

# DEANNA DICKINS

FOOD. BEAUTY. TRAVEL.

## The Essential Travel Guide to Athens, Greece

Athens is an incredible city that will keep you busy for hours. Spend your time exploring the Parthenon, the Museum and enjoying the Ancient Agora.

The city is filled with history, art, culture, beautiful churches, spectacular architecture, and lots of delicious food.

### ***Upon Airport Arrival***

Before leaving the *Athens International Airport*, find the ***Terkenlis*** bake shop and pick up one of their famous Tsoureki sweet bread loaves. They come in Traditional Plain, Dark Chocolate, and Chestnut Cream. The perfect midnight snack to when dealing with jet lag.



### ***State of the Art Transit: Athens Metro***

Locals and tourist alike know that driving around the busy streets of Athens can be frustrating. Pick up a map to the subway system and use it as much as possible.

The Athens Metro was built in preparation for the 2004 Athens Olympics, and each stop showcases different artifacts replicas that were found during the construction process.

Immerse yourself in Greek as soon as you arrive with a Tsoureki loaf from Terkenlis. Chestnut Cream flavour shown here.

The stops at **Syntagma** (trendy shopping district located next to the Agora) and **Acropoli** (a must-go to see the famous structure and the museum) feature some incredible replica sculptures and artifacts and excellent photo ops.

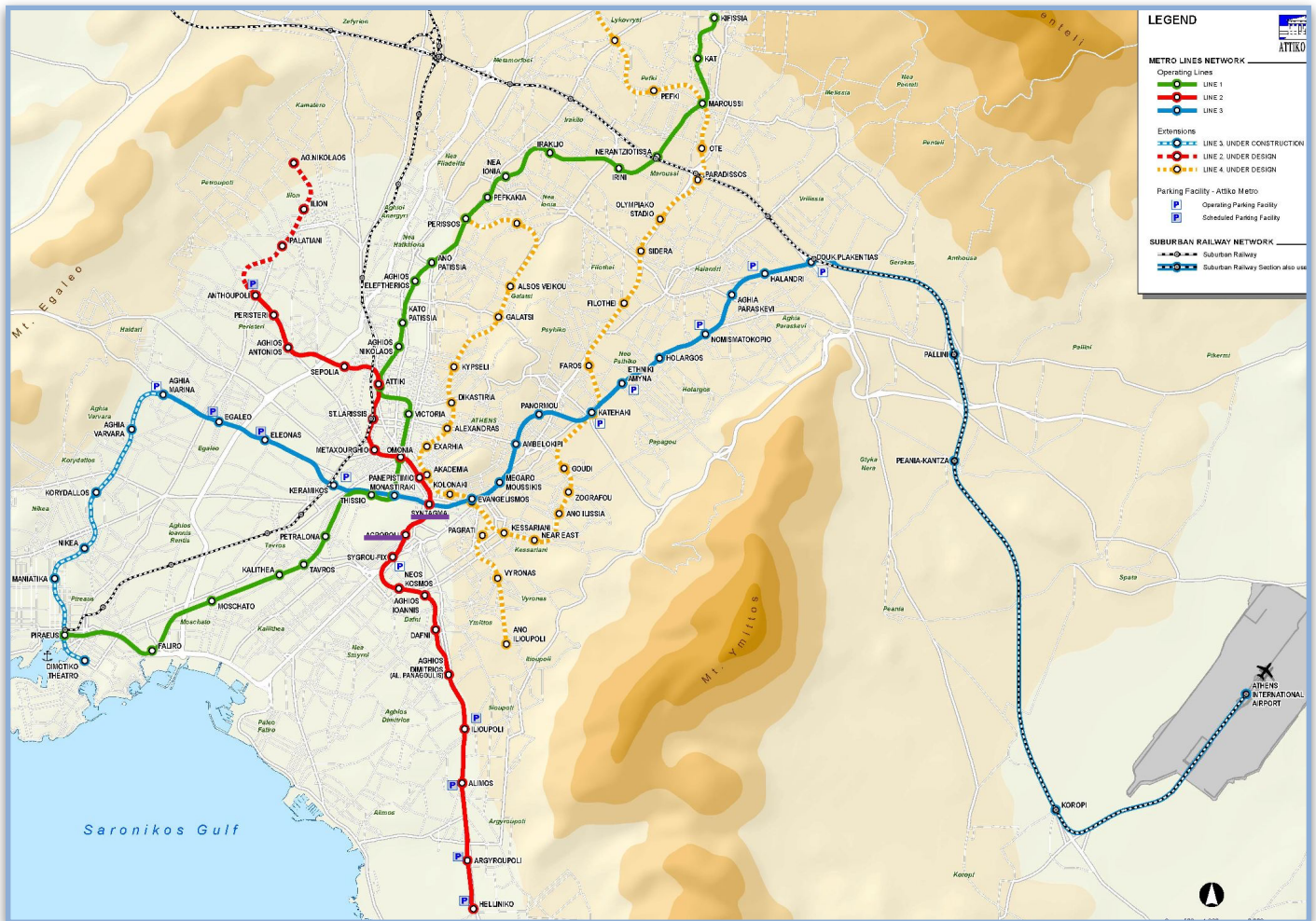
Other notable stops include ritzy Athens neighbourhoods like **Kifissia** (green line, North) and **Aghia Paraskevi** (blue line, North-East).

