

THE ACROPOLIS OF ATHENS



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

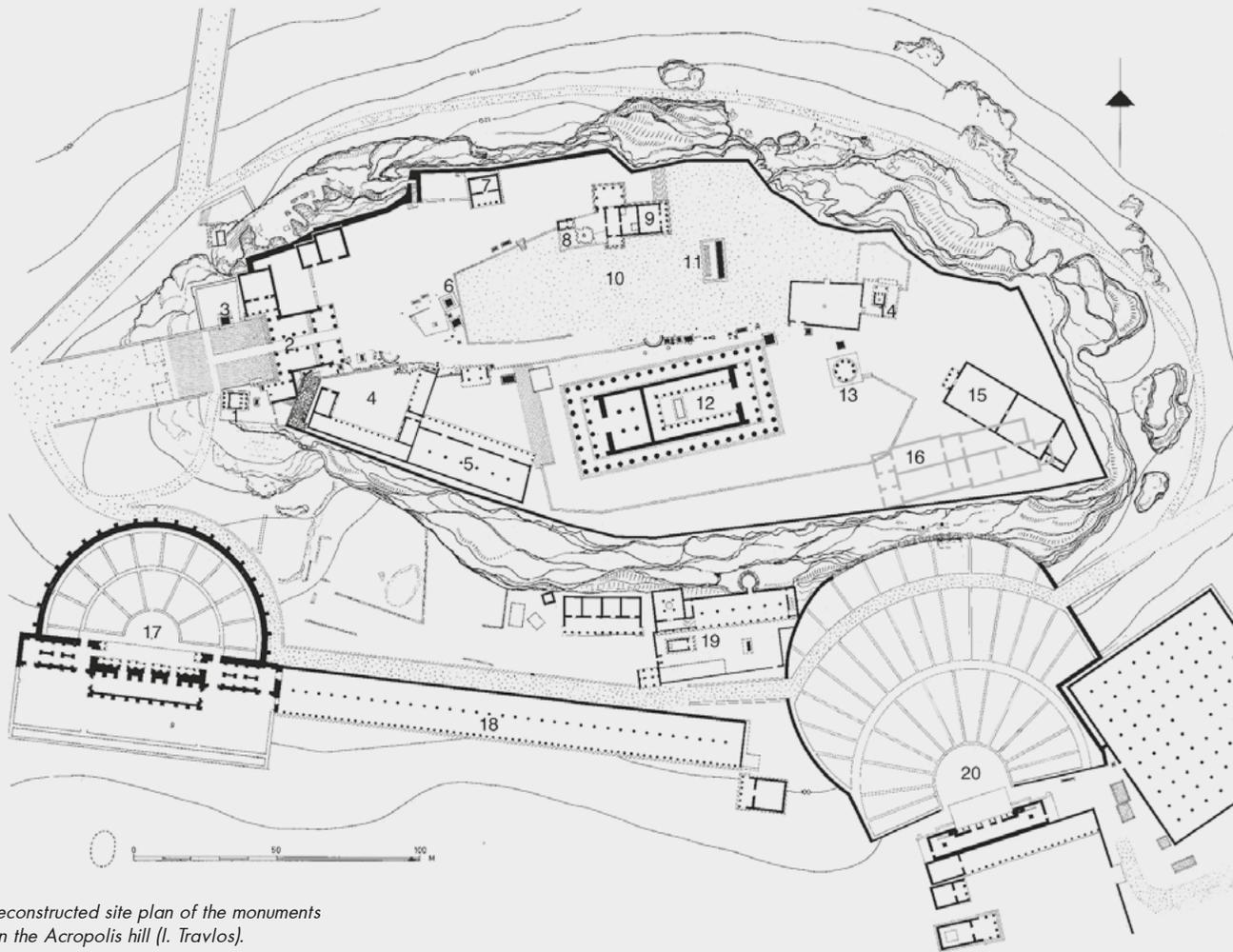


World Heritage
Convention



EUROPEAN
HERITAGE LABEL





*Reconstructed site plan of the monuments
on the Acropolis hill (I. Travlos).*

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|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Temple of Athena Nike | 11. Altar of Athena |
| 2. Propylaea | 12. Parthenon |
| 3. Monument of Agrippa | 13. Temple of Rome and Augustus |
| 4. Sanctuary of Artemis Brauronia | 14. Sanctuary of Zeus Polieus |
| 5. Chalkotheke | 15. Sanctuary of Pandion |
| 6. Pedestal of the statue of Athena Promachos | 16. Old Acropolis Museum |
| 7. Arrhephorion | 17. Odeion of Herodes Atticus |
| 8. Pandroseion | 18. Stoa of Eumenes |
| 9. Erechtheion | 19. Asklepieion |
| 10. "Old Temple" of Athena (<i>Archaioi Neos</i>) | 20. Theatre of Dionysos |

The Parthenon

The Parthenon, a temple dedicated to Athena Parthenos, is considered the most perfect Doric temple of classical antiquity due to its proportions, architectural refinements and masterful construction. It was built between 447 and 438 BC, while its sculptural decoration was completed in 432 BC and it is made of white Pentelic marble. The temple is defined by an outer colonnade that consists of 8 columns on either narrow side and 17 columns that run along each of its long sides. The architects who designed the monument were Iktinus and Kallikrates, whereas the person in charge of its sculptural decoration was the great sculptor Pheidias, who also created the chryselephantine statue of Athena Parthenos that was housed in the interior of the temple.

