Parthenon

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*"Temple of Athena" redirects here. For other uses, see*[*Parthenon (disambiguation)*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon_(disambiguation))*and*[*Temple of Athena (disambiguation)*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_Athena_(disambiguation))*.*

*Not to be confused with*[*Pantheon, Rome*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pantheon,_Rome)*.*

[Coordinates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/55/WMA_button2b.png/17px-WMA_button2b.png[37°58′17″N 23°43′35″E](https://tools.wmflabs.org/geohack/geohack.php?pagename=Parthenon&params=37.9714_N_23.7265_E_type:landmark_region:GR_scale:4000)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Parthenon** | |
| Παρθενώνας | |
| [The Parthenon in Athens.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Parthenon_in_Athens.jpg)  The Parthenon | |
| [Wikimedia](https://foundation.wikimedia.org/wiki/Maps_Terms_of_Use) | © [OpenStreetMap](https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright) | |
| **General information** | |
| **Type** | [Temple](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple) |
| **Architectural style** | [Classical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_architecture) |
| **Location** | [Athens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athens), Greece |
| **Construction started** | 447 BC[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-academic.reed.edu-1)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-ancientgreece.com-2) |
| **Completed** | 432 BC[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-academic.reed.edu-1)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-ancientgreece.com-2) |
| **Destroyed** | Partially on 26 September 1687 |
| **Height** | 13.72 m (45.0 ft)[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Penprase2010-3) |
| **Dimensions** | |
| **Other dimensions** | [Cella](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cella): 29.8 by 19.2 m (98 by 63 ft) |
| **Technical details** | |
| **Size** | 69.5 by 30.9 m (228 by 101 ft) |
| **Design and construction** | |
| **Architect** | [Iktinos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iktinos), [Callicrates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Callicrates) |
| **Other designers** | [Phidias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phidias) (sculptor) |

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Akropolis_by_Leo_von_Klenze.jpg)

Reconstruction of the Acropolis and [Areopagus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Areopagus) in Athens, [Leo von Klenze](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leo_von_Klenze), 1846

The **Parthenon** ([/ˈpɑːrθəˌnɒn, -nən/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA/English); [Ancient Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_language): [Παρθενών](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/%CE%A0%CE%B1%CF%81%CE%B8%CE%B5%CE%BD%CF%8E%CE%BD#Ancient_Greek); [Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language): Παρθενώνας, *Parthenónas*) is a former [temple](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_temple)[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Neils2005-4)[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-HambidgeFund1924-5) on the [Athenian Acropolis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acropolis_of_Athens), [Greece](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greece), dedicated to the [goddess](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_gods) [Athena](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athena), whom the people of [Athens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athens) considered their patron. Construction began in 447 BC when the [Athenian Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athenian_Empire) was at the peak of its power. It was completed in 438 BC, although decoration of the building continued until 432 BC. It is the most important surviving building of [Classical Greece](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_Greece), generally considered the zenith of the [Doric order](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doric_order). Its decorative sculptures are considered some of the high points of [Greek art](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_in_Ancient_Greece). The Parthenon is regarded as an enduring symbol of [Ancient Greece](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greece), [Athenian democracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athenian_democracy) and [Western civilization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_culture),[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Beard2010-6) and one of the world's greatest cultural monuments. To the Athenians who built it, the Parthenon and other Periclean monuments of the Acropolis were seen fundamentally as a celebration of Hellenic victory over the Persian invaders and as a thanksgiving to the gods for that victory.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-:0-7)

The Parthenon itself replaced an older temple of Athena, which historians call the Pre-Parthenon or [Older Parthenon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Older_Parthenon), that was destroyed in the [Persian invasion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greco-Persian_wars) of 480 BC. The temple is [archaeoastronomically](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archaeoastronomy) aligned to the [Hyades](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyades_(star_cluster)).[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-BoutsikasHannah2012-8) Like most Greek temples, the Parthenon served a practical purpose as the city [treasury](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treasury).[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-9)[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-10) For a time, it served as the treasury of the [Delian League](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delian_League), which later became the [Athenian Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athenian_Empire). In the final decade of the sixth century AD, the Parthenon was converted into a [Christian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Christianity#Early_Middle_Ages_(476%E2%80%93799)) church dedicated to the [Virgin Mary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary,_the_mother_of_Jesus).

After the [Ottoman conquest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Greece), it was turned into a [mosque](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosque) in the early 1460s. On 26 September 1687, an Ottoman ammunition dump inside the building was ignited by [Venetian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Venice) bombardment. The resulting explosion severely damaged the Parthenon and its sculptures. From 1800 to 1803,[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-11) [Thomas Bruce, 7th Earl of Elgin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Bruce,_7th_Earl_of_Elgin) removed some of the surviving sculptures, now known as the [Elgin Marbles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elgin_Marbles), with the alleged permission of the [Turks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_people) of the [Ottoman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire).[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-12)

Since 1975 numerous large-scale restoration projects have been undertaken, the latest is expected to finish in 2020.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-13)

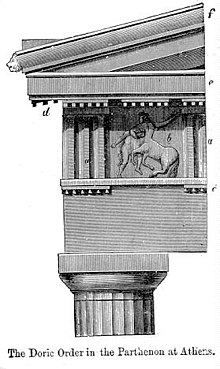
## **Etymology[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=1" \o "Edit section: Etymology)]**

