

the Parthenon was being built, wrote Plutarch, every architect strove to surpass the magnificence of the design with the elegance of the execution. Through the centuries the Parthenon has undergone many changes—its roof and 28 columns were blown out when a venetian bombardment hit the gunpowder stored in the temple by Turks. To fully appreciate the site, including the Temple of Athena Nike and the Erechthion, we recommend the MHC tour with our expert guide.

* * * A “must-see” for Mount Holyoke sisters: The Acropolis Museum tour will include viewing some of the Caryatids dismantled from the Erechthion and a unique collection of *kores*, statues of young women dedicated by worshippers to the goddess Athena in the sixth century BC.

The following areas are also close to the Royal Olympic Hotel. They are interesting places where you can see different faces of Athens, and are full of restaurants and cafés. You can walk around and explore:

Gazi: Centered around Athens’ old gas plant, which is also open, it has been transformed into a chic haven of modern art galleries and museums, stylish cafés, clubs and restaurants. Located to the west of the Acropolis-Monastiraki-Plaka areas, and just northwest of Piraios (Piraeus) Street, in a neighborhood also known as “Rouf”.

Lykavittos Hill (aka, “Lykabettus”): Close to Kolonaki, a chic area filled with boutiques and cafes. The Hill is one of the few green spaces of Athens. At the top of the hill you can enjoy a coffee at the café (and restaurant). There is also the “Horizontes” restaurant with great views of the city. At the top is St. George’s church. Also on the mount, is the Lykavittos Amphitheater, which hosts summer concerts. Accessible via the “teleferik” (cable car), which starts in Kolonaki on Aristippou St and actually goes through the mountain.

Psyrri: Popular and fun, a ‘night on the town’. Psyrri’s charming pedestrian ways are full of cafés, ouzeries (places where you can drink “ouzo” with Greek appetizers), restaurants, bars, clubs, theaters and galleries, just north of Monastiraki Square (end of Mitropoleos St). Many ouzeries and restaurants feature live music - it’s fun just to wander around, along with the after-theater or weekend crowds.

Here is a list of main sites and museums in Athens. You can find many [more](#), to suit your interests and desires.

- [The Acropolis](#), the [Acropolis Museum](#)
- [Agora](#)
- National Archaeological Museum: <https://www.namuseum.gr/>
- Museum of Cycladic Art Museum: <https://cycladic.gr/en>
- Benaki Museum: <https://www.benaki.org> The Benaki Museum has several differently themed museums. We would recommend the Museum of Greek Culture (near Syntagma Square, the Parliament and the National Garden)

Enjoy this magical city. Explore the sites, the culture, the history and the changes over time!

Greek Food

- Greek food is simply amazing and healthy; there are options for any type of culinary choices and nutritional preferences. A few suggestions are: “spanakopita” (spinach pie), “tiropita” (cheese pie), “moussaka” (eggplants, potatoes, minced meat & béchamel sauce) “pastitsio” (the Greek “lasagna”), “dolmades” (stuffed grape leaves with or without meat), grilled octopus, grilled or fried calamari, fried “atherina” (small fish like anchovies) or fried sardines, “bakalaos with skordalia” (fried cod with garlic potato purée), “tzatziki” (yogurt with cucumber, dill and garlic), taramosalata (fish egg salad), melitzanosalata (eggplant salad), “horiatiki salad” (typical Greek salad), “saganaki” (greek grilled cheese with lemon), “horta” (boiled greens with olive oil and lemon), “keftedakia” (fried Greek meatballs), “biftekia” (grilled Greek burger), “gemista” (stuffed vegetables with rice), “gigantes” (giant beans in tomato sauce), “bamies” (okra in tomato sauce), “fasolakia” (green beans in tomato sauce), “spanakorizo” (spinach rice with lemon), “agginares à la Polita” (artichokes with lemon), “briam” (a vegetarian dish with eggplants, potatoes, zucchini in tomato sauce), “hilopites” (typical Greek square pasta) “kokinisto” (literally means anything in red/tomato sauce, mainly meat with either French fries, or pasta, or potato purée), “kotopoulo lemonato” (chicken in lemon sauce and potatoes), “giouvetsi” (lamb in tomato sauce with Greek pasta similar to orzo)...and of course, “souvlaki” (a meat skewer, can be lamb, chicken or pork), or “gyros” (meat either inside a pita bread with tzatziki, tomatoes and onions or “open”/“merida” on a plate with the rest of the ingredients)...and so many more amazing dishes.
- What we also do in Greece is to order a lot of appetizers (called “mezes” or “mezedes”) and some main dishes and share with our group

Restaurants, tavernas, cafes and bars in Athens

Please note that this list includes only few of the thousands of places to eat in Athens. You will find food everywhere you go, from the humble souvlaki or gyro with pita, to bakeries, cafes, neighborhood tavernas, and gourmet restaurants.

There are also many bakeries offering all kinds of varieties of pies (cheese pies - tyropita, spinach pie - spanakopita) and many other options, which are great if you are walking around the city and looking for a quick bite.

If you have the time to explore you will surely find your favorite whether or not it's one of the places listed here.

You may also want to consider the recommendations of these two sites:

[Top 8 Rooftop Bars/Restaurants in Athens](#)

culinarybackstreets.com Click on Athens

(<https://culinarybackstreets.com/category/cities-category/athens/>). Those of you, who have registered for the optional food tour on Friday morning, will meet Carolina Doriti in person and she will be able to answer all your questions.

