

Athens in a Minute

Athens can be a culture shock. It takes many visits for it to feel really 'comfortable'. Like so many big cities, buildings are constantly under reconstruction. Your Hotel – the [Athos](#) – is in a street that for years was been undergoing renewal. When we went there a few weeks ago, most of it has now been completed. We last stayed in [The Athos Hotel](#) 30 years ago and many places along the street have been added including a Bakery and an extra Eaterie. Two streets to the right is the 5* [Hotel Electra Metropolis](#) which we remember as the *Teachers' Union Offices* when we first visited.

I didn't understand initially that you were meeting your cruise ship after Athens. Originally, I thought you were disembarking and going to Athens before you flew home. If I've got it right now, you are flying into Athens and then going to your hotel before joining your Cruise Ship after two nights in the *Athos*.

**Athos Hotel,
Patroou 3,
Athina 105 57**

The taxi from Athens Airport should be €45.00 (maybe €50.00 with a tip if they are polite). It will take about 40 mins if they know where they are going. The *Athos* is not the best known hotel in Athens so it would be useful if you had a slip of paper with the address printed on it as above to give to the taxi driver.

I have tried to relate the places in Athens to your Hotel so you know which way to follow. I have tried to provide places of interest, places of historical significance, places to eat, places to shop. We have been to Athens 80 times over the past 45 years and have spent the equivalent of 1.5 years living there. Every time we go back, we find new things but much of the downside we've learned to fade down. Arriving for just a few hours, it may not be so easy to do that.

Pauline immediately tells me off for this but, if I was going to spend my first couple of days in Athens, I would find the most central café around the Plaka area, order a litre of chilled, white wine and just sit and watch the world go by, listen to the voices, inhale the scents and smells, watch the body language. That way, you would imbibe more of Athens than visiting tourist 'must sees'.

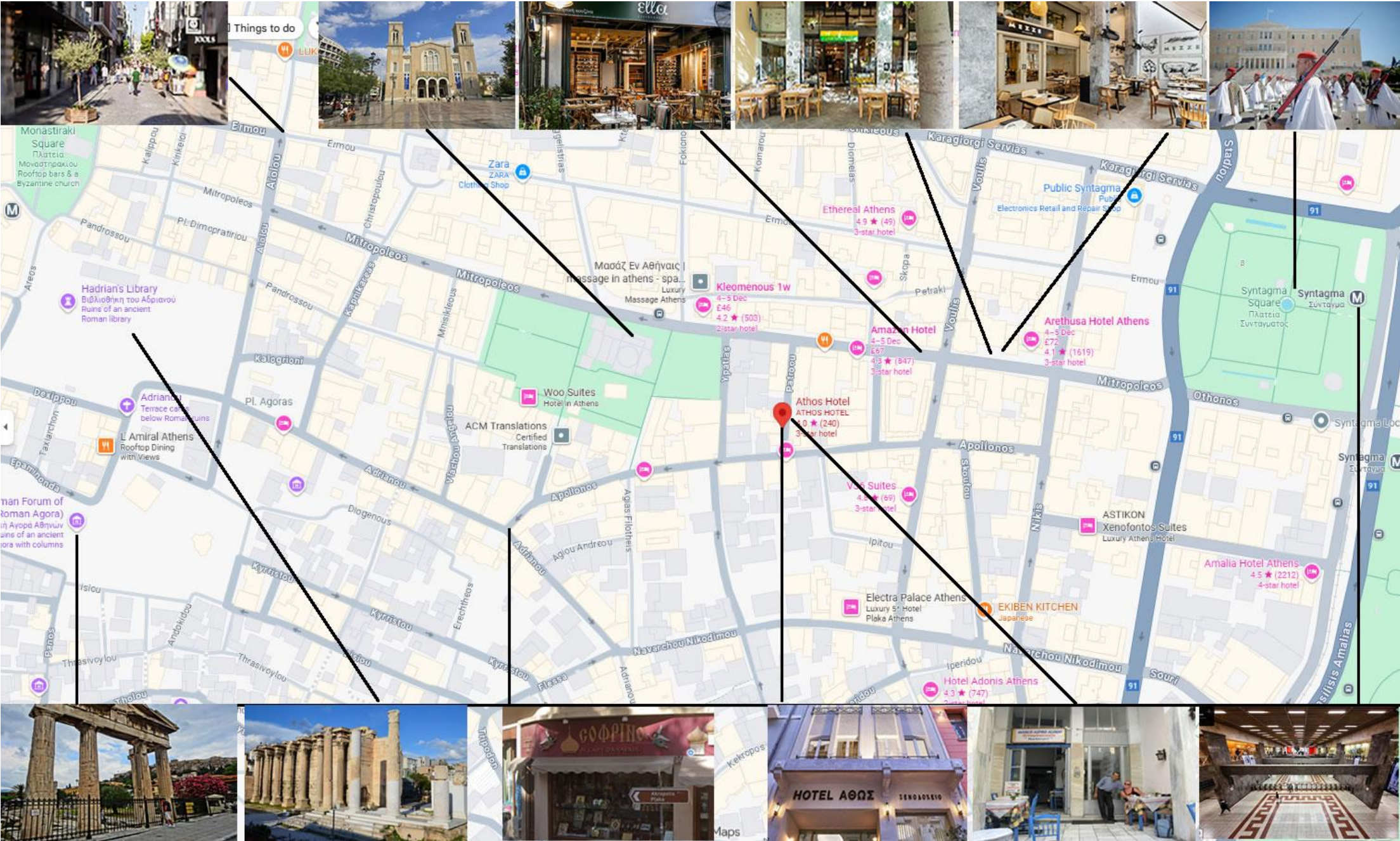
Visiting the Acropolis could take the best part of a day and, I have to say, we didn't visit it until we'd been in Greece for 25 years. Even then, we had a cursory look and left to find a Taverna for lunch. The smart new [Acropolis Museum](#) at the foot of the Acropolis Hill is impressive but, for me, not interesting enough to give up a precious day of your short time.

