SPECIALIST
JOURNEYS



Acropolis

Athens at New Year

Explore this ancient capital, unimpeded by the usual crowds

On our winter tour, we explore the important monuments of this most seminal of cities and celebrate New Year with local Athenians. The New Year's countdown is a night-long celebration in Athens, kicking off with a spectacular firework display over the Acropolis, which lights up the Athenian sky at midnight. Our base is at the family-run Herodion Hotel, located in the heart of the Plaka and at the foot of the Acropolis, where we can take advantage of the views from its rooftop bar and restaurant.

Key highlights

- Explore three world-class museums, housing between them some of the greatest collections of antiquities
- Enjoy Athens like the locals do, enjoying some favourite corners of this famous city
- Discover Kerameikos, a beautiful, tranquil site which marked the starting point of the Panathenaic procession

SPECIALIST JOURNEYS

Day One: London - Athens

We fly into Athens and meet your expert Guide Lecturer and fellow travellers at your hotel.

Meals: Lunch, Dinner

Day Two: Acropolis

Our first full day is dedicated to the **Acropolis** and its museum. We walk through ancient Athens, past the Theatre of Dionysus, where the original masterpieces of Aeschylus, Sophocles Euripides and Aristophanes were performed, and on to the towering remains of the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, one of the landmarks of Athens. From here, we climb to the incomparable Acropolis, which still dominates the city with a complex of religious sanctuaries, most famous of which is the Parthenon — 'Chamber of the Maiden' — built in the 5th century to house a colossal statue of Athena, patron goddess of the city. No matter how many times you have gazed at this wonder of the ancient world, it never fails to impress.

After lunch in the Plaka, we visit the fabulous **Acropolis Museum**, consistently rated as one of the best museums in the world. Now 10 years old, the museum was designed by Bernard Tschumi, with local Greek architect Michael Photiadis, and houses the ancient artefacts found in and around the Acropolis, including the superb Parthenon frieze — some parts original, some copies *(we all know where much of it resides!)*. The top floor of the museum is designed on the same axis as the Parthenon so that it has the identical cardinal orientation and you can walk along the entire frieze of the temple, exactly as it would have been in ancient times. The museum has recently made the ancient underground neighbourhood available to visitors.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day Three: Kerameikos & Cycladic Museum

In the morning, we visit **Kerameikos**, named in ancient times after the hero Keramos, son of Dionysus and Ariadne, where an extensive cemetery was excavated during the 19th and early 20th centuries. A usually peaceful site infrequently visited by tourists, this was a major crossroads in antiquity, and you can see remains of the massive **Dipylon Gate**, where most roads converged, and the **Sacred Gate**, where participants in the Panathenaic Festival gathered before heading through the Ancient Agora and ascending to the Parthenon. It is also the spot where Pericles gave what was probably his most famous speech, honouring those who had fallen in the first year of the Peloponnesian War. In the afternoon, we visit the **Cycladic Museum**, established to showcase the private collection of the Goulandris shipping family. Housed in the neo classical dwelling of a former 19th-century ship owner, the remarkable collection focuses on ancient cultures of the Aegean, especially that of the Cyclades during the 3rd millennium BCE.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day Four: Agora

We continue our exploration of Athens, visiting its ancient economic centre, the **Agora**, where a wide range of goods were shipped in from the nearby port of Piraeus and members of the elected democracy assembled to discuss affairs of state. Buildings of note include the city's arsenal, the Tholos and several stoas *(the museum is housed in the reconstructed stoa of Attalos)*. Here we also find the temple of Hephaestus, one of the best-preserved of its type in Greece. Constructed around the same time as the Parthenon, the temple was built to honour the patron of metal workers, potters and craftsmen.

After lunch, we visit the **National Museum of Athens**. Now somewhat overlooked by visitors flocking to the Acropolis Museum, it is worth remembering that this older museum is still home to one of the greatest collections of antiquities in the world. The museum was established in 1829 to protect antiquities from all over Greece and there are over 11,000 exhibits dating as far back as the Neolithic period through to late antiquity. From the huge bronze statue of Poseidon *(or is it Zeus?)* to the golden mask of Agamemnon, the richness of the exhibits at the National Museum are outstanding. This evening we celebrate New Year's Eve.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day Five: Philopappos Hill

After a night of celebration, we enjoy a leisurely start and refreshing walk this morning. We take the path up to **Philopappos Hill**, a favourite place for a promenade for Athenians. There are spectacular views from here over the city, the Acropolis and the Saronic Gulf beyond. Here we also see the so-called tomb of Socrates, an impressive structure built into the rocky slope of the hill. Its original ancient use is unknown but during World War II, it was used to hide antiquities which were sealed there behind a thick concrete wall. Later, we head to the **Niarchos Foundation Cultural Centre**, where we have lunch and spend time enjoying some of the exhibitions.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day Six: Athens - London

We transfer to the airport for our flight back to London or continue your trip at leisure.

Activity level - **Moderate** ●●○

Your Expert Guide Lecturer

Dr Rita Roussos



Dr Rita Roussos is a native Athenian, who grew up in California, and taught archaeology and art history at the American University of Athens. Her undergraduate degree is in Classical Languages from the University of California, Berkeley, while her PhD is from the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London. Rita's research interests include the place of women in ancient Greece and Rome as well as Greek sculpture of the fourth century BC. She has worked on archaeological projects at Isthmia, Kato Lossous, Mantinea and has led several of Andante's tours to Greece.

Your tour includes

- Expert Guide Lecturer & professional Tour Manager
- Entries to all sites as per the itinerary
- Field notes
- All taxes & gratuities
- Return flights from London
- Private group transfers to/from the airport & hotel
- Local travel aboard a private air-conditioned coach
- 5 nights at the Herodion Hotel, Athens
- 5 breakfasts, 5 lunches & 5 dinners
- Water with all meals, wine & tea or coffee with dinner