

THE ROMAN AGORA OF ATHENS

ATHENS



EUROPEAN
HERITAGE LABEL



The Roman Agora of Athens was built in the 2nd half of the 1st c. BC, with the aim of transferring the commercial centre of the city to it from the Ancient Agora. The donors are recorded in an inscription carved on the epistyle blocks of the west propylon as Julius Caesar and Augustus.

The Roman Agora is about 100 m to the east of the Ancient Agora. It is a building (dimensions 111x104 m) with a large, rectangular open courtyard surrounded by stoas, shops and storerooms. It has two propyla. The one on the west is in the Doric order, and is known as the Gate of Athena Archegetis, to whom it was dedicated by the Athenian deme in 11/10 BC, during the archonship of Nikias. The other propylon, on the east side, has Ionic columns made of Hymetian marble, with bases of Pentelic marble. A narrow staircase in the middle of the south side, to the east of the fountain-house that used to be located here, led to another small entrance, above the retaining wall, on the street that passed by at this point.

The courtyard was paved during the reign of the emperor Hadrian or Marcus Aurelius (117-132 or 121-180 AD). It was at this time that the inscription containing the decree of Hadrian regulating the tax obligations of the oil-merchants was placed at the main door of the west propylon.

The date at which the Roman Agora was destroyed is not known with certainty. In any event, after the raid by the Herulians (AD 267), when the city contracted within the Late Roman wall, the commercial and administrative centre was transferred from the Ancient to the Roman Agora and Hadrian's Library, where it continued to be located until the middle of the 19th century. With the passage of time, the area became covered with thick earth deposits, and in the Byzantine and post-Byzantine periods it was occupied by houses, workshops and churches (those of the Taxiarchs, now the Panayia Grigoroussa, Profitis Ilias, and the Sotira Pazaroporta, which have been demolished, and the Middle Byzantine basilica found beneath the Fetiye Mosque of the 17th century or thereabouts) and the Fethiye Mosque, of the late 17th century. In the adjacent lot lying north of the archaeological site, the northeastern corner and parts of the eastern peristyle and northern enclosure wall of the Roman Agora were uncovered, as was part of the Southeastern Exedra of the Library of Hadrian. Evidence for the urban development of the area can be drawn from 18th and 19th centuries engravings and oil-paintings.

There are three other buildings to the east of the Roman Agora, on a higher level:

a. The so-called "Agoranomeion" (1st c. AD) (this identification is no longer accepted). The wide staircase, the facade, with three archways, and parts of the north and south walls of the edifice are preserved. The inscription on the epistyle on the facade states that the building was dedicated to Athena Archegetis and the *divi Augusti*.

b. The Horologion of Andronicus Kyrresthus or Tower of the Winds (Aerides). This was built by the architect and astronomer Andronikos from Kyrrhos in Macedonia. It is an octagonal tower of Pentelic marble standing on a base with three steps. It has a conical roof, a cylindrical annex on the south side, and two propyla. A bronze weather-vane (no longer preserved) on the roof indicated the direction of the winds, personifications of which are carved in relief at the top of each of the sides.

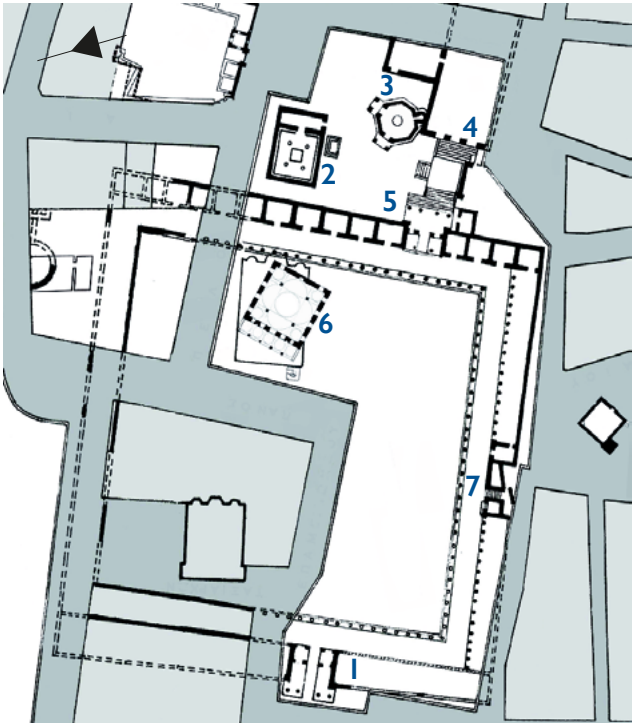
Their names are inscribed beneath the cornice: Boreas, Kaikias, Apeli-



otes, Euros, Notos, Lips, Zephyros and Skiron. The rays of sun-dials are carved on each side, beneath the scenes of the winds, and inside the building was a waterclock, which was operated by water running down from the Acropolis.

The Horologion was used as a church at least from the Late Byzantine period (13th-14th centuries AD) and in the middle of the 18th century as a tekes (monastery) of Ottoman Dervishes.

c. The Vespasianae (public toilets), to the north-west of the Tower of the Winds. This is a building with a rectangular room with benches along the sides, and a narrow anteroom on the east.



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| 1. Gate of Athena Archegetis - Entrance | 4. "Agoranomeion" |
| 2. Vespasianae (Public Toilets) | 5. East Propylon |
| 3. Horologion of Andronicus Kyrrestus (Tower of the Winds) | 6. Fetiye mosque |
| | 7. Fountain-House |

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.



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