Museum explorers ancient Greeks

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Welcome

This trail guides you on a journey of exploration and discovery around the Museum. On the way you'll track down some amazing treasures and learn tales of human history. Whichever way you go, and whatever you discover, enjoy yourself! If you ever feel lost, just ask a member of staff for help.

Useful information for families

• Accessible toilets and baby changing facilities are available. You can breastfeed and bottle feed anywhere on the Museum's grounds but if you would like more privacy, please use the feeding room in the Ford Centre for Young Visitors in The Clore Centre for Education on the Lower floor, Level -1, or one of our baby changing spaces. For details, ask at the Families Desk or Information Desk in the Great Court, or pick up a map of the whole Museum.

• You can leave fold-up pushchairs in the cloakroom free of charge.

• You can find child-friendly food at the cafés. High chairs are available.

• You can use the Ford Centre for Young Visitors to picnic with your family at weekends and during school holidays.

The ancient Greeks didn’t have cameras, so they used sculpture to capture people's faces instead. What expression would your sculpture have?

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This map shows the locations of the objects in this trail. You can pick up a map of the whole Museum at the Information Desk in the Great Court. Please note that some galleries may be closed at short notice due to unforeseen circumstances or refurbishment.

The Families Desk is open on weekends and school holidays from 10.00–12.30 and 13.15–16.30.

* Take a trip through thousands of years of Greek history to find out how life and art changed across the centuries and how the ancient Greeks lived. You’ll need to pay close attention to track down every object you need!

**Your journey starts in Room 12, Ground floor, Level 0**

Case numbers can be hard to find – don’t be afraid to ask a member of staff for help finding an object.

1. Ancient makers
   - Room 12
2. Meet the neighbours
   - Room 13
3. Party time
   - Room 15
4. Happy Birthday, Athena
   - Room 18
5. Walking on water
   - Room 17
6. People and portraits
   - Room 22
Ancient makers

Go to Room 12 on the Ground floor, Level 0, and find Case 2

The Greeks used the metal named ‘bronze’ for the first time in what archaeologists call the Bronze Age. The Minoans and the Mycenaeans are the peoples we know most about from this time in Greece.

The Greek Bronze Age covers the period 3200–1050 BC

The Minoans and Mycenaeans decorated pots with animals that were important to them and made small objects shaped like them. Explore Case 2 and find these animals:

- Octopus
- Dolphin
- Goat
- Bull
- Falcon
- Duck

Now go to Case 8 and look at the Mycenaean objects. Can you find:

- Precious jewels?
- A weapon?
- Tools for catching food?

What do these objects tell you about Mycenaean life? How rich were they? Did they fight? What did they eat?

Find this jar. It once stood in the Minoan palace at Knossos on the island of Crete. It can hold 450 litres of wine, oil or grain – that’s enough to fill two big baths! What would you and your family store in it?
2 Meet the neighbours

Go to Room 13 and find the two statues pictured below.

In the Archaic Age, the Greeks got to know their neighbours around the Mediterranean Sea. They set up trading towns in other countries and swapped ideas about art with the people they met.

The left statue is from Egypt and the right one is from Greece. The Greeks were influenced by Egyptian sculpture, but then developed their own style. What similarities can you spot between the two statues? What differences are there?

The Archaic Age covers the period 700–480 BC.

Go back towards the entrance of the room and find the vase with the motifs below. It was used to mix wine and water for drinking. Can you find these creatures on the vase?
Greek culture flourished in the Classical Age. Cities grew larger and richer and many great monuments were built. Craftspeople refined their skills, writers produced wonderful plays and great thinkers shared their deep thoughts with others.

The Classical Age covers the period 480–323 BC

Drinking parties were popular with ancient Greeks. Explore the cases in this gallery and find these objects for a drinking party:

- Bowl
- Cups
- Jug
- Pot with three handles

Find this pot in Case 1. It shows the Greek hero Theseus fighting a mythical creature called the Minotaur. Guests at ancient Greek parties told stories inspired by the myths and legends illustrated on pots. Why do you think Theseus and the Minotaur are fighting in this illustration? Now take turns and create a story together, using the picture on the pot as a starting point.
Happy Birthday, Athena

Go to Room 18

Athens once controlled a large empire and was the richest city in the Greek world. The wealthy Athenians built a huge temple for the goddess Athena on top of a hill called the Acropolis. The temple was known as the Parthenon.