The Athens Metro makes it easy for travellers using ***Athens International Airport*** (blue line, South-East) or ***Pireus Boat Port*** (blue line, South-West), with connections to both places. Travellers taking boats from *Rafina Port* can also take the subway to **Pallini** (blue line, East) and hop in a taxi from there (25 to 35 minute ride).

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This is high resolution map. Save *The Essential Travel Guide* to your phone for quick reference and to zoom into maps! I have underlined Acropolis and Syntagma Station in purple for ease. More Metro Route Maps are available at [ametro.gr](http://ametro.gr).

On the Athens Metro, you pay for the length of your trip (usually between 1 Euro to 2 Euros for travel within the city). Kiosks and cashiers are available in Metro stations where you can purchase a ticket for your trip.

Keep your ticket with you while travelling on the Metro to avoid substantial fines.



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### **Sample Itinerary: One Day and One Night in Athens**

### **Prepare for Your Adventure**

**CLOTHING:** Dress in Smart Casual Attire.

Athens is a great place to explore, but it is full of cobblestone streets and can be incredibly hot during the summer months. Wear comfortable walking shoes or thick-soled sandals like Birkenstocks and be prepared to be on your feet.

You should dress respectfully for your adventures. Men should wear t-shirts or Polo shirts, not undershirts; and shorts, not bathing suits. Women should not wear beach attire when exploring the city. If you are visiting churches, women should cover their shoulders and their upper legs to show respect.

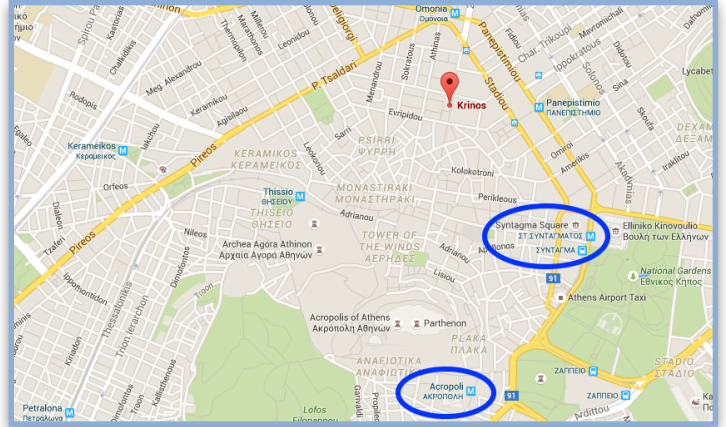
**SPF:** Necessary. Sunscreen, Hat and Sunglasses.

Apply sunscreen before leaving your hotel, and bring a small bottle with you. The Greek sun will fry you if you are not used to it - especially at the top of the Parthenon.

**MONEY:** Use Euros.

In 2015, many Greek vendors, restaurants, shops and hotels stopped accepting credit cards. Make sure you have lots of Euros handy - account for enough to pay for your accommodations, meals, and any extras.

Be aware of your wallet and your valuables at all times. I would advise that men carry a small zippered cross-body bag that they can hold in front of them. Women should also carry secure zippered hand bags that they can hold in front of their body.