The origin of the Parthenon's name is from the Greek word παρθενών (*parthenon*), which referred to the "unmarried women's apartments" in a house and in the Parthenon's case seems to have been used at first only for a particular room of the temple;[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-14) it is debated which room this is and how the room acquired its name. The Liddell–Scott–Jones [*Greek–English Lexicon*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Greek%E2%80%93English_Lexicon) states that this room was the western [cella](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cella) of the Parthenon, as does J.B. Bury.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-:0-7) Jamauri D. Green holds that the parthenon was the room in which the [peplos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peplos)presented to Athena at the [Panathenaic Festival](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panathenaic_Festival) was woven by the [*arrephoroi*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arrephoros), a group of four young girls chosen to serve Athena each year.[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-15) Christopher Pelling asserts that Athena Parthenos may have constituted a discrete cult of Athena, intimately connected with, but not identical to, that of [Athena Polias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athena_Polias).[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-16) According to this theory, the name of the Parthenon means the "temple of the virgin goddess" and refers to the cult of Athena Parthenos that was associated with the temple.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Br-17) The epithet *parthénos* (παρθένος) meant "maiden, girl", but also "virgin, unmarried woman"[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-18) and was especially used for [Artemis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artemis), the goddess of wild animals, the hunt, and vegetation, and for Athena, the [goddess](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goddess) of strategy and tactics, handicraft, and practical reason.[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-19) It has also been suggested that the name of the temple alludes to the maidens (*parthenoi*), whose supreme sacrifice guaranteed the safety of the city.[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-20) *Parthénos* has also been applied to the [Virgin Mary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary,_mother_of_Jesus), Parthénos Maria, and the Parthenon had been converted to a Christian church dedicated to the Virgin Mary in the final decade of the sixth century.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-freely-21)

The first instance in which *Parthenon* definitely refers to the entire building is found in the writings of the 4th century BC orator [Demosthenes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demosthenes). In 5th-century building accounts, the structure is simply called *ho naos* ('the temple'). The architects [Iktinos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iktinos) and [Callicrates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Callicrates) are said to have called the building *Hekatompedos* ("the hundred footer") in their lost treatise on Athenian architecture,[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-22) and, in the 4th century and later, the building was referred to as the *Hekatompedos* or the *Hekatompedon* as well as the Parthenon; the 1st-century-AD writer [Plutarch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plutarch) referred to the building as the *Hekatompedos Parthenon*.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-23)

Because the Parthenon was dedicated to the Greek goddess Athena, it has sometimes been referred to as the Temple of [Minerva](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minerva), the Roman name for Athena, particularly during the 19th century.[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-24)

## **Function[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=2" \o "Edit section: Function)]**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:DoricParthenon.jpg)

The [Doric order](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doric_order) of the Parthenon

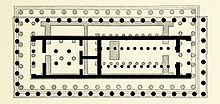
Although the Parthenon is architecturally a temple and is usually called so, it is not really one in the conventional sense of the word.[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Deacy-11-25) A small [shrine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrine) has been excavated within the building, on the site of an older [sanctuary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanctuary) probably dedicated to Athena as a way to get closer to the goddess,[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Deacy-11-25) but the Parthenon never hosted the cult of Athena Polias, patron of Athens: the [cult image](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cult_image), which was bathed in the sea and to which was presented the [*peplos*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peplos), was an olivewood [*xoanon*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xoanon), located at an older altar on the northern side of the Acropolis.[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Burkert-143-26)

The colossal statue of Athena by [Phidias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phidias) was not related to any cult[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon" \l "cite_note-27) and is not known to have inspired any religious fervour.[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Burkert-143-26) It did not seem to have any [priestess](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priest), altar or cult name.[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Nagy-55-28) According to [Thucydides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thucydides), [Pericles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pericles) once referred to the statue as a gold reserve, stressing that it "contained forty talents of pure gold and it was all removable".[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-29) The Athenian statesman thus implies that the metal, obtained from contemporary coinage,[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon" \l "cite_note-30) could be used again without any impiety.[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Nagy-55-28) The Parthenon should then be viewed as a grand setting for Phidias' votive statue rather than a cult site.[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-31) It is said[*[by whom?](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Manual_of_Style/Words_to_watch" \l "Unsupported_attributions" \o "Wikipedia:Manual of Style/Words to watch)*] in many writings of the Greeks that there were many treasures stored inside the temple, such as Persian swords and small statue figures made of precious metals.

Archaeologist [Joan Breton Connelly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joan_Breton_Connelly) has recently argued for the coherency of the Parthenon’s sculptural programme in presenting a succession of genealogical narratives that track Athenian identity back through the ages: from the birth of Athena, through [cosmic](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Special:Search/cosmic) and epic battles, to the final great event of the [Athenian Bronze Age](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Athenian_Bronze_Age&action=edit&redlink=1), the war of [Erechtheus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erechtheus) and [Eumolpos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eumolpos).[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-32)[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-33) She argues a pedagogical function for the Parthenon’s sculptured decoration, one that establishes and perpetuates Athenian foundation myth, memory, values and identity.[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-34)[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-35) While some classicists, including [Mary Beard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Beard_(classicist)), [Peter Green](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Green_(historian)), and [Garry Wills](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garry_Wills)[[36]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-36)[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-37) have doubted or rejected Connelly's thesis, an increasing number of historians, archaeologists, and classical scholars support her work. They include: J.J. Pollitt,[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-38) Brunilde Ridgway,[[39]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-39) Nigel Spivey,[[40]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-40) Caroline Alexander,[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-41) [A.E. Stallings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A.E._Stallings).[[42]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-42)

### Older Parthenon**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=3" \o "Edit section: Older Parthenon)]**

*Main article:*[*Older Parthenon*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Older_Parthenon)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Parthenon_ancient_%26_Pericles,_Maxime_Collignon.jpg)

The [Older Parthenon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Older_Parthenon) (in black) was destroyed by the Achaemenids during the [Destruction of Athens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Destruction_of_Athens) in 480-479 BC, and then rebuilt by [Pericles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pericles) (in grey).

