

# NEW, POST-OLYMPIC ATHENS

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*Attiko Metro, Halandri station*

**Post-Olympic Athens fully deserves the label “new”. The fully upgraded transport and tourism infrastructures, the restored coastal zone, the renovated Olympic areas and the growing economy stand – among others – as tangible evidence of the city’s Olympic legacy. Athens finally succeeded in transforming the huge athletic event into a significant boost for its development, a sustainable one for the capital’s economy, environment, society and culture. And this new Athens is waiting to be discovered by you.**



The glittering opening ceremony gave way to the “Efharisto Athens!” of the Games’ closing. The crowds of Olympic visitors left, the huge media buzz faded away. In most Olympic cities what remain are mostly memories. Athens stands for exactly the opposite.

The preparations for hosting the great event served as a trigger for massive transformations of almost every aspect of the city’s life, ranging from transport networks to its coastal zone and tourism services; they even influenced culture and society itself. Hosting the Olympic Games acted as a catalyst for urban redevelopment, enabling changes which might normally have taken several decades to be completed over a seven-year period. The goal of rebranding both the city of Athens and Greece has been achieved. If you visited Athens some years ago and come back today, you’ll probably feel unfamiliar, or amazed, but you’d better read on to be prepared.

### TRANSPORTATION

You will get your first impression of the new Athens upon arrival at the new Athens International Airport “Eleftherios Venizelos”. The airport, which is located 30km to the east of central Athens, began operating in March 2001 and was awarded the title “European Airport of the Year” for its successful operation and achievements. In 2006, the airport served more than 15 million passengers, while in 2007 it is expected to offer its excellent services to even more people, hopefully including you.

The airport is connected to Athens through the new “Attiki Odos” motorway. The 47km ring road along with the also new 13km “Ymittos Ring” absorb 8% of the city’s total daily traffic (250,000 transits), significantly improving the overall traffic flow. The motorway, which went fully operational in early 2004, was honored as the safest European motorway in 2005.

Adjacent to the airport terminal you will find a station of the new



“Proastiakos” suburban railway network. The network, which opened in 2004, extends today to a length of 119km and is interconnected with the Athens Metro.

The Athens Metro is one of the most impressive underground mass transit systems in the world. While it efficiently serves its main transport purpose as the most modern underground in Europe, it is also part museum, housing the ancient Greek artifacts which were found during the construction of the subway. Lines 2 and 3 of the Athens Metro were inaugurated in 2000 and joined the renovated Line 1, which first operated back in 1869. The Athens Metro today serves more than half a million people on a daily basis.

The Metro is also connected to the new Athens tram. The 24km tram route connects the city center to all the coastal suburbs, providing an attractive way to visit the fully revitalized coastal zone.

Additionally, the bus fleet, consisting of more than 2,000 buses, is completely renewed with the purchase of new, accessible buses that run on environmentally friendly fuels (LPG, improved diesel, natural gas). Among them stands the largest fleet of natural gas-run buses in Europe and a significant number of trolley buses. Finally, more than 2,800km of the road network in the greater Attica region was built or upgraded in the last four years, including 40 new junctions.

The entirely upgraded Mass Transit System, along with the renovated and extended road network of Athens, comprises a prominent part of the Olympic legacy, which has created new transport standards and has significantly improved the quality of life of the city’s residents and visitors.

### SITES AND SIGHTS

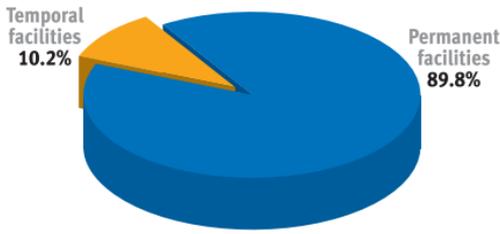
Olympic sites ought to provide much more than just the canvas of

TV coverage. In Athens, the provision was such that the Olympic facilities would provide sustainable services to society and the environment. Therefore, very few of the facilities were designed as temporary. Two years after the Games, the initial planning has been proven prudent, as the Olympic sites spread around metropolitan Athens represent the architectural legacy for large public spaces and are making a significant contribution to revitalizing extended areas of the capital. They offer great opportunities for new activities. Let's take a closer look.

League 2007 final and the Final Four of FIBA Euroleague 2007, to name just a few. Additionally, the surrounding area has been upgraded, with new congress and exhibition centers and the brand-new Athens Mall, the largest shopping center in the Balkans.