Start your day at Acropoli Metro Station and make your way around the city toward Syntagma Station. If you have time, explore some of the trendy suburbs like Kifissia and Aghia Paraskevi.



Nescafe Frappe (def): Sweetened iced coffee with a delicious dense foam, they are the perfect treat for people watching from a cafe, or sun bathing at the beach. Try them half sweet with milk (aka "Metrio meh Gala")!

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### **DO NOT FORGET: Water.**

Have a bottle of water with you and drink often. The risk of dehydration is a serious concern while travelling in Greece.

### **THE GREEK EXPERIENCE:**

*See the Sights; Try the Food.*

If you are on a budget, try traditional pastries like *Spanakopita* (spinach pie), *Tiropita* (cheese pie) or *Toast* (grilled ham and cheese sandwich) from local bakeries and street vendors.

Meat lovers will also rejoice over *Souvlaki* (marinated and grilled skewers of meat) and *Gyros* (seasoned meat, shaved off a vertical rotisserie, served in a warm pita bread). These street foods are available everywhere in Greece and are generally well-priced, fresh and delicious!

### **GPS MAPS... No Data Required**

Directionally-challenged travellers are in luck! First of all, turn off the “Roaming” option on your smart phone to avoid charges. Next, open your “Maps” app and locate the area in which you are going to be exploring (ex: Scroll around Central Athens).

If your smart phone has GPS, it will stay active and show you where you are without using data - just make sure you keep the map open without refreshing it! This is guaranteed to work on an iPhone.



Follow your nose to find the nearest bakery. They are full of savoury and sweet treats to satisfy any craving.

If you have a sweet tooth, look for a Zaharoplastia (a shop dedicated entirely to desserts).



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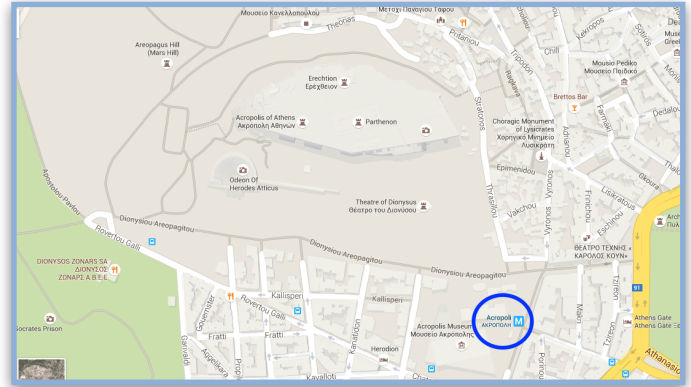
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### Start Your Adventure

#### 1. Take the Metro to **Acropoli Station**.

At the top of the escalator, there are plenty of pastry vendors where you can pick up a quick pita for breakfast before your day of adventuring.

As you make your way up to the Acropolis, you are walking through “Plaka” or the “City Centre.” This was the main city hub during ancient times. It is full of souvenir shops and cafes.



A Map of Acropoli Metro Station in relation to the Parthenon Museum and Acropolis.

#### 2. Spend the morning walking up the **Parthenon** and then exploring the **Acropolis Museum**.

Walking up to the Parthenon is physically demanding - there are lots of stone stairs and steep hills. If you have trouble walking or are highly asthmatic (Athens can be a very smoggy city), you may be better off enjoying the view from the air conditioned Acropolis Museum, instead.

#### TIPS: Parthenon and Acropolis

TIP #1: To avoid disappointment, confirm the Acropolis Hours of Operation at [www.theacropolismuseum.gr](http://www.theacropolismuseum.gr)  
You can also book your tickets in advance.

TIP #2: There is an observation deck attached to the Parthenon Museum that has a cafe and gift shop. It is a great place to relax your tired feet, take in a great view, and refuel with a refreshing Nescafe Frappe!

#### 3. When you finish exploring the Parthenon, Museum and surrounding Agora, walk back through the city and make your way down **Ermou** (Street).