I've given you the route to walk to the [Central Athens Fish & Meat Market](#). That is our choice for a visit. We eat almost entirely fish these days and there's plenty on display. If you prefer Pig's or Sheep's heads, you won't be disappointed. At least going in the cooler months, the aroma won't be so overpowering as in August. On the perimeter you will find fresh herbs to buy and bring home.

There are more places to eat than you could manage in a month but I've tried to give you a selection near to your hotel. We have eaten in them all although we haven't visited the one across the road from your hotel for a while. It has been there for years and looks really good. The sort of place that will serve simple, island cuisine.

When you leave the hotel to join your cruise, remember Piraeus has two harbours and you want the cruise ship one. It is six miles away and will cost €25.00.

Central Athens - Map 1



Places to Eat

Right across the road from your hotel is **Marco Aspro Alogo - The White Horse**. It is small, relaxed authentic homemade Greek food. It is not capital city posh but friendly and informal.



[Aspro Alogo - White Horse\) Traditional Greek Food](#)

Turn left out of your hotel and walk down Patroou Street with a couple of eating places we don't know, you will hit Mitropoleos Street. Across the road to the right you will find three excellent restaurants:

Ella which means *Come on!* in Greek is probably our favourite and has a lovely menu which they describe as Urban Greek Cooking.



[Ella Website / Menu](#)

Next is **Tzitzikas & Mermigas** - Cicadas & Ants – Lovely Restaurant with excellent cooking .



[Tzitzikas & Mermigas - Menu](#)

Next to that is **Mezze** which you probably know means a selection of small dishes in Greek. They probably do that but their general menu is excellent.



[Mezze - Menu](#)

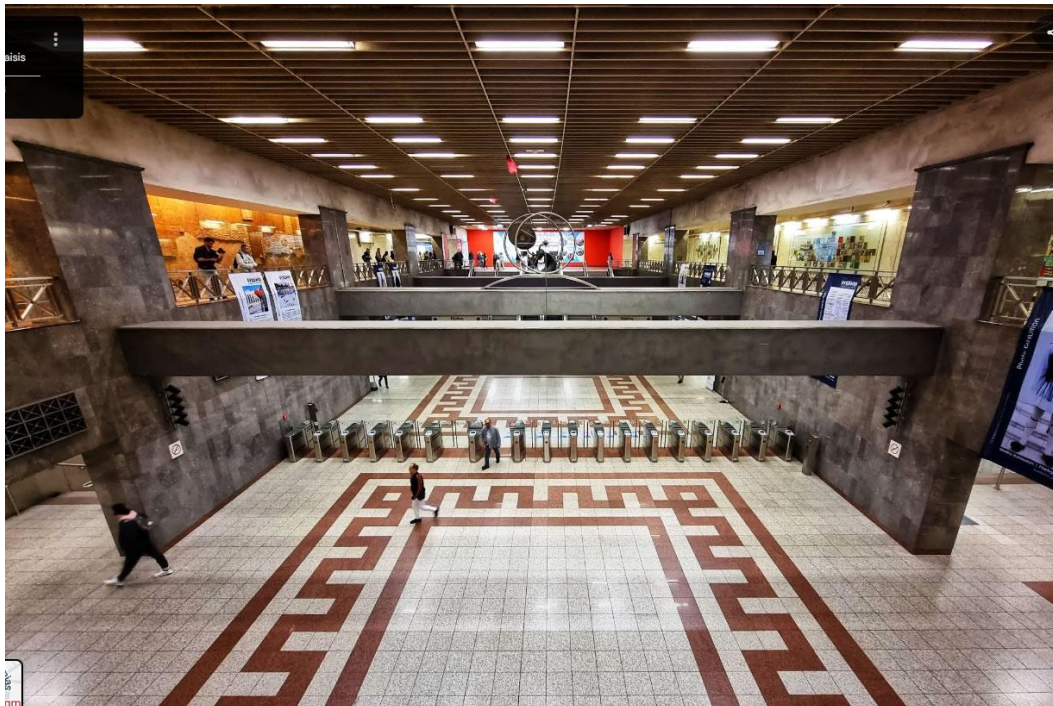
All these restaurants do inside and outside dining. Although October is mild, Greeks will consider it the middle of Winter and freezing. They will be running patio heaters and be dressed for skiing. Don't forget your bobble hat.

