

THE PARTHENON

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The **Parthenon**: is a former temple on the Athenian Acropolis, Greece, that was dedicated to the goddess Athena during the fifth century BC. Its decorative sculptures are considered some of the high points of classical Greek art, an enduring symbol of Ancient Greece, democracy and Western civilization.



The Parthenon was built in thanksgiving for the Hellenic victory over Persian Empire invaders during the Greco-Persian Wars. Like most Greek temples, the Parthenon also served as the city treasury.

Although the Parthenon is architecturally a temple and is usually called so, some scholars have argued that it is not really a temple in the conventional sense of the word. ^[30] A small shrine has been excavated within the building, on the site of an older sanctuary probably dedicated to Athena as a way to get closer to the goddess, ^[30] but the Parthenon apparently never hosted the official cult of Athena Polias, patron of Athens. The cult image of Athena Polias, which was bathed in the sea and to which was presented the peplos, was an olive-wood xoanon, located in another temple on the northern side of the Acropolis, more closely associated with the Great Altar of Athena. The High Priestess of Athena Polias supervised the city cult of Athena based in the Acropolis, and was the chief of the lesser officials, such as the plyntrides, arrephoroi and kanephoroi.

The Parthenon is a peripteral octastyle Doric temple with Ionic architectural features. It stands on a platform or stylobate of three steps. In common with other Greek temples, it is of post and lintel construction and is surrounded by columns carrying an entablature. There are eight columns at either end and seventeen on the sides. There is a double row of columns at either end. The colonnade surrounds an inner masonry structure, the cella, which is divided into two compartments. The opisthodomos contained the monetary contributions of the Delian League. At either end of the building, the gable is finished with a triangular pediment originally occupied by sculpted figures.

The Parthenon has been described as "the culmination of the development of the Doric order". The Doric columns, for example, have simple capitals, fluted shafts, and no bases.

Above the architrave of the entablature is a frieze of carved pictorial panels, separated by formal architectural triglyphs, also typical of the Doric order. The continuous frieze in low relief around the cella and across the lintels of the inner columns, in contrast, reflects the Ionic order. Architectural historian John R. Senseney suggests that this unexpected switch between orders was due to an aesthetic choice on the part of builders during construction, and was likely not part of the original plan of the Parthenon.