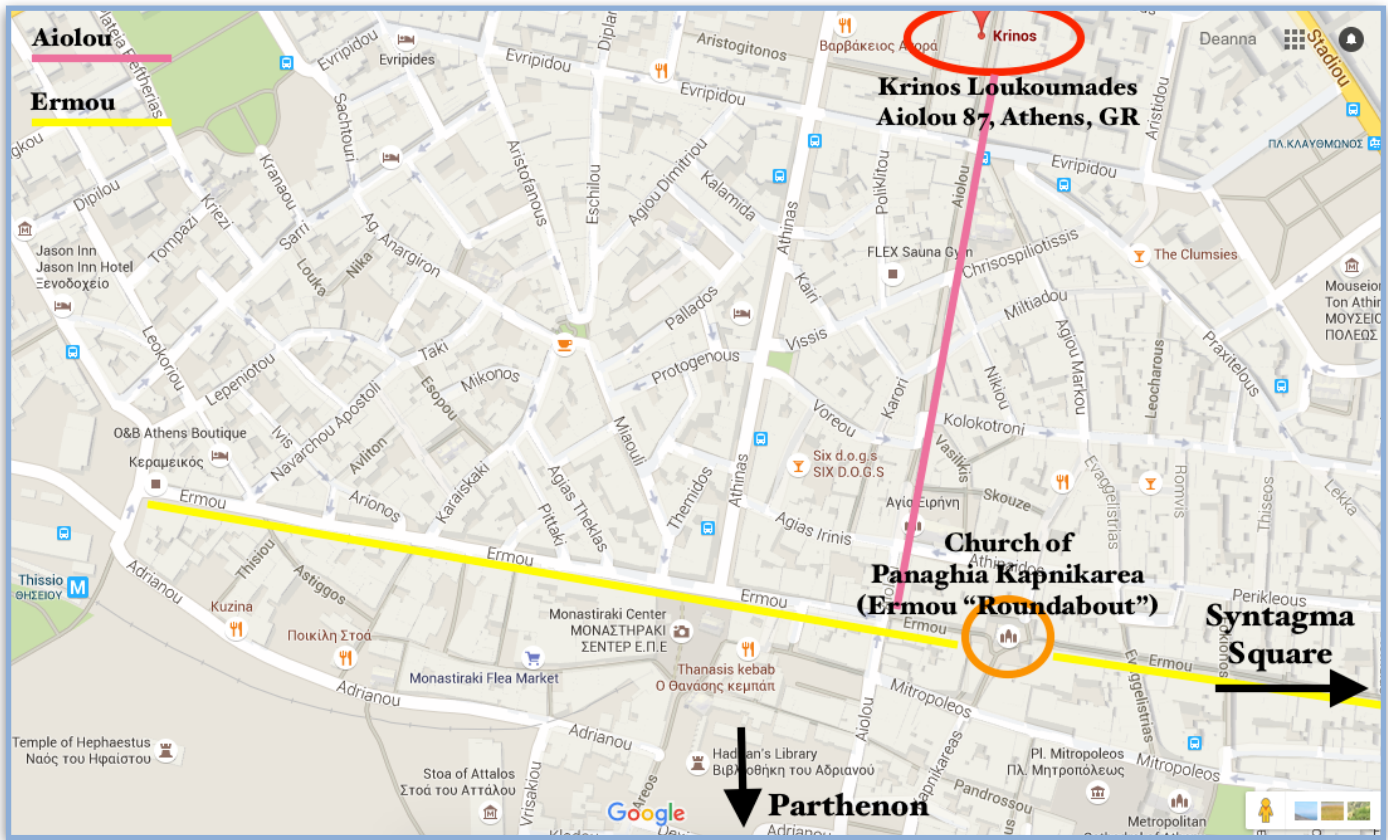
Ermou is a trendy shopping district in Athens known for its beautiful shops. Some unique “Made in Greece” fashion finds include their leather goods like sandals, handbags and wallets.

On the pedestrian-only portion of Ermou, there is a small church (**Panaghia Kipnikarea**) in the middle of the street. Use this as the landmark to locate the next *Essential Destination*...**Krinos Loukoumades Shop**. (See Map on Page 6)

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Athens is full of small winding roads that can be confusing for travellers. Use my No Data GPS trick to navigate, save time and find Krinos!

4. From the *Panaghia Church*, take **Aiolou** (Street) north for a few blocks until you reach **Krinos**. Stop here for their specialty - Loukoumades (crispy, light and fluffy Greek “donuts” covered in honey syrup, cinnamon, and nuts).

Krinos has been a landmark in Athens for decades. I recommend having a plate to yourself (yes, you can do it), paired with a Nescafe Frappe. They also have fresh pitas and other snacks.

