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Olympic Legacy of Ancient Greece in Olympic National Park USA

by

Dan Youra

Travel writer and president of Olympic Peninsula Travel Association



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Series of seven articles compares Olympic games of ancient Greece 3000 years ago to their legacy on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State USA, where Mount Olympus, *Home of the Gods*, casts its spell across majestic Olympic National Park, sole UNESCO World Heritage Site in the Great Pacific Northwest.

Part 3

Tribute to the Gods and to Nature

The original Greek Olympic Games, were characterized by five defining elements: they were held as a tribute to the gods and to nature, they took place in sacred places, participants came as pilgrims, festivals included music and drama, and, athletes competed in track and field events.

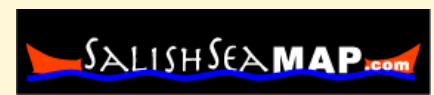
First and foremost the original Olympic Games of the 8th century BCE in Greece were tributes to the gods. Pilgrims trekked to sacred sanctuaries to share a religious experience, participate in cultural and athletic events, and glow in the pride in being part of a shared community.

In the early festivals the athletic events were only one small part of the Olympian gatherings, which were richly infused with music, singing and dancing, theater and even poetry reading.

The classical Grecian ideal of health, summarized in Juvenal's 2nd century plea for a "sound mind in a healthy body" (*L. mens sana in corpore sano*), was an integral part of the earliest Olympic festivals. The festivals were set up to allow attendees and participants to relax and enjoy the five days of celebration. Pilgrims trekked over land and sea to arrive at Olympic gatherings to amuse themselves and to share the joys and spirit of a common culture. The motivation was not to compete for the most gold medals and tally the highest sales in official merchandise.

The Olympic legacy of ancient Greece's celebration of nature is manifest in its modern day namesake on Washington State's Olympic Peninsula, designated as the singular World Heritage Site in the northwest, a title bestowed upon Olympic National Park, a natural treasure judged by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to be of common value to all citizens of the world.

The natural beauty of the United State's Olympic Mountains is the magnet that lures visitors to search out the wild and majestic treasures accessible on the special peninsula proudly carrying the names bequeathed from Mt. Olympus almost three thousand years ago.





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Washed on three sides by saltwater, the Olympic Peninsula's *Call of the Wild* is heard in the hearts of people who trek from around the world to experience the place named by Captain Meares in 1788 with his memorial tribute, *"If that be not the home where dwell the gods, it is certainly beautiful enough to be, and I therefore call it Mount Olympus"*.

In the Pacific Northwest visitors sail across Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca to land on the pristine shores of the Olympic Peninsula, where they discover gems of nature that they thought existed only in National Geographic magazines and on the Discovery channel. The peninsula is anchored by Olympic National Park, one of the most richly endowed parks in the United States national park system. Its wonders include the only three temperate rain forests in the United States – the Hoh, Queets and Quinault Rain Forests. The park boasts world-record trees and wilderness forests that beckon to modern day pilgrims seeking sacred encounters similar to those sought by Greek sojourners almost three millennia ago.

End of Part 3 – **Olympic Games from Zeus to Whistler**

Seven Articles in Olympic Legacy Series

- Part 1 – **Olympic Games from Zeus to Whistler**
- Part 2 – **Home of The Gods in The New World**
- Part 3 – **Tribute to the Gods and to Nature**
- Part 4 – **Sacred Festival Sites**
- Part 5 – **Pilgrims Attend Olympic Festivals**
- Part 6 – **Festivals For Mind and Body**
- Part 7 – **Success of Ancient and Modern Olympic Events**

Dan Youra, author of Olympic Legacy series of articles, is president of Olympic Peninsula Travel Association OPTA and lives on Washington State's Olympic Peninsula. Contact the author at dan @ youra.com.

Olympic Peninsula Travel Association
P.O. Box 1169 • Port Hadlock, WA 98339 • www.OPTA.us

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