Chapter 9 – Athens (Athena, Goddess of Wisdom)

Ride back to Athens, with guide Voula Paraskevi - part 1

https://youtu.be/Tk2rSpqDN1o (2:55)

Straight ahead you see the mountain Hymettus, and the hill in front of that on which is the Parthenon. It’s not very clear right now. The city of Athens is surrounded by four mountains: (1) Mount Hymettus to the east, and the international airport is behind it; (2) Mt. Aigaleo to the west; (3) Parnes (Parnitha) to the north; and (4) Penteli (Pentelikon) to the northeast. In the olden days the slopes of the mountains were covered with forests of pine and cypress trees, and lots of herbal bushes. Hymettus was known as a good place for bees to make good honey. Today, unfortunately, there is no more green. Many of the forests were cut down and replaced by houses, instead of by new plants. The other mountain Penteli (Pentelikon) was known for its marble quarry in ancient times. There are still quarries there today.

The temple that we will admire tomorrow on the hill of the Acropolis was built with the marble from Mount Penteli (Pentelikon). The other mountain, which is the highest mountain around Athens, is Mount Parnitha (1413 m; 4635 feet). We will see it tomorrow from the acropolis, and also the whole city of Athens. [The historical seven hills of Athens are Acropolis, Areopagus, Philopappus Hill (or Hill of the Muses, Mouseion Hill, Hill of the Nymphs, Pnyx, Mount Lycabettus, and Mount Anchesmos or Tourkovounia.]

Straight ahead you can see another hill, with a white building on the top. This hill is called Lykavittos (Lycabettus), which is the highest of the hills at 339 meters (1,112 feet). The white building on top is the Greek Orthodox church dedicated to St. George (Georgios).

The majority of the Greeks (95%) are Greek Orthodox. Once somebody is born in Greece they’re automatically considered Greek Orthodox, the state religion. But there are Evangelicals (0.6% approximately), and there are about 100 Evangelical churches in the whole country; they are small ones, averaging about 30 people in each church. Mainly there are Presbyterian churches, and a couple of Baptist churches, and of course a number of Pentecostal churches, also. About 1% of the Greeks are Catholics; there are Catholic groups in certain islands like Syros, Rhodes; or the islands of the Ionian Sea, like Corfu, Cefalonia.

Now, the city of Athens, like I said before is surrounded by mountains, and to the south is the Saronic Gulf, with the port of Piraeus.

There’s Allou, a fun park run by a French company, we call it Athens’s small Disneyland. http://www.discovergreece.com/en/directory/activities/allou-fun-park

Phalerum used to be the first port of ancient Athens, in the 5th century BC. Then it was moved to Piraeus, which was also the port during the Roman time.
Ride back to Athens, with guide Voula Paraskevi - part 2

There were many stadiums built along the coast for the Olympic games. You can see one now on the right. It’s a stadium for beach volleyball. There’s a small marina further down, you can see the yachts there. Cruise boats leave from this place for the islands of the Saronic Gulf. The other stadium that we see further down with a roof is an indoor stadium for Tae-Kwon-Do for ten thousand people; today it is used for various purposes. For a while it offered shelter to the refugees, last year, but not anymore. The big building you see on the left that’s undergoing construction is going to be the new opera house. Part of the national library is going to be housed here. Stavros Niarchos Foundation (http://www.snf.org/) is the one that is financing that building.

The other building on the left – four or five stories high – is the Onassis Heart Surgery Center (http://www.onasseio.gr/english/onaseio/) – a hospital for heart problems; and it’s financed by Aristotle Onassis, you know the famous billionaire (who married Jacqueline Kennedy in 1968).

Soon we will be at the Metropolitan Hotel, and be sure to take all your personal belongings and don’t leave anything behind.

[The next day, Voula took us on a four hour tour of Athens and the Acropolis area]

The city of Athens has a very long history, as you know very well. The modern city is built right on top of the ancient city. In ancient times the city was called Athena, after the goddess Athena, who was the goddess of wisdom. According to the legend, Athena was born from the head of her father, Zeus. Zeus had a terrible headache, and he asked Hephaestus, the god of blacksmiths and metallurgy (among other things), to hit his head with a hammer. When he did that, Athena sprang out of the head as a grown up lady. She was fully dressed in her armor, with helmet, shield, and spear. That’s why she was the goddess of wisdom.

The people of Athens worshipped Athena as the goddess of wisdom. They worshipped wisdom, and they were seeking for wisdom. That’s why philosophers started from here. Athens never grew into a big cosmopolitan city like Corinth or Ephesus or Thessaloniki. It was always a small city, but it was a philosophical city. It was a city where democracy started. All the philosophical currents started from here. It was the hub of culture. People were seeking to learn more things, and they were seeking for answers to their questions.

We believe that’s why God used this city to establish this classical city and the golden age. It was a period that influenced not only Greece, but also the culture of the western world. As you know, the western world today is based on two pillars: the values of Athenian democracy, and Christianity. And both started from here – Greece. Democracy came from Athens, and Christianity from Greece through Apostle Paul. Thus, Greece was the first country in the western world in which Christianity was established, and it was spread from here during Apostle Paul’s second missionary journey – Philippi, Thessaloniki, Berea, Athens, and Corinth. And from here the gospel was spread. It’s important to remember that.

So the goddess Athena, the daughter of Zeus, quarreled with Poseidon for the name of the city. That’s what the legend tells us. The council of gods said, OK, don’t quarrel; let’s have a competition. Make a gift to the city, and we are going to tell you which gift is the best. And the
winner will give his name to the city. So Poseidon struck his trident onto the rock of the acropolis, and water sprang out, but it was salty water. The city was surrounded by sea, and they didn’t need more salty water. So they didn’t like that gift too much. According to another version of the legend, he offered horses; however, in ancient times, horses meant war. Horses were not used for cultivation, for farming. Horses were used for war. So they didn’t like that gift either.

On the other hand, the goddess Athena planted the very first olive tree. The olive tree is a symbol of peace, a symbol of victory, and, of course, practically is a very good tree which produces the olive oil and the olives which are so essential for the nutrition of the ancient people of the Mediterranean. And today, you may know that the most important product which Greece exports is the olive oil and the olives.

In ancient times – to give you an idea how important the olive tree was – in the 6th century BC, Solon the legislator promoted the cultivation of the olive tree as a science. People had to learn how to cultivate the olive tree in order to make the best olives and olive oil. Later on, Solon made a law according to which people were not allowed to cut more than two olive trees per olive grove per year. The people had cut the olive tree for wood, which had many uses; it was the best fire wood because it had the oil inside and it produced a warm environment. Also, they made utensils, spoons, forks, bowls, and tables out of it – you see, it was very useful. And the olive tree is the kind which can be used from the roots to the branches – everything was used. If you boil the leaves of the olive tree, you can a kind of tea which helps your stomach, to prevent ulcers.

So now you can understand why Athena won the competition. She gave her name to the city – Athena, the name of the city and the name of the goddess. The Athenian hero Theseus, the son of Aegeus, who gave the name to the Aegean Sea, he united the ten tribes or communities which were around the acropolis hill into one city. And he called the city Athena.

When we speak about the history of the acropolis, we speak about the history of the city of Athens. The acropolis was always a part of the city, and it played an important role in its history. The hill of the acropolis was fortified originally in the 6th century BC – the Mycenaean period – so imagine that the walls were similar to the ones we saw yesterday at Mycenae. The king lived behind fortified walls, and the people lived outside the walls, and if there was danger they entered the fortified area.

In the 6th century BC, the city-states were formed in Greece – Corinth, Athens, Sparta, Argos. At that time the hill was used not only as a fortress or citadel, but also as a religious center, a sanctuary. Of course, the sanctuary was dedicated to the goddess Athena. The 6th century BC is the Archaic period, and for the first time in Athens, we have Solon the legislator and Clisthenes, the reformer-politician of the city, who first set down laws for democracy, laws which helped promote equality of the people. For example, Solon, in one of his most important laws, acquitted people who were in debt. Before Solon’s time, if someone owed money to somebody else and could not pay it off, that person could be taken as a slave. Solon said that was not human, we cannot do that. So he released the person from the debt. That was the first stone in the foundation of democracy that was developed later on in the 5th century.

During the 6th century there was also this development in arts and crafts. This was the first time we saw bigger temples on the hill of the acropolis and lots of statues of males called kouroi (free-standing sculptures) or kore, female statues. They were made of marble, or gold, silver or bronze. These were all gifts to the goddess Athena.
The whole progress was interrupted by the Persians. The Persian wanted to attack Greece, and to conquer Greece and Europe. The Persians started the war in the year 492 BC. This war lasted thirteen years, and thank God the Greeks won. If the Greeks had not won in these wars, the history of the country and the culture of the country would be completely different. The Greeks would not have had the chance to continue the development of their culture and its influence on the western world. Just to remind you of four important battles: (1) the battle of Marathon in 490 BC; Marathon is 50 kilometers outside of the city. The Athenians won the battle and they sent a runner to announce the victory, and as soon as the runner arrived in the city, he said the words, ‘nenikikamen’ (Nike, victory; we have won), and then he died. That’s why the marathon race started later – not only in our time – in honor of that victory, and in memory of that runner (Pheidippides) and event. (2) Ten years later in the year 480 BC, we had the Battle of Thermopylae with King Leonides and the 300 Spartans against the Persians, and the battle was lost because a local resident betrayed the Greeks and they lost that battle; this battle took place in spring. (3) Three months later in September we have the naval battles, the Battle of Salamis, in which the Greeks (Athenians) won under the leadership of Themistocles. (4) The following year there was one more battle, the Battle of Plataea, and after that defeat the Persians left for good.

Once the Persians left, the Athenians came back to their city and they started developing their great civilization known as the Golden Age. The last fifty years of the 5th century BC is known as the Golden Age.

We will continue the historical narration later, but right now I would like you to look at the left hand side where you have a wonderful view of the columns of the Temple of Zeus. This was the temple of the 6th century BC, and it was completed during the reign of Emperor Hadrian in Roman times. It was built in the Corinthian style.

And look at the acropolis in the distance – you see how rocky the hill is.