The rich sculptural decoration of the Parthenon consists of three groups: the compositions on the pediments, the relief metopes above the outer colonnade of the temple and the frieze, a continuous band carved in relief that occupies the top part of the walls of the temple and the inner colonnade. The east pediment depicts the birth of Athena, while the west illustrates the contest between Athena and Poseidon over the patronage of the Attic land. The metopes feature the Gigantomachy on the east side, the Sack of Troy on the north side, whereas the Amazonomachy and the Centauromachy are represented on the west and the south side respectively. Along the frieze unfolds the procession of the Great Panathenaea, the greatest festival of the city that was celebrated every four years in honour of the goddess Athena. From 1802 to 1803 Lord Elgin detached a large part of the Parthenon sculptures which are on display today at the British Museum.



The Propylaea

The Propylaea, the monumental entrance to the sanctuary of the Acropolis, were built on the site of an earlier propylon at the west extremity of the hill's plateau, between 437 and 432 BC, and they were designed by the architect Mnesikles. They comprise a central rectangular building with E./W. orientation, flanked by two wings on the north and south side. The room in the north wing is known as the "Pinakotheké" since, according to the traveller Pausanias (2nd c. AD), its walls were decorated with paintings.



The temple of Athena Nike

The small elegant Ionic temple, which stands at the top of the bastion at the southwest edge of the Acropolis hill, was dedicated to Athena Nike (Victory). It was built from 427 to 424 BC replacing an earlier smaller temple made of poros stone. Its architect was Kallikrates. The frieze of the temple depicts battle scenes between Greeks, combats between the Greeks and the Persians, as well as the assembly of the Olympian gods. A marble parapet with representations of winged Nikai (Victories) and the seated figure of the goddess Athena protected the top part along the three sides of the bastion.



The Erechtheion

The Ionic building on the north side of the Acropolis plateau was named *Erechtheion* after the mythical king of Athens Erechtheus. Construction began either before 431 BC or after 421 BC and was completed in 406 BC following an interruption caused by the Peloponnesian War.

Its peculiar shape is the result of the uneven terrain and the need to house the age-old *Sacred Tokens*. It was dedicated to the cults of Athena Polias as well as Poseidon Erechtheus, Hephaestus and the hero Boutes. On the north side of the edifice a magnificent propylon is formed, whereas the south side is dominated by the famous *Prostasis* (porch) of the Maidens (Korai) or Caryatids which constitutes the overground part of the tomb of the mythical king of Athens Cecrops.

On the west side the Erechtheion was connected to the Pandroseion, a sanctuary dedicated to the daughter of Cecrops, Pandrosos. There lay the sacred Olive Tree of the goddess Athena.

In the early 19th century Lord Elgin removed one of the Caryatids, which is exhibited today at the British Museum.



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- to collect, remove or damage any kind of object, including ancient and contemporary works of art as well as any natural item,
- to consume food or beverages,
- to smoke,
- to produce litter of any kind,
- to behave, dress or act in a way not compatible with the nature of the archaeological site/museum,
- entrance to people under the influence of substances (intoxicants, narcotics etc.),
- entrance to pets, except for dogs accompanying people with disabilities,
- entrance to all vehicles, except for emergency vehicles and those used for conducting archaeological works.

Furthermore, visitors and guides are kindly requested:

- to comply with the instructions and indications of the security guards,
- to follow the signs, walk along marked routes and avoid entering restricted areas,
- not to touch any work of art,
- to be very careful whilst being near areas of high risk or areas where works are in progress.

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The Acropolis of Athens

The earliest evidence of habitation on the naturally fortified hill of the Acropolis of Athens dates back to the Middle Neolithic period (5000-4000 BC). During the Mycenaean period (1600-1100 BC) it served as the seat of the local ruler and in the 13th century BC it was reinforced with strong fortification. In the 6th century BC, being the most significant sanctuary of the city consecrated primarily to its patron goddess Athena, the Acropolis acquired its first monumental temples, whereas the faithful dedicated large numbers of votive offerings. Of the early shrines the foundations of the "Old Temple" of Athena (*Archaios Neos*) are still visible to the south of the Erechtheion that was built later.

The buildings that dominate today the Sacred Rock, the Propylaea, the Parthenon, the Erechtheion and the Temple of Athena Nike, were erected in the aftermath of the Persian destruction that occurred in 480 BC, during the Classical period, and more specifically in the second half of the 5th century BC, on the initiative of Perikles, the inspired political leader that turned Athens into a hegemonic power. The monuments of the Acropolis represent the political, economic, artistic and intellectual apogee of the Athenian democracy.

During the long history of the Acropolis, its monuments have undergone many alterations when Christianity prevailed, as well as during the Frankish Rule (1205-1456) and the Ottoman Occupation (1456-1830).

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