



ΑΘΗΝΑ 2004 section one

## WELCOME HOME

**T**he Athens 2004 Olympic Games were staged throughout Attica in a celebration that commenced with the lighting of the Olympic cauldron on the night of 13 August at the Athens Olympic Stadium. Athletes from 201 nations competed at the pinnacle of sport in a spirit of friendship and fair play before the cauldron was extinguished on 29 August and the Olympic flame was passed to the future.

An emotional seventeen-day journey that honoured the history of Olympism and showcased a thriving modern Greece, the Athens 2004 Olympic Games had a powerful impact on the people of the world and created a distinctive legacy for the Olympic Movement.

Throughout history, Greek civilisation has made man the measure of all things. The Olympic Games became the benchmark of creativity and excellence in ancient times and, over the centuries, illuminated examples of extraordinary human achievement. As the 2004 Olympic Games made a homecoming to Greece, the world's attention once again resided with the athlete, the individual, the team.

The Athens 2004 Olympic Games opened with a ceremony that honoured Greece as the birthplace of democracy, lyric poetry and tragedy. The ceremony featured the epic poetry of Homer and the modern poetry of George Seferis. It told the story of the development of art and the manifestation of the human form in sculpture throughout the history of Greek civilisation, and it celebrated humanity's relationship to the universe by exploring philosophy, geometry and science.

“IT IS SO TRUE THAT THE GAMES, TRYING TO MAKE MAN THE VISION, ENCOURAGED THE WHOLE WORLD TO BURY

The Athens 2004 Opening Ceremony symbolised that all of humanity is made from the same secret. A moving history encircled the Athens Olympic Stadium, charting the course of humanity through the Minoan, the Geometric, the Archaic, the Classical, the Hellenic, the Byzantine and the Traditional eras before arriving in the Modern, where the Olympic Games were reborn. Finally, the greatest delegation in the history of the Olympic Games paraded into the stadium, highlighting a night dedicated to humanity and beginning a global festival to celebrate the athlete. For the next 17 days, man was the measure of all things — and noble competition in a spirit of friendship and fair play inspired the athletes to establish new heights of human achievement.

Set amidst the vitality of modern Greece, the Athens 2004 Olympic Games honoured the host nation's history and culture, its proud place in the traditions of the Olympic Movement, and its distinct connection to the Olympic ideals, providing the world with perspective on the significance of a tradition that originated nearly three millennia ago.

Beginning in 776 BC, the ancient Olympic Games were staged on the plains of Olympia for nearly twelve centuries. The celebration came to occupy an important position in the Greek world, embodying a foundation of universal ideals — the values of noble competition and the effort to combine body, will and mind in a balanced whole — that remain with us today.



MEASUREMENT OF ALL THINGS AS IN THE ORGANIZERS  
ANIMOSITY AND PREJUDICE.”  
— XINHUA NEWS (CHINA)



To announce the coming of the event in ancient times, heralds from Eli would travel throughout the Greek world to proclaim *ekecheria*, the Olympic truce. Ancient Olympic judges known as *helanodikis* crowned Olympic victors with olive wreaths, or *kotinos* — a tradition thought to have originated in 752 BC on the advice of the Oracle at Delphi. Torch relay races emerged in ancient Greece as nighttime religious rituals that soon became popular sports. The enchanting power of fire was a source of inspiration, and sacred flames lit by the rays of the sun always burned in Olympia.

In August 2004 these traditions returned to Greece, and Greece shared them with the world.

“EFHARISTO, ATHENS, FOR COUPLING THE ANCIENT WITH THE NEW.” — ASSOCIATED PRESS, 29 AUGUST 2004

The first Olympic Games of the third millennium AD brought shot putters from around the world to compete in the Ancient Stadium at Olympia, constructed in the fifth century BC and buried under river silt until its rediscovery in 1766. Archers and distance runners returned to the beautiful marble of the Panathinaiko Stadium in Athens — built in 329 BC, destroyed in the Middle Ages, then excavated and restored in the nineteenth century before hosting the first modern Olympic Games. And athletes from more nations than ever before competed in refurbished twentieth century venues as well as spectacular new state-of-the-art arenas.

The world then watched as, within new and ancient stadiums throughout Attica, athletes were once again crowned with olive wreaths at the 2004 Olympic Games. It was a transcendent experience in the ideal setting, a symbolic masterstroke that placed these athletes and their achievements on a fixed point in the history of the world's greatest tradition.

“THESE GAMES TOOK US TO THEIR SACRED ORIGIN IN OLYMPIA, THE MYTHOLOGICAL HOME OF THE GODS, TO WATCH THE SHOT PUT, TO MARATHON TO STAND ON THE SPOT WHERE THE RACE GOT ITS NAME.”

— ASSOCIATED PRESS, 29 AUGUST 2004

The Athens 2004 Olympic Games stands today as the most inclusive sporting event in history. From nations to individual athletes, from torchbearers to volunteers, Athens 2004 embodied the ideal of participation in the Olympic experience.

Athletes from 201 countries participated in the 2004 Olympic Games, the largest athlete delegation in Olympic history. Athens 2004 also witnessed a record in the participation of women, as they comprised more than 41 percent of the participating 2004 Olympic athletes. On day five of the 2004 Olympic Games, as many as 29 women competed in the ancient stadium at Olympia for the first time in history.

The Athens 2004 Olympic Torch Relay invited the world to participate as the Olympic flame, carried by 11,400 torchbearers and supported by thousands of escort runners, touched all five continents represented by the Olympic rings. Finally, in a resounding show of support for bringing the Olympic Games home, more than 57,000 Athens 2004 volunteers welcomed the world to the Olympic Games.

#### Athens 2004 Olympic Games Participation

Athletes Participating in the Games	10,564
Participating Male Athletes	6,254
Participating Female Athletes	4,305
Olympic Teams / NOCs	201
Olympic Volunteers	57,000
Olympic torchbearers	11,400

The celebration of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games was a great success, providing the world with a vibrant experience, exciting sporting action, and memorable moments of human achievement. Through 16 days of competition, the athletes participated in 28 sports and 37 disciplines.

#### Athens 2004 Olympic Games Competition Facts

Olympic Sports	28
Olympic Disciplines	37
Olympic Medal Events	301
Olympic Medals Awarded	929
Olympic Competition Venues	35

A total of 929 Olympic medals of gold, silver and bronze were awarded to the athletes following 301 medal events. Olympic athletes representing 75 nations on all five continents won medals at the Athens 2004 Olympic Games.



“GREECE GAVE THE WORLD THE FIRST OLYMPICS, THE FIRST MODERN REVIVAL AND NOW A FITTING REPRISE. FOR THIS, THERE IS A GREEK WORD OF THANKS: EFKHARISTO!” — THE TIMES (UNITED KINGDOM)