You can see caves, which were shrines in ancient times. In Christian times they became churches. You can see it was a very strong citadel. Although it’s not the highest of the hills here, it was appropriate for a fortress or citadel because it had a natural fortification. The only place one could approach the acropolis was from the west side – the opposite side, not from here. Then there were wells of drinkable water. The area on top was flat and large. The temple that we see is the Parthenon.
Acropolis means ‘edge of the city’ (acro – polis). Parthenon (‘virgin goddess or maiden’) is the name of the temple. Mars Hill (Areopagus) is below the acropolis.

Now we are heading to our first stop, which is the Panathenaic Stadium, or the Olympic Stadium. The stadium that we are going to see was used for the first modern Olympic games in 1896, which took place in Greece. All the seats of the stadium are covered in marble. 50,000 people can sit there. It's the only marble stadium in the world with seats made of marble. We call it ‘Kallimarmaro’ because of the marble; ‘kallo’ means good and beautiful, and ‘marmaro’ is marble. So ‘Kallimarmaro’ means beautifully paved with marble.

In ancient times, exactly at the same place, there was a stadium with wooden seats, which was used for the athletic events during the festival in honor of the goddess Athena; the festival was called Panathena (‘pan’ means all). The athletes who won in ancient times used to receive jars covered with beautiful paintings and full of olive oil. It was a great prize. And these jars are called panathenaic jars. If you go to the National Archaeological Museum, you will see pieces of these jars.

We are going to get off here since there are too many buses in front. We will spend about ten minutes here. Time for you to take some pictures.


The flag of Greece has nine horizontal stripes, alternating blue and white, with a white cross on a blue square field in the upper corner. The nine stripes stand for a phrase, which was the motto of Greeks during the war of independence in 1821 against the Ottoman Turks, and the phrase goes like this, ‘Eleftheria i thanatos’ (freedom or death). The cross in the corner shows that Greece remains a (Eastern Orthodox) Christian country despite the 400 years we were under Ottoman rule.
[Another explanation is that the nine stripes represent the nine Greek Muses, the goddesses of the liberal arts and civilization.]

During the Olympic games of 2004, the stadium was used by women’s archery. And, of course, the flame was kept here.

There was a river outside the walls here, and the name of it was Ilissos, but the dry bed of the river is now under the city. People had to cross a small bridge from the city to come to the stadium here. To conclude, the stadium we see is a 19th century stadium from 1896, but in the same spot there was a stadium from the 4th century BC, which was used for the Panathenaic games. And Herodes Atticus, a Athenian Roman senator, rebuilt the stadium in 144 AD with marble seats. But nothing of that had survived either. So what we see today is a refurbished stadium from the 1896 Olympics.

It was in an appropriate place, because it was at a natural hill called Arditos, and we know from ancient sources that it was one of the places Socrates liked to walk. Can you imagine this place without the buildings, with trees all around, and a river flowing by. A nice place just outside the city walls.

[As we drive by we see a sign saying ‘Voula,’ which is a suburb of Athens.]

As we drive further we will see the House of Parliament, the university buildings, and other classical style buildings. Most of these buildings were built in the 19th century when Athens became the capital of Greece. I already mentioned the occupation of the Ottomans in Greece, which started in 1453 AD. That was when Constantinople (today, Istanbul), the capital of Byzantium, was conquered by the Ottomans. Greece, as well as the other Balkan countries, Bulgaria, Albania, Rumania, and so on were part of the Byzantine Empire. Gradually, all the areas came under the Turks. This occupation lasted 400 years for southern Greece, but 500 years for northern Greece. In 1821, the War of Independence started. By 1828, south Greece (half of modern Greece) became free, independent. The north part, the regions of Macedonia and Thrace, unfortunately were not able to get their freedom, and it took them another hundred years of wars to gain independence.

By 1828, southern part of Greece was free, and the first capital was a small town called Nafplio; remember, it was near Mycenae, and we could see the Gulf of Nafplio and port there from the citadel of Mycenae. There was a governor who ruled Greece at that time. His name was John Capodistria, and he ruled for almost one and a half year. He was on his way to church one day when he was assassinated by his opponents. The country remained without a ruler for almost one and a half year.

I want to stop here for a minute and have you look on the right hand side, where you see the entrance of a building which is known as Zappeion. It looks like a temple, but it is not. It was built as an exhibition hall; you can see by the façade with its columns imitating an ancient Greek temple. Two brothers called Zappas were the founders of this building, and that’s why it’s called Zappeion. The walls inside this exhibition hall are beautifully painted, and today it is used for cultural events, concerts, meetings, and conferences. The results of elections are given from that building.
On the left you can see the Corinthian columns of the Temple of Zeus. This temple was the largest temple in antiquity in Athens. It had 106 columns altogether; today only 16 columns are still standing. We’ll be coming around this way again, and I’ll tell you more about it then.

Now, look on the right – close to the entrance to the National Garden. There’s a sculpture of a woman crowning a young man. The young man is Lord Byron, the English poet, who was a philhellene, a friend of Greeks. He wrote many poems encouraging Greeks to go on fighting and regain their freedom. The woman symbolizes Greece. Greece is crowning Lord Byron.

Now, look on the right hand side underneath the covered area, and you can see ruins of a Roman bath. This bath was discovered during the construction of the Metro of Athens. 85,000 square meters were excavated to create the Metro; it was the largest excavation to have taken place here. The archaeologists say they have enough material to study for the next 100 years. The artifacts and buildings date from the 16th century BC until the 8th century AD. The whole life, all the history of the city.

On the right you see behind the fenced area the National Garden, the largest park of Athens. Unfortunately, we cannot boast of big parks and green places. Athens lacks that. We are now heading for Syntagma Square; ‘Syntagma’ means constitution.

The building we see on the right is the House of Parliament. It was built to be the palace of the first king of Greece. His name was Otto. You see, when Greece remained without a ruler for one-and-a-half year, the three military forces in Europe at the time (England, France, and Russia) decided to bring a king to rule the country. So they chose the German, the Bavarian Prince Otto, son of King Ludwig of Bavaria.
And since Otto was very young – only 17 years old – his advisers decided to transfer the capital from Nafplio to Athens. This building was his palace.

In 1910 the palace was destroyed by fire, and since 1934 it houses the House of Parliament. In your free time later on, you can come here and see the changing of the guards – you see the guards in front of the relief to the Unknown Soldier, which all the capitals have a memorial. The soldiers you see are dressed in traditional uniforms, which were used by the mountain troops during the War of Independence. The changing of the guards is at the top of every hour, so they are going to change at ten o’clock, eleven o’clock, and so on. The barracks of these soldiers are behind the House of Parliament. It’s quite interesting the way they are dressed and the way they walk like galloping horses. That choreography was made for practical reasons; as you can see, they are standing completely still, and they need to make some movements for the blood to circulate. Thus, they walk in a more graceful way.

The building on the right is the Hotel Grande Bretagne – you see the beautiful marble beams to support the balconies. The arches on the ground floor remind you of the Italian loggia, a typical neoclassical building. It was a house first, then it was enlarged, and since 1870’s it has been a hotel.

Now, look on the right, a very beautiful building, the Numismatic Museum (for collection of coins). It was the house of Heinrich Schliemann, the one who did the excavations. It was formerly known as ‘Iliou Melathron’, which means palace of Troy (Ilion). Inside there are beautiful frescoes on the walls and ceilings. It reminds one of an Italian building – a very beautiful building and a very interesting museum with a nice café where young people like to drink a nice cup of coffee.


A little further down we are going to see the Catholic church, the Cathedral that is dedicated to Dionysius the Areopagite. He was a member of the court, and he became a believer and a follower of the Apostle Paul — Acts 17:34. [Dionysius the Areopagite was also the name of a Christian theologian-philosopher of the late 5th century who wrote ‘Mystical Theology’ and other Neoplatonic works.] The church is here on the right.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudo-Dionysius_the_Areopagite

And next to it is the stone and brick building – the eye hospital, a building of the 19th century. Further down we see the university, the Hellenic Academy and the National Library. All these three buildings were built between 1834, when Athens became the capital of Greece, and 1881. The first one is a Hellenic Academy – you see the statues (on tall columns) of Apollo holding the lyre (musical instrument) and goddess Athena holding the shield and spear.
The sitting statues in front of the columns belong to Socrates and Plato (in commemoration of the Academy of Plato, the first higher learning institution in the western world).

The sculpture on the pediment is a copy of the (west) pediment of the Parthenon depicting the conflict between goddess Athena and Poseidon for the name of the city. It is very beautifully decorated and very much elaborated.

The middle (central) building is the university. In the National Garden you can see statues of people who have contributed to the educational system of Greece, teachers and philosophers of the 19th century. Inside you can see a fresco which depicts Raphael’s ‘School of Athens’. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_School_of_Athens] Athens has always been the philosophical city.

The third building is the National Library containing more than three million valuable books and manuscripts. But there is not enough space to house them all, so part of the library will be housed at the new building that we saw near the hotel, the Opera House. The statue of the man that you see in front of the building belongs to Vagliano, the man who gave the money for the library and was a co-founder.

These very beautiful buildings were designed by the Danish architect Theophil Freiherr von Hansen, as well as Ernst Ziller, a German architect. The two were responsible for the construction of these beautiful neoclassical marble buildings.

You see, when Otto chose Athens to be the capital city, it had only eight thousand people. It was a small town, and unimportant. Otto wanted to make Athens a beautiful capital like the rest of the European capitals, that’s why he brought educated engineers and town planners from other countries. They built houses imitating the style of the ancient Greek architecture with influence from the Italian architecture, as well as of the Orient, of the Turkish. Some neoclassical buildings have lots of reliefs, lots of flowers – this was not the style of ancient times. This was the influence from the Turkish times, from the Ottomans. So it’s a combination of these three influences – these three periods.
Unfortunately, many of these buildings were destroyed during the Second World War when Athens was bombed. Greece suffered a lot, with about two million lives lost. Many buildings were destroyed. And because the country was poor, many people left their villages and towns and came to the big city to find jobs. The neoclassical buildings that had survived either were pulled down or were replaced by ugly buildings to house all the people who came into the city. We will be turning left ahead, and you will see concrete buildings that look like boxes, with no architectural style at all. When you compare the beautiful neoclassical look of the 19th century with the post-war buildings, you can see which is better.