Faliro, an extensive area once renowned for its sandy beaches, was for many decades the summer resort of the Athenians. It was the place where the first public bathing beaches were organized, while Faliro Bay was a place of entertainment and recreation, providing

### EXPENDITURE ON CONSTRUCTION OF FACILITIES



Source: General Accounting Office, Ministry of Economy and Finance

The exceptional and massively upgraded main Olympic Sports Complex (OAKA) now serves as an architectural landmark of international recognition. The Complex, redesigned by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava with steel arches, landscaped gardens, fountains and futuristic passageways is an entirely new attraction, while the new glass roof which was added to the main stadium stands undoubtedly as the symbol of modern Athens. The athletic facilities continue to host important international and national athletic events, such as the Eurovision Song Contest in 2006, the UEFA Champions

the capital with a gateway to the sea. However, once the urbanization rates of the city soared, the area was neglected and abandoned to rubble and waste, a freeway was built along the coast and the city's inhabitants lost access to the waterfront. This was the situation before the Games construction project.

Today, the Peace and Friendship Stadium has been joined by the Karaiskaki Football, Faliro Beach Volleyball and Tae-Kwon-Do stadiums, which are all easily reached by tram. While the first two frequently host athletic events, the



Beach Volleyball Complex is still looking for competition and the Tae-Kwon-Do Stadium and its surroundings have been transformed into an area of multiple uses, housing various cultural events, exhibitions and film events. Nearby, construction of the brand-new Metropolitan Conference Center of Athens has just been completed.

In addition to the construction of the Olympic venues, extensive cleaning, anti-flooding and marine engineering works have been carried out, a new marina has been created and 770,000m<sup>2</sup> of land has been landscaped from the Kifissos Delta to Faliro Bay. An 800-meter-long esplanade was built over the highway intersection, providing direct access from the residential areas to the coast. The rehabilitation of the Faliro Coastal Zone was the largest European urban rehabilitation project to be implemented in recent years. And this was not the only one.

The Agios Kosmas Sailing Center was another ambitious project

which was fully and successfully carried out and which now functions as a marina offering exceptional seaside facilities able to accommodate a broad range of activities. The nearby Hellinikon Complex, located on the site of the former Athens Airport, hosts the Hellinikon Events Hall, which has already hosted concerts, exhibitions and sports events, along with the Canoe/ Kayak/Slalom venue, one of the most exceptional man-made whitewater sport facilities. The development is sure to become the city's leading adventure destination, an amusement park right in the heart of the new Athens Metropolitan Park, which will take the place of the former Athens Airport as one of the biggest urban parks in Europe (approximately 530 hectares).

These projects, along with the biological waste treatment plant on the small island of Psitalia, one of the largest waste treatment centers in Europe which offers valuable services in the Saronic Gulf, have really transformed the Athens

coastal zone. The many blue flags which decorate the sandy and pristine beaches stand as a clear proof of the attractive and inviting destination, for the joy of both Athenians and visitors.

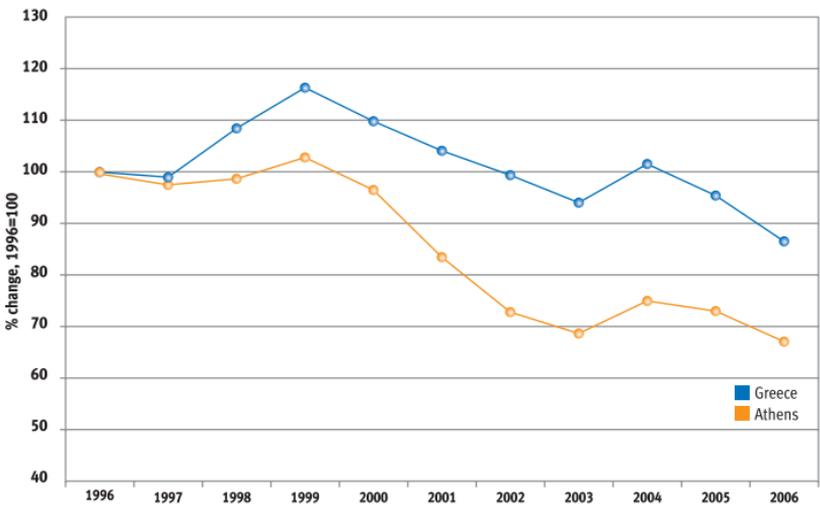
Other Olympic facilities have been transformed into cultural venues that change the perception and dynamics of the local areas. Examples are the Goudi Complex, where the Badminton Theater – the largest theater in Greece – has been constructed, the Galatsi Arena for leisure and entertainment activities, the Nikaia Weightlifting Hall into University of Piraeus departments, the International Broadcasting Center into the Olympic Museum, the Ano Liossia Wrestling Hall into a school of performing arts, and Schinias into an international training center for rowing and canoeing. They are greatly improving the quality of life for the inhabitants of these areas, providing valuable services to the community and the economy.

