

A brief tour in the National Archaeological Museum of Athens



The national archaeological museum of Athens is our largest archaeological museum.

It was founded at the end of the 19th century in order to house and protect antiquities from all over Greece.

It offers visitors a panoramic view of ancient Greek civilization from prehistory to late antiquity and Roman period. That means we are going to travel through

- the neolithic age
- the bronze age, where we are going to admire the Cycladic culture and the Mycenaean world
- the geometric period
- the archaic period
- the hellenic miracle of the classic period
- the hellenistic ages
- and finally the roman period.

Because we are a large group we are going to be separated into smaller ones. Our students have prepared a guided tour. Of course it isn't possible in an hour to see everything. That's why we have chosen to present the most important exhibits.

I hope you will enjoy it.

The Neolithic age

Most of the finds have come from Sesklo and Dimini, the two most significant settlements on the Thessaly plain.

- Ceramics and pottery,
- interesting figurines from stone, marble or clay,
- stone tools
- and golden jewelers is what we are going to see in this showroom.

Don't be surprised, because gold is not unknown. It can be found in its native state in nature and it was one of the first metals used by man to make jewelers.

A seated man of stone is greeting us, **The Thinker**.

He appears to be a little thoughtful.



Images of everyday life, kitchen tools for example.
This is **a large storage jar**. It contained food.



A spherical vase.

It looks like a ball. It is colored.



The Kourotrophos: The mother.
A clay figurine of a woman. She is sitting on a stool and she is holding a small child in her arms. She is preparing to feed it. The artist managed in a very simple way to describe us the feelings of that woman. She looks sensitive and tender.



Cycladic Antiquities

Cyclades is a group of islands in the middle of the Aegean Sea.

During prehistory, the Bronze age, 3000 to 1500 B.C
a great civilization grew up there.

In this showroom we are going to admire of course the marble figurines, that they remind us modern abstract art.

This mail figurine is playing **the harp**.



This standing man is playing **the double flute**.



A female figurine. The largest one (1,52 m. heigh). It represents maybe a goddess.



A wall painting with flying fish.



The Mycenaean world

This room is dedicated to the Mycenaean world.

We know these people. Homer has written about their adventures. Do you remember the great king Agamemnon and the war against the Trojans?

This civilization developed in mainland Greece in the last phase of the Bronze Age from 1600 to 1100 B.C.

Eric Schliemann was the great excavator. A wealthy businessman with archaeological interests believed in Homer's stories and discovered this ancient world.

Although these people were influenced by the Minoans, they managed to give their civilization their own character, their own philosophy of life.

They were farmers, but they also traveled all over the world, from Asia and Egypt to west Mediterranean Sea and even North Europe. We know that because some material they use, can't be found in Greece. It came from abroad.

They were great warriors and hunters, but they liked luxury, they liked gold!!!

Let's see some interesting exhibits. Most of them are treasures from the royal tombs at Mycenae.

- Shield
- Swords
- Gold death masks



- The head of a woman - possibly a goddess



- Golden cups (the capture of a bull – the attempts to capture three bulls)



- Nestor's cup – the golden Kylix



- Golden diadems
- Golden signet rings



- Golden earrings and necklaces
- The large clay Krater: Men are going to war and a woman raises her hand in a farewell.



- Wall paintings



- The beautiful Mycenaean woman: Although she wants to be serious, I think she's smiling. She accepts a gift, a necklace which she holds tightly in her hand.



- Clay tablets – palace archives – **Linear B script**= a syllabic script, which it was deciphered [decoded] by Ventris and Chadwick. Greek words are written on those tablets. That's why the Mycenaean world is the first Greek civilization.



**The geometric period
1100 – 750 B. C.**

For many reasons the Mycenaean world collapsed and the great achievements were forgotten.

For 300 years people [the Greek tribes] migrated looking for food and better living conditions. After they had settled on their new territories greek history began.

We haven't many marvelous finds to admire, but terracotta pots and figurines. Geometric motifs in decoration have given this period its name.



A large geometric Krater. This vase was placed to mark the grave of a noble Athenian. We see a funeral procession. People lay out a dead man.

The archaic period
750 – 480 B.C.

