

The best MARCO POLO Insider Tips

Our top 15 Insider Tips



INSIDER TIP Preservation order

In order to preserve the chapel of *Agía Dínami*, the developer had to put a tower block on stilts; it's no wonder that the little church gets many visits from pilgrims (photo above) → p. 29

INSIDER TIP Versatile material

At the *Mastiha Shop* you can get various products – from cosmetics, oils and jams to chewing gum and spirits – all made using resin from the mastic trees on the island of Chios → p. 79

INSIDER TIP Boarding party

In the *Trocadero Harbour* you can explore a World War I battleship and also see a replica of an ancient warship → p. 58

INSIDER TIP Ancient artistry

In the shop at the *Museum of Cycladic Art* you will find beautiful pieces of jewellery, which look as stylish today as they did 5000 years ago → p. 51

INSIDER TIP Designer footwear

Get a pair of shoes by Athenian designer *Tsakiris Mállas*. Whether you're young, flashy or more conventional, there's something for you and the prices aren't too bad either → p. 79

INSIDER TIP Best lamb chops

Centrally located but off the main tourist track, the simple *To Stéki tou Ilía* taverna is one of the best places in the city for tender lamb chops → p. 69

INSIDER TIP Fish in the Old Town

The *Psarás* taverna, located beneath the Acropolis in Pláka, has really fresh fish and an almost village-like atmosphere (photo right) → p. 67

INSIDER TIP Flea market in miniature

Amorgós is an inconspicuous, delightfully old-fashioned, antique shop that specialises in ethnic objets d'art which will fit into any suitcase → p. 74

INSIDER TIP Follow the play in English

Don't worry about not understanding an ancient Greek tragedy. It will be a memorable experience, but to make the most of it, buy an English translation from one of the *bookshops* in Athens → p. 74

INSIDER TIP Big performance

Gagarin is the name of one of the biggest concert halls in Athens. Rock and heavy metal are the preferred musical genres → p. 84

INSIDER TIP Satchmo instead of Sirtáki

Athens displays its international credentials at this top jazz club, the *Half Note*. Greek jazz artists also like to play here → p. 83

INSIDER TIP Café and more!

The *Vryssáki* in Pláka, right behind the Roman Agorá, draws the crowds not only for its view of the Acropolis, but also with its programme of evening exhibitions, cabaret, films and live music → p. 65

INSIDER TIP Breakfast with a view

For guests of the *Ádrian* hotel in Pláka, every summer day gets off to a good start. Breakfast is served in the roof garden, with its stunning views of the Acropolis → p. 91

INSIDER TIP A night by the sea

On warm summer evenings, the Athenian club scene flocks to the coast to spend the night at clubs like the *Akrotíri Boutique*. Proceedings start with international mainstream, and by the early morning they might be dancing to Zorba the Greek → p. 82

INSIDER TIP Athens from on high

The café bar on the roof terrace of the *A for Athens* on Monastiráki-Square is an outstanding location: chosen in 2013 as one of the 50 best cocktail bars in Europe, it is the daytime café-hangout of young locals and boasts a panoramic view over the whole of Athens → p. 65



BEST OF...

GREAT PLACES FOR FREE

Discover new places and save money

● One museum is free on Thursday

Every Thursday, the *Benáki Museum* grants visitors free admission to the world of Greek art from the 15th to the 19th century. There are also ancient and Byzantine exhibits to admire here → p. 51

● The harbour by bus

There's always a lot going on at *Kantharós*, the largest ferry terminal in Europe. Sauntering from quay to quay would take hours, so anyone who wants to can hop aboard the free buses that serve the harbour area – as opposed to using one of the scheduled municipal services → p. 54

● Wi-fi for all

If you want to surf the Internet, you don't necessarily have to pay a charge in Athens or Piraeus. Many public squares, the harbour and the airport terminal are *free hotspot areas* → p. 116

● Antiquity with a view

The highest court of ancient Athens once convened on the *Areopagus*. Today, the rocky platform is occupied by visitors who come here for the stunning views over the capital, and to have that feeling of being somewhere really historic without having to pay an admission fee → p. 51

● Oasis of tranquillity

Right in the middle of the beating heart of Athens, the *National Gardens* are like an oasis. Old men sit on benches reading the paper, mothers push their buggies to the duck pond, and you can take a tasty picnic along, to enjoy under the shade of the palm trees – every bit as civilised as a taverna → p. 52

● Metro or Museum?