Near the Acropolis area (in alphabetical order)

Café Avissinia: Kynetou & Hadrianou street, in Avissinias Square, Athens, 210 321 7047, cafeavissinia.net, open daily from 11am-12am except on Monday. In the heart of the Monastiraki Flea Market. Get a table on the roof for an amazing view of the Acropolis at night

Cave of Acropolis Taverna: Thrasillou 24, Athens, 210 324 8593, spilia-akropolis.gr, open 10am-12am daily

Daphne's Restaurant: Lisikratous 4, Athens, 210 322 7971, daphnesrestaurant.gr, open daily 6pm-12am

Kuzina: Adrianou 9, 210 324 0133, kuzina.gr, open all day, ask for a table on the terrace for the Acropolis view

Strofi Restaurant: Rovertou Galli 25, Athens, 210 921 4130, strofi.gr, open T,W,Th, Fr noon-1am, Sat, Sun noon-12am, ask for a table on the terrace for the Acropolis view

Thespi Taverna: Thespidos 18, 210 325 0592, thespis.gr, open daily 9am-12am

Tzitzikas kai Mermigas ("The Grasshopper and the Ant"): Mitropoleos 12-14, 210 324 7607, tzitzikasmermigas.gr/en/syntagma/, open daily 12:30pm-12am, simple Greek cuisine with a twist

Museum Cafes

The museum cafes are favorites even for locals. You can combine your meal with a visit to the museum or just enjoy a meal!

Acropolis Museum Café and Restaurant: Acropolis Museum, Dionysiou Areopagitou 15, Athens, 210 900 0915, theacropolismuseum.gr, open 8am-4pm Monday, 8am-8pm Tuesday-Sunday, and until 10pm on Friday

National Archaeological Museum Café: lower level, National Archaeological Museum, 28th October Street 44, Athens, namuseum.gr, open daily 8am-8pm except Tuesday 12:30-8pm

Benaki Museum Café: Museum of Greek Culture, Koumpari 1, Athens, 210 367 1000, benaki.org, open M,W,F, Sat 10am-6pm, Th 10am-12am, Sun 10am-4pm, closed Tuesdays

Byzantine and Christian Museum Café: Leof. Vassilissis Sofias 22, Athens, 213 213 9517, byzantinemuseum.gr, open daily 8am-8pm except Tues. 12:30-8pm

Cycladic Museum Café: Neofitou Douka 4, Athens, 210 722 8321, cycladic.gr, M, W, F, Sat 10am-5pm, Th 10am-8pm, Sun 11am-5pm, closed Tuesdays

Numismatic Museum Café: Panepistimiou 12, Athens, 210 361 0067, nummus.gr, open M-Sat 9am-11pm, Sun 9am-8pm

Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center: Andrea Siggrou Avenue 364, Kallithea, 216 809 1000, www.snfcc.org/en, open daily from 6.30am-12am with many restaurants and cafés, a complex in the bay of Faliro in Athens which includes new facilities for the National Library of Greece and the Greek National Opera, as well as a beautiful park

In the center of town

Athinaikon: Mitropoleos 34, Syntagma, 210 325 2688, athinaikon.gr, open M-Sat 11am-12:30am, Sun 11am-7:30pm, for traditional Greek dishes

Barbounaki Mitropoleos: Mitropoleos Square 4, Syntagma, 210 324 7700, open daily 1pm-1am, fish and seafood with a few meat dishes

Cherchez la Femme: Mitropoleos 46, Syntagma, 210 322 2020, cherchezlafemme.gr, open daily 9am-12am except Sun 5pm-12am, breakfast till noon, Greek and international dishes for lunch and dinner

Coccoovaya: Xatzigianni Mexi 2A, next to the Hilton Hotel, 210 723 5005, cook-oovaya.gr/en/, open Sun-Th 1pm-12am, F-Sat 1pm - 1am, modern Greek cuisine in a beautiful setting

Ergon House: Mitropoleos 23, Syntagma, 210 010 9090, <https://house.ergonfoods.com/food-experience/>, open daily 7am-1am, all day eatery, breakfast, lunch and dinner, coffee and pastries

A Little Taste of Home: Dekeleon 3, Gazi, 210 341 0013, alittletasteofhome.gr, open F, Sat 7pm-midnight, T, W, Th 6pm-12am, closed Mondays, Syrian and eastern Mediterranean food

Nolan Restaurant: Voulis 31-33, Syntagma, 210 324 3545, nolanrestaurant.gr, open M-Sat 1pm-12am, closed Sunday, Japanese/Greek fusion food

Oikeio: Ploutarchou 15, Kolonaki, 210 725 9216, [face-book.com/oikeio/?rf=170935649625545](https://www.facebook.com/oikeio/?rf=170935649625545), open M-Th 12.30pm-12am, F-Sat 12.30pm-1am, Sun 12.30pm-6pm, traditional Greek food, for lunch or dinner, in the beautiful shopping area of Kolonaki

Zonars/Athénée: Voukourestiou 9, Syntagma, 210 325 1430 www.yatzer.com/zonars-restaurant-cafe-athens-greece, open daily 9am-10.30pm, for breakfast, lunch and early dinner, a legendary Greek restaurant revived with modern Greek cuisine

Vegetarian/Vegan Restaurants

Avocado: Nikis 30, Syntagma, 210 323 7878, avocadoathens.com, open M-Fr noon-7pm, fresh juices, smoothies, organic coffee and tea, and a variety of vegetarian and vegan dishes including daily specials

Lime Bistro: Dekeleon 23, Gazi, 210 347 4423, limebistro.gr, open W-Sun 2-10:30pm, closed Mon and Tues, vegan, Greek and international food including gluten free dishes

Veganaki: Athanasiou Diakoy & Kalliroes (around the corner from the Royal Olympic), 210-924 4322, <https://www.facebook.com/VeganakiGR/>, open M-Sun 8:30am-11-30pm.