We are going to visit now the sculpture collection of the museum and try to understand the evolution [the development] of ancient greek sculpture through ages.

During the A. P. the foundation of the ancient greek civilization was prepared.
Many steps have been made in the economical and political level.

Great philosophers from the colonies in Ionia tried to explain the beginning of the world, not through mythology, but through logical thought, as well as reason.

People after many ages of poverty and difficulties feel strong and self-confident. Life can be beautiful. They are happy and that's why they are smiling.

In this showroom we are going to see young naked men [known as koori] and young dressed girls [Known as kores].

The Naxian Nikandre

This statue is from marble. It represents probably the goddess Artemis. Nikandre has dedicated this statue to Apollo.



The Sounion Kouros

It's a colossal statue. [3,05m. height] It was dedicated to Poseidon and stood in front of his temple in Sounion.

We can see the basic characteristics of those young men. Hands are tightly attached to the thighs. The left leg is advanced.



The kore Phrasikleia

She died young. This marble statue stood on her grave. That's what the inscription - written on the right side of the pedestal - informs us. She wears a wreath on the head, a necklace, earrings, bracelets. Her dress, a long hiton, was painted red and had a variety of motifs. She is holding a rose in her hand.



The kouros of Merenda

He marked the grave of a youth from an aristocratic family. He wears a diadem and his hair is red.



The kouros of Anavyssos

This young man was erected on the grave of Kroisos, who fell in battle.



Aristodikos

He looks different from the other young men. He has short hair and his arms aren't attached to thighs. This masterpiece shows the development of sculpture and it's the last of the kouros series.



Grave stele of Aristion

The dead man is fully armed



**The classic period
480 – 323 B.C.**

The end of the Archaic Ages was marked by the Persian wars. Greek cities fought together and united they managed to defeat their enemies.

Athens was going to play a leading role in the arts and became the Panhellenic cultural center. Pericles was the dominant politician of the Athenian Republic. Under his leadership Athens was to give the world whatever was most beautiful, the Classical civilization.

Although citizens were enjoying their freedom, the war memories and the fact they participated those days in every political decision, made them more responsible.

Their statues didn't laugh any more. They expressed a melancholy, they looked thoughtful.

On the other hand the artists wanted to express the ideal beauty and managed to achieve for their figures movements that extended into the third dimension.

Zeus of Artemision

The god, extends his left arm forward, while throwing the thunderbolt, which he held in his right hand. He looks severe.



The big Eleusian relief (votive object = a religion offering)

This relief was inspired from the Eleusinian mysteries.

At left we see Demeter. She is wearing a peplos and holding a scepter. She offers ears of wheat [stalks of grain] to Triptolemos, son of the king of Eleusina, in order to teach man the cultivation of the cereals. At the right is Persephone.

She is wearing a hiton and holding a torch. She is blessing the young prince.



Grave reliefs – Grave stones

1. The famous gravestone of Hegeso

An Athenian lady, dead Hegeso, is seated on a chair. Her feet are resting on a stool. She looks at a piece of jewellery she holds in her hand. In front of her stands a sorrowful servant girl [attendant] who holds an open jewellery box.



2. The grave stele from Salamis

A young man is extending his right hand to a cage while he is holding a bird in his left. A dog / cat is sitting on a stool, under which is a young slave sad at the loss of his master.



3. The large relief found in the bed of the river Illisus

The dead youth, naked, is gazing into eternity. His father, full of grief, looks at his lost son, while below a young slave is sleeping.



During the Archaic Period the dead person was on the grave stele alone remote from the world of the living. But in these grave reliefs two or more figures appear, one of which represents the dead person. The others are relatives or slaves looking at the departed loved one.

The attic white lekythoi

A particular category of vases. They were produced at Kerameikos, Athens's cemetery. They contained perfumes and oils and were associated with burial customs and practices.

The departure of a warrior

A woman is sitting comfortably on a couch and bids farewell [says goodbye] to her husband.



Young Warrior sitting on the steps of his tomb

Next to him there is a woman holding his helmet and shield, and a young man.



The marble funerary lekythos of Myrrhine

Hermes leads the young lady to the Underworld. On the left stand her relatives.