Athens' metro stations often double up as museums. In *Monastiráki* station you can see the walled-in channel of a stream and some ancient plumbing; at *Syntagma* metre-high encased excavations reveal finds from various eras. In *Acropolis* station (photo) the walls are decorated with a replica of the Parthenon Frieze → p. 46, 47

● ● ● Dots in guidebook refer to 'Best of...' tips

ONLY IN ATHENS

Unique experiences

● *Souvláki and kebab*

Meat skewers and grilled mince sausages in pitta bread entice Athenians of every age to have lunch at the rustic *O Thanásis* grill taverna, situated in a busy alleyway off *Monastiráki Square*. Go and join them – street musicians and hawkers go from table to table, while tourists and shoppers rarely give them a second glance → p. 71

● *Flea market prices*

As a sign of the economic and financial crisis, more and more Athenians are doing their shopping in the colourful and bustling alleyways of the flea market surrounding *Monastiráki Square*. Jeans, shirts, T-Shirts and shoes are all available here at knock-down prices → p. 75

● *Evening is the time to meet*

Hardly any Athenians stay at home in the evening. One traditional place to exchange news and gossip is the old wine merchants and present-day wine bar of *Vrettós* in *Pláka*, where colourful liqueur bottles line the shelves and there's a wall full of wine barrels (photo) → p. 85

● *Basement tavernas*

Small basement tavernas are a distinctive feature of Athens. At the *Diporto* taverna in the market quarter, minimalism is the order of the day. Groups of friends share tables (there are only eight of them) with complete strangers, and the waiters only speak Greek; every day there are six dishes made with freshly bought market produce → p. 69

● *Harbour idyll*

Athens is a large city between the mountains and the sea. The Athenians can see both when they sit in the fish restaurants and music cafés around *Mikrolímano harbour*, the smallest harbour basin in Piraeus, full of fishing boats and yachts → p. 54

● *Greek dancing*

Greek folk music and dancing is just as much a part of Athens as the Acropolis. If you want to enjoy a well-staged show with performers in traditional costume, you should spend an evening, camera at the ready, in the *Paliá Taverna Kritikoú*. It is one of a number of music tavernas lining the Old Town lane of *Mnisikléous* → p. 85



ONLY IN



DISCOVERY TOURS

1

ATHENS AT A GLANCE



START: ① Omónia Square

END: ⑬ Páme Psirri

1 day

Actual walking time
2 hours

Distance:

→ 6.5 km/4 mi



COSTS: Admission fees 36 euros/person

WHAT TO PACK: Shoes with non-slip soles, shopping bag



IMPORTANT TIPS: Buy a combined ticket at the entrance to the ⑤ ancient Agorá (also valid for ⑦ Acropolis and ⑨ Theatre of Diónysos). The ⑨ Theatre of Diónysos is only open until 3pm in Nov-March, so visit it before the ③ Acropolis Museum!



This tour takes you round the Acropolis and up onto the 'Sacred Rock'. You'll experience the atmosphere of the old city, the bustling market halls and the three largest squares. Greek music and a bit of shopping are also on the programme.

Cities have many faces. If you want to get behind the scenes to explore their unique charm and head off the beaten track or find your way to green oases, handpicked restaurants or the best local activities, then these tailored Discovery Tours are just the right thing. Choose the best route for the day and follow in the footsteps of the MARCO POLO authors – well-prepared to navigate your way to all the many highlights that await you along the tour.

09:00am From ① Omónia Square → p. 46 with its underground metro station, you begin by following Odós Athinás whose pavements are lined by numerous hawkers' stalls. Passing the city hall you come to Athens' ② central market → p. 45. On the right there are open-air stands full of fruit, vegetables and imported foods of all kinds; on the left, inside the 100-year-old halls, meat and fish, nuts, olives and honey are sold. Athens ends at Monastiráki Square → p. 46, to the right of the historic metro station. At this point, you should first of all climb up to the

① Omónia Square



② Central Market

