SIGHTS · CORINTHIA

Temple of Apollo



About

The **Temple of Apollo** is an Archaic temple in Ancient Corinth, built with monolithic Doric columns. It originally had 6 columns on the short sides and 15 on the long sides, of which only 7 still stand today, in a commanding position above the ruins of the ancient agora. The temple was built around 540 BC. Its considerable length relative to its width, the large monolithic columns and the capitals with their short, broad echinus all point to the Archaic period. To support the roof there were also internal columns running the length of the unusually large cella, which was divided into two rooms as well as a pronaos and an opisthodomos, each fronted by two columns between antae. The temple is the emblem of Corinth.

About a hundred years later, in 44 BC, Julius Caesar — dictator in perpetuum of Rome — decided to refound Corinth as a Roman colony, recognising its exceptional geographical importance within his wider strategy for the eastern Mediterranean. His violent death that same year did not derail the ambitious plan, which was carried on by his successor Octavian, later Augustus. The new city was named Colonia Laus Iulia Corinthiensis, also recorded as Clara Laus Iulia Corinthus or Iulia Corinthus Augusta, as a colony of the Julian family of Caesar and Augustus (Gens Iulia). In 27 BC it was made capital of the Roman province of Achaea (Provincia Achaiae), which covered much of mainland Greece, the Peloponnese and a number of islands.

Because the site had been left deserted after the battle of Leukopetra, the city was settled first by Roman freedmen and veteran soldiers, soon joined by Greeks, who worked the notably fertile land confiscated by Rome (ager publicus) and granted to the new landless settlers. Rome's aim was twofold: to establish a stable Roman base in the turbulent East, and to speed the passage of the Roman fleet across the Diolkos — the unique paved overland road for ships that crossed the Isthmus. A Latin inscription of 102 BC records the fleet passing through on its way to Side in Pamphylia, Asia Minor, to confront the pirates, under the orator Marcus Antonius, grandfather of Mark Antony, the companion of Queen Cleopatra and mortal rival of Octavian in the war over Julius Caesar's succession.

The population grew rapidly as farming, stock-raising and trade revived, with exports of wool, dyed woollen cloth, olive oil and honey, as well as timber and metalwork. At the same time the needs and habits of the city's Roman inhabitants, and its international role, brought in goods from other parts of the Empire — wine and building materials such as marble and granite, required for the new and lavish constructions.

According to researchers the city was laid out afresh on the Hippodamian grid, with intersecting road axes (cardines and decumani) defining city blocks (insulae). Around the Agora rose handsome public buildings and private monuments raised by wealthy Romans and Greeks who wanted to make their presence felt in the provincial capital. Many inscriptions attest to their construction, while depictions of them survive mainly on later local coinage.

Horace's line "non cuivis homini contingit adire Corinthum / non licet omnibus adire Corinthum" (Epistles 1.17.36) and Strabo's "ou pantos andros es Korinthon esth' o plous" (Geography 8.6.20) both reflect the city's prosperity and the high cost of staying there.

By the middle of the 1st century AD, when the Apostle Paul visited, Corinth was a major Roman city of the Empire, governed by two local magistrates, the duoviri, on the model of the consuls of Rome — a city in miniature that served as a point of reference in Roman thinking about, and travel to, the East.

Despite the destruction it suffered in the raid of the Heruli (AD 267) and the devastating earthquake of around AD 375, the city remained powerful and was later designated capital of the Theme of Hellas of the Eastern Roman Empire. Following the sack of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade in 1204, it was besieged by the Franks, and Acrocorinth finally fell in 1210. It also went through a brief Venetian period, followed once again by Ottoman rule, until liberation and the founding of the Greek State in 1830.

Limited excavation, with limited results, was carried out in 1892 and 1906 by A. Skias, funded by the Archaeological Society. Systematic excavations in the area, which continue to this day, began in 1896 under the American School of Classical Studies.

Distances & what is nearby

Straight-line distances, for a quick sense of scale — use the navigation QR for the real driving route.

How far it is

Corinth	**6.1 km**
Loutraki	**12 km**
Kiato	**16 km**
Nemea	**21 km**
Xylokastro	**29 km**
Athens	**75 km**

Close by

Ottoman Tomb	**0.3 km**
Ancient Corinth	**0.4 km**
Roman Gymnasium	**0.4 km**
Bath of Aphrodite (Kiamil Bey)	**0.5 km**
Asklepieion & Lerna Fountain	**0.5 km**
Gymnasium Excavations	**0.5 km**
Fountain of the Lamps	**0.5 km**
Ottoman Baths	**0.6 km**

Useful information

Best time to visit	April–June & September–October (mild, uncrowded)

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Enjoy exploring Corinthia!