



OLYMPIEION

ATHENS

The temple of Olympian Zeus (Olympieion), the largest of the ancient temples of Athens, stands on a low elevation in the ground to the south-east of the Acropolis. Traces of human settlement on this site date from as early as the Prehistoric period. The antiquity of the sanctuary is attested both by archaeological evidence and the ancient sources. Pausanias reports that it was founded by Deukalion, the mythical founding father of the Greeks.

Worship of Zeus in the area of the Olympieion is attested from early historical times, and there was a temple here already in the early 6th c. BC. During the period of the tyranny, in 515 BC, Peisistratos the Younger, grandson of the famous Peisistratos, endeavoured to replace this early temple with a new one of large dimensions, on the model of those in Asia Minor. Construction had reached the level of the crepis when the tyranny at Athens was overthrown. The Athenians refused to continue with the building of it, so that the democracy should not bring to completion a work that, although brilliant, was a reminder of the hated tyranny. In 174 BC, the King of Syria, Antiochos IV Epiphanes, continued the work, with Cosutius, a Roman, as his architect. The level of the entablature was reached before work came to a halt in 163 BC, on the death of Antiochos.

After his stay in Athens in AD 124-125, the emperor Hadrian decided to finish the temple, and it was inaugurated in AD 131. This temple was one of the largest in the ancient world, and stood in a large open space measuring 250x130 m; it was 110.35 m long and 43.68 m wide, and is in the Corinthian order. There were two rows of 20 columns on the sides and three rows of 8 columns on the ends, giving a total of 104 columns, which were 17.25 m high, with a base diameter of 1.70 m. Only 16 are now preserved, 13 at the south-east corner and 3 near the south-west corner; the middle one of these last fell after a storm in 1852 and now lies on the ground. The cella housed a chryselephantine statue of Zeus and a statue of Hadrian, who was honoured jointly with the god.

A rectangular poros enclosure wall measuring 205.85x128.72 m was constructed and buttressed with built pillars. Entrance to the enclosure was by a small propylon on the north side.

After the construction of the temple, the Athenians honoured Hadrian by building an arched gateway, 18 m high, 13.50 m wide and 2.30 m deep, in the north-west corner of the enclosure. The central arch is 6.20 m wide and surmounted by Corinthian columns and pilasters, with Ionic epistyles at the ends and a pediment in the centre. On the epistyle blocks above the arch and the columns, on the side of the old city (west facade) is carved the inscription: "This is Athens, formerly the city of Theseus", while on the side facing the sanctuary and the extension of the city by Hadrian, is the inscription: "This is the city of Hadrian and not of Theseus".

The remains of other important sanctuaries have been excavated in the area immediately bordering on the Olympieion to the north. The foundations of a Classical temple just outside the south side of the enclosure wall of Olympieion have been identified with the Delphinion, the sanctuary of Apollo Delphinios. A small peristyle Doric temple of Roman times, surrounded by an enclosure wall, has been identified with the Kronion, the sanctuary of Kronos and Rhea. Finally, the remains of a large rectangular peristyle and the foundations of a small temple, to the south-west of the Kronion, have been identified with the Panhellenion, the sanctuary of Zeus Panhellenios.

OPERATING RULES

Please be informed that the following is strictly prohibited:

(Law 3028/2002 and Official Government Gazette 88/B/23.1.2004)

- to collect, remove or damage any kind of object, including ancient and contemporary works of art as well as any natural item,
- to consume food or beverages,
- to smoke,
- to produce litter of any kind,
- to behave, dress or act in a way not compatible with the nature of the archaeological site/museum,
- entrance to people under the influence of substances (intoxicants, narcotics etc.),
- entrance to pets, except for dogs accompanying people with disabilities,
- entrance to all vehicles, except for emergency vehicles and those used for conducting archaeological works.

Furthermore, visitors and guides are kindly requested:

- to comply with the instructions and indications of the security guards,
- to follow the signs, walk along marked routes and avoid entering restricted areas,
- not to touch any work of art,
- to be very careful whilst being near areas of high risk or areas where works are in progress.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILMING

(Official Government Gazette 1138/B/10.04.2012, 3046/B/30.12.2011 and 648/B/07.03.2012)

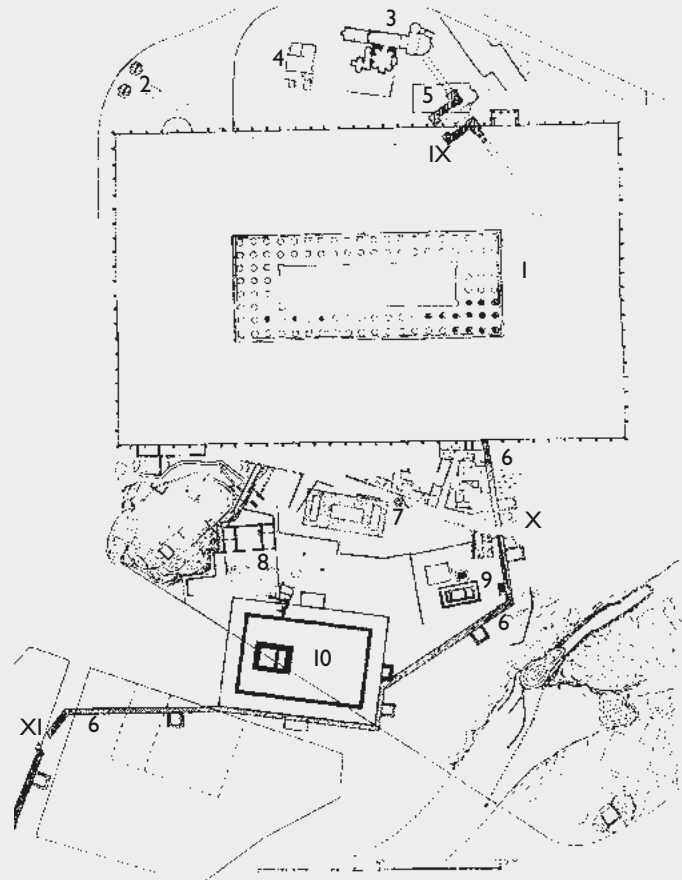
- Photography and filming with professional cameras as well as aerial photography and filming, with or without human presence, are allowed only after a special permit has been issued and fees have been paid.
- Photography and filming with amateur cameras are permitted for free unless they are to be used for commercial purposes.
- Photography with the use of supplementary lighting systems inside a museum is not allowed, unless permission is granted.

Non-compliance with the above rules can lead to the eviction of recalcitrant visitors.

The archaeological site is partially accessible to visitors with disabilities using a wheelchair, with the assistance of an escort.



1. Temple of Olympian Zeus and the precinct wall (AD 131/2)
2. Arch of Hadrian (AD 131/2)
3. Roman Baths (AD 124-131)
4. Ruins of Houses (5th c. BC-2nd c. AD)
5. Basilica of Olympieion (AD 450)
6. Valerian Wall (3rd c. AD)
7. Temple of Apollo Delphinios (450 BC)
8. Lawcourt at the Delphinion (500 BC)
9. Temple of Kronos and Rhea (AD 150)
10. Temple of Hera and Zeus Panhellenios (AD 131/2)
- IX, X, XI. Gates of Themistoklean wall (479/8 BC)





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i T: 210 9226330

GENERAL SUPERVISION: ARF, PUBLICATIONS DEPARTMENT



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