Things to see without pain

Turn left out of your hotel down *Patroou Street* and then right on to *Mitrolpoleos Street* you will quickly walk up to the centre of the world's Democracy – *Syndagma Square* and the Parliament building where the famous Changing of the Guards takes place every hour.



Just below it is the Metro from where you can get all over Athens for next to nothing but also see Ancient Athens without going anywhere.



The Athens Metro is incredible and showcases all the antiquities rescued from digging out the tunnels. It is all literally five minutes walk from your hotel.

Turning right out of your hotel and walking up to Apollonos Street (literally 30 seconds) you will see Hermes Hotel; turn right down Apollonos until you hit Adrianou Street where you can decide what to do. You will see this sign:



Obviously, this will take you to the Plaka – the Flea Market which is an interesting tourist trap although Pauline buys quality local leather goods here every time we visit. Or you could make the longer walk up to the Acropolis and the Museum but you will need to consult the map to continue this. We do this walk every morning after Breakfast but it does take about 90 minutes.



Other Things to see without too much effort

Like all good Atheists, I love a cathedral. Well, you've got one a few minute's walk away. This is centre of Greek's world at Easter *Mitropoleos Cathedral* on the street where you may eat – *Mitropoleos Street* by turning left out of your hotel and turning left again when you hit Metropoleos Street. It is a short walk away and you will soon see it.

