

Expeditions Fund Report:

Athens, Greece

My recent expedition to Athens, Greece, funded by the Queen Mary's Expeditions Fund, was an enriching experience that went beyond my initial expectations. The aim of the trip was to explore ancient financial history at its birthplace, and contextualize my academic studies.

During my time in Greece, I visited the Ancient Agora of Athens, the Stoa of Attalos, and several important museums, including the National Archaeological Museum, the Numismatic Museum of Athens, and the Acropolis Museum, where I saw the famous Athenian tetradrachm, a key type of coin that played a crucial role in ancient trade and economies all around the world. These visits allowed me to observe historical artefacts, which provided an in-depth perspective on how financial systems evolved over time.



[Photo 1: Monastiraki Square, one of Athens' historical and contemporary commercial hubs, reflecting the continuity of trade in the city.]

Throughout the week, I also explored other significant historical and cultural locations, including Delphi and Ancient Corinth. Visiting these sites not only gave me a deeper appreciation of the cultural context in which ancient financial systems developed but also helped me draw parallels between ancient trade networks and the evolution of financial systems. For example, Athens relied heavily on imported grain, which was facilitated by a complex financial system capable of attracting risk capital through private banking and partnerships. The development of private banks in Athens shows how finance transitioned into increasingly abstract forms, relying heavily on legal mechanisms and interpersonal trust. The inclusion of a visit to the contemporary Bank of Greece further complemented my understanding of the country's financial landscape, both past and present.



[Photo 2: Myself in front of the National Bank of Greece, a symbol of the financial system in Athens.]

One of the most impactful aspects of this trip was seeing how theoretical concepts from my studies are applied in real-world contexts. Exploring the places where shares in companies were traded in antiquity, as well as the contemporary financial institutions in Athens, allowed me to connect the historical roots of finance to modern practices.



[Photo 3: Myself at the famous Acropolis, a site representing the heart of ancient Athens and its historical significance in trade and finance.]

Observing the application of financial theory to practice in Classical Athens was invaluable, providing me with inspiration for my academic research. The Athenian jury system, for example, dealt with complex financial disputes over business deals, loans, and trade, highlighting the sophisticated financial comprehension of the time. Concepts such as the time value of money and risk compensation were key elements in these disputes, showing an early understanding of financial principles that are still relevant today.

Queen Mary's Expeditions Fund made this experience possible, helping to cover key expenses such as travel, accommodation, and entrance fees, which allowed me to focus entirely on the academic aspects of the trip without financial distractions. The financial system of Classical Athens, which supported complex and risky endeavors like voyages to the Black Sea for grain, serves as a reminder of how structured investments and transparent legal systems could foster economic growth then, and today.

Overall, this trip has significantly contributed to my academic and personal growth. Not only did I acquire new knowledge and experiences that will enrich my research, but I also developed a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of culture, history, and finance. This holistic approach to learning has made me more adaptable and better equipped to tackle complex academic challenges in the future.