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LIST

Athens, Beyond the Classics

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See the ancient city's other sides: hidden bars and restaurants, local markets and newly-buzzing neighbourhoods.

A **British** travel writer, *Rough Guides* author and debut novelist of *Girl Gone Greek*, Rebecca Hall loves to showcase her adopted country. “Athens has so much more to offer than just its famous ancient sites. The many hidden bars, regenerated gasworks and rich street-art culture make Athens stand out as a place that successfully interweaves the ancient past with a contemporary European city.”

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Varvakeios Central Market and Diporto Taverna

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By Rebecca Hall
Photo by Florian Gior

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One of the best places to immerse yourself into Athenian life, the meat and fish stalls at Varvakeios engage your senses as vendors shout out their wares. You will find a hidden treasure just opposite the market: One of the oldest tavernas in Athens sits in the cellar of a graffiti-stained neo-classical building. Diporto's exterior is misleading, but those of us in the know come to enjoy the daily specials – like the fava dip that comes with housemade bread. With wine barrels lining the walls and the locals sitting at the old tables shooting the breeze, it's also an excellent throwback to 1960s Athens.



MONASTIRAKI FLEA MARKET: RAUL VILLALON FLICKR

Monastiraki Flea Market

Always a great place to find souvenirs, you will want to come and experience the Monastiraki flea market on a Sunday when this famous shopping arcade shows a different face. Locals set out

their wares on tables or carpets, selling a range of treasures from old drachma coins to tavli boards (like backgammon). Many play the game as they wait for a buyer, making Sundays a special time to browse and a chance to witness a weekly Athenian gathering.



TAF: THE ART FOUNDATION

T.A.F. / The Art Foundation

Hidden behind a tiny door within the crowded Monastiraki flea market is a distinctly calmer location to take a break. Local students and workers come to T.A.F. day and night to relax at the tree-sheltered courtyard bar and enjoy a coffee or a glass of wine. Originally a 19th-century prison, the old interrogation cells now house rotating art exhibits and projects by international and local group designers, while the small shop promotes exclusively Greek designers, supporting local production and creativity.

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The Kiss, by Ilias Papailiakis PHOTO: ONASSIS FOUNDATION

Metaxourgio Street Art

In a city of street art – wonderful murals can be found in most districts – **The Kiss**, by Cretan-born, award-winning Ilias Papailiakis, is the main attraction. Adorning the wall of an inner-city apartment building in the Metaxourgio neighbourhood, the mural is just a 15-minute walk from Gazi. Commissioned by the Onassis Foundation and City of Athens in 2019, the 22-metre-high mural depicts the faces of two people kissing, and emphasizes human contact and hope – especially during times of self-isolation.

Gazi

Athens' old gasworks district is now the place to be at night, where Athenians hang out at the mix of bars, clubs and LGBTQ-friendly venues such as the **Beaver Cooperativa** – run by a women's collective, the all-day café/bar serves a range of organic wines and draft beers. The old gasworks is now the **Technopolis**, comprising a museum and a large exhibition space with regular events, such as the **Meet Market**, where local artisans sell crafts ranging from organic lavender by-products to handmade clothing. As day blends into night, a lively atmosphere builds up around DJ sets. The street art and murals here are a treat – something to experience during daylight hours.

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