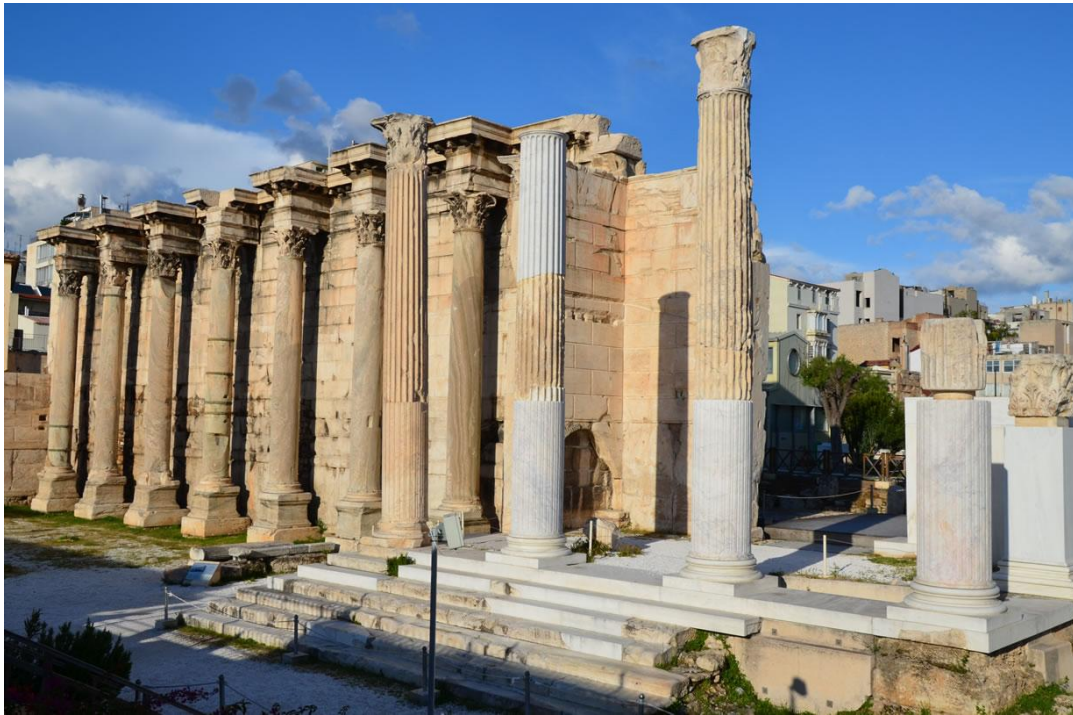


Of course, if you go one street further on and running straight down from Syndagma Square, you will be on the famous *Ermou Street* (the *Oxford Street* of Athens) where you will find lots of interesting fashion outlets.



I'm reliably informed that Greek clothes are rubbish and cost a lot. For that reason, Pauline gets free reign and comes back with absolutely nothing. Quite a good fun walk though if only for the buskers.

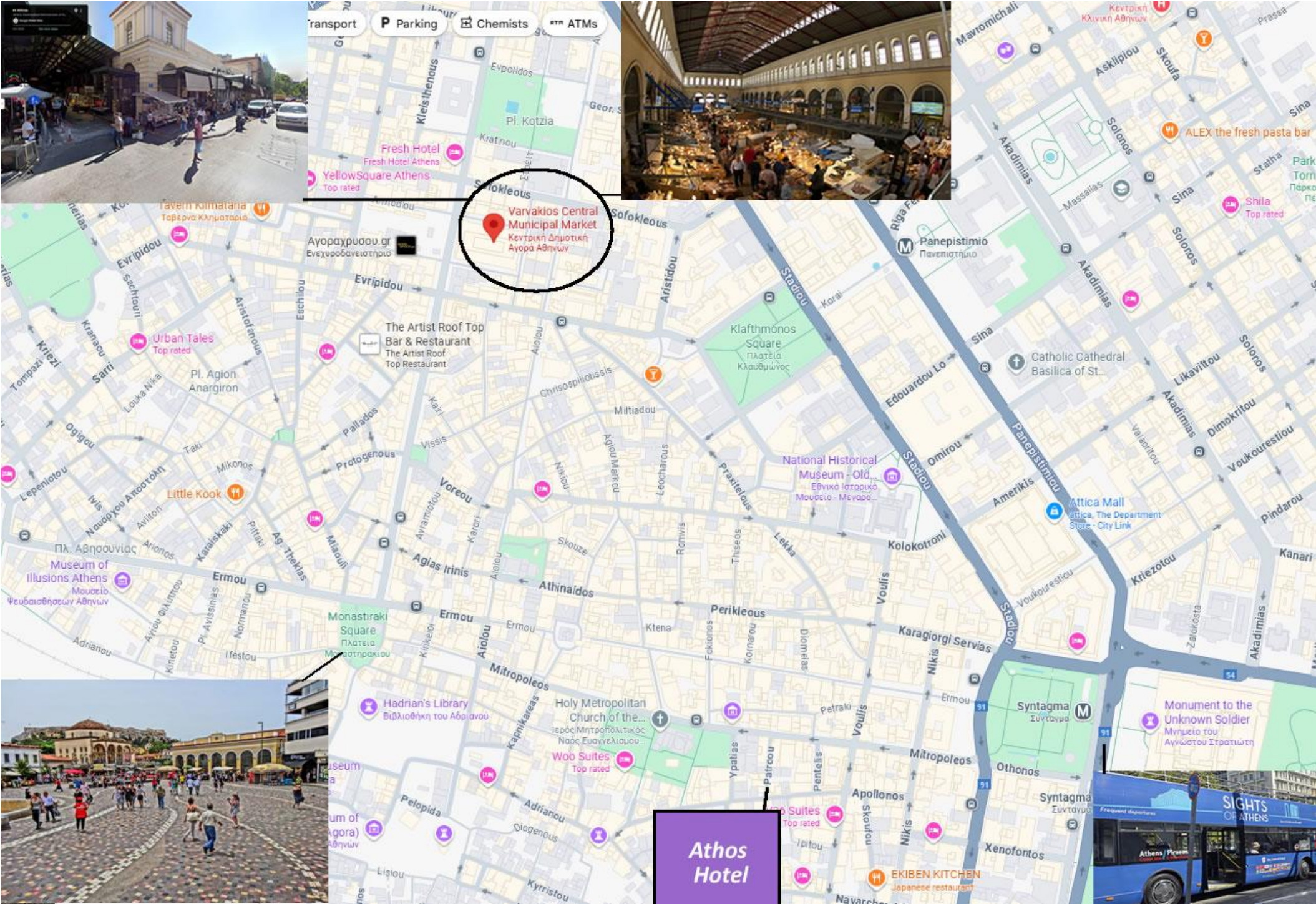
Our walk to the Acropolis takes near two possible ruins of interest. When you turn from Apollonos and walk up Adrianou, you come to Emporer Hadrian's Library (AD132) which is where the street name came from. You'd be hard pressed to know that without the explanatory plaques outside. Still, I feel the same about quite a few of the restaurants I eat in as well.