The National Bank of Greece on the left has classical style with marble and balconies, with decorations around the windows. Look how beautiful it is. I understand we cannot copy the neoclassical style in the 20th century, but we could build something that is closer to the beauty of that time. At the corner there’s a shop and pink building that is classical, and then an ugly building next to it. Or this one with the green windows.

The avenue we’re on now is called Stadiou; originally, it was designed to link the commercial center of the city with the stadium. However, it stops at Syntagma Square. On the right hand side you will see the Historical and Ethnological Museum of Athens housed in another neoclassical building. This was actually the third House of Parliament. In front you can see a man on his horse, the bronze statue; this is Kolokotronis, who was one of the heroes during the War of Independence.

Athens became the capital of independent Greece in 1834, but ten years later Otto had still not given the country a constitution. So on September 3, 1843, a demonstration started in front of the palace to create a constitution. And that’s why the square was called Constitution (Syntagma) Square. They got the constitution, and after a while Otto left. He was not a successful king, anyway. Syntagma Square is very popular today because here you can hear news about Greece and conduct demonstrations in the center of the city. Under the square is a metro station. The metro is quite interesting because it is like a museum. Some of the items which were found during the excavations are found there.

To the right is Ermou (‘Hermes’) street – for pedestrians. It has lots of shops and leads down to Plaka, the old city of Athens.

We are on Filellinon (friends of Greeks) Street, and on the left you see a church; it used to be a Greek Orthodox Church, a Byzantine church, actually, belonging to a monastery complex. It was destroyed by earthquakes, and then it was bombed by the Russian government in WWII, and it’s a Russian Orthodox Church today. It’s the home of the Russian Orthodox community of Athens.
And on the left is the only Anglican Church in Athens, dedicated to Apostle Paul; it’s a church of the 19th century. It’s called St. Paul’s Anglican Church. Otto wanted the people who were not Greek Orthodox to have a place for worship, so this church was built during that time (1843) for this reason.

Straight ahead you can see the Temple of Zeus, again. The temple was started to be built in the 6th century BC. However, the work stopped and started again many times, until the time of the Emperor Hadrian. The Roman Emperor Hadrian loved art very much, and he loved Athens very much. He was involved in the construction of various buildings, including an aqueduct, a library, and other buildings. He completed the Temple of Zeus, and that’s why the Athenians built an arch that you will see on the left. It was built in order for Hadrian to pass underneath to inaugurate the completion of the Temple of Olympian Zeus. The Arch of Hadrian is marble, 60 feet high (18 meters). So you see the Temple of Zeus with Corinthian columns and the Arch of Hadrian.

To the right you see a marble building with a cross. This is the Evangelical Church, the oldest Evangelical Church in Athens. It’s a Presbyterian Church that was built in the 19th century. We saw a Catholic Church, and Anglican, and an Evangelical – and they are a minority in the Greek Orthodox country of Greece. From here on the right is a paved road that goes all the way to the Acropolis. It’s a road for pedestrians built about thirty years ago. When Melina Mercouri was the Minister of Culture – she used to be an actress, and won an Oscar for ‘Never on Sunday’ – she was a successful Minister of Culture for eight years (1981-1989). Unfortunately, she died at a young age (73) in 1994, and she wasn’t able to complete her visionary goal of unifying all the archaeological sites to promote Greek culture. She started a foundation in order to bring back the sculptures from the Parthenon, which are in the British Museum, and are known as the Elgin marbles.

This big building on the right is the New Acropolis Museum. If you would like to visit it, it stays open until 8PM. The ticket costs five Euros. It is built on the ruins of one of the neighborhoods of Athens, so on the floor before the entrance there is a glass-covered view of the ruins. It’s a beautiful museum. All the sculptures and artifacts that were found on the Acropolis and on the slopes are displayed there. It has been operating since 2009.
The hill of the Acropolis is on the right hand side. We are almost there. We will walk together to the Acropolis to see the Parthenon, and then we’ll go to Mars Hill. From Mars Hill you will be able to walk to Plaka on your own. That will be your free time. However, if you want to come back to the bus, you will get a ride back to the hotel. Otherwise, you will be able to catch the hotel shuttle near McDonald’s at Ermou Street, the pedestrian street, whenever you’re ready to come back to the hotel.

[At the south-eastern foot of the Acropolis. The Odeon of Herodes Atticus, aka Herodeon.] The day we were there happened to be a field trip day for many schools, and for children of all ages.

The Odeon was built by the Athenian Herodes Atticus in 161 AD in memory of his wife, Aspasia Annia Regilla who had died at a very young age. The seating capacity of the Odeon was for 5,000 people. All the seats were made with marble, and the building itself had a roof made of cedar wood. The acoustics, of course, were perfect. At the end of the 3rd century AD (267), a group of barbarians called Herulians arrived from Central Europe and destroyed many cities, including the city of Athens. The Odeon was destroyed during that time.

In the 1950’s, the Greek Ministry of Culture restored it, and since 1955 it has been used for musical performances, mainly classical music, and ballet dancers, also. Pavarotti, Maria Callas, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Bolshoi Ballet, Nora Jones, Yanni, and many others have performed here. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odeon_of_Herodes_Atticus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odeon_of_Herodes_Atticus)

There are performances here from May until September. Until last week we were able to come closer and see the interior, but now you can see they are getting ready for performances, and the area is roped off.

The south slopes of the Acropolis were used for the residential area – you see houses around here. It was also the commercial center, plus it had temples dedicated to various gods and heroes. If you go to the museum of the Acropolis, you will see the items (artifacts) that were
found. Next to the Odeon was the Stoa with the luxurious shops, and further down was the theater of Dionysus Eleuthereus (the god of wine and amusement, and also of the theater). This theater was the oldest which was built in Athens dating to the 6th century BC. The Romans also used it. Today we can see ruins of it; actually, from the top of the Acropolis we will have a nice view of it (and the Odeon).

Follow me, and we will go up to the top of the Acropolis.

[web site with a great Map of the Acropolis: http://plato-dialogues.org/tools/acropol.htm ]

The hill to the southwest of the Acropolis is known as Mouseion Hill or Philopappou Hill. It includes the Hill of the Muses, the hill of the Nymphs and the Pnyx. The white building you see on top is the Mausoleum or Monument of Philopappos, where the grave of that man is located. And there is a statue of him and his grandfather (Antiochus IV) there. His full name was Gaius Julius Antiochus Epiphanes Philopappos. He was a prince from Syria. He came to Athens and became an Athenian and also a benefactor of the city (65-116 AD).

But it seems that he was quite arrogant, because he wanted his grave across the famous acropolis and Parthenon, so he built his grave there before he died. The funny part to the story is that he died in Rome and was buried in Rome, and many years later his body was brought to Athens for reburial. Now it is known as Philopappou Hill and is associated with the modern history of Athens, for on the very first day of Lent, which we call ‘Clean Monday’ (Ash Monday), there is a kite-flying competition here. The municipality of Athens offers free meals, mainly bread, sweets, olives, and bean soup to everyone who participates. So it’s an important place even in modern times.

Stay together as we proceed up to the Propylea. There are too many school kids here today. So please stay close together. [Lots of noise from the school children]

Question: When does the school year end here? I asked because I am a retired teacher.
Answer: June 15. And it starts on September 11th. Primary education is kindergarten, then six years of primary school (ages 6 – 12). Secondary education includes three years in the gymnasio (gymnasium), or junior high school, and another three years in the Lykeion (Lyceum), or high school. In the gymnasium it’s a general education, and in the lyceum they can take courses leading toward university studies or where they can learn a trade or job. They can also take foreign languages, like German or English. And then there are private schools, although now with the crisis many parents can’t afford private schools.

[Near the entrance, the Propylae]

Later we will see Mars Hill and the Agora. During the Roman times, the Romans didn’t build anything else on the top of the Acropolis. And they didn’t destroy any of the buildings. On the contrary, they built more temples, principally temples relating to Rome and the Emperor’s Cult. The big distraction on the hill of the Acropolis took place during the 400 years of the Ottoman rule, when it became a fortress and many of the buildings were turned into mosques or to gunpowder storage places. Once the Turks left after 1821 (the War of Independence), the archaeologists came here and cleared the place of buildings that were not here originally, and they started the
restorations. It's a big program, and a very expensive program, and the people pay lots of money in taxes; however, the European Union also helps towards the reconstruction of the site.

Today the archaeologists use titanium to keep the marble pieces together. It's elastic, but very expensive. They also use real marble for the restoration. Wherever you see very white marble on a building along with the yellow marble, you will know the white marble is new, and the other is the original (from the 5th century). The yellow one was originally white, but because of time and pollution the color changed.

Let's keep moving further up to the shade.

Now, we are standing next to the main sanctuary called the Propylea. In ancient times, imagine this wall behind you was built after the 3rd century AD, after the Herulians had destroyed the city. The steps you see and walked on are the original steps, as well as the path leading up. Look at the reconstruction, how the Propylea looked like. This is how it looked like. Imagine the pilgrims walking through here, through the main gate where you see people up there walking to enter the sanctuary.

The building was made of marble. You can see the original marble steps. It had Doric columns and façade (western), and the inner (eastern) part had Ionic colonnades. The building was divided into three sections: the room on the left (north) had a picture gallery; the central section was narrow at the top and wider on the bottom, which means that when the doors opened and the people walked in, the doors closed behind the people automatically, and since the people didn't know about engineering, they believed that the goddess was the one who closed the door behind
them, making them realize that they were entering a holy place; the section on the right (south) had a porch through which one entered into the sanctuary of Athena Nike.

During the Ottoman rule, this building used to store gunpowder, and in 1656 lightning struck the building and it blew up. Today the building is restored, and when we pass under the gate building, be sure to look at the partly restored ceiling. Above us on the south side of the Propylea is a small temple which had four Ionic columns on each side. It was the temple dedicated to Nike, Victory. You may know that the statues of Nike are depicted with wings. Victory never stays in one place. It flies from place to place. It seems that the ancient Athenians didn’t like the idea of losing Nike, of being defeated, and having Victory fly away from them. That’s why they chopped off the wings of the statue in order to keep Victory on their side. That’s why the temple is also called Apteros Nike, meaning ‘wing-less.’