The shop has lots of seating, perfect for resting your tired feet, and clean bathrooms. Take the opportunity to re-apply your sunscreen and grab one of their signature soft-serve ice cream cones as you continue your adventure.



Living the Loukoumades dream at Krinos.



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### 5. Shopping Centres in Central Athens

After enjoying your Krinos treats and countless Pitas, an afternoon of shopping is a great way to digest. There are quite a few department stores near Central Athens that are worth checking out. (*See Map on Page 8 for More Details*)

If you continue walking North from Krinos, you will reach **Omonoia Square** ("Platia"). On either side of the Platia you will find the *Hondos Centre* and *Notos Galleries* - two well-known Greek department stores.

#### TIP: Attica Department Store

One of my favourite things to buy in Greece are *Korres* cosmetics. They have a wide range of natural make up, creams, sunscreen, soaps, and herbal supplements.

In addition to their counters in large department stores like Attica, you can also buy Korres in Pharmacies throughout Greece. Try their *Body Butters* and their *After Sun Aloe Vera Body Milk* - an essential product for the Greek sun! Korres soap bars also make great gifts for friends and family back home.

There is also a large Korres booth at Duty Free inside the international departure gate at the Athens International Airport. Pick up a Body Butter to keep your skin hydrated (and your tan dark) for the long flight home.

If you proceed South-East down **Panepistimiou** (street), you will enjoy some beautiful traditional Greek architecture including the University of Athens (across from *Panepistimiou Metro Station*) and old churches like **Katholokos Naos Agio Dionisiou**.

Before you reach **Syntagma Square** (the area in front of the Greek Parliament; the Syntagma Metro; and the National Gardens), you will reach **Attica Department Store**. Pop in here to cool off and to pick up some Korres products.

#### TIP: Syntagma Square

Arrive at Syntagma Square in time to enjoy the *Changing of the Guard Ceremony* - every hour, on the hour. The grandest ceremony takes place every Sundays at 11 am, but the regular one is still exciting.

The event takes place in front of the **Parliament Building** at **Syntagma Square**, at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Watch as the guards (Evzones), dressed in traditional hats, kilts, and shoes, perform a choreographed military walk back to their stations.

DO: Take photos and videos, and enjoy the performance from an appropriate distance.

