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Olympic Legacy of Ancient Greece in Olympic National Park USA

by

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1932 2010
78th Anniversary
OPTA.us

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 7

Success of Ancient and Modern Olympic Events

The original games were collective activities, not popular adulation of individual accomplishment. They had distinct ethical and civic objectives. Festivals and games were promoted by host cities. Invitations were sent out by local ambassadors. Guests who attended were treated with extra hospitality. The Games came together under three Grecian customs: great festivals, sacred ambassadors and hospitality.

Great Festivals (Gr. *panegyris*)

Panegyris is the Greek expression for the congregation of many people who come together on the occasion of a solemn festival and particularly when the Games are held. Great festivals were encouraged in order to foster the kinship that existed among Greeks from all regions of the country and to make people feel more kindly towards each other. What mattered to ancient game commentators from Aristotle and Plato in Greece to Pliny in Rome was the propagation of a sense of identity that could be shared by all pilgrims and participants in the festivals.

Sacred Ambassadors (Gr. *theoroi*)

Theoroi were the Greek ambassadors who journeyed out from host cities to circulate through other regions to invite people to come to the festivals and games. The job of the *theoroi* was both to advertise the Games and to be present at them.

Hospitality (Gr. *proxenis*)

Proxenis were the welcoming hosts of Olympic towns who looked after the needs of visitors to ensure that their stay during the festivals was a joyful experience.

Inhabitants of Washington State's Olympic Peninsula live in small communities, close to nature, and share a sense of stewardship for the bounties of Olympic National Park and Olympic Mountains that are integrally woven into their daily lives. As if reenacting the community efforts of nearly three millennia ago in the sacred valleys of Greece, modern day trustees of the ancient Olympic traditions manifest the same values in promoting today's festivals.





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Festivals and Events

Regional festivals, cultural events and music concerts are organized in the cities and towns of the Olympic Peninsula, especially during the summer months, when the weather is warmer and sunnier, and when more people have vacations and are able to visit. Events are put on by private and public groups. Summer concerts in a barn, musical events at a fort, and musical groups playing on a strait are held over the days of the summer season.

Publicity and Promotion Agents

Festivals and recreational opportunities are promoted by local ambassadors in the form of non-profit associations, who advertise the events and distribute guidebooks and maps in multi-media formats, some produced with government-supported tax money and some supported with advertising money. Local chambers of commerce help promote summer festivals. Peninsula-wide promotions of events are lead by groups such as the **Olympic Peninsula Travel Association**, actively inviting visitors to the Olympic Peninsula since 1933.

Hospitality: Local Welcoming Committees

Visitor bureaus and chambers of commerce both fund visitor centers to receive travelers and look after their needs to ensure that their stay during the festivals and their vacations is a pleasant experience. Owners of businesses, especially lodging owners, are helpful hosts who work to help visitors while they are traveling on the Olympic Peninsula. For more information on visiting the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State call the Olympic Kitsap Visitor Bureau at 800-416-5615. Visit the peninsula portal online at OlyPortal.com and on the mobile web at OlyPortal.mobi.

End of Part 7 – Success of Ancient and Modern Olympic Events

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**

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