During the time of the Ottomans, the Turks destroyed the Temple of Athena Nike (goddess of victory in war and wisdom). They used the stones as fortification and protection when the Venetians were at war with the Turks in 1686. There was a Turk-Venetian war here and many buildings were destroyed. The archaeologists completely restored it, and enough of the original material is still there.

I want you to turn around now and look in the distance around the Acropolis. Down at the right hand side is the Agora. The ruins that we see below the hill of the Acropolis is the Agora, which was the downtown, the center of the ancient city.

And we can see a temple down there, which is the best preserved Greek temple.

[The Temple of Hephaestus is dedicated to Hephaestus, the ancient god of fire and metal working. It is located at the northwest side of the Agora.]
We can also see Mars Hill from here. Mars Hill (Areopagus) is where you see some people on the top. There were never any permanent buildings on Mars Hill. It was an open area. I will tell you more details about Mars Hill when we get there later.

I would like you to see something else – at 12 o'clock sharp. You see another hill, with a flat top. This hill is called Pnyka (Pnyx). It’s located less than one kilometer from here. This was the place where the Greek Assembly gathered. During the years of Democracy, all the male Athenians over eighteen years of age gathered to participate in the assembly. The Greek word for assembly is ‘ecclesia,’ which comes from the word ‘ekkalein,’ which means I call in order to discuss, and then the decisions will be transferred to the other people. In other words, we are called in to go out, and that’s why the word ecclesia is used today. Ecclesia today is those who come to Christ, they know Christ, and they are called out, to go out into the world to tell the people. The assembly was called ‘ecclesia demos’ (demos, means people). Demokratia, kratos means power, so demokratia means the power of the people.

Imagine that on that rock, all the male population over eighteen would gather and sit on the ground, and everybody who wanted to give a speech stood on that Bema (speaker’s platform). There is a platform on the hill Pnyka which is attached to the wall, and there are three steps there. That’s the Bema, the speaker’s platform. It’s not as high as the one we saw yesterday in Corinth, because that was only for the people to stand and be seen and heard by the rest of the people. The things which were discussed were written down; they kept records. The archives were kept in a building at the Agora called Metron; this building today is completely destroyed. So Pnyka came to be known also by its ancient meaning (pnyx), which means ‘sticking together.’ It’s estimated that 8,000 people were sitting there. The population of Athens at the time was about 20,000 people. That's an estimation.

The classical period is from around 510 BC to 338 BC, when Philip, the father of Alexander, defeated the alliance that was formed against him. [Some scholars say the classical period ended with the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC.]

One more thing. You see the hill with some beacons on top, and a black dome; this is the observatory.

Now we will go through the Propylaia (entrance) and see the Parthenon and the other sites on the Acropolis.
The Propylaia (B) Shrine of Athena Hygieia and Hygieia. The Propylaia, the monumental entrance of the sanctuary of the Acropolis, was built at the west edge of the hill in the frame of the building programme of Perikles. The building’s architect was Mnæsikles, who applied ingenious and innovative architectural solutions. The construction of the Propylaia (437-432 BC) was interrupted by the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, and as a result the original plan remained incomplete. The Propylaia comprise a central building with an E-W direction and similar hexastyle (6 columns) Doric pedimental facades.

A cross-wall with five doorways divides the central building into two parts. The longest western one is divided into three aisles by two Ionic colonnades, each of three columns, which support the ceiling. The marble ceilings comprised beams and coffered slabs which had rich painted decoration. The central building of the Propylaia is flanked on the south and the north by two wings with a similar prostyle Doric porch. In the north wing the hall lying behind the porch might have served as a banquet and recreational hall for the worshippers. According to the traveler Pausanias (2nd cent. AD) the hall was decorated with paintings and for this reason is conventionally known as the “Pinakotheke” (picture gallery). The south wing consists only of a porch through which the sanctuary of Athena Nike was accessed.

[Read the rest of the sign at: http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/athena1.jpg ]

The Erechtheion was a temple dedicated to the god Poseidon-Erechtheus and Athena Polias, the two names associated with the sacred place where Poseidon struck his trident on a rock and the place where Athena’s olive tree sprouted – you can see an olive three there. This was where the famous battle took place between Poseidon and Athena for possession of the city. You can see six beautiful statues, the caryatid (supporting) columns in the shape of women.

[The name Erechtheus comes from the name of one of the mythical kings of Athens.]

The building itself has a strange shape. There’s a central rectangular room (cella) and two rooms to the right. Inside was a cult statue of Poseidon, and a wooden statue of Athena. The ancient Athenians believed that the wooden statue of Athena had fallen from heaven, not man-made. This xoanon, the wooden statue or effigy, was considered to be the most sacred and oldest statue on the Acropolis. During the Panathenaic procession in honor of the goddess Athena, the ladies from the rich families of the Athenians made a beautiful garment with which they covered the wooden statue that was there – not the golden one that was inside the Parthenon, but the wooden one in the Erechtheion because it was the oldest.

During the time that Greece was under Ottoman occupation, this building was used as a harem; the sultan had his wives there. The interior was completely destroyed. However, it was the first of the buildings to be restored, and what we see now is a restoration. The entrance was at the east, where the Ionic column is, and later we will see it as we walk further.

Now, about the Parthenon. We first saw the Propylaia, and we walked through the Propylaia. Look at the wall which is on the left. Do you see the knobs, these things which are sticking out of the wall? This shows how the Greeks built the temple. When the marble was cut at the quarries at Mount Penteli (Pentelicon), which is ten miles away, the stonemasons cut the stone in the shape and dimension which were directed to them by the architect. The knobs were placed on four sides of the stone in order to put the rope around it – you see that in this illustration which shows how they put the rope around the drum to pick up the stone and then placed it in its place; then they chipped off the knobs and smoothed the surface. They cut the drums in situ (at

the site), and the last thing that was cut were the knobs. The drums with knobs we see at the wall (on the left) means that the wall was not completed. And we know from historical sources that they didn’t finish it because the Peloponnesian war started.

The illustration also shows that inside each drum there was a hole in which they put two wooden dowels, and when they lifted up the stone and lowered it on another stone, they were placed in such a way that they were exactly in proper alignment – a perfect match with no space in between. Metal (lead) was used in the form of a dowel that looked like a V or a W to fit together the marble blocks – not the drums, only for the marble blocks.

Now, when they put the marble pieces on the carriage driven by oxen, the trip from the quarries at the mountain (Penteli) down to the foot of the Acropolis took almost one day. Slowly, slowly – can you imagine? Each carriage carried one piece weighing about one ton. And then they had to come up the hill. How did they do that? They were very clever. They used the pulley system, where an empty carriage pulled down while the heavier load with the marble was tied up to the pulley and pulled up; you see, they were going down the hill in order to pull up the marble. Very clever, indeed.

The construction of the Parthenon began in 447 BC, and within nine years (438 BC) they finished the temple. And the decoration of the building took six more years. So altogether, it was fifteen years in the building. The reconstruction now has taken more than one hundred years. The outer part of the temple (the columns) has always been like you see; it was the interior that was destroyed, and also the roof was completely destroyed. Question: During the Hellenistic period, during the time of St. Paul, what would have been here? Answer: Everything.

Let me tell you about the Parthenon. It was built with eight columns on the narrow side (width) and seventeen columns on the long side (length). It is divided into three sections. The entrance is at the east, so it’s not this side (with the present-day scaffolding). And inside this big
beautiful building was the statue of Athena. The statue of goddess Athena looked like that. It was made of gold and ivory (chryselephantine), and the weight was about one ton. The height was about forty feet, and you can compare the height of humans with the height of the statue. If you go to Nashville, Tennessee, you can see a full-scale replica of the original Parthenon in Athens there.

So the cult statue of goddess Athena was standing behind the columns here, facing east. People were not allowed to get into the temple; they were able to see the statue only from outside.

Now, until the end of the 4th century AD, the temple was intact, and the statue was still there. In the year 394 AD, the Byzantine Emperor Theodosius the Great, declared Christianity the official religion, and he ordered all the pagan temples to close down and to be destroyed. All the cult statues were destroyed, also. The temples were turned into Christian churches. The temple of the Parthenon also became a Christian Church. They didn’t destroy the columns; they built the church inside. They church was dedicated to Hagia Sophia, which is Wisdom. [Church of the Parthenos Maria, i.e. Virgin Mary – according to some sources]. So, the Christians worshipped at the same temple where the pagans had previously worshipped. [Athena, goddess of Wisdom, became Christianized as Hagia Sophia, church of Wisdom. Wisdom is also personified in Proverbs 9:1 as Wisdom with Seven Pillars.]

Apostle Paul came to Athens in the 1st century AD. So the temple (Parthenon) was there, and he must have seen everything that was there. The destruction of the temple and the looting of the treasury took place after the 4th century AD.

Here I want to make a parenthesis. In the year 323 AD, Constantine the Great established his new capital in the east. Constantine the Great was a Roman emperor. The big Roman empire was divided in two; Rome remained the capital in the west, and Constantinople (or New Rome) became the capital in the east. He realized that he was losing people from his empire, because most of the people became Christians. So he made this edict in 313 AD, the edict of Milan, according to which people were allowed to worship any god they wanted. For the first time, Christians were allowed to worship (their god). Constantine the Great himself was not a Christian. The Orthodox like to say that Constantine was the first Christian (and have canonized him as Saint Constantine), but he was not. He was the Pontifex Maximus (high priest), which means he was representing the god Mithras, who was the god of the Roman military forces (generals and army). He was baptized only before he died. Hence, he was not Christian.

After Constantine we have Theodosius, who was not part of the royal family, but was a general who knew the secrets of the emperor. I don’t want to go into that detail, but Theodosius was the worst person in Byzantine history, even though they say he was the first Christian (emperor). He forced Christianity (upon others) – he was not Christian. The decisions that he took, and the way he behaved was not Christian at all. When he was in Thessaloniki, he called the people (Thessalonians) into the stadium, and the people went there to salute him and worship him. Once they got into the stadium, he ordered his soldiers to close the doors, and everyone was killed – children, women, men – because they were pagans, and because they came to worship the emperor against the Christian way of thinking. When the Athenians heard of what happened in Thessaloniki, do you know what they did? They went down to the Gulf of Salonica (from Thessalonica), and they were all baptized. So they said, ‘Look, we’re Christians.’ This is how they became Christians, without knowing and realizing what they did.

