

## *Olympieion*



**A**ccording to tradition, the establishment of the sanctuary goes back to the time of mythical Deucalion. The site was inhabited in the prehistoric period and the cult of Zeus is attested in early historic times. In ca. 515 B.C., Peisistratos the Younger, began the construction of a monumental temple which was not finished because of the fall of the tyranny in Athens. Much later, in 174 B.C., Antiochos IV Epiphanes, the king of Syria, attempted to continue the erection of the temple, which was finally completed by the Roman emperor Hadrian, in A.D. 124/125. Inside the temple stood a colossal chryselephantine (gold and ivory) statue of Zeus.

**T**he temple was excavated in 1889-86 by E. Penrose, and in 1922 by G. Welter. The Greek Archaeological Society conducted excavations in the area around the temple, between 1886 and 1907, and work was resumed by Ioannes Travlos in the 1960's.

**M**any parts of the circuit wall of the sanctuary have been rebuilt, imitating the ancient masonry. Sections of the ancient wall have been preserved only at the south-east corner and on the north side.

**T**he most important monuments of the site are:

**Temple of Zeus Olympios.** It was tripteral octastyle on the two narrow sides, and dipteral eikosastyle on the long sides, that is, it was surrounded by 104 Corinthian columns in total. Inside the building, along the north and south walls, there was an additional Ionic colonnade. The temple was built between A.D. 124 and 132.

**Temple of Apollo Delphinios.** Peripteral Doric temple, dated to 500 B.C.

**The Court at the Delphinion.** Ancient building with a spacious courtyard and rooms along the north side. Dated to ca. 500 B.C.

**Gates of the city wall of Athens,** built by Themistocles in 479/78 B.C.

**Roman baths**, constructed in A.D. 124-132.

**Temple of Panhellenic Zeus**, built in A.D. 131-132.

**Temple of Cronos and Rhea**. Small, dipteral temple dated to A.D. 150.

**Hadrian's arch, dated to A.D. 131.**



**T**he triumphal arch lies on an ancient street that led from the old city of Athens to the new, Roman section, built by Hadrian. It was constructed by the Athenians in A.D. 131, in honor of their benefactor emperor. Two inscriptions are carved on the architrave, one on each side: the first, on the side towards the Acropolis reads "This is Athens, the ancient city of Theseus"; the second, on the other side, facing the new city reads "This is the city of Hadrian and not of Theseus".

**T**he central arched opening of the monument is supported by pilasters crowned with Corinthian capitals. Similar, but taller pilasters flank the outer corners. The arch is crowned by a series of Corinthian columns and pilasters, with an Ionic architrave at the ends, and an entablature with a triangular pediment in the middle. The whole monument is made of Pentelic marble.

Source : Hellenic Ministry of Culture