The Greek capital, Athens, is taking advantage of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis by transforming parts of its inner city to a pedestrian zone.

In June 2020, Athens will begin to change the image of the centre of the city. The area of the Plaka, along with other parts of the inner city, will be transformed into a 6.8 km-long pedestrian zone. The objective is to create one of the most enchanting and impressive walking areas in a European capital in order to attract tourists and locals alike.
The project, called the “Great Walk of Athens”, is also a response to the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 crisis. By converting areas that were previously open to traffic to pedestrian space, the city is allocating more space to pedestrians, thus facilitating social distancing.

Kostas Bakoyannis, Mayor of Athens, says: “During this period, a number of cities around the world, from London and Berlin to Bogota, have decided to take a series of emergency measures to deal with the pandemic. We want more public space so we can practice social distancing, as well as to give priority to pedestrians, bicycles and new means of transport, and to safeguard public health and the environment by not allowing roads to be flooded again by cars.”

The “Great Walk of Athens” is planned to be finished by 2022. It will allow people to walk amongst the main archaeological treasures of central Athens. At the same time, improved walking and cycling conditions in the central area of the city aim to reduce the load on public transport and to reduce congestion due to the increase in active mobility. The project is based on detailed studies that have been undertaken by the National Technical University of Athens, which analysed the effects of the planned changes.

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