So the Parthenon became the Church of Hagia Sophia (Wisdom), and Theodosius was happy because everybody was Christian, ha-ha-ha, and the pagans were defeated. You can do more research about it. One part of it is very sad, because the Christian message was given here so clearly by Apostle Paul, but in the 4th century unfortunately it was corrupted when it became the official religion.

The Parthenon is a beautiful building with Doric columns. All the sculptures we see are copies. Between 1801–1803, Lord Elgin carved out lots of the sculptures here and took them to the British museum, and we are looking forward to bringing them back. It’s a big story.

Now, I want you to see the very last column of the north side of the temple. Do you realize that the column is not straight? Do you realize that it leans toward the center? One thing that makes the Parthenon a masterpiece of architecture is the optical and esthetical rules that govern the building. We know that there are no straight lines of this temple. The four sides of the temple lean toward the center. This curvature starts from the foundation and goes up to the top. If we extend in our imagination the four corner columns of the temple in the height of 2,000 meters (6,562 feet – over one mile), the columns will meet and form a pyramid. Amazing.

Also, the pavement, the floor, is not completely flat. There is a curvature from one side to the other. Why did the architects do that? They had to overcome the difficulty, the problems, of optical illusions. The building is built on a higher level than the rest of the sanctuary against the blue sky and the sunlight. If the columns were made completely straight, in our eyes they would have looked like they were going to fall down. This is the amazing thing.

5th century BC, and they knew how to handle this problem. So they made this slight curvature. If we stood over there, further away, we would not have realized that the columns are not straight. We would have thought that the columns were straight. But if we stand at a certain angle (like we are now), we realize that the columns are not straight.
Also, another refinement here is the style of the columns. There are thirty-six columns. And not one is exactly the same (or identical to) another one. There are slight differences in the diameter. The exterior ones are a little fatter, swelled. Not all the columns, but only certain parts. Slight differences, in centimeters. But they are bigger because they are exposed to the light. If the columns would have had the same dimension (width), in our eyes they would have looked similar because of the sun that strikes them. But since they made them a little fatter, we think they are the same but they are not. So, amazing.

So, to think that all of this beautiful building – all these details – was finished within nine years in the 5th century BC. And the archaeologists are always surprised when they study the building and they find new things. If I remember correctly, every two or three years all the archaeologists – not only Greeks – attend an international conference because the modern people can learn from the construction of buildings like this one (the Parthenon).

Sign: The Parthenon. The Parthenon was a temple dedicated to Athena Parthenos (Virgin). It is built in the Doric order and was made of white Pentelic marble with a width of 30.86 m., a length of 69.51 m., and a height of 15 m. It has an outer colonnade (pteron) of 8 columns on the short and 17 columns on the long sides, as well as an interior colonnade (prostasis) of 6 columns on the short sides. The interior of the temple was divided into the pronaos (open vestibule), the sekos (cella) the opisthodomos (rear room) and the opisthonaos (see plan, no. 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively).

The Parthenon was the most important building of the program for the re-establishment of the Acropolis sanctuary after the sack by the Persians (480 BC), which was implemented at the initiative of Perikles, the renowned politician of Athens. The funding for the program came from the treasury of the Athenian League that was kept in the opisthadomos of the Parthenon.

The temple was built between 447 and 438 BC, and its sculptural decoration was completed in 432 BC. Iktinos and Kalikrates were the architects of the temple. Its architectural sculptures were designed and partly sculpted, in collaboration with his colleagues, by the famous Athenian sculptor and friend of Perikles, Pheidias, who also had the general supervision of the construction of the temple. Pheidias also created the chryselephantine (gold and ivory) statue of the goddess with an imposing formal appearance and a total height of 12 meters, which stood in the cella. The statue is not preserved, but its appearance is known from ancient writers and later copies. [Read the rest of the sign at: http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/athena2.jpg]

Sign: The Parthenon. The restoration of the Parthenon opistonaos (rear portico) was completed in June 2004. The project provided for the restoration of the architectural members of the entablature, which had been dismantled, and for conservation and restoration in situ of members that had remained on the monument. The architectural members were conserved and, where necessary, they were filled in with new Pentelic marble. New titanium clamps and dowels replaced the rusted clamps and dowels of earlier interventions. As part of the project, works were carried out for effective protection of the west frieze.

After being dismantled, the frieze blocks were conserved with the use of the most recent technology and are currently exhibited in the Acropolis Museum. Casts have replaced the original members on the monument. [Read the rest of the sign at: http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/athena3.jpg]

Sign: The “Old Temple” of Athena. The large Archaic temple to the south of the Erechtheion, which today preserves only its foundations, was called the “Old Temple” according to epigraphic evidence. Dedicated to Athena Polias, the patron deity of the city, it housed the Xoanon, the wooden cult statue of the goddess to which the Athenians offered a peplos (outer robe or shawl) during the Panathenaic festival. The western section of the temple, consisting of three smaller parts, housed the cults of other divinities, possibly Hephaistus, Poseidon-Erechtheus and the hero Boutes. Built at the site once occupied by the palace of the Mycenaean ruler of Attica, the temple replaced a smaller Geometric one (8th c. BC) also dedicated to Athena Polias. The only remains of this early temple are two stone column bases as well as a bronze disc with an image of Gorgo, which adorned the pediment on the tip of the roof in the 7th c. BC. The “Old Temple” of Athena, a Doric peripteral building with 6 columns at the front and rear end and 12 at the sides, measured 43.44 x 21.43 m. It was built of poros, while Parian marble was used for some upper parts, such as the metopes, pedimental sculptures and tiles. One pediment was adorned with a sculpted group illustrating the Gigantomachy (the battle between the Olympian gods and the rebellious Giants), while the other featured a partially preserved group of lions devouring a bull. The altar, which is no longer preserved, was located to the east of the temple, as is indicated by the cuttings on the rock. [Read the rest of the sign at: http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/athena4.jpg]
Sign: The Lateral walls of the Cella. The projects for restoring the lateral walls of the cella began in 1992 with the aim of correcting the inadequacies of the earlier interventions of 1841-1844, 1913 and 1927-28. Together with the dismantling of the architectural members, studies have been made for a new restoration. Research has been focused on locating the original position of the blocks that had been used in previous restorations and on incorporating scattered material in the building. As a result, 440 additional cella wall blocks have been identified. With the new restoration, the walls will regain the form they had at the beginning of the 19th century.

http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/athena5.jpg


[At the east side of the Parthenon]

You see the Doric capitals? Above the columns are the reliefs; all of them are copies. Then above that is the pediment, the triangle-shaped top. The subject here was the birth of the goddess Athena. She was born from the head of her father, Zeus. On the west pediment was the conflict between Athena and Poseidon for the name of the city.

Look at the slabs under the pediment which look like legos. It's a very clever system of collecting the rain water from the roof. So the rain water was collecting there and dropping down onto the ground without leaking on the walls and columns, and thus the walls and columns were protected. In the corners they used the open-mouthed gargoyles like gutters. The horses were part of the chariot of the moon. You see them on the right side of the pediment.
And on the left side of the pediment you see Dionysus and the Chariot of the Sun. Some of the original ones are at the Acropolis Museum. The majority are destroyed or they are in the British Museum.  

[The horses of Helios (sun) are depicted as if they are about to rise above the horizon pulling behind them the life giving sun. The horses of Selene (moon) are tired for they are at the end of their journey across the night sky.]

http://ancient-greece.org/art/parthenon-ped-east.html

East of the Parthenon lay the foundations of a small building attributed by the first excavators of the Acropolis to the Temple of Rome and the Roman Emperor Octavian Augustus. The association of the foundations with the temple stems from the discovery in the area of many marble architectural members, as well as of the architrave bearing the incised dedicatory inscription. The architectural members indicate that the Temple of Rome and Augustus was of the Ionic order, circular and monopteral – namely that it featured a single circular colonnade made of nine columns (pteron), without a walled room inside (cella).
Sign: The Parthenon. The Parthenon, a temple of the Doric order, was dedicated to Athena Parthenos (Virgin). It was the most important building of the program of Pericles for the re-establishment of the Acropolis sanctuary after the sack by the Persians in 480 BC. The architects of the temple were Ictinos and Callicrates. The renowned sculptor Pheidias collaborated with other sculptors to design and execute the abundant sculptural decoration of the temple, created the chryselephantine (gold and ivory) statue of Athena which stood in the cela, and had the general supervision of the construction of the temple. The Parthenon was built in 447-438 BC, and its sculptural compositions were completed in 432 BC. In the following centuries, several votive offerings were added to the Parthenon, among which most characteristic were the bronze shields which Alexander the Great dedicated from the spoils of his victory at the Granikos River (334 BC). The shields hung along the east architrave, as indicated by the large rectangular holes. The bronze letters of a decree by the Athenians in honor of the Roman emperor Nero (61 AD) were fastened in the smaller closely grouped holes on the east architrave. In the late 3rd or late 4th cent. AD, the interior of the temple was destroyed by fire either by the Germanic tribe of the Heruli (267 AD) or by Alaric's Visigoths (396 AD). During the early Christian period (6th cent. AD), the Parthenon was converted into a church dedicated to the “Holy Wisdom” (Hagia Sophia) and in the 11th cent. AD to Panagia Athiniotissa (Virgin Mary). [To read the rest of the sign, click on link: http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/athena6.jpg ]

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269076024_The_geology_of_the_Acropolis_Athens_Greece

Now, before we walk down to see the theater of Dionysus – follow me this way.

[We walk on the bare limestone of the Acropolis]

How the Acropolis was built: Deposit limestone in the late Cretaceous. 30 million years later, deposit sandstone and marl. In the Eocene, shove the limestone up and over the younger strata, shattering the bottom of the limestone in the process. Break up the fault with some small-offset normal faults. Differentially erode the landscape.

