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**
UPBEAT ATHENS

**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 Gaiaouli's creamy-crunchy pavlova is reckoned to be the best in Athens. 56 Skoufa St; pavlova.gr.

- **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 breadring from Thessaloniki.
  3 Mitropoleos St; mikelcc.gr.

- **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.

- **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 ravioli.
  **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 Papirrigopoulou St; 00 30 210 325 2396, blockduckgarden.gr.

- **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 sit – the best seats in the house. Fokiotidou 15, Kolonaki; 00 30 210 360 8621.

**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;.

- **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 (Vallantou 10) for the best espressos (using Hausbrandt coffee) in Athens.
  9 Vallantou St;.

- **The graphic T-shirt store**
  KOUKOUTSI
  **Because**: Designer Nikos 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 Athenyor' range. 815 Skoufa St; koukoutsi.tumblr.com.

**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 Sami St; 00 30 210 023 7244, citycircus.gr.

- **The kooky townhouse**
  ALICE IN 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, aliceinathens.com.

- **The urban hang-out**
  FRESH HOTEL (Doubles from €71, B&B)
  **Because**: This minimalist pad in the edgy market area blends all-white