Inside the Parthenon stood a colossal statue of the goddess Athena, made of gold and ivory, and towering some 12m high!

Explore the gallery
Start by standing in the middle of the gallery. The stone carving round the walls is known as a frieze. The frieze shows a procession to celebrate the goddess Athena’s birthday.

Walk round the frieze and find:

- A group of cattle
- People on chariots
- Horses galloping
- Gods and goddesses resting

Where on the frieze would you like to be? Choose a small section of the frieze that you find interesting. Imagine you’re there. What can you see, hear and smell?
The skills of Classical Greek architects and sculptors were well known. The 2,000 year-old Nereid Monument is a beautiful tomb made for a king of Lycia. It is named after the Nereids, or sea-goddesses, whose statues look as if they are hovering over the ocean.

Lycian rulers built tombs above ground in their local tradition, but had them decorated with sculptures in the Greek style.

Look at the frieze on the wall and find the picture above. Can you see the woman between the soldiers on the right-hand side? Wave your arms like her. What do you think she might be signalling?

Pick one of the three Nereid sculptures standing between the columns. Imagine what they were once like. Mimic the pose and ask the other people in your group to guess which one you are copying.
Imagine the movement

Stay in Room 17

These marbled statues of women were positioned between two columns of the Neireid Monument. They look like they are moving, with the fabric of their dresses dancing.

These statues are wearing an item of clothing called a *chiton*.

These women, or sea-goddesses, look like they are moving. Can you create a dance, moving your body and arms like the ocean? Go with the flow!

Look closer, what body parts are missing from these sea-goddess statues? Can you imagine the movement of their hands and the shape of their fingers?

Have a go at moving your hands into the shape and wiggling your toes.

Draw a portrait of yourself dancing and moving like a sea-goddess. If you don't have a pencil to hand, draw it at home later.
You have completed the ancient Greeks trail!

You can find out even more about ancient Greek life in other parts of the Museum:

- Learn about the everyday life of ancient Greeks in Room 69
- Travel to Italy with the Greeks in Room 73
- Explore the influence the Greeks had on Roman sculptures in Room 23

Head back to the Families Desk to receive a stamp!

What an adventure that was. You've travelled through thousands of years of Greek history and explored life and art in the ancient Greek world. Of all the things you discovered, what was your favourite?

Name

Age

Date

Favourite objects

At home

Draw and colour the other half of this Greek pot using just orange and black – one colour for the figures, the other for the background.

Other things you could do when you get home:

- Read some Greek myths and find out what ancient Greek gods, goddesses and heroes got up to.
- Create your own mythical creature – don’t forget to give it a name!
Trails in the Museum
explorers series

Ages 6+
- Africa around the world
- Ancient Britain
- Ancient Egypt
- Ancient Greeks
- Fantastic creatures
- Journey across Japan

Ages 3+
- Colour and shape
- Time to count

You can find out more about our family activities at britishmuseum.org

See you at the British Museum again soon!

Cover: Marble head from a statue of a young woman or goddess from the Temple of Demeter, Turkey, about 325–275 BC.

- Terracotta *pithos* (storage jar) from the Palace of Minos, Greece, 1450–1375 BC.

- Limestone standing figure of Tjayasetimu, Egypt, 26th Dynasty.

- Statue of nude standing youth, Greece, about 570–560 BC.

- Images from the Sophilos Dinos, a black-figured *dinos* (wine bowl) and stand, painted by Sophilos, Greece, 580–570 BC.

- Red-figured *stamnos* (storage jar for liquids) showing Theseus killing the Minotaur, attributed to the Kleophrades Painter, found in Italy, made in Greece, 490–480 BC.

- From The Parthenon Sculptures: a marble relief from the South frieze of the Parthenon, Greece, 438–432 BC.

- Part of the second frieze from the Nereid Monument, Antalya. Turkey, Asia, Classical Greek, 390 BC–380 BC.

- The Nereid Monument (Xanthus) from Antalya, Mediterranean Region. Turkey, Asia, Classical Greek, about 390 BC–380 BC.

- Marble statue from The Nereid Monument, Turkey, about 390–380 BC.

- At home activity: The Sophilos Dinos, a black-figured *dinos* (wine bowl) and stand, painted by Sophilos, from Attica, Greece, Europe, Attic, 580 BC–570 BC.

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