The nearby hill is Lykavittos (Lycabettus), and the white building on top is the Greek Orthodox church dedicated to St. George. In the distance you can see Mount Penteli. This is where the marble was quarried that was used in the building of the temple (Parthenon). The marble was
brought from that mountain. You can see the white holes in the slopes – that’s the quarry. The mountain is 16 kilometers (about 10 miles) away, from here.

Now we can see the theater of Dionysus, the god of theater and wine. Among the dramatists of the classical era whose plays were performed here are: Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, and Menander. The theater had a seating capacity of 17,000 people. The seats originally were wooden, but during the Hellenistic and Roman time they were paved with marble. What we see today is the Roman theater, as you can see by the semicircular form of the orchestra.

We also have a nice view of the Temple of Zeus. And we can see down below the ruins of the Temple (Sanctuary) of Asclepius, the god of healing and medicine. You remember we talked about him yesterday at Corinth. That’s the place the pilgrims would sleep at, and during the night the god would appear to them in a dream or vision with a remedy or cure.
You can see the Hill of Philopappos (Hill of the Muses) with the Philopappos Monument on top. That's the ancient Greek mausoleum dedicated to Gaius Julius Antiochus Epiphanes Philopappos. Beyond the hill you have a view of the Saronic Gulf and the small island Aegina. And the building past the theater is the New Acropolis Museum. You can see that the third floor is not parallel to the rest of the building, but is parallel to the Parthenon because this room is as big as the Parthenon itself. And it houses all the sculptures from the temple. So if you go inside the museum, you will have a nice view of the Parthenon.

An actual drum near the Parthenon.

An ancient well at the site.

Posing with our tour guide, Voula Paraskevi.

View of the Odeum of Herodes Atticus.
Sign: The first restorations of the Monuments on the Athenian Acropolis (1835-1940). The restoration of the monuments of the Acropolis, among the masterpieces of Universal Cultural Heritage, was a national goal of the greatest significance from the very foundation of the Greek State (1833). In the first restorations of the monuments (1835-1854), consolidation and completion of their ancient parts was carried out in an experimental way. Large-scale restoration interventions intended, in so far as possible, to recover the form that the monuments had in classical times. With the use of ancient material and a few additions of new marble, these interventions were carried out from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the Second World War (1896-1940). Yet the practice of using ordinary iron for joining architectural members and the arbitrary use of scattered ancient fragments as ordinary building material created serious problems. [Continue at: http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/athena7.jpg]

Sign: Surface Conservation of the Acropolis Monuments. The main building material of the Acropolis monuments is Pentelic Marble. The damage seen in this material in the course of time is due to its internal structure, the action of environmental and biological agents (3), and to human activity. The conservation interventions include graphic (1) and photographic documentation of the existing condition and diagnosis of the agents and mechanisms of the damage.

http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/athena8.jpg
The work of the restoration of the Erechtheion during the period 1979-1987 is the first intervention carried out on the Acropolis under the scholarly supervision of the Committee for the Conservation of the Acropolis Monuments, in which the methodology used since then in the interventions was applied. Restoration on a large scale had been carried out on the monument during the periods 1837-1846 and 1902-1909. [Continue reading at: http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/athena9.jpg ]

From the end of 2010 the work of restoration of the Parthenon has continued with four new sub-programs funded by the Greek state and the European Union [National Strategic Reference Framework 2011-2013]. Planned for the west side (1) is the dismantling (2, 7), structural restoration and resetting of the blocks of the pediment and entablature of the two corners. [Continue reading at: http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/athena10.jpg ]

Sign: The Restoration of the Parthenon – Works in Progress. From the end of 2010 the work of restoration of the Parthenon has continued with four new sub-programs funded by the Greek state and the European Union [National Strategic Reference Framework 2011-2013]. Planned for the west side (1) is the dismantling (2, 7), structural restoration and resetting of the blocks of the pediment and entablature of the two corners. [Continue reading at: http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/athena10.jpg ]

Sign: The Restoration of the Parthenon: 1983-2009. The Interventions for restoration of the Parthenon began in 1983 and were divided into 12 separate sub-programs, depending on the extent and seriousness of the problems in the various parts of the building (1). On the east side the works have included restoration of the entablature and pediment on the two corners (3), the transfer of the authentic metopes to the Acropolis Museum and their replacement on the monument by precise copies. [Continue reading at: http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/athena11.jpg ]

On the north side some 230 architectural members from the 8 central columns and the overlying entablature were structurally restored and reset on the monument in their authentic positions (2, 6). The restoration of the pronaos (4) was accomplished using original material, the authentic position of which on the monument was known, and fillings of new marble. At the same time, the columns of the west porch were consolidated by means of injections and the entablature was restored. The opithonaos work included the removal of the blocks of the west frieze, their cleaning with laser and their removal to the Acropolis Museum. Copies in artificial stone have replaced them on the monument (5). [http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/athena11.jpg ]
Sign: The Restoration of the Propylaia. The serious structural problems caused by the previous restoration (2) of the Propylaia (1909 – 1917) made the need for a new intervention, that begun in 1990, urgent. Systematic research on the preserved architectural material and the interventions on the east portico (4, 5) and the west hall of the monument, led to the restoration of extensive parts of the marble ceilings (1, 3) of the Propylaia (2002-2009). Completion of the work with the restoration …[Continue at: http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/athena12.jpg]

Sign: The Restoration of the Temple of Athena Nike. The work of the restoration of the temple of Athena Nike during the decade 2000-2010 (1) was necessary because serious damage and structural problems were evident in the monument, many of which were due to earlier restoration interventions in 1835-1845 and in 1935-1940. The most recent intervention included the entire classical temple (2-3) and was extended also to the earlier poros temple of the goddess (4), which is preserved beneath [Continue at: http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/athena13.jpg]

Sign: The Statue of Athena Promachos. The colossal bronze statue of Athena, known as Athena Promachos, dominated in the area between the Propylaia and the Erechtheion, to the left of the visitor walking along the processional way of the Acropolis. It was made by the renowned sculptor Pheidias probably at the bronze foundry situated at the southwest slope of the Acropolis. The Athenians dedicated the statue to Athena, to express their gratitude for her contribution to the victories in the . . . [Continue at: http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/athena14.jpg]
Exit through Propyla

Inscription: “The Castle of Athens is the most precious jewel in the world”

Greek pillar: [link]

Lions put off to the side.

Walk to the Areopagus. Acropolis in background.

[Proceed to the Areopagus, Mars Hill]
[link]

Let me tell you about the hill. It’s a limestone hill. It’s 125 meters (410 feet) high. It was the place where the Supreme Court of the ancient people of Athens, and it was called the Areopagus Council. Pagos means ‘rock’ in ancient Greek, and Ares (Mars) was the god of war, so it’s Areo-pagos. Ares was the first one who was put on trial here, and that’s why the hill was named after him. The Supreme Court of ancient Athens usually gathered in a building called the Royal Stoa, which was down at the Agora. But when they had to judge cases of religious crimes, like sacrilege, they met on top of the hill. A temporary hut was built for the judges, while the person who was accused of committing the crime stood outside in the open air. The judges did not want to be under the same roof as the criminal. The original staircase that led to the top is over there, those marble steps. The staircase on the left is the new one, and it is actually safer.

Apostle Paul – we read in the Scriptures – arrived in Athens by boat from Berea. The Jewish brethren in Thessalonica were after him, and the brothers and sisters in Berea took Apostle Paul to the sea, where he sailed to Athens. His co-workers (Silas and Timotheus) walked. While Apostle Paul was waiting for them in Athens – let’s read from verse 16 (Acts, Chapter 17):
“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.” (KJV) I remind you that the Roman critic Petronius said that Athens had more gods than men. That shows how many statues, how many gods, were worshipped here.

“Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? And some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection (verse 17-18).” The Greek word for babbler is 'spermalogos' – sperma is the seed, and spermalogos is the seed speaker, the seed distributor, like the bird who takes a seed from here and goes elsewhere and drops it, something like that. So what does he want to say? You see, the Epicureans and the Stoics were the two groups of philosophers at that time; the Epicureans were the first materialists who said, ‘eat, drink, be merry, for you die, and that’s it.’ The Stoics were more strict – you know the word Stoicism – and they gathered in a stoa, that’s why they called Stoics. The Stoics believed that the most precious part of the human being is the soul, and that the body is the house of the soul. And when a person drifted away from God, the body or house of the soul became a prison of the soul. So the Stoics didn’t celebrate their birth, but their death, because they believed that when people died, then the soul was freed from the prison (body). So the Stoics and the Epicureans were in Athens at that time.

“Others said, he seems to be a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached to them Jesus, and the resurrection. (verse 18) And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus (in the Greek text it says on the Areopagus, or Mars Hill, and that’s why we believe that this is the spot, and not at the Royal Stoa, as some people say). And they asked, may we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? (v. 19) For you bring certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. (v. 20) (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)” (v.21) This is what actually happened.

“Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, You men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious” (very religious, in other translations). (v. 22) The Greek word for that is ‘deisidaimonesterous’ – ‘daimon’ in the ancient Greek language meant God – so the word ‘deisidaimonesterous’ means you are far more religious, there is emphasis here, you are too religious, are more than others.

“For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.” (v. 23) You see, the city was full of idols, and his spirit was disturbed, but he didn’t tell them, I walked and I saw your idols. No, he said, I saw the objects of your worship – how wonderfully he built this bridge to communicate this important truth. “Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” You see, we do know that there were altars to the
unknown god. Nothing of this has survived, but we know that from reading sources. And then he starts his wonderful sermon.

“God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands; (v.24) Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he gives to all life, and breath, and all things; (v.25) And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; (v.26) That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us; (v.27) For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. (v.28) Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead (divine nature) is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device. (v.29) And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men every where to repent: (v.30) Because he has appointed a day, in the which we will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained; whereof he has given assurance unto all men, in that he has raised him from the dead. (v.31) And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear you again of this matter. (v.32) So Paul departed from among them.” (v.33) You see, he lost his audience once he spoke about the resurrection. The Epicureans mocked, and the Stoics wanted to hear more later. If you time this speech, it is less than two minutes.