Sculpture

Diadoumenos

He's a young athlete. He is tying the victor's ribbon in his hair. He isn't smiling. He is ideal beautiful and he moves freely in space expressing the three dimensions.



Nereid riding a horse

Nereid was one of the Ocean's daughters. She is rising from the sea. This statue was to the pediment of the temple of Asklepios



The Marathon boy

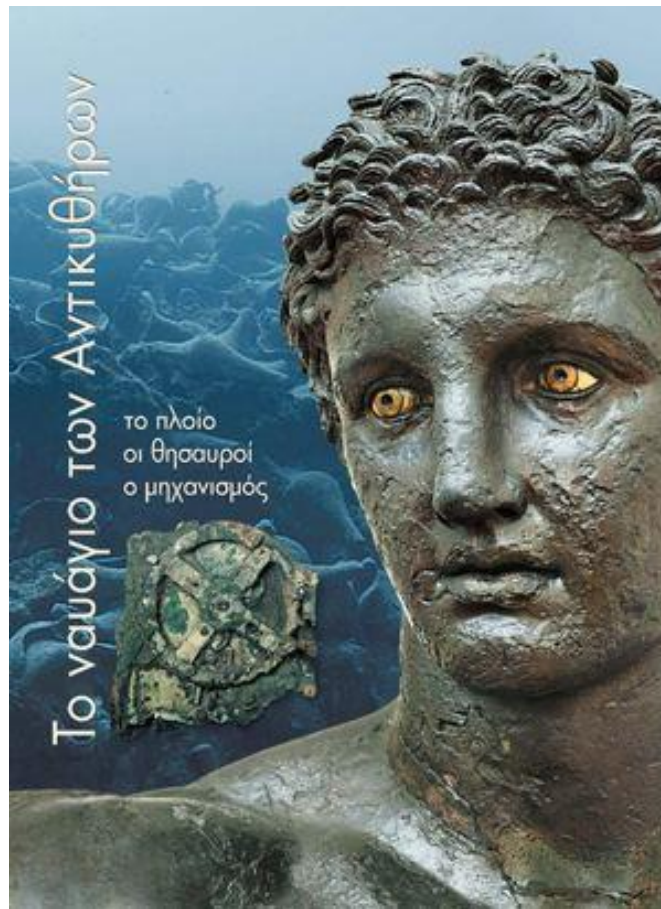
Maybe an athlete holding the victory's ribbon.



The youth from Antikythera

The statue was found in an ancient shipwreck. He maybe Perseus, holding the head of Medusa, or Paris holding an apple in his hand. He is ready to give it to the most beautiful goddess, Aphrodite.





**The Hellenistic period
323 – 31B.C.**

The Hellenistic period began after the death of Alexander the Great and ended after the Romans had dominated in the Mediterranean Sea. The main characteristic of those ages is the synthesis between the Greek and the eastern civilization.

There were many changes in sculpture. The ideal beauty as well as the eternal youth of the classical ages was no longer what the artists were looking for. Realism, the daily life, the representation of people's true facial characteristics was giving them the inspiration.

A horse and a young jokey
Look at the agony and his passion to win!



The philosopher of Antikythera We can see his individual features. His eyes lend/ give an expressive vitality.



Themis

The goddess of justice.



Poseidon

In a grand majestic stand with a dolphin beside him. In his right hand he was holding a trident.



A boy with his dog

This work is known as the little refugee boy, because it was found in Asia Minor and brought to Athens by refugees in 1922.



Marble group of Aphrodite, Pan and Eros

The goat-footed god Pan makes an erotic attack to the nude goddess Aphrodite. She is holding her sandal threateningly trying to avoid him, while the winged god Eros comes to her aid.



The fighting Gaul

The warrior is wounded in the thigh. He has fallen to the ground on his right knee, and tries to defend himself against his enemy with his left arm. On the ground, next to him, rests a Galatian helmet.



Greece under the Roman rule

In this room we can see portraits of Roman emperors and sarcophagus. (= tombs)



The emperor Augustus on a horse. We can see the official greeting!



In this marble sarcophagus there's a hunting scene of mythology.



The sleeping Maenad.
Maenads were the female followers of the god Dionysus.