The first endeavour to build a sanctuary for [Athena Parthenos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athena#Athena_Parthenos:_Virgin_Athena) on the site of the present Parthenon was begun shortly after the [Battle of Marathon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Marathon) (c. 490–488 BC) upon a solid [limestone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limestone) foundation that extended and levelled the southern part of the [Acropolis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acropolis) summit. This building replaced a *hekatompedon* (meaning "hundred-footer") and would have stood beside the [archaic temple dedicated to *Athena Polias*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Temple_of_Athena)("of the city"). The [Older or Pre-Parthenon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Older_Parthenon), as it is frequently referred to, was still under construction when the [Persians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achaemenid_Empire) sacked the city in 480 BC and razed the Acropolis.[[43]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-venieri-acropolis-43)[[44]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-44)

The existence of both the proto-Parthenon and its destruction were known from [Herodotus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herodotus),[[45]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon" \l "cite_note-45) and the drums of its columns were plainly visible built into the curtain wall north of the [Erechtheion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erechtheion). Further physical evidence of this structure was revealed with the excavations of [Panagiotis Kavvadias](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Panagis_Kavvadias&action=edit&redlink=1) of 1885–90. The findings of this dig allowed [Wilhelm Dörpfeld](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelm_D%C3%B6rpfeld), then director of the [German Archaeological Institute](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Archaeological_Institute), to assert that there existed a distinct substructure to the original Parthenon, called Parthenon I by Dörpfeld, not immediately below the present edifice as had been previously assumed.[[46]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-46) Dörpfeld's observation was that the three steps of the first Parthenon consisted of two steps of Poros limestone, the same as the foundations, and a top step of Karrha limestone that was covered by the lowest step of the Periclean Parthenon. This platform was smaller and slightly to the north of the final Parthenon, indicating that it was built for a wholly different building, now completely covered over. This picture was somewhat complicated by the publication of the final report on the 1885–90 excavations, indicating that the substructure was contemporary with the Kimonian walls, and implying a later date for the first temple.[[47]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-47)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Perserschutt.gif)

Part of the archaeological remains called [*Perserschutt*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perserschutt), or "Persian rubble": remnants of the destruction of Athens by the armies of [Xerxes I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xerxes_I). Photographed in 1866, just after excavation.

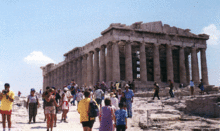
If the original Parthenon was indeed destroyed in 480, it invites the question of why the site was left a ruin for thirty-three years. One argument involves the oath sworn by the Greek allies before the [Battle of Plataea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Plataea) in 479 BC[[48]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-48) declaring that the sanctuaries destroyed by the Persians would not be rebuilt, an oath from which the Athenians were only absolved with the [Peace of Callias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_of_Callias) in 450.[[49]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-49) The mundane fact of the cost of reconstructing Athens after the Persian sack is at least as likely a cause. However, the excavations of [Bert Hodge Hill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bert_Hodge_Hill) led him to propose the existence of a second Parthenon, begun in the period of [Kimon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cimon) after 468 BC.[[50]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-50) Hill claimed that the Karrha limestone step Dörpfeld thought was the highest of Parthenon I was in fact the lowest of the three steps of Parthenon II, whose stylobate dimensions Hill calculated at 23.51 by 66.888 [metres](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metre)(77.13 [ft](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foot_(unit)) × 219.45 ft).

One difficulty in dating the proto-Parthenon is that at the time of the 1885 excavation the archaeological method of [seriation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seriation_(archaeology)) was not fully developed; the careless digging and refilling of the site led to a loss of much valuable information. An attempt to discuss and make sense of the potsherds found on the Acropolis came with the two-volume study by Graef and Langlotz published in 1925–33.[[51]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-51) This inspired American archaeologist [William Bell Dinsmoor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Bell_Dinsmoor) to attempt to supply limiting dates for the temple platform and the five walls hidden under the re-terracing of the Acropolis. Dinsmoor concluded that the latest possible date for Parthenon I was no earlier than 495 BC, contradicting the early date given by Dörpfeld.[[52]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-52) Further, Dinsmoor denied that there were two proto-Parthenons, and held that the only pre-Periclean temple was what Dörpfeld referred to as Parthenon II. Dinsmoor and Dörpfeld exchanged views in the *American Journal of Archaeology* in 1935.[[53]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-53)

### Present building**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=4" \o "Edit section: Present building)]**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Parthenon_at_Night..jpg)

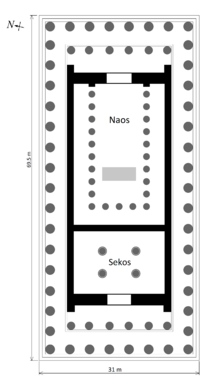
The Parthenon at the acropolis of Athens at night.

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Parthenon_restoration.gif)

Parthenon today and as it probably appeared in ancient times

In the mid-5th century BC, when the Athenian Acropolis became the seat of the [Delian League](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delian_League) and Athens was the greatest cultural centre of its time, [Pericles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pericles) initiated an ambitious building project that lasted the entire second half of the century. The most important buildings visible on the Acropolis today—the Parthenon, the [Propylaia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propylaia), the [Erechtheion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erechtheion) and the temple of [Athena Nike](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athena_Nike)—were erected during this period. The Parthenon was built under the general supervision of the artist [Phidias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phidias), who also had charge of the sculptural decoration. The architects [Ictinos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ictinos) and [Callicrates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Callicrates) began their work in 447 BC, and the building was substantially completed by 432, but work on the decorations continued until at least 431.