The scholars believe – and I believe – that Apostle Paul was planning to give a six minute speech. This was given at the Ecclesia (assembly) and in the courts. The speech was called ‘Logos’ – Logos is the speech which includes wisdom, expression, persuasion, credibility, all this. But because Apostle Paul was interrupted, since he mentioned the resurrection, he stopped. But still, within two minutes he was able to cover so many things. He even mentions some of the poets. This poet who is mentioned here is Aratus, he was one of the poets from Cilicia, the area where Apostle Paul was born. Have you ever heard of him? He is not well known. Socrates, Aristotle, the philosophers and others, like the poet Euripides, are more important. Although this person was not well-known, Paul knew him. Paul was three-in-one: Roman citizen, Jew, and he had Hellenistic education.

“Howbeit certain men clave unto (joined) him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.” (v.34). Dionysius the Areopagite was a member of the court, and the woman Damaris was obviously of a noble family who could influence her environment, that’s why she’s mentioned. Some people (Christians) say that Apostle Paul failed here in Athens because he didn’t establish a church. Personally, I disagree. We never fail when we speak about God. We plant the seed, and it’s God’s work to grow that seed. And that’s exactly what Apostle Paul did. Remember that it was the very first time Paul had to speak to philosophers. He was not in the synagogue. The audience was a challenge to him, but I think he managed it very well. And some of them became Christians.

So what is a Church? Do we have to have one hundred people in the church in order for it to be a church? Wherever there are five, or a few people, are gathered in Jesus’ name, it’s a church. So among them were members of the court and members of high society. So I don’t think that Paul failed. On the contrary, he put the foundation for a small Christian community, and we do know that the word was spread. Also, have in mind that at the time the city of Athens was a small provincial city (no more than 20,000 people), a philosophical city during Roman times. The capital of the area was Corinth (about 150,000 people), the wealthy trade city. And Apostle Paul always established churches in places from which the gospel could be heard and spread much faster. Athens was not a city like that. And I’m sure he was not planning to establish a church here; his plan was to go up to Corinth. But because he was waiting for his friends, he stayed here.
One more thing. I spoke about Logos. Logos (‘Everlasting Word’) is the term Heraclitus (of Ephesus, a pre-Socratic philosopher) mentions – for the first time. Apostle John used exactly the same word to speak about God, Jesus. Logos is Jesus – it’s not just an idea or a speech; it (Jesus) is the expression of God to us. These are some of the things I wanted to share with you. I don’t know if you would like to add, or clarify. [Voula gets a group hug from the pilgrims.]

[I tried to find the Speech on Logos by Apostle Paul that Voula mentioned, but I couldn’t find it. However, I did find some interesting commentaries on Apostle Paul’s Athens speech in Acts, and also a different version of what the altar to “an unknown God” was all about:

https://bible.org/seriespage/27-aphostle-athens-preaching-philosophers-acts-1715-34
(altar clarification)
http://www.freewebs.com/reformationalphilosophy/Sewell/Acts17.pdf (commentary)
http://www.cmfnow.com/articles/pa045.htm (commentary)
http://spindleworks.com/library/rfaber/aratus.htm (Phaenomena of Aratus)]

Now, shall we go up? Yes. Are we all going up? Yes. Let’s go up. Be very careful, especially on the marble steps, which are very slippery. [I took the slippery marble steps on the way up, and the modern safe metal steps on the way down.]


Bronze plaque of Paul’s Speech (in Greek) at the base of the steps leading to the Areopagus (Mar’s Hill)

Statheis de ho Paulos en meso tou Areiou Pagou ephe Andres Athenaioi kata panta hos deisidaimonesterous hymas theoro. (transliterated Greek) 22 Στάθετις δὲ Παύλος ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ Ἀρείου Πάγου ἔφη· Ἀνδρέας Ἀθηναῖοι, κατὰ πάντα ώς δεισιδαιμονετέρους ὑμᾶς θεοῦ· 23 διερχόμενος γὰρ καὶ ἀναθεωρῶν τὰ σεβάσματα ὑμῶν εὗρον καὶ βοῶν ἐν ὦ ἑπεγέγραπτο· Ἀγνώστω θεῷ. ὁ οὖν ἄγνοοντες εὐσέβει τε, τούτο ἐγώ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν. 24 ο θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας τὸν κόσμον καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ, οὕτως οὐρανοῦ καὶ υπάρχουν κύριος οὐκ ἐν χειροποιήτοις ναοῖς κατοικεῖ· 25 οὐδὲ ὑπὸ χειρῶν ἀνθρωπίνων θεραπεύεται προσδεόμενος τινος, αὐτὸς διδοὺς πάσι ζωήν καὶ πνοήν καὶ τὰ πάντα· 26 ἐποίησέν τε ἐξ ἐνὸς πάν ἐθνῶν ἀνθρώπων κατοικεῖν ἐπὶ παντὸς προσώπου τῆς γῆς, όρισας προστεταγμένους καίρους καὶ τὰς ὀρθοθεσίας τῆς κατοικίας αὐτῶν, 27 ὁτι κάθε πόλις εἶ ἄρα γε μηθαφήσειν αὐτὸν καὶ εὐριήν, καὶ γε ὅ μεκρὰν ἀπὸ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου ἡμῶν ὑπάρχοντα. 28 ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν, ὡς καὶ τίνες
τῶν καθ’ ύμᾶς ποιητῶν εἰρήκασιν. Τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν. 29 γένος οὐν ὑπάρχοντες τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ὁφείλομεν νομίζειν χρυσῷ ἢ ἀργύρῳ ἢ λίθῳ, χαράγματι τέχνης καὶ ἐνθυμήσεως ἄνθρωποι, τὸ θεῖον εἶναι ὅμοιον. 30 τοὺς μὲν οὖν χρόνους τῆς ἁγνοίας ὑπεριδῶν ὁ θεός τὰ νῦν παραγγέλλει τοὺς ἄνθρωποις πάντας πανταχοῦ μετανοεῖν, 31 καθ’ ἐστησαν ἡμέραν ἣμεραν ἣν ἤμελλε κρίνειν τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ ἐν ἀνδρὶ ὥριεν, πίστιν παρασκεύασμα τῆς ἁπάτης αὐτῶν ἐκ νεκρῶν. (Acts 17:21 - 31)

The Odeon of Agrippa was a large concert hall located in the centre of the Ancient Agora of Athens. It was built about 15 BCE, occupying what had previously been open space in the centre of the agora. It was a gift to the people of Athens by Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, a Roman statesman and general.

The two-storey auditorium seated around 1,000 spectators and was equipped with a raised stage and marble-paved orchestra. On three sides it was surrounded by a subterranean cryptoporticus with stoae above. The building was decorated externally with Corinthian pilasters. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odeon_of_Agrippa]


The Agora was the downtown of the city of Athens. It was the commercial center, the market center, the judiciary center, the political center, and administrative center. The first building that was built was the temple (of Hephaestus), and the buildings below the temple. You see where the temple is – the temple was classical, built in the 5th century BC; it was dedicated to Hephaestus, who was the god of coppersmiths, and goddess Athena. Both were worshipped as protectors (patrons) of arts and crafts. You can see it is very well preserved.

Lower down the hill were other buildings, like the Council House (Bouleuterion). The city consisted of ten tribes, and fifty people from each tribe were elected to be members of the council. Every citizen was allowed to be a member of the council. This is how democracy functioned – Power of People. Imagine a wealthy person sitting next to a poor person, educated next to uneducated; they were responsible for themselves. You see, the views of democracy started from here. That was the hub – the center. What was democracy? Each person had a value – not only for one another, but above all for God (as was preached later on). For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son. All this started from here. People would not have understood the teachings of Jesus if the views and teachings of the Athenians about democracy had not had not preceded. In the Old Testament, people would say, ’eye for eye’ – no forgiveness. Then we have the Christians who come and say, ’God loved the world so much and gave his only Son, and we forgive.’ They would forgive their enemies – Love your enemies. People would not have understood this if they had not the knowledge of Athenian democracy before that.

So, that was the Council House (or senate house). Today we see only the ruins – nothing else. The round building (in the reconstruction picture) was called the Tholos (or council headquarters), where one from each tribe selected to be president (of the tribe) met.

Next to the Tholos was the Metroon (ancient temple dedicated to mother goddess), the register office, where the records from the meetings were kept, and further down there was a stoa dedicated to Zeus as the father of freedom (’Zeus Eleutherios’).
Do you see the green tents? In front of the green tents is a railway, and the ruins of the Royal Stoa (Stoa Basileios) was there. This was where the Areopagos Council regularly met. But nothing of that has survived.

Here in the reproduction picture you can see a stoa (Stoa of Attalos) that has been reconstructed. It houses the Museum of the Ancient Agora today.

People lived there until the 19th century; that’s why you see a church there dedicated to the Twelve Apostles of Christ (aka Church of the Holy Apostle). It is a building preserved from the 10th century AD.

Monastiraki is the name of the whole old area of the city (aka Plaka Monastiraki). Now, some practical information. You can walk parallel to the Acropolis, down the path, and then a street takes you to Monastiraki Square. Behind the cypress trees you see a square building with a dome – it’s a mosque – it’s exactly in front of the square called Monastiraki, and all the shops are around that area. There are nice restaurants there, too, if you are interested.

So, let’s meet down the stairs in the shade, and we can say good-bye. Officially, that’s the end of the tour today. Let’s go down now.
We gave Voula our tips for being such a great tour guide, took a group picture, and then we headed our separate ways. I headed to the Acropolis Museum.

http://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/ (official site)
https://youtu.be/P0OgGCuuJzE (YouTube video, New Acropolis Museum)

Sign at entrance: The Parthenon Riders

Model of Acropolis in the 2nd – 3rd cent. AD
http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/museum1.jpg
Model of Athens in 2nd cent. AD http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/museum2.jpg

Model of Parthenon. [Note: Captions for museum pieces are taken from Wikipedia—Parthenon]
The east pediment narrates the birth of Athena from the head of her father, Zeus. According to Greek mythology, Zeus gave birth to Athena after a terrible headache prompted him to summon Hephaestus (the god of fire and the forge) for assistance. To alleviate the pain, he ordered Hephaestus to strike him with his forging hammer, and when he did, Zeus's head split open and out popped the goddess Athena in full armor. The sculptural arrangement depicts the moment of Athena's birth.

