

ATHENS

ENCOUNTER

VICTORIA KYRIAKOPOULOS

Athens Encounter

Published by **Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd**
ABN 36 005 607 983

Australia Head Office, Locked Bag 1,
Footscray, Victoria 3011
☎ 03 8379 8000 fax 03 8379 8111
talk2us@lonelyplanet.com.au

USA 150 Linden St, Oakland, CA 94607
☎ 510 250 6400
toll free 800 275 8555
fax 510 893 8572
info@lonelyplanet.com

UK 2nd fl, 186 City Rd
London EC1V 2NT
☎ 020 7106 2100 fax 020 7106 2101
go@lonelyplanet.co.uk

This title was commissioned in Lonely Planet's London office and produced by: **Commissioning Editors** Fiona Buchan, Michala Green, Sally Schafer **Coordinating Editor** Gina Tsarouhas **Coordinating Cartographer** Julie Dodkins **Layout Designer** Jacqui Saunders **Assisting Editors** Monique Choy, Diana Saad **Assisting Cartographers** Valentina Kremenchutskaia, Joanne Luke **Assisting Layout Designer** Jim Hsu, Indra Kilfoyle, Wibowo Rusli **Managing Editor** Geoff Howard **Managing Cartographer** Mark Griffiths **Cover Designer** Tamsin Wilson **Project Managers** Eoin Dunlevy, Fabrice Rocher **Managing Layout Designer** Celia Wood **Thanks to** Shahara Ahmed, Glenn Beanland, David Connolly, Quentin Frayne, Laura Jane, Chris Lee Ack, Charity Mackinnon, Wayne Murphy, Michael Ruff, Julie Sheridan, Geoff Stringer
ISBN 978 1 74104 991 6

Printed by Hang Tai Printing Company
Printed in China.

Acknowledgement Athens Metro Map © 2008 Attiko Metro

Lonely Planet and the Lonely Planet logo are trademarks of Lonely Planet and are registered in the US Patent and Trademark Office and in other countries.

Lonely Planet does not allow its name or logo to be appropriated by commercial establishments, such as retailers, restaurants or hotels. Please let us know of any misuses: www.lonelyplanet.com/lp.

© Lonely Planet 2009. All rights reserved.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Colour-Coding & Maps

Colour-coding is used for symbols on maps and in the text that they relate to (eg all eating venues on the maps and in the text are given a green knife and fork symbol). Each neighbourhood also gets its own colour, and this is used down the edge of the page and throughout that neighbourhood section.

Shaded yellow areas on the maps denote 'areas of interest' – for their historical significance, their attractive architecture or their great bars and restaurants. We encourage you to head to these areas and just start exploring!

Prices

Multiple prices listed with reviews (eg €10/5 or €10/5/20) indicate adult/child, adult/concession or adult/child/family.

Although the authors and Lonely Planet have taken all reasonable care in preparing this book, we make no warranty about the accuracy or completeness of its content and, to the maximum extent permitted, disclaim all liability arising from its use.

Send us your feedback We love to hear from readers – your comments help make our books better. We read every word you send us, and we always guarantee that your feedback goes straight to the appropriate authors. The most useful submissions are rewarded with a free book. To send us your updates and find out about Lonely Planet events, newsletters and travel news visit our award-winning website: lonelyplanet.com/contact.

Note: We may edit, reproduce and incorporate your comments in Lonely Planet products such as guidebooks, websites and digital products, so let us know if you don't want your comments reproduced or your name acknowledged. For a copy of our privacy policy visit lonelyplanet.com/privacy.

VICTORIA KYRIAKOPOULOS

Victoria left her hometown, Melbourne, for a year-long Athens experiment in 2000 and ended up staying four years – and the city still feels like home whenever she returns. Since her very first visit in 1988, she's witnessed Athens' remarkable transformation. Despite its quirks and frustrations, she's never ceased to be captivated by Athens' heady jumble of history, urban life, restless energy and hedonistic spirit. She was editor of the Athens-based Greek diaspora magazine *Odyssey*, reported on the city's Olympics preparations for the *Age* and various Australian and international newspapers and magazines, and worked on several TV shows about Greece. She wrote the previous editions of *Best of Athens*, the Athens chapter of *Greece 8* and the last two editions of *Crete*. When not living her 'other' life in Greece, she is a freelance journalist based in Melbourne.



VICTORIA'S THANKS

Special thanks to Eleni Bertes for her invaluable support. For their help, insight and company, thanks to Antonis Bekiaris, Eleni Gialama, Kamilo Nollas, Mary Retiniotis, Spiros Nasainas, Vasilis Zenios, Maria Zygourakis, Nikos Dimopoulos, Eleni Hatziladas and Tammy Iliou. In Melbourne, thanks to Bill and Yvonne Kyriakopoulos, Rosanna De Marco and Chris Anastassiades; in London thanks to Sally Schafer and Michala Green at Lonely Planet.

