

ATHENS

MUST-DOS

BY JANE FOSTER

the essential quick guide for discerning travellers



1 SLEEPING IN

Tucked in a quiet corner of Plaka, AVA Hotel & Suites (avahotel.gr) is a stylish boutique hotel with spacious suites, each equipped with a kitchenette and furnished verandas. New Hotel (yeshotels.gr), by award-winning designer-duo the Campanas brothers, is a 79-room contemporary-retro outfit housing New Taste Restaurant (above) and an impressive gym. Nearby, Hotel Hermes (hermeshotel.gr) offers excellent value with 45 rooms decked out in wooden floors and white marble bathrooms.

2 DINING ATHENS STYLE

Local foodies flock to Funky Gourmet (funkygourmet.com) in trendy Keramikos for pricey but inventive cuisine like their beautifully presented Quinoa Salad (right). Only open for dinner, their specialities are salmon with black quinoa and truffle cream, and lamb with potato confit and chickpeas. Or go all out and opt for the 12-course degustation menu, from €78 (US\$104). For stunning Acropolis views, there's Strofi (strofi.gr), a taverna turned minimalist-chic Greek restaurant featuring local favourites like tomatoes stuffed with rice, sultanas and pine kernels. In touristy Plaka, Brettos Ouzo Restaurant (www.brettosplaka.com) and Brettos distillery serve tasty and inexpensive mezes (appetisers), and carafes of ouzo or wine.



3 HIGH GROUND Enjoy expansive city views from atop the monumental Acropolis, crowned by three 5th century BC temples. The best known of these is the Parthenon (below), widely considered the most important architectural complex of the ancient Greeks as it was a symbol of Athenian democracy; besides serving as a temple, it was also a treasury, church and mosque. Or make your way to the peak of the 277m-high Mount Lycabettus, from where you have amazing panoramas of the nearby mountains and outlying islands.

4 COUNTRY RETREAT

Venture to the Greek countryside and be greeted by olive groves and vineyards, presided over by dramatic rugged mountains. A two-and-a-half-hour drive from Athens, Delphi has to be one of Greece's most sublimely beautiful archaeological sites. On the slopes of Mount Parnassus sits the Temple of Apollo and a well-preserved 4th century BC amphitheatre. The nearby Arachova village is a popular winter bolt-hole among wealthy Athenians who flock here to ski. Famous for its hand-loomed rugs, it has stores selling fluffy flokati (handmade shag wool rug), as well as cosy tavernas and boutique hotels should you decide to stay the night.



Spent a day at the Acropolis Museum, which houses some of the most important sculptures of ancient Greek art.

5 ART ON SHOW

Designed by Swiss architect Bernard Tschumi, the glass-and-concrete Acropolis Museum (theacropolismuseum.gr) showcases some of the most awe-inspiring marble sculptures from the Acropolis. Taking pride of place is a life-size reconstruction of the splendidly carved frieze that once circled the top of the Parthenon. For the performing arts, visit Onassis Cultural Centre (sgt.gr) for its fine line-up of music, theatre and art exhibitions.

fast facts

CURRENCY

Euro
US\$1= 0.75 EUR

VISA

Visa requirements vary. Visit europa.eu for details.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

From late April to mid-June and September to mid-October, when temperatures hover in

the mid-20s and it is less crowded. Avoid peak tourist season from July through August.

HOW TO GET THERE

Singapore Airlines flies 3 times weekly from Singapore to Athens via Istanbul.

MORE INFORMATION

visitgreece.gr

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