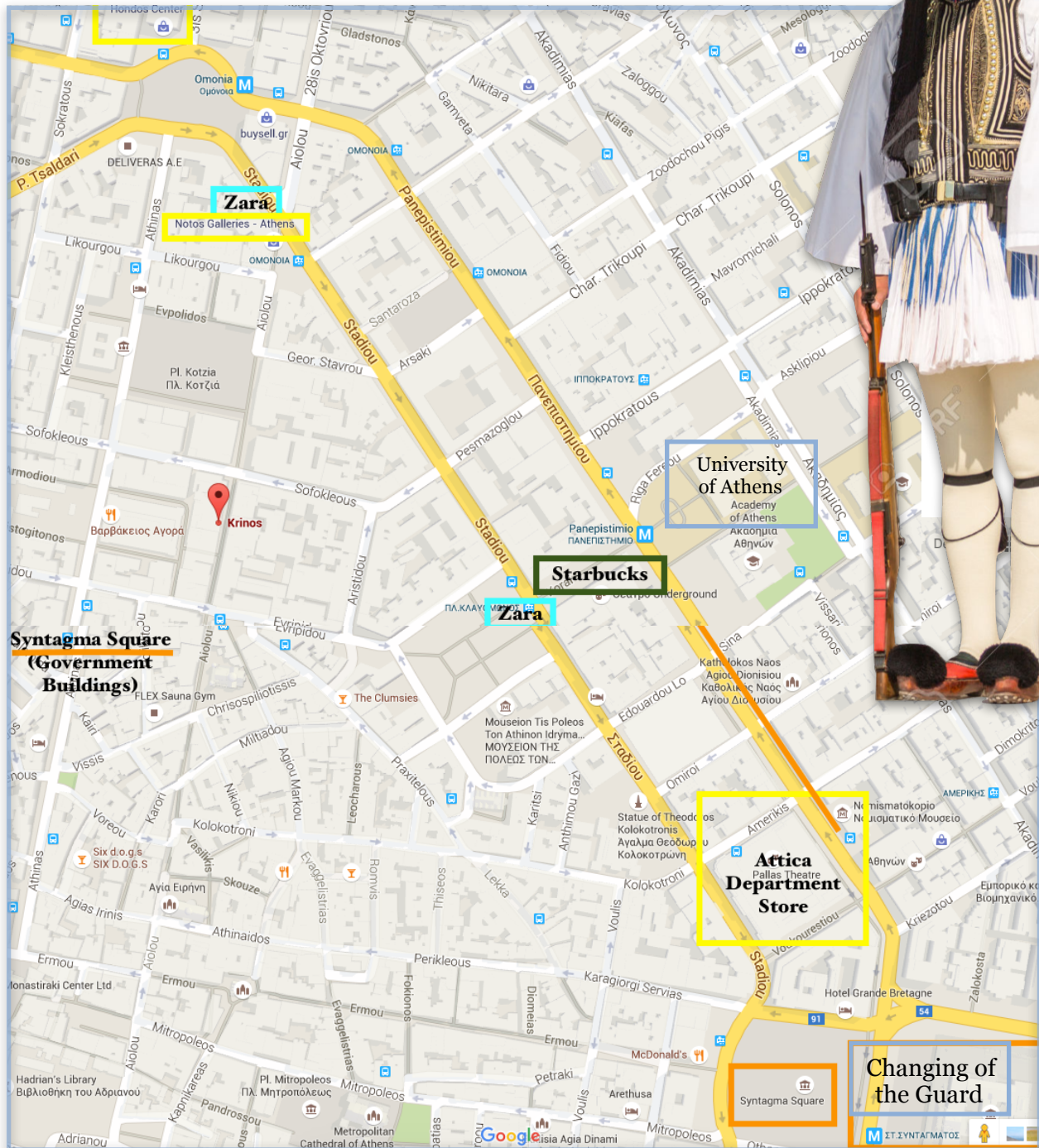
DO NOT: Walk too close to the Guards, heckle, or insult their traditional dress. Have you seen their rifles?



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*Panepistimiou* is a very scenic street to stroll down in Athens. You will see the University of Athens, with its large statues of Athena and Apollo protecting the gates, followed by churches and government buildings.



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### 6. Nap Time

Afternoon naps are embedded in Greek culture. If you are visiting in July or August, you will likely find yourself needing a nap in the mid-afternoon when the sun is at its peak (usually between 1pm and 3pm). You will also notice that many small shops, restaurants and cafes close down around those time so the owners can take a break.

If you are staying near Athens, head back to your hotel to rest up in preparation for the night life. If you are not tired, yet, have a gyro and a glass of wine. *That* will make you sleepy.



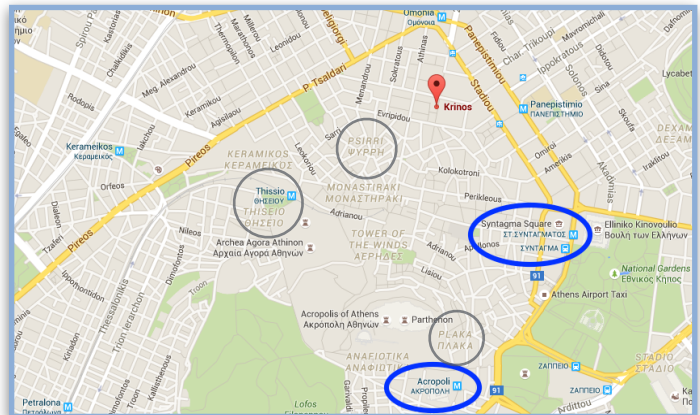
Gyros are a perfect on-the-go meal when travelling in Greece. They are typically served with tomato,

### 7. Athens at Night

Some of the best nightlife in Athens surrounds the same areas that you explored during the day.

You will experience a different side of Athens at **Plaka**, **Thissio** and **Psiri** at night. As the sun goes down, restaurants and landmarks light up for even more unforgettable views.

For a true Athenian experience, find a *taverna* (restaurant) with a view of the *Parthenon*, order some traditional Mezes, a carafe of wine and a shot of Ouzo. Relax, enjoy, and see where the night takes you.



Enjoy lively night life and stunning views in Plaka, Thissio and Psiri.

