

# MEDITERRANEAN

SIGGY AND HEATHER | TRIP AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN | SATURDAY, 18 MAY 2013

## Olympia

There is a lot to admire about Olympia. This was the place where the Olympic Games originated in 776 BC. The Games lasted for over 1000 years. Even today the Olympic flame is lit here and carried to the next venue. The illustrious history and religious significance of the place was obvious when we walked around the site. There were many very ornate temples and beautiful public buildings including the biggest statue of Zeus this side of the black stump inside one of the wonders of the world (when it was standing) - a huge monolith of a temple. But it's all gone. What is left is a jumbled scattering of blocks with only a couple of pillars remaining.

We arrived at Olympia reasonably early but had difficulty finding the physical site. We expected a large car park but there was none so we parked in a side street and walked around to locate the entry point. Eventually we found the Archeological Museum and, to our surprise, we found that the site was free for the day - it was World Museum Day!

The Museum houses many impressive artifacts. They are tastefully laid out in a series of large rooms. The floor is marble. This adds a certain ambience to the place -



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**SETTING A GOOD EXAMPLE** We get passed by some crazy drivers in Greece. Today we were nearly knocked off the road when a police car passed us on double lines. Maybe they were in a hurry to have coffee.

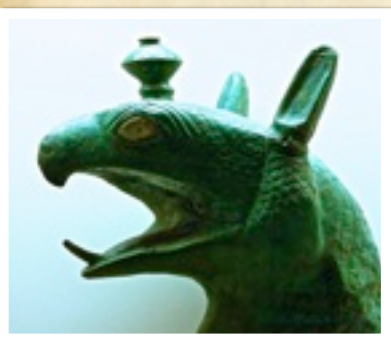
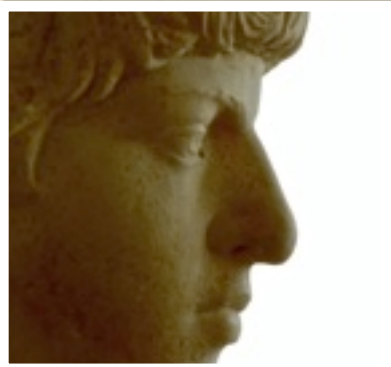
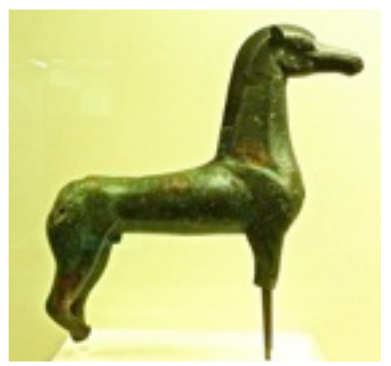
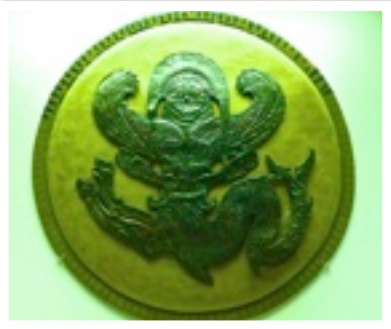


**GREEK SERPENTS** Weren't sure if Greece still had snakes but gauging by the number of dead ones we have seen on the road makes me think that there could not be many left. They are short and quite stout like a lot of Greeks.



**GREEK EPITAPH** Here lies Torres, man of little wisdom, man of great speed, used his GPS too literally and paid the cliff no heed. Alas poor Torres.

## SNAPS



# Olympia's headier days are now nothing but ruins and memories.

makes the place really cool too. We spent some time looking at and admiring the many exhibits and various statues on view. The statues were really grand because most were larger than life size. I marveled at how someone could carve out another person accurately to scale from one block of marble. I wonder if they would have had to start again if they made a mistake.

## THERE IS NOTHING LEFT FOR EARTHQUAKES TO DESTROY IN OLYMPIA

We saw evidence of bronze and early iron age artifacts along with more recent stuff. Olympia suffered many ups and downs both politically and economically over the many centuries of its existence (lots of "Greek crisis" in the past too). However it was the many earthquakes that destroyed the stone buildings and brought Olympia to its knees.

After the museum it was time to see the ruins themselves. What immediately struck us was the many trees on the site. They created a leafy and cool space.

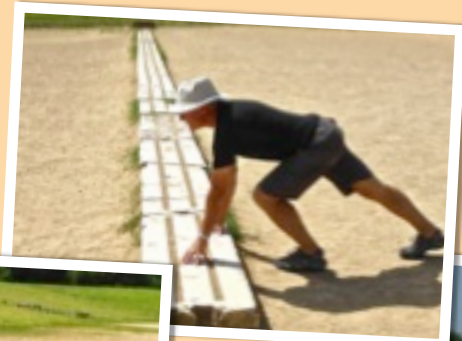
Apparently during recent devastating bush fires the locals fought successfully to save these trees while the surrounding forested countryside was reduced to ash. Surrounding the site we saw evidence of metal towers with large sprinklers on top. Attempts are obviously being made to protect the area from future fires.

The most interesting part of Olympia is the running arena - not really an arena but a 120m straight track.

We entered via the still standing entry arch and could hear the 10,000 ghosts of the past cheering loudly as both Heather and myself took our marks and waited for the starters pistol. It never came for me but Heather was off like a rocket for a false start (I have the photographic evidence).

I was asked to take a photo of 2 nubile Canadian girls at the starters block, bums in the air, ready for action. Very nice - but unfortunately no photo to share. A real pity.

Would we recommend anyone to go out of their way to see Olympia? No, not unless they are a real Olympics buff.





# PHOTOS

