



instant
escapes

Upbeat Athens

Crisis? What crisis? The ancient city now oozes Greek chic

Known recently as the Bad Boy of Europe – and far from happy about it – Athens has bounced back in a burst of energy, with new bars, restaurants and unusual places to shop. This 'Greek Revival' is all about risk-taking, doing the unexpected and, if that doesn't work, trying something else. Have a hedonistic, Hellenistic time... **By Adrian Mourby**



EAT

● **The TV chef's pastry shop**

PAVLOVA-O, TIKALYTERO

(Mains about £3)

Because: The roadside tables are made for elevenses while window-shopping in upmarket Kolonaki.

Travel's tip: Chef Effie Gialousi's creamy-crunchy pavlova is reckoned to be the best in Athens. 56 Skoufa St; pavlova.gr; ⑨

● **The Greek riposte to Starbucks**

MIKEL COFFEE SHOP (Mains about £5)

Because: The interiors of this popular new chain are truly head-turning, with words of homespun philosophy adorning the walls. **Travel's tip:** The trendy thing to eat with your Mikelchino espresso is *koulouri*, a sesame-topped bread ring from Thessaloniki.

3 Mitropoleos St; mikelcc.gr; ⑩

● **The great late-breakfast bar**

OSTERMAN (Mains about £11)

Because: There's such a good range of global palate-pleasers – just about anything from burgers to Reuben sandwiches (corned beef, Swiss cheese and *Sauerkraut*).

Travel's tip: Sit outside on Irinis Square, a great place for people-watching. 10 Agias Irinis Square; osterman.gr; ⑪

● **The memorable meal outside**

THE BLACK DUCK GARDEN

(Mains about £12)

Because: You'll be dining alfresco in the former garden of King Otto and Queen Amalia, and the dishes are perfect for hot days: light Med ensembles, such as slow-cooked lamb shank or spinach-filled *ravioloni*.

Travel's tip: Ask and they'll show you the curious brick ovens formerly used to heat water to wash King Otto's clothes. 5-7 Paparrigopoulou St; 00 30 210 325 2396; blackduckgarden.gr; ⑫

● **The upmarket diner**

PAPADAKIS (Mains about £17)

Because: It's the vivacious home of top Greek TV chef Argiro Barbarigou, copied from her famous Paros taverna, also in Athens. **Travel's tip:** If Argiro is there, ask where her fans Pierce Brosnan, Billy Zane and Jean Paul Gaultier sat – the best seats in the house. Fokilidou 15, Kolonaki; 00 30 210 360 8621; ⑬

SHOPS & BARS

● **The up-all-night bar**

BONZER

Because: The cheery team at this buzzy bar in Kolonaki keep going until 4am – or whenever the last customer decides to leave.

Travel's tip: Ask to be shown the extraordinary mezzanine, built like a section of the Brooklyn Bridge. 73 Skoufa St; ⑭

● **The design shop**

I-D CONCEPT STORE

Because: This new store is the place to find Greek chic, from books and jewellery to sunglasses and clothes.

Travel's tip: Call in at neighbouring Brazilian Coffee Store (Valaoritou 10) for the best espressos (using Hausbrandt coffee) in Athens. 9 Valaoritou St; ⑮

● **The graphic T-shirt store**

KOUKOUTSI

Because: Designer Niko has cornered the market in T-shirts encouraging Athenians to love their city. **Travel's tip:** A trendy take-home is the 'Ich Bin Ein Athener' range. 81 Skoufa St;

koukoutsi.tumblr.com; ⑯

CAPITAL KING

Athens owes a lot to King Otto, a German prince who ascended to the Greek throne and sponsored archaeology, rebuilding Athens in regal style – before being deposed in 1862



ASK THE LOCAL

Yanniss Tselepidis is co-founder of Vintage Eyeshop (vintage-eyeshop.com), which specialises in retro specs



If you're not Greek call for a cab, don't take one off the street (download the app at taxibeat.gr). It's very safe and they'll agree the fare with you beforehand. You don't need to tip taxi drivers, just round up. In restaurants, one euro is fine, and in bars, it's a custom that if you buy a few drinks, the barman gives you one free! Remember we go to lunch at 3pm, so bars stay open late, till 4am or 5am. The best restaurants are the ones where Greeks eat – if the menu is in English, it'll cost you more. Be sure to wander the city at night. It's beautiful and safe, apart from in the southwest. **Walking in Plaka** ⑰, or by the new **Acropolis Museum** is a real treat.



STAY

● **The big-top hostel**

CITY CIRCUS (Doubles from £49, B&B)

Because: This is the best-value hostel in Athens, with communal dining under Victorian frescoed ceilings. **Travel's tip:** Ask nicely and they'll even do your laundry (£6 a load). 16 Sarri St; 00 30 213 023 7244; citycircus.gr; ⑲

● **The kooky townhouse**

ALICE INN ATHENS (Doubles from £50, B&B)

Because: Architect/owner John Consolas has lovingly converted this stately townhouse in memory of his grandmother, Alice. The Betty Boop Suite is bijou, but perfect for lovers with its louvred shutters and private patio. **Travel's tip:** Staying the weekend? Ask John if he's making Sunday brunch for guests. He often does. 9 Tsatsou St; 00 30 210 323 7139; aliceinnathens.com; ⑳

● **The urban hang-out**

FRESH HOTEL (Doubles from £71, B&B)

Because: This minimalist pad in the edgy market area blends all-white

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