THE PHOTOGRAPHER

George Tsafos has been a contributor to Lonely Planet Images for almost nine years. George took up travel photography almost 13 years ago while he was searching for a good way to escape the daily routine. Born and raised in Athens, he is currently working freelance for magazines and newspapers both national and international. He's also been a technical editor for almost a decade, writing articles on photography and digital imaging. His first technical book on digital photography was published in 2006.

Cover photograph Exhibits at the National Archaeological Museum, Exarhia, Athens, John Sones/Lonely Planet Images. **Internal photographs** p54, p72, p106, p128 by Victoria Kyriakopoulos; p26, p152 Scott Barbour/Getty Images. All other photographs by Lonely Planet Images, and by George Tsafos except p24, p29, p98, p105, p107 Anders Blomqvist; p100, p135, p141 Neil Setchfield; p147 Diana Mayfield; p150 Holger Leue.

All images are copyright of the photographers unless otherwise indicated. Many of the images in this guide are available for licensing from **Lonely Planet Images**: www.lonelyplanetimages.com.



Patrons enjoying a drink at the charming bar Alier Man (p92), Gazi

CONTENTS

THE AUTHOR	03	>DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE	158
THIS IS ATHENS	07	>SUMMER IN THE CITY	160
HIGHLIGHTS	08	>MUSIC	161
ATHENS DIARY	25	>ARCHITECTURE	162
ITINERARIES	29	>STREET LIFE	164
NEIGHBOURHOODS	34	>GALLERIES	165
>SYNTAGMA	38	>SHOPPING	166
>AKROPOLI & MAKRYGIANNI	50	>GAY & LESBIAN	167
>PLAKA & MONASTIRAKI	58	>MUSEUMS	168
>PSYRRI, THISIO & KERAMIKOS	76	BACKGROUND	169
>GAZI & ROUF	88	DIRECTORY	181
>OMONIA & METAXOURGHIO	94	INDEX	192
>EXARHIA	102		
>KOLONAKI	110		
>METS & PANGRATI	122		
>PIRAEUS	130		
>KIFISIA	138		
>GLYFADA & THE COAST	142		
EXCURSIONS	147		
>CAPE SOUNION	148		
>DELPHI	149		
>HYDRA	150		
SNAPSHOTS	152		
>ACCOMMODATION	154		
>FOOD	156		

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are passionate, dedicated travellers. They don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage so you can be sure the advice you're given is impartial. They travel widely to all the popular spots, and off the beaten track. They don't research using just the internet or phone. They discover new places not included in any other guidebook. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, palaces, trails, galleries, temples and more. They speak with dozens of locals every day to make sure you get the kind of insider knowledge only a local could tell you. They take pride in getting all the details right, and in telling it how it is. Think you can do it? Find out how at lonelyplanet.com.



THIS IS ATHENS

From the iconic Acropolis rising majestically above the city to modish galleries and lively bars in gritty downtown backstreets, bustling Athens is a delightfully quirky clash of past and present, a city that confronts and surprises.

Major urban renewal has breathed new life into Athens' historic centre, spectacularly reconciling its ancient and modern faces with charming car-free streets that wind along well-trodden ancient paths, making it feel like you're walking through a giant archaeological park. Ancient monuments bask in the famous Attica light that softens the concrete sprawl.

Amongst the downtown hurly-burly and traffic-ridden roads, you'll find quiet shaded cafés and delightful neighbourhood squares, sophisticated shopping strips, quaint tavernas and chic restaurants. Amid the sea of modern high-rise office and apartment blocks you'll find Byzantine churches, restored neoclassical buildings and equal measures of grunge and grace.

While Athens' wealth of archaeological sites and museums remains its drawcard, it's the city's vibe and mindset that enamours and surprises visitors. An infectious, restless energy permeates this city; pavements bustle with Athenians revelling in the lively alfresco café and dining cultures, while balmy summer nights have a seductive allure. Vibrant street life creates a chaotic yet almost permanently festive atmosphere.

Athens comes alive at twilight and stays up late – its spirited nightlife sustains arguably more bars and clubs than many other world capitals. Athens continues to be a city of change. The city's radical pre-Olympics makeover went well beyond new infrastructure. There's a newfound confidence and creative energy, particularly in emerging arts, dining and entertainment hotspots in newly hip, urban neighbourhoods. Yet despite its urbane ambitions, Athens retains a distinctly east-meets-west character; at the same time folksy and sophisticated, traditional and anarchic, frenetic and laid-back, often frustrating but inevitably fun.

Top left Strolling through the ancient cemetery ruins of Keramikos (p22) **Top right** Relaxing at a café on the Ancient Promenade (p13) with the Acropolis (p10) as a backdrop **Bottom** The Caryatids standing sentinel at the iconic Erechtheion (p10)