

48 Hours in Athens: Things to do in Athens & Budget Tips

by Janice Green on September 02, 2019



An ancient theater next to the Acropolis.

We had a jam packed 48 hours in Athens before we caught our flight home to Canada. There is no shortage of things to see or do in this bustling city. Athens reminded us a lot of some cities we have been to in South East Asia; it bustles with the same energy and intensity as a city like Ho Chi Minh, and has a rich culture that can only be experienced, not described. This is how we enjoyed 48 hours in Athens, the capital of Greece:

Eat Delicious Vegan Food

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the amazing vegan scene in Athens, and while I truly did want to write an entire post about this, I didn't think it was fitting because I basically ate all of my meals at Vegan Nation while in Athens, and it is sadly now closed. However, there are many fully vegan restaurants in Athens, and what seems like a really active and passionate vegan community.

As always, [Happy Cow](#) was one of my go-to resources to find vegan eats on this trip.

Join a Free Walking Tour

Ever since I was a wee baby traveler (circa 2011 when I flew the coop for my first ever international trip to live in Germany) I have absolutely loved free walking tours. In my opinion, there is no better way to explore a city than on foot. I've been known to spend hours wandering markets, historic areas, and even shopping malls just to get a feel for the local way of life.

Walking tours take this to the next level—you're typically being guided by someone who knows something (or everything) about the history of the area. I always find that these guides are a wealth of knowledge when it comes to local customs, history, cuisine, way of life, and just generally know all of the best things to do in any given area/city. We did ours with [Athens Free Walking Tour](#) and Michael was our guide—we highly recommend this experience! Don't forget to tip your guides and write a review, it's how they pay their bills!

Wander the Acropolis Museum

I'm not always a huge museum fan. It's gotta be interesting and really well laid out to keep my attention. We decided, upon recommendation from locals, to check out the [Acropolis Museum](#) before heading up to the Acropolis itself. I'm glad we did, because it was a really good introduction.

This is a great way to spend an afternoon, too, if it's super hot in Athens while you're there; and at only 10 euros per person to visit, it's a steal of a deal for all of the work that has gone into this museum.

Join the Crowds at The Acropolis

Of course, when in Athens... we did visit the Acropolis, but we don't necessarily recommend it. More on that next week, and which historical sights to see instead! Still, I'll admit, there is something that is always special about roaming ancient ruins, and standing on history itself.

Go Back in Time at the Agora

Without a doubt, if you visit only one site in Athens, make it the Agora. As individuals we are both deeply interested in the daily life of those across the world; the Agora is where daily life happened, where people gathered, shopped, and where ideas were exchanged in Ancient Greece.

Explore the Flea Markets at Monastiraki

As a bonafide market addict I profess that I love all markets. They don't even have to be selling anything interesting for me to love them. I will drag Dan across cities, countries, continents for a good market. It comes as no surprise that while in Athens we had to check out the Flea Markets at Monastiraki.

Home to many small shops selling everything you could imagine in terms of souvenirs—most of this stuff is all cheap merchandise from China, but occasionally you will find something that catches your eye. This is the best place in the city to buy postcards, magnets and other small trinkets if you're into that kind of thing. Even if you're not, the opportunities for people watching cannot be passed up. I loved the energy of these markets!

Watch the Sunset at Lycabettus Hill

277 meters above sea level—this is the highest point in Athens. No doubt that the view from this hill is best enjoyed at sunset, or just after, when Athens is bathed in the evening light.

You can take a quick cable car up to the top, but from our research it is quite expensive for the short ride that takes you through a tunnel (no views here!). It's a bit of a strenuous climb up, but once you're there you can take in the view of Athens below you. There are options for food and drink at the top.

Drink Wine

No trip to Greece is complete without sampling Greek wines; while in Athens we visited numerous wine bars. Some of our favourites included: Heteroclito, Vintage Wine bar & Bistro, and Wine O'Clock. We visited others, but those were the ones that stood out for us.

Observe the Locals at Varvakios Agora

We actually never got around to visiting the Central Market (well, we did pass it late in the evening and it was closed), but would have loved to have seen it during the day. This is a more local market, selling meat, fish, fruits, vegetables, olives, nuts, and more—our favorite!

Budget Tips

It's rumored that Greece is cheap to visit, and that's true, if you do as the locals do. However, in Athens the prices are comparable to any large Western metropolis. You have options, though. You can eat and drink locally if you're on a budget, or you can treat yourself to a luxury experience at a 5 star restaurant.

If you're visiting Athens on a budget these are our top recommendations:

1. Take the metro or walk - save the planet, save your money, and work off all of the delicious Greek food and wines you will no doubt be consuming. The metro in Athens is extremely cheap and very convenient.
2. Bring a student card—critical for getting deeper discounts at attraction sites.
3. **Stay in an Airbnb**—you'll get a local experience and also save your precious dollars for more exciting experiences than sleeping! You'll be out exploring for most of your time in Athens anyways.
4. Wander—this is my absolute favorite budget tip in any country. You don't need to spend loads of money to have a great time. The best days I have had travelling have been days where I just wandered, checked out local cafes, or sat in a local tavern/restaurant reading a book with a glass of wine or a tea! Ample opportunities for people watching here too!
5. Buy some groceries—I'm always really conscious of what/where we eat when we travel. It can be easy to burn through a lot of money when you're eating in sit down restaurants each meal. I like to eat out for usually one meal per day, and the rest I'll buy groceries for and utilize kitchen facilities, or just snack on nuts/fruit/veggies. On this trip we splurged a bit, but we also ate simple cucumber sandwiches with hummus and an abundance of fruit and nuts to save money on breakfast and lunches. I use this as an opportunity to explore local grocery stores (one of my favourite past-times while travelling), and to see how the locals live/what they may be buying at their local stores. One exception to this in Greece is that local bakeries are often very cheap and readily available; however, the goods are not always the healthiest, so keep that in mind!