## **Architecture[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=5" \o "Edit section: Architecture)]**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Parthenon_plan.png)

Floor plan of the Parthenon

The Parthenon is a [peripteral](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peripteral) [octastyle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Octastyle) [Doric](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doric_order) temple with [Ionic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ionic_order) architectural features. It stands on a platform or [stylobate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stylobate) of three steps. In common with other Greek temples, it is of [post and lintel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post_and_lintel) construction and is surrounded by columns ('peripteral') carrying an [entablature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entablature). There are eight columns at either end ('octastyle') and seventeen on the sides. There is a double row of columns at either end. The colonnade surrounds an inner masonry structure, the [*cella*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cella), which is divided into two compartments. At either end of the building the [gable](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gable) is finished with a triangular [pediment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pediment) originally occupied by sculpted figures. The columns are of the [Doric order](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doric_order), with simple capitals, fluted shafts and no bases. Above the architrave of the entablature is a [frieze](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frieze) of carved pictorial panels ([metopes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metope_(architecture))), separated by formal architectural [triglyphs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triglyph), typical of the Doric order. Around the cella and across the lintels of the inner columns runs a continuous sculptured [frieze](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frieze) in low relief. This element of the architecture is [Ionic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ionic_order) in style rather than Doric.[[54]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-54)

Measured at the stylobate, the dimensions of the base of the Parthenon are 69.5 by 30.9 metres (228 by 101 ft). The cella was 29.8 metres long by 19.2 metres wide (97.8 × 63.0 ft). On the exterior, the Doric columns measure 1.9 metres (6.2 ft) in diameter and are 10.4 metres (34 ft) high. The corner columns are slightly larger in diameter. The Parthenon had 46 outer columns and 23 inner columns in total, each column containing 20 flutes. (A flute is the [concave](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/concave) shaft carved into the column form.) The roof was covered with large overlapping marble tiles known as [imbrices and tegulae](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imbrex_and_tegula).[[55]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-55)[[56]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-56)

The Parthenon is regarded as the finest example of Greek architecture. The temple, wrote [John Julius Cooper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Julius_Cooper), "enjoys the reputation of being the most perfect Doric temple ever built. Even in antiquity, its architectural refinements were legendary, especially the subtle correspondence between the curvature of the stylobate, the taper of the [naos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naos_(architecture)) walls and the *entasis* of the columns."[[57]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-57) [*Entasis*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entasis) refers to the slight swelling, of 4 centimetres (1.6 in), in the centre of the columns to counteract the appearance of columns having a waist, as the swelling makes them look straight from a distance. The stylobate is the platform on which the columns stand. As in many other classical Greek temples,[[58]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon" \l "cite_note-58) it has a slight parabolic upward curvature intended to shed rainwater and reinforce the building against earthquakes. The columns might therefore be supposed to lean outwards, but they actually lean slightly inwards so that if they carried on, they would meet almost exactly a mile above the centre of the Parthenon; since they are all the same height, the curvature of the outer stylobate edge is transmitted to the [architrave](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Architrave) and roof above: "All follow the rule of being built to delicate curves", Gorham Stevens observed when pointing out that, in addition, the west front was built at a slightly higher level than that of the east front.[[59]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-59)

It is not universally agreed what the intended effect of these "optical refinements" was; they may serve as a sort of "reverse optical illusion".[[60]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-60) As the Greeks may have been aware, two [parallel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parallel_(geometry)) lines appear to bow, or curve outward, when intersected by converging lines. In this case, the ceiling and floor of the temple may seem to bow in the presence of the surrounding angles of the building. Striving for perfection, the designers may have added these curves, compensating for the illusion by creating their own curves, thus negating this effect and allowing the temple to be seen as they intended. It is also suggested that it was to enliven what might have appeared an inert mass in the case of a building without curves, but the comparison ought to be, according to Smithsonian historian Evan Hadingham, with the Parthenon's more obviously curved predecessors than with a notional rectilinear temple.[[61]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-SmithMag-61)

Some studies of the Acropolis, including of the Parthenon and its façade, have conjectured that many of its proportions approximate the [golden ratio](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_ratio).[[62]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-62) However, such theories have been discredited by more recent studies, which have shown that the proportions of the Parthenon do not match the golden proportion.[[63]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-63)[[64]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-64)

## **Sculpture[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=6" \o "Edit section: Sculpture)]**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Elgin_Marbles_east_pediment.jpg)

Group from the east pediment, [British Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Museum).

The cella of the Parthenon housed the [chryselephantine statue of Athena Parthenos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athena_Parthenos) sculpted by [Phidias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phidias) and dedicated in 439 or 438 BC. The appearance of this is known from other images. The decorative stonework was originally highly coloured.[[65]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-65) The temple was dedicated to Athena at that time, though construction continued until almost the beginning of the [Peloponnesian War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peloponnesian_War) in 432. By the year 438, the sculptural decoration of the Doric metopes on the [frieze](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frieze) above the exterior colonnade, and of the Ionic frieze around the upper portion of the walls of the [cella](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cella), had been completed. In the *opisthodomus* (the back room of the cella) were stored the monetary contributions of the Delian League, of which Athens was the leading member.

