

a tour of the acropolis museum

After crossing the ground floor lobby towards the turn styles of the Museum, the first collection lies before the visitor. An ascending, wide glass-floored gallery presents finds from the slopes of the Acropolis. On the left hand side, finds from some of the key sanctuaries of the slopes are exhibited. On the right hand side, finds from the smaller sanctuaries and the settlements that developed on the slopes of the Hill are displayed. Unique vases from the Sanctuary of Nymphe, the relief of Telemachos, theatrical masks and the treasure of Aphrodite amongst many other exhibits, provide a fascinating introduction to the larger sanctuaries and the ceremonies associated with them in antiquity.

The visitor is drawn up towards the monumental glass staircase at the end of the glass floored ramp by the large architectural sculptures of the pediment of the *Hekatompedon*, the first large temple of the Goddess Athena on the Acropolis. The visitor begins the tour of the first floor galleries at the northeast corner, where archaeological finds and a scale model make clear the significance of the Acropolis in the Mycenaean Period both as a residential area and as the seat of the local ruler. The shift in the status of the Acropolis to an important religious center is signaled by the finds from the Geometric period and in particular by the bronze decorative disc

from a temple roof. This development is consolidated in the mind of the visitor, with the viewing of the *Hekatompedon* pediment sculptures at close range, where a scene of a lion entwined in battle with a bull is presented.

The visitor then moves to the south side of the Gallery where the richness and range of architectural sculptures, principally free standing votives stand. Depictions of young women (the *Korai*), the horse riders (the *Ippeis*) and many others provide a striking picture of the Acropolis in the Archaic Period.

In the same Gallery, close to the exhibition of the *Korai*, the visitor is presented with the commanding sculptures of the pediment of the *Ancient Temple of Athena Polias*.

For the first time visitors to the Archaic Gallery are afforded the opportunity to view exhibits from all sides as three-dimensional exhibits. With the benefit of the changing natural light, visitors can discern and discover the delicate surface variations of the sculptures and select the vantage point from which to observe the exhibits. The visitor progresses to the close of the Archaic collection, with the display and narrative about the Persian disaster on the Acropolis, and is prepared for the next collection – that of the so-called *Severe Style*. Turning back to look at the Gallery

the visitor is likely to be impressed with the beautiful view of the sculptures amongst the tall columns of the Archaic Gallery. Visitors can then take the stairs, escalator or elevator to reach the second floor where the Museum restaurant operates but where they can also have panoramic views of the Archaic Gallery and the Gallery of the Slopes below from the public viewing balconies. Another level up using the staircase, escalator or elevator and the visitor finds themselves in the atrium of the Parthenon Gallery.

Here the visitor can observe a video presentation about the Parthenon, before or after their visit to the Parthenon Gallery, and access other information about the sculptural decoration of the monument. The ancient marble inscriptions recording details of the construction of the statue of Athena *Parthenos* provide information on how democratic bodies in the 5th century BC functioned.

The installation of the frieze of the Parthenon on the rectangular cement core that has exactly the same dimensions as the cella of the Parthenon enables a comprehensive viewing of the details of the frieze as one takes the perimetric walk of the Gallery. The narrative of the story of the *Panathenaic* Procession is pieced together with a combination of the original blocks of the frieze and cast copies of the pieces in London. The *metopes* of the Parthenon are

mounted in their correct order between the perimetric columns of the Gallery and the pediment sculptures, east and west, are displayed in their respective places.

The descent of the visitor back to the first floor to the last gallery of the Museum, affords views of unique works that became prototypes for subsequent periods from antiquity to today. For the first time ever, it is possible to view to see the coffered ceiling of the *Propylaia* and the sculptures from the parapet of the Temple of Athena *Nike*, and finally the Caryatids – or *Kores* of the Erechtheion at close proximity on the balcony overlooking the Slopes Gallery.

The exhibition concludes in this first floor gallery. Reliefs of Athenian decrees, impressive portraits, Roman copies of classical masterpieces and depictions of philosophers and historical figures are the exhibits covering a period from 5th century BC to 5th century AD. The visitor then descends the monumental staircase, crossing the Gallery of the Slopes once again towards the Museum exit.

In the coming months visitors will be able to commence their tour of the Museum from the on-site archaeological excavation that lies within the Museum. When conservation of the remains within the excavation is completed and metal ramps above the excavation installed, visitors will be able to walk among – or rather above the remains

of the ancient neighborhood. Assisted by key information points at selected vantage spots, visitors will be able to gain an understanding of life in the ancient neighborhood. The excavation provides the opportunity to visitors to appreciate both the masterpieces of the Acropolis in the upper levels of the Museum against the remains of the day to day lives of the people that lived in the shadow of the Acropolis over various periods.

Museum visitors have access to a range of visitor services including the ground floor café and second floor restaurant–café with its panoramic views of the Acropolis. A temporary exhibition gallery, auditorium, a virtual reality theatre and two Museum shops assure a high standard of visitor experience in the Museum.