Souvlaki

Bairaktaris: Ermou 85, Monastiraki Square, also Kirikiou 6, off Mitropoleos, 210 321 3036, bairaktaris.gr, Ermou branch open daily 11am-4am, Kirikiou branch open daily 10am-1am, souvlaki and traditional Greek dishes

Hoocut: Agias Irinis Square 9 (off Athinaidos St.), Athens, 210 324 0026, hoocut.gr, open daily noon-12:20am, gourmet souvlaki

Kostas: 5 Pentelis St, Syntagma, 210 322 8502, open M-Fr 9:30am-3:30pm, souvlaki

O Thanasis: Mitropoleos 69, Monastiraki Square, 210 324 4705, othanasis.com, open daily 9am-2am, Sat-Sun 9am-3am, famous kebab and typical Greek appetizers, great for a quick lunch or late night snack

Street Food

Falafellas: Aioulou 51, Athens, 210 323 9809, falafellas.gr, open M-Th 11am-11pm, Fr, Sat 11am-12am, closed Sun, falafel wraps, hummus, tabbouleh

Poke Hawaiian Sushi: Petraki 7, Syntagma, 210 322 6653, pokehawaiiansushi.com, open daily 1-11pm, closed Sun, deconstructed sushi served in a bowl

Bars, Wine Bars and Wine Restaurants

Endless selection of bars, wine bars and wine restaurants are available. The listing here is really just the tip of the iceberg, waiting for you to discover!

A for Athens Cocktail Bar and Restaurant: Miaouli 2-4, Monastiraki, 210 324 4244, aforathens.com, open daily, located on the roof of the A for Athens Hotel with a view of the surrounding area, including the Acropolis

The Art Foundation (TAF): Normanou 5, Monastiraki, 210 323 8757, theartfoundation.metamatic.gr, open daily 10:30am-3am, combination art gallery, gift store, and all day café and bar; enter through a dark corridor, the café is located in a converted stable and courtyard

By the Glass: Souri 2, Athens (inside the stoa and across the street in the Rallou Manou Square), 210 323 2560, bytheglass.gr, open daily 10am-3am, wine bar/bistro serving Greek and imported wines, cheese and cold meat platters, appetizers and a selection of Greek and international main dishes

The Clumsies: Praxitelos 30, central Athens, 210 323 2682, theclumsies.gr, open Sun-Th 10am-2am, 10am-4am Fri, Sat; an award winning bar located in the heart of Athens.

Couleur Locale: Normanou 3, Monastiraki, 216 700 4917, couleurlocaleathens.com, open Sun-Th 10am-2am, 10am-3am Fri, Sat. The entrance to this all-day café and bar is hidden in a stoa on Normanou Street, next door to The Art Foundation. There is a roof top bar with a view of the Acropolis.

Heteroclito: Fokionos 2 and Petraki 30, Athens, 210 323 9406, heteroclito.gr, open daily 12:30pm-midnight except Sun 6-11pm, serves over 200 Greek wines and a limited selection of cheeses and cold meats to accompany

Oinoscent: Voulis 45-47, Athens, 210 322 9374, oinoscent.com, open M-Th 10am-2am, F-Sat 10am-3am, Sun 6pm-2am, very large selection of Greek and imported wines, cheese and cold meat platters, appetizers and main dishes to pair with the wine

360 Cocktail Bar: Ifestou 2, Athens, 210 321 0006, three-sixty.gr, open daily 9am-3am, a beautiful bar with great coffee drinks and cocktails, as well as food, to enjoy either in for a morning or an afternoon coffee, or a drink in the evening admiring the great view of the Acropolis

Restaurants in the South Suburbs (Vouliagmeni, Kavouri, Varkiza)

If you have time and the weather is nice, which is usually in Athens, it's worth visiting the southern suburbs of Athens by the water, where there is the Athenian Riviera, including the areas of Floisvos Marina, Glyfada with a big shopping area and the Vouliagmeni.