Only a very small number of the sculptures remain *in situ*; most of the surviving sculptures are today (controversially) in the [British Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Museum)in London as the [Elgin Marbles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elgin_Marbles), and the Athens [Acropolis Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acropolis_Museum), but a few pieces are also in the [Louvre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louvre), and museums in Rome, [Vienna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vienna)and [Palermo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palermo).[[66]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-66)

### Metopes**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=7" \o "Edit section: Metopes)]**

*Main article:*[*Metopes of the Parthenon*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metopes_of_the_Parthenon)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Parthenon_XL.jpg)

Detail of the West metopes

The frieze of the Parthenon's entablature contained ninety-two [metopes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metope_(architecture)), fourteen each on the east and west sides, thirty-two each on the north and south sides. They were carved in high relief, a practice employed until then only in treasuries (buildings used to keep votive gifts to the gods).[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)] According to the building records, the metope sculptures date to the years 446–440 BC. The metopes of the east side of the Parthenon, above the main entrance, depict the [Gigantomachy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gigantomachy) (the mythical battle between the Olympian gods and the [Giants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gigantes)). The metopes of the west end show the [Amazonomachy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amazonomachy) (the mythical battle of the Athenians against the [Amazons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amazons)). The metopes of the south side show the Thessalian [Centauromachy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centauromachy) (battle of the [Lapiths](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lapiths) aided by [Theseus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theseus) against the half-man, half-horse [Centaurs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centaur)). Metopes 13–21 are missing, but drawings from 1674 attributed to Jaques Carrey indicate a series of humans; these have been variously interpreted as scenes from the [Lapith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lapith) wedding, scenes from the early history of Athens and various myths.[[67]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Barringer2008-67) On the north side of the Parthenon, the metopes are poorly preserved, but the subject seems to be the [sack of Troy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iliou_persis).

The metopes present examples of the [Severe Style](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Severe_Style) in the anatomy of the figures' heads, in the limitation of the corporal movements to the contours and not to the muscles, and in the presence of pronounced veins in the figures of the [Centauromachy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centauromachy). Several of the metopes still remain on the building, but, with the exception of those on the northern side, they are severely damaged. Some of them are located at the [Acropolis Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acropolis_Museum), others are in the [British Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Museum), and one is at the [Louvre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louvre)museum.[[68]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-68)

In March 2011, archaeologists announced that they had discovered five [metopes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metope_(architecture)) of the Parthenon in the south wall of the Acropolis, which had been extended when the Acropolis was used as a fortress. According to *Eleftherotypia* daily, the archaeologists claimed the metopes had been placed there in the 18th century when the Acropolis wall was being repaired. The experts discovered the metopes while processing 2,250 photos with modern photographic methods, as the white Pentelic [marble](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marble) they are made of differed from the other stone of the wall. It was previously presumed that the missing metopes were destroyed during the Morosini explosion of the Parthenon in 1687.[[69]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-69)

### Frieze**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=8" \o "Edit section: Frieze)]**

*Main article:*[*Parthenon Frieze*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon_Frieze)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:1868_Lawrence_Alma-Tadema_-_Phidias_Showing_the_Frieze_of_the_Parthenon_to_his_Friends.jpg)

[*Phidias*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phidias)*Showing the Frieze of the Parthenon to his Friends*, 1868 painting by [Lawrence Alma-Tadema](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawrence_Alma-Tadema)

The most characteristic feature in the architecture and decoration of the temple is the Ionic [frieze](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frieze) running around the exterior walls of the cella, which is the inside structure of the Parthenon. The bas-relief frieze was carved in situ; it is dated to 442 BC-438 BC.

One interpretation is that it depicts an idealized version of the [Panathenaic procession](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panathenaic_Festival) from the Dipylon Gate in the [Kerameikos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kerameikos) to the [Acropolis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acropolis). In this procession held every year, with a special procession taking place every four years, Athenians and foreigners were participating to honour the goddess [Athena](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athena), offering sacrifices and a new [peplos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peplos) (dress woven by selected noble Athenian girls called *ergastines*).

[Joan Breton Connelly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joan_Breton_Connelly) offers a mythological interpretation for the frieze, one that is in harmony with the rest of the temple’s sculptural programme which shows Athenian genealogy through a series of succession myths set in the remote past. She identifies the central panel above the door of the Parthenon as the pre-battle sacrifice of the daughter of [King Erechtheus](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=King_Erechtheus&action=edit&redlink=1), a sacrifice that ensured Athenian victory over [Eumolpos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eumolpos) and his Thracian army. The great procession marching toward the east end of the Parthenon shows the post-battle thanksgiving sacrifice of cattle and sheep, honey and water, followed by the triumphant army of Erechtheus returning from their victory. This represents the very first Panathenaia set in mythical times, the model on which historic Panathenaic processions was based.[[70]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-70)[[71]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-71)

### Pediments**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=9" \o "Edit section: Pediments)]**

*Main article:*[*Pediments of the Parthenon*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pediments_of_the_Parthenon)

The traveller [Pausanias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pausanias_(geographer)), when he visited the Acropolis at the end of the 2nd century AD, only mentioned briefly the sculptures of the [pediments](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pediment) (gable ends) of the temple, reserving the majority of his description for the gold and ivory statue of the goddess inside.[[72]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-72)

#### East pediment[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=10" \o "Edit section: East pediment)]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Partenon04.JPG)

Part of the east pediment still found on the Parthenon (although part of it, like Dionysos, is a copy)

The figures on the corners of the pediment depict the passage of time over the course of a full day. [Tethrippa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chariot_racing) of [Helios](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helios) and [Selene](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selene) are located on the left and right corners of the pediment respectively. The horses of Helios's chariot are shown with livid expressions as they ascend into the sky at the start of the day; whereas the Selene's horses struggle to stay on the pediment scene as the day comes to an end.[[73]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-73)[[74]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-74)

