



0. A TRIP TO OLYMPIA - Story Preface

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Historians believe these are the ruins of Pheidias' studio at ancient Olympia. The most-famous sculptor of his day, Pheidias (among other things) created the statue of Zeus—one of the "Seven Wonders of the Ancient World"—which stood in Olympia's Sanctuary of Zeus. Photo by Alun Salt, online via Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC BY-SA 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/).

What did athletes, judges, and spectators see when they participated in the [ancient Olympic Games](#)? Between the writings of ancient historians, and ruins of [buildings at Olympia](#), we can piece together what the games must have been like thousands of years ago.

- Athletes passed through a vaulted [entry way](#) as they [came into](#) the Stadium.
- Spectators sat on wooden stands which were mounted on the earthen bank surrounding the stadium. The distance from the foreground [starting line](#) to the [finish line](#) (with its still-original stones) was a stade (also called stadion and measuring about 192.28 meters) from which "stadium" gets its name.
- Judges, who awarded top-honor prizes, had a [good view](#) of the finish line at their [honorary seating area](#).
- Olympic athletes practiced running events in a [Gymnasium](#) at Olympia.
- The [Philippeion](#) (situated to the left of [the path](#) which led back to the Stadium) was started by Philip of Macedon (also known as Philip II) and likely finished by his son, Alexander the Great, hundreds of years after the first Olympic Games.
- Only foot races were part of the original games. Later, other sports were added and athletes, especially wrestlers, trained at [the Palaestra](#).
- Pheidias, the sculptor, had a [studio at Olympia](#) where he worked on his great statue of Zeus. Parts of the two-room studio, and its [exterior](#), remain.
- [Deterioration](#) of the great [temple of Zeus](#) was aided by an earthquake which caused many of the [columns](#) to fall.

Who participated in the ancient Olympic Games? Were female athletes allowed to compete? Were women allowed in the stadium to watch the competition?

Given the scope of our modern games, the restrictions which applied in ancient times may surprise you.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

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See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/A-TRIP-TO-OLYMPIA-Ancient-Olympics>

Media Stream



Entry Arch at the Ancient Olympic Stadium

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Entrance Into the Ancient Olympic Stadium

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Ancient Olympics - Starting Line

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Ancient Olympic Stadium - Finish Line

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Ancient Olympics - Judges' Stand

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Ancient Olympic Gymnasium

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Ancient Olympics - Philippeion

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Ancient Olympics - Courtyard of the Palaestra

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Path Leading to the Ancient Olympic Stadium

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Ancient Olympics - Columns in Ruins

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Exterior of Pheidias' Studio

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Pillars of the Great Temple of Zeus

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Ruins at the Great Temple of Zeus

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Studio at Olympia

Image online via Excursions Greece.

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The Great Temple of Zeus at Olympia

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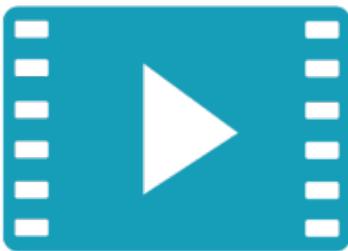
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A TRIP TO OLYMPIA

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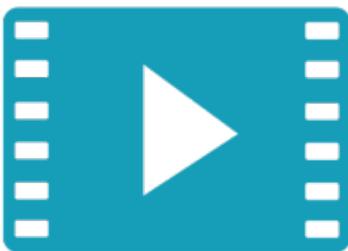


Olympics, Ancient - Early Games

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Living History - A Trip to Ancient Olympia

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