Blue Fish Vouliagmeni: Leof. Posidonos 4, Vouliagmeni, 210 967 1778, athensinsider.com/blue-fish-catering-to-your-shellfish-demands/, open daily from 12pm-12am, gastronomic seafood restaurant right on the water with beautiful sea setting

Island Club & Restaurant: 27th km of Athens, Sounio Avenue, on the way from Vouliagmeni to Varkiza, 210 965 3563, islandclubrestaurant.gr/the-restaurant/, open daily 8.30pm-6am, an expensive gastronomic greek cuisine and sushi restaurant, in a magnificent setting with a view of the Athenian Riviera, which turns into a club

Ithaki: Apollonos 28, Vouliagmeni, 210 896 3747, ithakirestaurantbar.gr, open daily 12pm-1am, a gastronomic legendary restaurant with a beautiful sea view

Krabo Beach Restaurant: Zoska Bay, Thespidos Street, Vouliagmeni, 210 896 3309, krabo.gr, a Mediterranean-inspired menu with seasonal and fresh dishes in a beautiful summer setting

Matsuhisa Athens (Nobu): Apollonos 40, Vouliagmeni, 210 896 0510, matsuhisaathens.com, open daily from 7.30pm-1am, Japanese/Sushi right on the seafront (part of the Four Seasons Hotel)

Sardelaki with a view (sardelaki “me thea”): Posidonos 18, Vouliagmeni, 210 967 0913, open daily 9am-1am, a simple seafood restaurant by the water, better for lunch

Restaurants and Bars in the North Suburbs (Kifisia)

If you have more days in Athens and you want to see an “old”, beautiful neighborhood with a nice shopping area, you can take a taxi to Kifisia or take the subway from Syntagma square to Kifisia and walk around in the main area, where you can see beautiful houses and a lot of green.

Artisanal: Zirini 2, 210 808 6111, artisanal.gr/en/, open daily 5pm-3am, a beautiful restaurant in a historic building of Kifisia with a Mediterranean style food with clear references to modern Greek cuisine with familiar flavours, contemporary techniques and high-quality materials from Greek producers.

Buba Bistrot: Papdiamanti 4, 210 623 1151, bubabistrotexotique.com, open daily from 7.30pm-3am, a Thai restaurant in a beautiful garden with a nice atmosphere

Different Beast: Kassaveti 19, Kifisia, 216 700 4556, [tripadvisor.com/Restaurant_Review-g1026500-d10520090-Reviews-Different_Beast-Kifissia_Attica.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Restaurant_Review-g1026500-d10520090-Reviews-Different_Beast-Kifissia_Attica.html), open daily, except Mon, from 9.30am-1am, a modern place for a coffee, a drink or a healthy lunch, with vegetarian and vegan options too

Goulandris Natural History Museum & restaurant: Levidou 13, 210 801 5870, gnhm.gr/en/, open M-F 9am-2.30pm, Sat-Sun 10am-3pm and open for dinner, a natural history museum with a beautiful garden for a morning or afternoon coffee or a drink and for lunch and dinner

Il Salumaio d'Atene: Panagitsas 3, 210 623 3934, http://salumaio.gr/en/il_Salumaio_dAtene/Home_Page.html, open Mon-Sat 10am-12.30am, Sun 12.30pm-11.30pm, an Italian family owned small restaurant within a delicatessen with dishes using only the purest and finest ingredients, including fresh Parmigiano Reggiano and Prosciutto di Parma, smoked salmon from Switzerland and only the highest quality truffles from Italy's Alba

La petite fleur: Agion Theodoron 4, 210 808 3949, petite-fleur.gr/en/, open daily from 10am-1am, a small, very cute coffee shop with homemade desserts and many drinks, nice for a morning or an afternoon coffee or tea break

Recipe Bar: Kassaveti 12, 210 623 0600, recipebar.gr, open daily from 9am-3am, except Sun till 12am, an old-day bar in one of the most beautiful streets of Kifisia where the locals go

The Dalliance House: Kiriazi 19, 210 623 0775, open M-Th 10am-3am, F-Sat 10am-5am, S 10am-12am, thedalliancehouse.com/en/, a modern restaurant and bar in a beautiful building with very good cocktails and a fun atmosphere

Tzitzikas and Mermigas: Georiou Drosini 11, 210 623 0080, tzitzikasmermigas.gr/en/kifisia/, open M-F 5pm-12am, Sat-S 1pm-12am, a small “taverna-style” restaurant with simple food inspired by the Greek nutritional tradition in a “grocery-style decoration”, with cans and jars on shelves, old advertisements of products and the classic tables with cutlery drawer

Varsos Bakery: Kassaveti 5, 210 801 2472, varsos.gr/history.aspx?s=η-ιστορία-μας&Id=30, open daily from M-Th 7am-1am, F 7am-2am, S 7am-12am, one of the oldest bakeries and patisseries in Athens with typical Greek deserts: try the “galaktompourekko”, “kataifi”, “rizogalo” (rice pudding), “mpezedes” (meringues), “portokalopita” (orange pie) and many other typical deserts and foods with a coffee, tea or any other drink

SHOPPING

If you have time for some shopping, Athens has wonderful handicrafts, shoes and jewelry, plus inexpensive ancient motif souvenirs and you can spend some time in the following areas:

Monastiraki/Plaka: a lot of souvenir shops and a “flea market” selling jewelry, antiques and old books. It never hurts to ask for a ‘better price’!