#### West pediment[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=11" \o "Edit section: West pediment)]

The supporters of Athena are extensively illustrated at the back of the left chariot, while the defenders of Poseidon are shown trailing behind the right chariot. It is believed that the corners of the pediment are filled by Athenian water deities, such as [Kephisos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cephissus_(mythology)) river, [Ilissos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ilissos) river and nymph [Callirhoe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Callirhoe_(Greek_mythology)). This belief merges from the fluid character of the sculptures' body position which represents the effort of the artist to give the impression of a flowing river.,[[75]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-75)[[76]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-britishmuseum.org-76) Next to the left river god, there are the sculptures of the mythical king of Athens ([Kekrops](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kekrops)) with his daughters ([Aglauros](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aglauros), [Pandrosos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pandrosos), [Herse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herse)). The statue of Poseidon was the largest sculpture in the pediment until it broke into pieces during [Francesco Morosini](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francesco_Morosini)'s effort to remove it in 1688. The posterior piece of the torso was found by Lusieri in the groundwork of a Turkish house in 1801 and is currently held in [British Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Museum). The anterior portion was revealed by Ross in 1835 and is now held in the [Acropolis Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acropolis_Museum) of Athens.[[77]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-77)

Every statue in the west pediment has a fully completed back, which would have been impossible to see when the sculpture was on the temple; this indicates that the sculptors put great effort into accurately portraying the human body.[[76]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-britishmuseum.org-76)

### Athena Parthenos**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=12" \o "Edit section: Athena Parthenos)]**

*Main article:*[*Athena Parthenos*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athena_Parthenos)

The only piece of sculpture from the Parthenon known to be from the hand of Phidias[[78]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon" \l "cite_note-78) was the statue of Athena housed in the *naos*. This massive [chryselephantine sculpture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chryselephantine_sculpture) is now lost and known only from copies, vase painting, gems, literary descriptions and coins.[[79]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-79)

## **Later history[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=13" \o "Edit section: Later history)]**

### Late antiquity**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=14" \o "Edit section: Late antiquity)]**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Attica_06-13_Athens_50_View_from_Philopappos_-_Acropolis_Hill.jpg)

The Parthenon's position on the Acropolis dominates the city skyline of Athens.

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ParthenonNight.jpg)

Image of Parthenon at night

A major fire broke out in the Parthenon shortly after the middle of the third century AD[[80]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon" \l "cite_note-80)[[81]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-81) which destroyed the Parthenon's roof and much of the sanctuary's interior.[[82]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Chatziaslani-82) Heruli pirates are also credited with sacking Athens in 276, and destroying most of the public buildings there, including the Parthenon.[[83]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-O'Donovan-83) Repairs were made in the fourth century AD, possibly during the reign of [Julian the Apostate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian_the_Apostate).[[84]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-AcropolisRestoration-84) A new wooden roof overlaid with clay tiles was installed to cover the sanctuary. It sloped at a greater incline than the original roof and left the building's wings exposed.[[82]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Chatziaslani-82)

The Parthenon survived as a temple dedicated to Athena for nearly one thousand years until [Theodosius II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodosius_II), during the [Persecution of pagans in the late Roman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_pagans_in_the_late_Roman_Empire), decreed in 435 AD that all [pagan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pagan) temples in the [Eastern Roman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_Empire) be closed.[[85]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Freely69-85) However, it is debated exactly when during the 5th-century that the closure of the Parthenon as a temple was actually put in practice. It is suggested to have occurred in c. 481–484, in the instructions against the remaining temples by order of [Emperor Zeno](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zeno_(emperor)), because the temple had been the focus of Pagan Hellenic opposition against Zeno in Athens in support of Illus, who had promised to restore Hellenic rites to the temples that were still standing.[[86]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-86)

At some point in the fifth century, Athena's great [cult image](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cult_image) was looted by one of the emperors and taken to [Constantinople](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantinople), where it was later destroyed, possibly during the [siege and sack of Constantinople](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sack_of_Constantinople_(1204)) during the [Fourth Crusade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourth_Crusade) in 1204 AD.[[87]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-87)

### Christian church**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=15" \o "Edit section: Christian church)]**

The Parthenon was converted into a [Christian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Christianity#Early_Middle_Ages_(476%E2%80%93799)) church in the final decade of the sixth century AD[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-freely-21) to become the Church of the Parthenos Maria (Virgin Mary), or the Church of the [Theotokos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theotokos) ([Mother of God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary,_the_mother_of_Jesus)). The orientation of the building was changed to face towards the east; the main entrance was placed at the building's western end, and the Christian altar and [iconostasis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iconostasis) were situated towards the building's eastern side adjacent to an [apse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apse) built where the temple's [pronaos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pronaos) was formerly located.[[88]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Freely70-88)[[89]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Hurwit293-89)[[90]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-90) A large central portal with surrounding side-doors was made in the wall dividing the cella, which became the church's [nave](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nave), from the rear chamber, the church's [narthex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narthex).[[88]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Freely70-88) The spaces between the columns of the *opisthodomus* and the [peristyle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peristyle) were walled up, though a number of doorways still permitted access.[[88]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Freely70-88) [Icons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icons) were painted on the walls and many Christian inscriptions were carved into the Parthenon's columns.[[84]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-AcropolisRestoration-84) These renovations inevitably led to the removal and dispersal of some of the sculptures. Those depicting gods were either possibly re-interpreted according to a Christian theme, or removed.[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed" \o "Wikipedia:Citation needed)*]

The Parthenon became the fourth most important Christian pilgrimage destination in the [Eastern Roman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Roman_Empire) after Constantinople, [Ephesos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesos), and [Thessalonica](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thessalonica).[[91]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Kaldelis-91) In 1018, the emperor [Basil II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basil_II) went on a pilgrimage to Athens directly after his final victory over the [Bulgarians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Bulgarian_Empire) for the sole purpose of worshipping at the Parthenon.[[91]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Kaldelis-91) In medieval Greek accounts it is called the Temple of Theotokos Atheniotissa and often indirectly referred to as famous without explaining exactly which temple they were referring to, thus establishing that it was indeed well known.[[91]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Kaldelis-91)

