

The Parthenon

The Parthenon was a temple to the patron goddess of Athens, Athena. Located atop Athens's Acropolis, the Parthenon was an architectural masterpiece. It was constructed between 447 and 432 BCE by the Greek sculptor Phidias and the Greek architects Ictenus and Callicrates. It the largest temple in Greece. However, subtle elements used in the construction create amazing effects. All of the 46 massive stone columns lean inward slightly, the flutes on the columns taper off a bit near the top and the columns get thinner near the top. When used together these elements create the illusion of "upthrusting motion". The illusion is most effective from a distance, when seen in contrast to the wall of the Acropolis. The Parthenon was made of white marble from Mount Pentelicus (however over time the marble's color has changed to a light yellowish beige). It stands approximately 60 feet high and has an area of 30,030 feet. The Parthenon contains two rooms. One room served as a treasury and the other once contained a large statue of Athena. Perhaps the most dramatic feature of the Parthenon was the sculpture by Phidias. Since the temple was a tribute to Athena, the sculpture centered around her. The western side of the roof depicted the battle between her and Poseidon over control of Athens. The eastern side depicted her birth. On the outer wall above the columns there were 92 metopes (sculptured panels) depicting battle scenes involving heroes and gods. They included the Trojan war, the Greeks fighting the Amazons, and the gods against the Titans. Along the walls of the enclosed room of the Parthenon a festival honoring Athena was shown, depicting the men and women of Athens. The Parthenon focused on Athena and the greatness of the city of Athens.

The Parthenon shows the architectural innovation and the artistic genius of the Athenians. It shows the spirit and culture of Athens and is a history in itself.