Syntagma square/ Ermou/ Mitropoleos/ Aioulou Streets: many Greek and international shops. You can visit “Attica” shopping center (a department store) with its main entrance on Panepistimiou Street with a variety of quality boutiques with clothes, shoes, accessories and cosmetics. You can also visit “Notos Galleries” on the corner of Aeolou and Stadiou streets close to Omonia square

Kolonaki square (“little hill” area next to Syntagma): a beautiful shopping area with many boutiques, some high-end shops, nice coffee shops and restaurants

Glyfada: a large shopping area in the southern suburb

Kifisia: a shopping mall with many Greek and international shops in this northern suburb. On the way to Kifisia from the center, you can also visit a beautiful, high-end mall called “Golden Hall” in Kifisias Avenue close to Halandri area or “The Mall” modeled on the traditional North American “mall”

Shopping Hours

Some large stores are open 10am-9pm, and in Monastiraki & Plaka, 9am-7pm, otherwise:

Mon & Wed: 9am-3pm

Tue, Thurs, Fri: 9am-2:30pm & 5:30pm-8:30pm

Sat: 9am-3pm

Sunday: Most shops are closed, although many in Plaka and Monastiraki will be open

DAY TRIPS FROM ATHENS

We offer a few ideas for those planning a longer stay.



If you need help with additional advice, recommendations, and reservations, please contact **AthensExplorerTravel / Escape2Greece**, the travel agency with which we are collaborating.

E: info@escape2greece.gr / T: +30-211-7902 520 (during regular business hours in Greece)
/ W: athensexplorertravel.com.

If you email, please include “**Mount Holyoke Symposium**” in the subject line and in your message.

Sounio/Temple of Poseidon: by either renting a car or taking a taxi, you can go to Cape Sounio and visit the Temple of Poseidon built during 444-440 BC and is one of the major monuments of the Golden Age of Athens. It is perched above the sea at a height of almost 60 meters (200 ft).

Delphi/Arachova/Galaxidi/Nafpaktos:

Delphi is the most popular archaeological site in Greece located 180 kilometers from Athens, where you can visit the Temple of Apollo, the Archaeological Museum and the Oracle. In ancient times, it was considered the center of the known world, the place where heaven and earth met. In Mythology, Delphi was the meeting place of two eagles, released by Zeus and sent in opposite directions. Where they met indicated the center of the earth. Delphi is known as the center of worship for the God Apollo, son of Zeus who embodied moral discipline and spiritual clarity.

Arachova, just 12 km from Delphi, is a mountainous village nestling picturesquely at the foot of Mount Parnassos. It is the most cosmopolitan winter destination in Greece, a great favorite for passionate ski lovers and celebrities, or just first-time visitors who wish to relax in a dreamy mountainous setting with modern tourism facilities. It was in Arachova that Georgios Karaiskakis (1780-1827) defeated the Turkish army led by Moustafabei in November 1826.

Galaxidi was a 19th century ship building center, has a number of hotels and a naval museum. There is an old castle, a 13th century monastery and many old mansions. It is one of the most beautiful towns on the gulf of Corinth and well worth a stop for lunch at one of the small fish restaurants on the harbor.

Nafpaktos is one of the most interesting towns in the area and has perhaps the most impressive castle in Greece after Nafplio. Known as “Lepanto” in the middle ages a famous naval battle took place here in 1571. The town has a beautiful fortified harbor and a *platanos* shaded main square. There are two long attractive beaches on either side of the harbor and lots of restaurants, cafes and hotels. The surrounding area is quite green. Be sure to go as high as you can get to see the castle and the amazing view of the town and the Peloponnesos across the gulf of Corinth.

Ancient Corinth, Corinth Canal, Epidaurus and Mycenae, Nafplio:

About an hour from Athens by car, taxi or bus, Ancient Corinth was one of the major cities of antiquity, made up of three parts; the acropolis on the hill (Acrocorinth), the city itself on a lower plateau, and its port (Lechaion) on the coast. All this was protected by a wall which ran for 20km (over 12 miles). Until the 1800's the city was covered up by development, with only the Temple of Apollo visible. The earthquake of 1858 destroyed nearly all of the town, and excavations began in 1896 by the Americans. As with many sites of this nature, the Roman era produced far more remains than the ancient Greek. Ancient Corinth was a very busy trading city, which led to its cosmopolitan character. It was known as "Wealthy Corinth". The reason for its wealth was its location. It was able to control the only land access to the Peloponnese and so dominated the trade in both the Saronic gulf (to the east) and the gulf of Corinth (to the west).

The Corinth Canal connects the Gulf of Corinth with the Saronic Gulf in the Aegean Sea. It cuts through the narrow Isthmus of Corinth and separates the Peloponnese from the Greek mainland, arguably making the peninsula an island. It is an important navigational route which once allowed ships to enter the Aegean Sea. The canal is 6.4 kilometers long with a width of only 25 meters.

Epidaurus is one of the most popular archaeological sites in Greece. The site is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Located on the north eastern side of Peloponnese, in the region of Argolis, Epidaurus Greece is mostly famous for its Ancient Theatre. This theatre was constructed in the late 4th century BC to host religious ceremonial events in honor of god Asclepius, whose healing centre was located few steps away. Famous for its symmetry and the incredible acoustics, this classical theatre is surrounded by lush greenery and gives a nice view of the valley below. In summer, it hosts performances of ancient Greek drama.

Mycenae is an archaeological site north-eastern Peloponnese and located about 120 kilometers south-west of Athens. The archaeological sites of Mycenae and Tiryns are the imposing ruins of the two greatest cities of the Mycenaean civilization, which dominated the eastern Mediterranean world from the 15th to the 12th century B.C. and played a vital role in the development of classical Greek culture. These two cities are indissolubly linked to the Homeric epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey, which have influenced European art and literature for more than three millennia.