At the time of the [Latin occupation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_Empire), it became for about 250 years a [Roman Catholic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic) church of [Our Lady](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blessed_Virgin_Mary_(Roman_Catholic)). During this period a tower, used either as a watchtower or [bell tower](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bell_tower) and containing a spiral staircase, was constructed at the southwest corner of the cella, and vaulted tombs were built beneath the Parthenon's floor.[[92]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-92)

### Islamic mosque**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=16" \o "Edit section: Islamic mosque)]**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Peytier_-_Mosque_in_the_Parthenon.jpg)

Painting of the ruins of the Parthenon and the Ottoman mosque built after 1715, in the early 1830s by Pierre Peytier.

In 1456, [Ottoman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) Turkish forces invaded Athens and laid siege to a [Florentine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence) army defending the Acropolis until June 1458, when it surrendered to the Turks.[[93]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-93) The Turks may have briefly restored the Parthenon to the [Greek Orthodox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_Orthodox) Christians for continued use as a church.[[94]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-94) Some time before the close of the fifteenth century, the Parthenon became a mosque.[[95]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-95)[[96]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-96)

The precise circumstances under which the Turks appropriated it for use as a mosque are unclear; one account states that [Mehmed II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mehmed_II)ordered its conversion as punishment for an Athenian plot against Ottoman rule.[[97]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Miller-97) The apse became a [mihrab](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mihrab),[[98]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-98) the tower previously constructed during the Roman Catholic occupation of the Parthenon was extended upwards to become a minaret,[[99]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-99) a [minbar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minbar) was installed,[[88]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Freely70-88) the Christian altar and iconostasis were removed, and the walls were whitewashed to cover icons of Christian saints and other Christian imagery.[[100]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-100)

Despite the alterations accompanying the Parthenon's conversion into a church and subsequently a mosque, its structure had remained basically intact.[[101]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Rathus-101) In 1667 the Turkish traveller [Evliya Çelebi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evliya_%C3%87elebi) expressed marvel at the Parthenon's sculptures and figuratively described the building as "like some impregnable fortress not made by human agency".[[102]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-102) He composed a poetic supplication that it, as "a work less of human hands than of Heaven itself, should remain standing for all time".[[103]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Holt-103) The French artist [Jacques Carrey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques_Carrey) in 1674 visited the Acropolis and sketched the Parthenon's sculptural decorations.[[104]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Bowie-104) Early in 1687, an engineer named Plantier sketched the Parthenon for the Frenchman Graviers d’Ortières.[[82]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Chatziaslani-82) These depictions, particularly those made by Carrey, provide important, and sometimes the only, evidence of the condition of the Parthenon and its various sculptures prior to the devastation it suffered in late 1687 and the subsequent looting of its art objects.[[104]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Bowie-104)

### Destruction**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=17" \o "Edit section: Destruction)]**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Parthenon,_o_Tempio_di_Minerva_a_Atene_-_Coronelli_Vincenzo_-_1688.jpg)

Parthenon illustration, published in 1688, depicting the structure in its entirety, by [Vincenzo Coronelli](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincenzo_Coronelli)

In 1687, the Parthenon was extensively damaged in the greatest catastrophe to befall it in its long history.[[84]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-AcropolisRestoration-84) As part of the [Great Turkish War (1683–1699)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Turkish_War), the [Venetians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Venice) sent an expedition led by [Francesco Morosini](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francesco_Morosini) to attack Athens and capture the Acropolis. The Ottoman Turks fortified the Acropolis and used the Parthenon as a [gunpowder magazine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gunpowder_magazine) – despite having been forewarned of the dangers of this use by the 1656 explosion that severely damaged the [Propylaea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propylaea) – and as a shelter for members of the local Turkish community.[[105]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Tomkinson2-105) On 26 September a Venetian mortar round, fired from the Hill of Philopappus, blew up the magazine, and the building was partly destroyed.[[106]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-106) The explosion blew out the building's central portion and caused the cella's walls to crumble into rubble.[[101]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Rathus-101) Greek architect and archaeologist Kornilia Chatziaslani writes that "...three of the sanctuary’s four walls nearly collapsed and three-fifths of the sculptures from the frieze fell. Nothing of the roof apparently remained in place. Six columns from the south side fell, eight from the north, as well as whatever remained from eastern porch, except for one column. The columns brought down with them the enormous marble architraves, triglyphs and metopes."[[82]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Chatziaslani-82) About three hundred people were killed in the explosion, which showered marble fragments over nearby Turkish defenders[[105]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon" \l "cite_note-Tomkinson2-105) and caused large fires that burned until the following day and consumed many homes.[[82]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Chatziaslani-82)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:MotarFragmentFromParthenon-BritishMuseum-August21-08.jpg)

Fragment of an exploded shell found on top of a wall in the Parthenon, thought to originate from the time of the Venetian siege

Accounts written at the time conflict over whether this destruction was deliberate or accidental; one such account, written by the German officer Sobievolski, states that a Turkish deserter revealed to Morosini the use to which the Turks had put the Parthenon; expecting that the Venetians would not target a building of such historic importance. Morosini was said to have responded by directing his artillery to aim at the Parthenon.[[82]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Chatziaslani-82)[[105]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Tomkinson2-105) Subsequently, Morosini sought to loot sculptures from the ruin and caused further damage in the process. Sculptures of [Poseidon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poseidon) and Athena's horses fell to the ground and smashed as his soldiers tried to detach them from the building's west pediment.[[89]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Hurwit293-89)[[107]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-107)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dodwell_Parthenon_1.jpg)

