

The Acropolis might be more-impressive from a distance



Today was the day to explore Athens, and we almost but not quite got in everything we wished to see.

We started with the must-see Changing of the Guards at the Parliament building. Not really sure why this is a "must-see" attraction, unless you're a Monty Python fan fond of the "Ministry of Silly Walks" skit. Silly walks, silly shoes, and silly security that doesn't allow photos of the building in the background that really doesn't have anything going for it worth taking photos of. Actually, it's no problem if the building is in the background while taking photos of the guards (while doing their silly walk) or the pigeons. Eventually I'll get around to posting a video; still shots simply don't do it justice.

Oh, almost forgot to mention how expensive food is here. Breakfast, including coffee, came to about 7 euros for the two of us. Unlike the expensive coffee later in the day (we'll get to that), this was really, really good.



This is where I got the idea of the palm tree as a model for the building columns.

From there we walked to the Temple of Zeus (did I mention that you can walk to pretty much anything historically-significant in Athens? It's all laid out in a pretty contained area), where I noticed the tops of the columns bear a striking resemblance to the top of a palm tree without its branches. From there it's a fairly-lengthy walk to the museum at the back side of the Acropolis, where in hindsight we spent more time than we should have, and definitely more time having lunch, than we should have. Who knew that the attractions in Athens close between 3 & 4pm, and that by the time we got to the ticket entrance for the Acropolis, we were told we needed to hurry because if we didn't make it to the top by 3 they would be sending us back down (and it's a long way up!).



Not coffee to die for

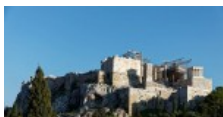
Maybe it was just the bizarre "Greek Coffee" that I had to try. Identical, by the way, to "Turkish Coffee" but due to various insults having to do with past occupations etc., the Greek choose to claim it as its own rather than give credence to something Turkish. What is it? Think of it as coffee soup. Very thick, partly because it's boiled and has is served with a ton of grounds in the cup. Maybe 1/4 grounds? You're supposed to sip it, very slowly, so the grounds get a chance to settle on the way. The grounds contribute to a slight sense of... well, kinda tastes like maybe someone ground out a cigarette butt in your cup. So yes, I've found a type of coffee I don't care for! Who knew it would be possible.

We did make it to the Acropolis, the literal city-on-a-hill, in plenty of time to take in all of the construction cranes, scaffolding and fencing that pretty much defines any modern city. Guess nothing really is new under the sun. While the Acropolis is definitely more stately, more impressive from a distance (pretty awesome lit up from a mile away), at the same time you can't help but make comparisons to that other city-on-a-hill we visited last year, Machu Picchu. Let's face it, the Acropolis is technically light-years ahead of Machu Picchu, in terms of building standards... and yet Machu Picchu is what, 600 years old? while the Acropolis was built 1600 years earlier? Guess the ancient aliens didn't get around to Peru until much later.

It was after descending from the Acropolis that we discovered the main archeological museum closes at 4pm on Tuesdays, not 6 or 8pm as it does on Mondays. Guess someday we'll have to come back and finish eating our way through Athens! But not before our day trip tomorrow to Delphi, a less-touristy area with a very significant ruin. Not that Athens is besieged by tourists; this time of year, there are very few, despite pretty reasonable weather, just a couple degrees warmer or cooler than back home. In other words, when they say Northern California has a "Mediterranean" climate, there's a reason for that.



Temple of Zues in foreground, the Acropolis on the hill behind.



Entrance to the Acropolis