Nafplio is a picturesque town, the first capital of Athens, where you can also spend a night. It's where Fougaro is located, though we will not have the chance to wonder around the town's pedestrian road, enjoy the little shops, boutiques and arts and crafts workshops as well as many nice restaurants and cafes. The surrounding castles and interesting museums offer plenty of opportunities to learn and enjoy!

Ancient Olympia/Patras/Rion-Antirion Bridge:

Olympia is an ancient site on Greece's Peloponnese peninsula that hosted the original Olympic Games, founded in the 8th century B.C. Its extensive ruins include athletic training areas, a stadium and temples dedicated to the gods Hera and Zeus, including the fa-

mous Temple of Zeus. The Archaeological Museum of Olympia exhibits finds from the site, including a statue of Hermes attributed to the sculptor Praxiteles.

Patras is Greece's third-largest city and the regional capital of Western Greece, in the northern Peloponnese, 215 km west of Athens. The city is built at the foothills of Mount Panachaikon, overlooking the Gulf of Patras. In Patras' hilltop upper town, close to the castle is a Roman conservatory for musical performances, built during the rule of Emperor Augustus at the turn of the 1st century AD. With a brick facade on its south wall, the Odeon was connected to Patras' Roman Forum and was actually built sometime before the Odeon in Athens. You have to visit the Agios Andreas Cathedral, a vast basilica started in 1908, but because of the tumultuous events of the 20th century wouldn't be consecrated until 1974. The Agios Andreas Cathedral is the largest church in Greece and the third largest Orthodox edifice in the Balkans. The church is a pilgrimage site for Christians from around the world as it contains the purported relics of Saint Andrew, one of the 12 Apostles. The Castle of Patras was built in the mid-500s AD on the ruins of the ancient acropolis. From the time it was completed to the Second World War the Castle of Patras was constantly armed. A long list of cultures and civilisations have either besieged or taken the castle, among them Slavs, Moors, Normans, Franks and Venetians. The Ottomans were in charge from the middle of the 15th century and later in the 17th-century Morean War, the Venetians wrested it from them for almost two decades before the Turks regained control, in 1715. A remarkable thing about the castle is that all of those occupants left their mark, revealing the development of military technology over the course of 1,500 years.

On your way from Athens to Olympia and right before Patras, you will see the **Rio-Antirion Bridge**, measuring 2,880 meters long, it is among the world's longest multi-span cable-stayed bridges. It is also definitively the longest bridge of its kind in the world to be fully suspended. The bridge opened in August 2004 and crosses not far from Patras to the town of Antirrio on the mainland, overcoming both the gulf's deep water and the constant seismic activity in the region. The bridge has more than 100 sensors, measuring anything from seismic tremors to the deck's thermal expansion. Before this structure was completed the only way across was by ferry, and by road, the Isthmus of Corinth, 130 kilometers to the east, added hours to journey times. Only two bridges in the world have longer cable-stayed decks: China's Jiaxing-Shaoxing Sea Bridge and the Millau Viaduct in France.

Porto Heli/Spetses:

Porto Heli is a summer resort town on a bay of the Argolic Gulf, 6 km south of Kranidi and 40 km southeast of Nafplio. You only have to climb down a low hill, drive a short distance to Ververonta, Costa and Aghios Aimilianos, or ride a water taxi to understand what all the fuss is about: Majestic vacation homes, magnificent resorts, private beaches (the owner of one has famously imported powder-white sand to sprinkle over the bay in front of the hillside villa). You can't help noticing the mega-yachts, the Riva classics or the equally expensive hand-crafted Greek kaikia (fishing boats).

The island of **Spetses** is located 6 km south of Porto Heli and you can go there with a small boat. At Poseidon Square near the harbor, visitors are welcomed by a statue of Greek War of Independence heroine Laskarina Bouboulina. Her house, transformed into the Laskarina Bouboulina Museum, is located in the backstreets nearby. Many of Bouboul-

ina's personal belongings are displayed here. They convey the heroic atmosphere of Bou-boulina's era, when sea captains from the islands of Hydra and Spetses converted a significant part of their commercial fleet into warships to support the Greek revolution. Considerable amounts of personal wealth were sacrificed to do so. A mansion linked to Hatzigiannis Mexis, a prominent citizen of Spetses whose power and wealth also played an important role in the revolution, is also maintained as a museum. Its exhibits include heirlooms and wooden figureheads. Explore the little alleys and look out for the charming black and white pebble mosaics which decorate house courtyards and focus on maritime themes such as frigates, mermaids, octopuses, billowing sails and anchors. Don't miss a visit to the island's traditional shipyards (*tarsanades*) in the old port, where craftsmen, having kept alive a centuries-old skill, build and repair wooden vessels. Irresistible sweets, including the island's famous amigdalota almond sweets, can be found at the confectionery shops in the new port (Dapia) area. Touring the island by bicycle is a great way to experience the lush nature which lead to the island being known as Pitoussa, meaning pine-filled, in ancient times. The charming combination of pine trees and sea, especially in the island's southwest area, is best enjoyed by bike.

Islands close to Athens

There are two main ports in Athens: Peiraeus and Rafina and some of the boats depart from the Floisvos Marina. Here are some islands close to Athens that are worth visiting for a day and if you have time, even longer.