"View of the Parthenon from the Propylea", [Edward Dodwell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Dodwell), *Views in Greece*, London 1821, depicting buildings of the time within the Acropolis

The following year, the Venetians abandoned Athens to avoid a confrontation with a large force the Turks had assembled at [Chalcis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chalcis); at that time, the Venetians had considered blowing up what remained of the Parthenon along with the rest of the Acropolis to deny its further use as a fortification to the Turks, but that idea was not pursued.[[105]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Tomkinson2-105)

After the Turks had recaptured the Acropolis they used some of the rubble produced by this explosion to erect a smaller mosque within the shell of the ruined Parthenon.[[108]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Tomkinson3-108) For the next century and a half, portions of the remaining structure were looted for building material and any remaining objects of value.[[109]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Grafton-109)

The 18th century was a period of [Ottoman stagnation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sick_man_of_Europe); as a result, many more Europeans found access to Athens, and the picturesque ruins of the Parthenon were much drawn and painted, spurring a rise in [philhellenism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philhellenism) and helping to arouse sympathy in Britain and France for Greek independence. Amongst those early travellers and archaeologists were [James Stuart](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Stuart_(1713%E2%80%931788)) and [Nicholas Revett](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_Revett), who were commissioned by the [Society of Dilettanti](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society_of_Dilettanti) to survey the ruins of classical Athens. What they produced was the first measured drawings of the Parthenon published in 1787 in the second volume of *Antiquities of Athens Measured and Delineated*. In 1801, the British Ambassador at [Constantinople](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantinople), the [Earl of Elgin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Bruce,_7th_Earl_of_Elgin), obtained a questionable *firman* (edict) from the [Sultan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sultan), whose existence or legitimacy has not been proved until today, to make casts and drawings of the antiquities on the Acropolis, to demolish recent buildings if this was necessary to view the antiquities, and to remove sculptures from them.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)]

### Independent Greece**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=18" \o "Edit section: Independent Greece)]**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Parthenon_1839.jpg)

The first known photograph of the Parthenon was taken by Joly de Lotbinière in October 1839. This is an engraving made after the original daguerreotype. The Ottoman-era mosque can just be seen behind the foreground pillars.

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Parthenon.Southern.Side.damaged.jpg)

The southern side of the Parthenon, which sustained considerable damage in the 1687 explosion

When independent Greece gained control of Athens in 1832, the visible section of the minaret was demolished; only its base and spiral staircase up to the level of the [architrave](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Architrave) remain intact.[[110]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-110) Soon all the medieval and Ottoman buildings on the Acropolis were destroyed. However, the image of the small mosque within the Parthenon's cella has been preserved in [Joly de Lotbinière](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre-Gustave_Joly_de_Lotbini%C3%A8re)'s photograph, published in Lerebours's *Excursions Daguerriennes* in 1842: the first photograph of the Acropolis.[[111]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-111) The area became a historical precinct controlled by the Greek government. Today it attracts millions of tourists every year, who travel up the path at the western end of the Acropolis, through the restored [Propylaea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propylaea), and up the Panathenaic Way to the Parthenon, which is surrounded by a low fence to prevent damage.[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed" \o "Wikipedia:Citation needed)*]

### Dispute over the marbles**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=19" \o "Edit section: Dispute over the marbles)]**

*Main article:*[*Elgin Marbles*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elgin_Marbles)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pediments_of_the_Parthenon-British_Museum.jpg)

Life-size pediment sculptures from the Parthenon in the British Museum

The dispute centres around the Parthenon Marbles removed by [Thomas Bruce, 7th Earl of Elgin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Bruce,_7th_Earl_of_Elgin), from 1801 to 1803, which are in the [British Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Museum). A few sculptures from the Parthenon are also in the [Louvre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louvre) in Paris, in [Copenhagen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copenhagen), and elsewhere, but more than half are in the [Acropolis Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acropolis_Museum) in Athens.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-Br-17)[[112]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-BrIT-112) A few can still be seen on the building itself. The Greek government has campaigned since 1983 for the British Museum to return the sculptures to [Greece](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greece).[[112]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-BrIT-112) The British Museum has steadfastly refused to return the sculptures,[[113]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon" \l "cite_note-113) and successive British governments have been unwilling to force the Museum to do so (which would require legislation). Nevertheless, talks between senior representatives from Greek and British cultural ministries and their legal advisors took place in London on 4 May 2007. These were the first serious negotiations for several years, and there were hopes that the two sides may move a step closer to a resolution.[[114]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-114)

## **Restoration[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Parthenon&action=edit&section=20" \o "Edit section: Restoration)]**

In 1975, the Greek government began a concerted effort to restore the Parthenon and other Acropolis structures. After some delay, a Committee for the Conservation of the Acropolis Monuments was established in 1983.[[115]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-115) The project later attracted funding and technical assistance from the [European Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Union). An archaeological committee thoroughly documented every [artifact](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artifact_(archaeology)) remaining on the site, and architects assisted with [computer models](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer_model) to determine their original locations. Particularly important and fragile sculptures were transferred to the Acropolis Museum. A crane was installed for moving marble blocks; the crane was designed to fold away beneath the roofline when not in use. In some cases, prior re-constructions were found to be incorrect. These were dismantled, and a careful process of restoration began.[[116]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-116) Originally, various blocks were held together by elongated iron **H** pins that were completely coated in lead, which protected the iron from corrosion. Stabilizing pins added in the 19th century were not so coated, and corroded. Since the corrosion product (rust) is expansive, the expansion caused further damage by cracking the marble.[[117]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthenon#cite_note-117)

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