To the south of that is the *Roman Agora*. Agora means Market and was promised to Julius Caesar in 51BC if an atheist can use that timescale. These two things are pleasant walks, have a quick look and then find wine.



Central Athens - Map 2

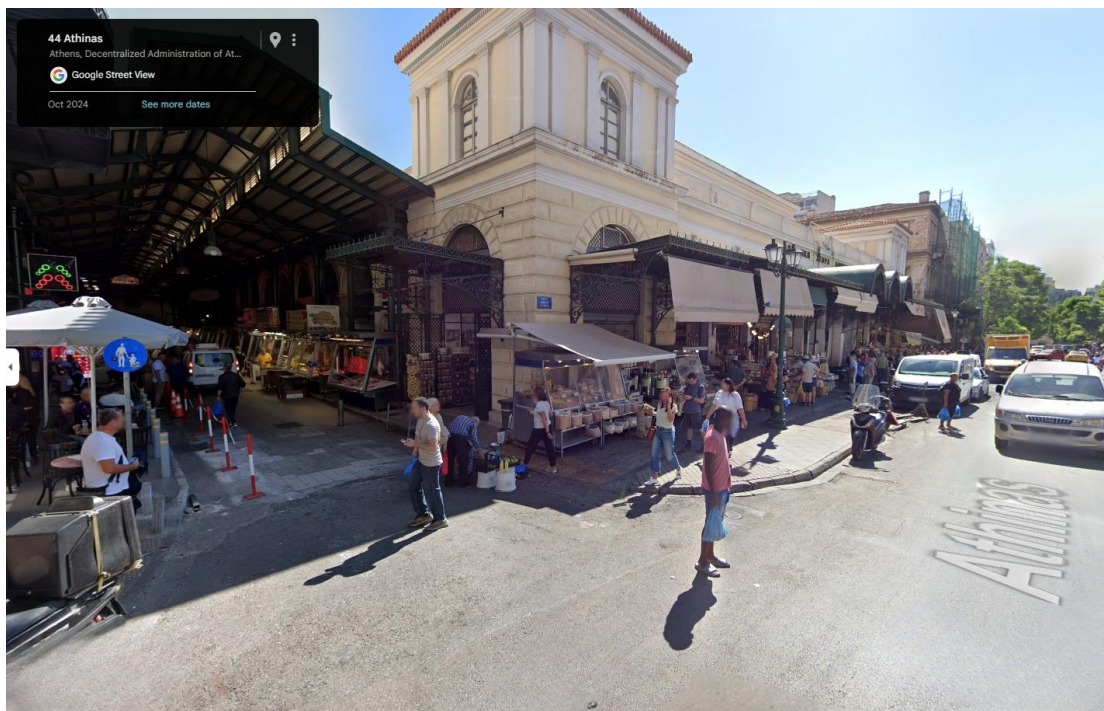


Things to see with a bit more effort

The Central Meat & Fish Market is one of our favourite places to visit. It can be a bit overpowering in 90F+ temperatures but should be better in October. It is a joint *Smithfield Meat Market* and *Billingsgate Fish Market* in London.



You will see big signs proclaiming Φρέσκο Ψάρια (Fresko Psaria) or Fresh Fish and Φρέσκο κρέας (Fresko Kre-as) or Fresh Meat.



All around the outside periphery are shops selling every olive known to man and huge bags of dried herbs which we buy to bring home.

You might like to visit Monastiraki Square which is a hub of energy particularly in the Summer months and features the Railway Station we use a lot when we are there. Often they have piled-high Fruit Barrows parked outside the station arches.



If you really are keen to DO ATHENS in a day, there is a hop-on-hop-off bus service that you can use throughout the day. They can be picked up in many places by definition but the best place to start would be up on Syndagma Square.



They do the whole of Athens in under two hours, turn up at stops every 20 minutes and cost £16.00 for tickets for two people. Never been on it because I value my sanity.