To search for any other islands you want to go and what to visit, you can use:

www.greeka.com/saronic/aegina/

To book tickets, you can use: travelplanet24.com/en/ferry or ferrie-singreece.com/?aff=travelpassionatecom

Hydra:

Widely considered as one of the most beautiful islands in Greece, Hydra makes up part of the Saronic Islands and is one of the closest islands to Athens, taking only two hours to get there by ferry (flying dolphin) from Piraeus at several different hours during the day and the journey lasts approximately 2 hours. Perhaps the most unique aspect of this stunning little paradise is that there are no cars or motor vehicles on the island, aside from garbage trucks and ambulances. The main method of transportation here are the delightful mules and donkeys, as well as the water taxis. Its rustic beauty has attracted world-famous musicians like Leonard Cohen, celebrities like Sophia Loren and travelers of all kind who seek inspiration and never end up leaving. The mules on this island are the go-to transport for items like luggage and heavy shopping. People also have the chance to ride on them, and there are donkey men who specialize in transporting tourists from one place to the other. You can even ride a donkey from the port. What is a more romantic and unique way to spend time on a Greek island? Harriet's Hydra Horses, run by Harriet Jarman who has been a local of Hydra since childhood, this company runs horseback riding excursions varying from 45 minutes to the whole day. With 300 churches and six monasteries throughout the island, a traveler is spoiled for choice when choosing which to visit. The Monastery, however, is Hydra's main cathedral and is located in the center of

the harbor underneath the clock tower. It was said to have been built by a nun on her arrival in 1643 and consists of a magnificent Byzantine-style cathedral, frescoes from the 18th century and exquisite Orthodox decorations. It is a focal point for the Greek Orthodox Church and is a place of worship, so appropriate dress is required. Museums to visit are the Historical Archives Museum. Founded in 1918, it displays rare documents related to the historical, traditional and cultural aspects of the island from 1708-1865. Within the museum is an Archive and Museum Section and a library, the Kountouriotis museum, dedicated to Lazaros Kountouriotis, who played a vital role in the War of Independence. It was built in 1780 and features beautiful interiors, paintings by the Greek artists including Konstantinos Byzantios and historical jewelry and furniture belonging to the Kountouriotis family. The Ecclesiastical Museum Located on the west side of the Monastery and housed in a former monk cell, has been open since 1999 and showcases elaborate holy vessels, jewelry, musical manuscripts and other historical relics of the Monastery. For a beautiful walking route, go from the picturesque fishing village of Kamini, west of Hydra Harbor, to Hydra Town. What makes it worthwhile is that it is off the beaten path as there are no tourist shops, but here you can explore the parish church of John the Baptist and find stunning mansion ruins. Visit Rafalia's Pharmacy considered one of the most beautiful pharmacies in the world, Rafalia's is an attraction well worth the visit and is one of the most important on the island. It is a family business founded in 1890 by Evangelos Rafalias, located within a gorgeous century-old mansion.

The beaches are beautiful, so if you would like to visit and take a swim, here are some recommendations:

Vlychos Beach (you can reach the village by water taxi or by foot), its waters are crystal clear and you can enjoy a drink nearby from the few taverns surrounding it. It is ideal for those who love quiet, undisturbed beaches and is worth the visit wherever you may be on the island

Kaminia Beach only 1km west of Hydra Town and near the village of Vlihos, Kaminia's has shallow waters and is a pebbled beach, located within a small fishing village and has an array of delicious restaurants, cafes, and taverns lining the coast, making this beach an idyllic one to visit.

Spilia is a rocky "beach" with translucent blue waters. It is not technically a beach but is a perfect diving spot because of the numerous rocks in the area. Nearby, there is a café of the same name where people can find refreshments.

Agios Nikolaos is on the western end of Hydra and is a remote and beautiful sandy beach. It is also one of the more blissful beaches to visit on the island. In addition to umbrellas and deck chairs, there is a café where people can find all kinds of food and refreshments. It can be reached by foot or boat from Hydra Town.

In front of the Four Seasons Hotel and located in Plakes town, the long, sandy beach of Plakes Vlychos is an island dream offering panoramic views of mainland Greece and the surrounding islands. To get there, the hotel offers a boat that runs every hour between the village and Hydra Harbour, or you can hire a water taxi. The cost of the hotel's water taxi is 3 € per person one way. To hire a water taxi, you will need around 20 €.

Poros:

Poros is a small Greek island-pair in the southern part of the Saronic Gulf, about 58 km south from Piraeus, an hour's ferry ride on a "Flying Dolphin" from the Port of Piraeus. In ancient times the island was believed to be the home of Poseidon, and the vestiges of a sanctuary to the god can be found commanding the north coast from a hill.

Laid out on an ancient volcano, Poros Town is in fact an island in its own right as it is separated from the rest of Poros by a small canal. The waterfront is hemmed by a promenade, with fabulous vistas of the strait and the coastal mountains of Peloponnese. The line of private yachts adds a dash of class, as do the Neoclassical villas across the road, where the next cafe or taverna is only a few meters away.

In Poros Town is an archaeological museum built on a plot donated by the wealthy Koryzis family, children of Alexandros Koryzis who was briefly the prime minister in 1941. The museum has artefacts that were mainly discovered on Poros at the Sanctuary of Poseidon, and across the channel, at the Sanctuary Aphrodite Akraia in Troezena.

