

The Acropolis

Acropolis is actually a generic Greek term referring to citadel on high ground originally designed for defense, and a number of Ancient Greek cities could boast such, such as Argos, Thebes, and Corinth. It was Athen's acropolis, though that has become *the* Acropolis to the modern world.

The Acropolis was formally proclaimed as the pre-eminent monument on the European Cultural Heritage list of monuments in 2007. The Acropolis is a flat-topped rock which rises 490 ft above sea level in the city of Athens, with a surface area of about 3 hectares.

By the time of Pericles, during the Golden Age of Athens (460–430 BC), a number of temples had already been build and destroyed on the Acropolis, but most of the major temples were rebuilt under Pericles, Phidias (a great Athenian sculptor) and Ictinus and Callicrates (two famous architects) . During the 5th century BC, the Acropolis gained its final shape. After winning at Eurymedon in 468 BC, Cimon and Themistocles ordered the reconstruction of southern and northern walls, and Pericles entrusted the building of the Parthenon to Ictinus and Phidias.

The Parthenon is the dominant building one sees standing atop the Acropolis today. It has been judged by architects as the most perfect building ever built by Man, and it undoubtedly is one of the major reasons why the Acropolis is so famous. The entrance to the Acropolis was a monumental gateway called the Propylaea. To the south is the tiny Temple of Athena Nike. A bronze statue of Athena, by Phidias, originally stood at its centre. At the centre of the Acropolis is the Parthenon or Temple of Athena Parthenos (Athena the Virgin). East of the entrance and north of the Parthenon is the temple known as the Erechtheum. South of the platform that forms the top of the Acropolis there are also the remains of an outdoor theatre called Theatre of Dionysus. A few hundred metres away, there is the now partially reconstructed Theatre of Herodes Atticus.

Every four years the Athenians held a festival called the Panathenaea that rivalled the Olympic Games in popularity. During the festival, a procession moved through Athens up to the Acropolis and into the Parthenon. There, a vast robe of woven wool was ceremoniously placed on Phidias' massive ivory and gold statue of Athena.

The Acropolis was recently selected as main motif for a high value euro collectors' coin; the €100 Greek The Acropolis of Athens commemorative coin to commemorate the 2004 Summer Olympics. In the obverse of the coin, a close view of the building is depicted.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acropolis_of_Athens]