The west pediment faced the Propylaia and depicted the contest between Athena and Poseidon during their competition for the honor of becoming the city's patron. Athena and Poseidon appear at the center of the composition, diverging from one another in strong diagonal forms, with the goddess holding the olive tree and the god of the sea raising his trident to strike the earth. At their flanks, they are framed by two active groups of horses pulling chariots, while a crowd of legendary personalities from Athenian mythology fills the space out to the acute corners of the pediment.

Lego version of the ancient Acropolis (two views)
http://www.ancientworldsociety.com/wordpress/lego-acropolis/
Sign: The Acropolis and classical Athens.
Sign: The Parthenon.
Sign: The Erechtheion (not pictured)

East side, with sculptures from east pediment, and metopes (gods vs. giants, i.e. Titans).
The sculptures of the Parthenon. The Parthenon had the richest sculptural adornment of any Greek temple, and through these sculptures and carvings, using the language of mythology and myth-making. The Athenians proclaimed the leading role of their city in the Greek world. The most important groups of sculptures decorated the metopes, the frieze and the pediments of the great temple. The 92 metopes were the first architectural elements with carved decoration to be placed on the building. Each metope portrayed a separate, self-contained scene, usually with two figures. The subjects of these scenes were inspired by mythic battles and symbolized the victorious struggles of the Athenian people against their numerous foes. The scenes from the east side of the temple depict the Gigantomachy – the battle of the Olympian gods with the Giants, who were challenging the Olympians’ sovereignty. The metopes on the west side show the young men of Athens fighting alongside their King Theseus against the Amazons, who were attaching the Acropolis. On the south side are depicted the young men of Thessaly, the Lapiths, in a fierce struggle with the Centaurs, who were trying to steal their women during the wedding feast of the Lapith King Perithoos, a close friend of Theseus. And finally, the metopes on the north side of the temple portray the Fall of Troy, in whose siege the descendants of Theseus participated.


The Caryatids. The Erechtheion has two porches or porticos, on its north and south sides. The roof of the north porch is supported by six Ionic columns, while an opening in the floor of the building shows a mark which the Athenians claimed was made by Poseidon striking the rock with his trident. The south porch is the better known of the two. In the place of columns, six sculpted Korai, the Caryatids, supported the roof. Although the name of their creator is unknown, it is thought that they are from the workshop of Alkamenes, a pupil of Pheidias. Many interpretations have been offered for the Caryatids. The most convincing of these contends that they comprise
the above-ground monument for the tomb of Kekrops, which was located directly beneath. These were the choephoroi (libation bearers), who were rendering tribute to the dead king, with phialai (shallow libation bowls) held in their hands, as we know from ancient reproductions. [Continue: http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/museum8.jpg]

Sign: The Metope of the Annunciation. In the turbulent years around 400 AD, when the ancient world was in decline and before the Parthenon was converted into a Christian church, fanatics opposed to idols in the invading army of Alaric attempted to burn the Parthenon and destroy its sculptures. The metopes, the large relief panels above the columns were brutally defaced on three sides of the building. The 32nd metope on the north side, however, was left intact. Here, two female figures are shown: one, older, is seated on a rock while the other, younger, stands before her. Archaeological research has attributed the preservation of this metope to the fact that the scene was thought to portray the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary. In actuality of course, the angel is Hebe and the Virgin Mary her mother, Hera. This metope, along with the three adjacent to it, depicts the gods on Mount Olympus deciding the outcome of the Trojan War and the victory of the Greeks. [Continue at: http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/museum13.jpg]

Metopes: The theme of the south side was the fight of the Thessalian youths (Lapiths) against the Centaurs who attempted to abduct their women during a wedding celebration (Centauromachy). (Left to right) S.26 A Lapith fighting a centaur. South Metope 27: Lapith and Centaur. S.28-32 Lapith and Centaur. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/artifact?name=Parthenon%20Metopes&object=Sculpture
Hekatompedon: The earliest building on the Acropolis was known by the name of Hekatompedon or Hekatompedos neos – meaning 100 feet long, and comes from an inscription referring to the layout of the sanctuary. The lioness pediment is distinguished by its high-relief carving and its striking size. It depicts a lioness with an unusually bushy mane, rearing on its hind legs and tearing apart a calf. It is believed to have adorned the east pediment of the temple. Two compositions belong to the west pediment.

The one to the left depicts Herakles on his right knee, wrestling with the Triton, a creature with a body of a man ending in the scaly tail of a sea monster. The group to the right is the Triple-Bodied Monster, a composite creature consisting of three male figures conjoined at the waist. Each figure holds an object in its left hand: the first has water, the second fire, and the third a bird (symbolizing air). [http://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/content/hekatompedon](http://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/content/hekatompedon)

A Day at the Acropolis Museum with the Goddess Athena (Wisdom). The birth of Athena. Athena was born in a rather unusual way, springing out from the head of her father, Zeus. According to myth, Zeus swallowed Metis, the goddess of prudence, when she was pregnant with Athena. When it was time for her to give birth, Zeus felt a great pain in his head and ordered Hephaistus to splay it open with an ax. Then, the goddess Athena sprang out fully armed, before the Olympian gods. The scene, which was portrayed on the eastern pediment of the Parthenon, is now lost.


Athena and Poseidon. In order to win over the protection of the Athenian territory, Athena had to take part in a contest with Poseidon, who had the same aim. The contest took place on the Acropolis. Poseidon hit the rock with his trident and salty water sprang up. However, the Athenians preferred the olive tree offered to them by Athena – the first olive tree in the world. This legendary battle was represented on the west pediment of the Parthenon, where the two gods held their attributes: Athena a spear and a shield, Poseidon a trident.

This block depicts the procession of four hydria-bearers. Three of these carry vessels on their shoulders that contain water for sprinkling the altar and the animals. The fourth has temporarily set down his hydria (water-jar) on the ground and prepares to lift it again.

The frieze measures 160 metres in length, is almost one metre high, and includes an astonishing 380 figures and 220 animals, mostly horses, all carved in low relief (maximum 6 cm) overlapping across 115 slabs. Through a combination of surviving pieces and drawings, 90% of the frieze can be reconstructed. Running around all four sides of the building between the outer colonnade and the inner cella, the narrative of the frieze begins in the south-west corner and then runs parallel down the long sides to conclude at the far end, exactly over the main doorway. Such a design was an Ionic feature and more typical of treasury buildings. However, in reality the Parthenon and the gold sheeting on the statue of Athena also served as the city's treasury and that of the Delian League. The frieze was unusual in that it did not depict scenes from Greek mythology and unique because all four sides depict a single subject - the Panathenaic Procession. This was a religious ceremony held every four years which involved a procession along the Sacred Way and finally delivered a new, specially woven robe or peplos, the arrephoros, to the ancient olive-wood cult statue of Athena housed in the Erechtheion next door to the Parthenon.

http://www.ancient.eu/article/780/

Three youths wearing himatia (cloaks) lead four rams. A fragment probably belongs to the body of the first. The other two are conversing while resting one hand on the back of the animals they are leading to sacrifice. Behind them is a marshal, partly depicted on this block and partly on the next. He turns back to face the procession.
Amidst the horsemen, a marshal with a himation wrapped around his waist turns to face the two approaching riders and commands them by raising his arm. Ahead of him, a horseman with a chlamys (cape) draped over his hand turns his well-built body to face those behind him.

A procession of sixteen elderly men in himatia. They converse while walking or standing, or they turn to look behind them. One man ties a ribbon around his head, while another has his hair arranged in braids that cross at the nape of the neck. Some once held branches shown in color. They have been interpreted as the thallophoroi (elders carrying olive branches) or as city officials (contest marshals – athiothetal – or supervisors of religious rites – hieropoli).

East Pediment: The East Pediment of the Parthenon represents the Birth of Athena in the presence of the Olympian Gods as reported by the 2nd cent. AD traveler Pausanias. In the center of the pediment are Zeus and Athena, whose figures have only partially survived. Other gods attending the scene are depicted right and left, standing, seated or reclining so as to fit in the triangular space of the pediment. The chariots of the rising Sun (Helios) and the setting Moon (Selene) complete the composition at its two ends. The loss of the central figures is thought to be related to the construction of the apse of the Christian church into which the Parthenon was converted in the 6th cent. AD.

West Pediment: Depicted in the West Pediment of the Parthenon was the Eris (contest) of Athena and Poseidon for the protectorship of Athens in the presence of the local heroes, as reported by Pausanias. The central figures are the two opposing divinities, followed each by their chariots, with Nike (Victory) as charioteer for Athena (Wisdom). Amphitrite (sea goddess, consort) for Poseidon. Behind them run the messengers of the gods, Hermes and Iris. Seated and reclining heroes fill the corners.  

http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/museum15.jpg

The lion-head waterspout of the Northeast corner of the Parthenon. The marble sima (gutter) set on the raking cornice of the pediments, ended in lion heads worked in the round at the corners. They were not penetrated, but were simply decorative. On the pan tile of the sima the bases of the corner finials were affixed; they were statues of moving women, presumably Nikai.

South Metopes10-12 (Centaurs vs. Lapiths)

East 6 Poseidon crushes a giant with the island of Nisyros.

E9. Apollo attacks a giant. E10. Artemis (Diana) driving the chariot of Apollo.

E14 The four-horse chariot of Helios (the Sun) rising from the Ocean.
Sign: The metopes of the Parthenon were the first architectural sculptures to be fixed on the temple during its construction. The Centauromachy, or battle of the Centaurs, a favorite subject of the Athenians, metaphorically depicts the fierce struggle between civilization and barbarism.


http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/museum18.jpg (from nature to marble)

Floral akroterion.

Preserved excavations outside Acropolis Museum.

Sign: The archaeological excavation. The remains of a neighborhood of ancient Athens are preserved in situ at the base of the Acropolis Museum. These include streets, houses, baths and workshops dating from the 5th century BC to the 9th century AD. Today, buildings from late
antiquity and the early Byzantine period mainly survive while earlier remains are occasionally interspersed among them. [Continue at: http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/museum17.jpg ]

Virtual tour of Acropolis Museum:
https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/streetview/acropolis-museum/IwFUpQvlJ1QDV