A bit further east from Askeli Beach is a monastery, Holy Monastery of Zoodochos Pigi, founded in 1720 after the Metropolitan of Athens, Iakovos II drank from a nearby spring, which supposedly cured his lithiasis. The monastery is on a pine-clad slope overlooking the water and its main church (katholikon) is rich with art from the 17th and 18th centuries.

Rising behind the ferry port is one of the symbols of the island, a dignified clock tower on a rocky pedestal. The tower is younger than its neo-Renaissance lines make it seem, and was only erected in 1927. To get up to it you have to labour up a stairway, which can be tricky in the midday heat, although the steps are partly shaded by fig trees.

At the base of a long steep-sided inlet on the north coast is the alluring Vagionia Bay. The beach is a blend of sand and pebbles, easing down to waters of startling clarity. The sea is so clear that if you bring snorkeling gear you can make out the foundations and cobblestone streets of an ancient town on the seabed. On the shore is a single taverna renting out sun loungers for a small fee and preparing trusted Greek classics like souvlaki, tzatziki and tirokafteri.

At this coarse sandy cove around three kilometers west of Poros Town, the pines come right down to the beach and almost touch the water. The beach also has a very soft gradient, with water as shallow and pure as you'll get on the island.

Some 200 meters down from the Monastery of Zoodochos Pigi is a small sandy beach. One of the advantages of this place is that even though it's only 15 minutes by car or taxi from Poros Town, few tourists are willing to come this far. The beach remains pretty quiet even in mid-summer and as it faces south there are sumptuous views of the Peloponnese.

Provided you come prepared, Poros is an island made to be seen on foot. You can walk paths beaten for centuries by villagers and farmers. Trekking in the aromatic pine-decked hills you'll journey past olive and citrus groves, historic presses and peaks like Vigla at 358 meters. One trail leads from Sinikismos, past the fountains of the Virgin Mary and the churches of Profitis Elias and Agios Atathis, to the ancient Sanctuary of Poseidon, which we'll talk about below. Found near Vagionia Bay, "Dontas Horses" is a riding centre ar-

ranging guided treks along the rocky north coast where you can gaze down from the trail to deserted deep blue inlets.

In a dominant position, with views north over Vagonia Bay are the remains of an ancient Temple to Poseidon at a site that was used from the Bronze Age onwards. The Sanctuary of Poseidon is one of those archaeological sites where you'll need to use a little imagination, but is a worthwhile stop while you're exploring the island.

Aegina:

It is a charming Saronic island that's just an hour away from Athens. Ferries depart frequently (almost every hour) from Piraeus to Aegina. The Flying Dolphin (passengers only) takes 40 minutes and a regular ferry (loads cars and motorcycles) takes around about an hour and 15 minutes. Ticket prices depend on the type of boat, from 8 to 14 euro/one way.

The island's name derives from the most beautiful of the twenty daughters of the river god named Asopos. Ferries and boats dock right in Aegina Town, the main town of the island. While you're there you can take a short tour in a horse-drawn carriage. Seek out the salmon pink Tower of Markellos in Aegina Town. It was built in the 17th century as a Venetian fortification and later used as a headquarters during the Greek Revolution of 1821.

Visit the archaeological site of Kolona. During ancient times, a fantastic Doric temple dedicated to the god Apollo was built here. A monolithic column that formed part of the temple remains and it was an important reference for Venetian sailors who named the area Colonna.

The Temple of Aphaia is another top sight in Aegina. This ancient temple predates the Parthenon in Athens. With Sounion's Temple of Poseidon on the Athenian Riviera and the Parthenon in Athens - the Temple of Aphaia is the third link to a hypothetical isosceles triangle. Precious artifacts from the temple can be seen at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens.

Paleahora, which means old village, was once the island's capital. There are dozens of stone chapels left including the twin chapel of Saints George and Demetrius where a medieval fortress once stood.

Visit the Monastery of Agios Nektarios, where Orthodox pilgrims visit this holy site to honor the first modern saint of Greece. Built in the 20th century, the monastery honors Saint Nektarios who was considered to be a miracle worker.

Another one of the top things to do on Aegina island is visit Perdika. Drive or take a short boat ride from Kalamaki to reach the little scenic fishing port of Perdika. One of the best things to do here is dine at a fish taverna. Near Perdika, you can find an uninhabited little isle called Moni (except for a few peacocks and Kri-Kri goats). The little beach has a sandy bottom, beautiful clear water and there is also a taverna offering refreshments and snacks. From Perdika you can take a 10-minute water taxi to the uninhabited place which has a pretty little beach and turquoise water.

Sarpa is one of the most - if not the most - beautiful beach on the island. Set on the southwestern coast of Aegina, near Perdika, it features thick sand and pebbles. Another nice beach nearby is Klima Beach.

Eat Aegina's famous Pistachios as they are harvested here with passion and they are considered the best in the world. In fact, a festival dedicated to the nut takes place here each year called the "Fistiki Fest." Besides the variety of sweets and snacks possible with pistachios, you can dine on local seafood. Two to try, are the grey mullet (often salted called lykourinos) and katsoula.

Daily Cruises for 2 or 3 islands

If you want to see many places in one day, you can do a cruise from Athens where you will visit 3 islands, Aegina, Poros and Hydra. There are different companies that organize daily cruises in the islands, such as <http://bit.ly/2V02uR3>.