

Ancient Greece

The City of Athens



Athens is one of the great cities of the world. During the time of the Ancient Greeks it was the center of power, art, science, and philosophy in the world. Athens is one of the oldest cities in the world as well, with recorded history going back over 3400 years. It is the birth place of democracy and the heart of the Ancient Greek civilization.

Named after Athena

Athens is named after the Greek goddess Athena. She was the goddess of wisdom, war, and civilization and the patron of the city of Athens. Her shrine, the Parthenon, sits on top of a hill in the center of the city.

The Agora

The agora was the center of commerce and government for ancient Athens. It had a large open area for meetings which was surrounded by buildings. Many of the buildings were temples, including temples built to Zeus, Hephaestus, and Apollo. Some of the buildings were government buildings like the Mint, where coins were made, and the Strategion, where the 10 military leaders of Athens called the Strategoi met.

The agora was a place for people to meet and discuss ideas on philosophy and government. This is the place where the democracy of ancient Greece first came to life.

The Acropolis

The Acropolis was built on a hill in the middle of the city of Athens. Surrounded by stone walls, it was originally built as a citadel and fortress where the people could retreat when the city was attacked. Later, many temples and buildings were built here to overlook the city. It was still used as a fortress for some time, however.

At the center of the Acropolis is the Parthenon. This building was dedicated to the goddess Athena and was also used to store gold. Other temples were in the acropolis such as the Temple of Athena Nike and the Erchtheum.

On the slope of the acropolis were theatres where plays and festivals were celebrated. The largest was the Theatre of Dionysus, god of wine and patron of the theatre. There were competitions held here to see who had written the best play. Up to 25,000 people could attend and the design was so good that all could see and hear the play.

The Age of Pericles

The city of Ancient Athens reached its peak during the leadership of Pericles from 461 to 429 BC, called the Age of Pericles. During this time, Pericles promoted democracy, the arts, and literature. He also built many of the cities great structures including rebuilding much of the Acropolis and building the Parthenon.