Finally, the majority of the Greek capital's museums, historical buildings and sites have undergone major renovation works, so that now visitors to the city can truly acknowledge the Olympic legacy and its sustainable and enduring effects, as a tangible result of both creating a new face for modern Athens and better promoting its historic one.

### TOURISM AND THE ECONOMY

Athens has been a popular destination for travelers since antiquity. In recent decades, the city has consistently found itself among the top six most-visited European capitals. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that all the aforementioned facts, along with the exceptional buzz created by the successful hosting of the 2004 Games, resulted in a 26% increase in foreign tourist arrivals in 2005.

### UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



Source: National Statistical Service of Greece



The city of Athens is now able to efficiently serve even more visitors, as the majority of its 5- and 4-star hotels have undergone major renovations. The city is now a unique and attractive – both for its history and its present – year-round destination, due to its mild Mediterranean climate. The hotel occupancy rate remains uniformly high in every season, while the average stay per foreign visitor was equal to 2.3 nights in 2005.

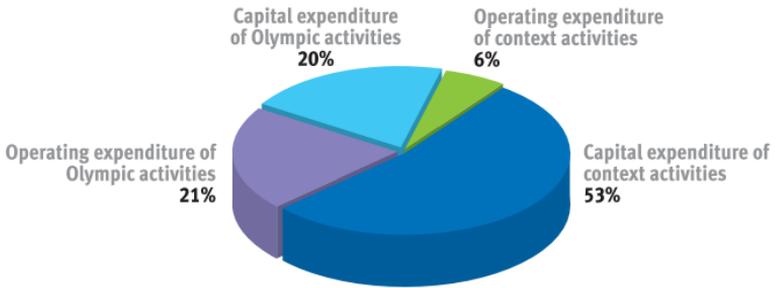
Tourism, however, is not the only economic sector to have experienced a significant increase in recent years. The construction and service sectors have also wit-

nessed considerable increases. In general, the economy of Athens, with 4.0 million inhabitants, which represents nearly 40% of Greece's gross domestic product, received a sustainable boost from the Olympic event, also shown by the continuous drop in the unemployment rate (now running at 8.3%) and increase of the per capita GDP, on a scale larger than that of the entire nation.

### SYNOPSIS

The biggest part of the total €11.3 billion spent on the Athens Olympic Games was invested in projects and activities concerning the context of the Games, meaning

### BREAKDOWN OF OLYMPIC EXPENDITURE



Source: General Accounting Office, Ministry of Economy and Finance

activities which are not directly related to the actual organization of the Games but which were needed to provide the best possible infrastructure for staging them. It is precisely these infrastructures that now represent the ultimate and lasting contribution to the host city, its exemplary Olympic legacy. A brand-new airport, Metro lines, tram and suburban railway, motorways, upgraded road networks and bus fleets, new grid and telecommunications infrastructures, a revived coastal zone, new facilities for athletic, cultural and business events and upgraded accommodation infrastructures are all living parts of this legacy, all of them honored for their top quality and standards, which are redefining the city's position and vision. This legacy, although it cannot be assessed fully in quantifi-

able terms, redefined the city's global image, but also – and more importantly – had a major effect on people's attitude and culture. Athenians today are more extrovert, more open-minded, more confident than ever and the society's collective upgrade is without doubt another important impact triggered by the Olympic event. At last, the post-Olympic Athens is a modern metropolis, which, building on the brilliance and uniqueness of its past and thanks to the achievements of the present, has succeeded in sustaining an advancing economy and a rapidly opening society, a city you are welcome to explore.

#### USEFUL LINKS

City of Athens  
[www.cityofathens.gr](http://www.cityofathens.gr)