

Ancient Greece

About 2,500 years ago, Greece was one of the most important places in the world.

Geography

Greece is made up of a peninsula at the southernmost tip of Europe and many islands scattered across the Aegean and Adriatic seas. It is mountainous with hot, dry summers and rain only in winter.

MAP 480

Mount Olympus was believed to be the home of the gods. It is the highest mountain in Greece.

Delphi was one of the holiest places in ancient Greece.

Marathon was the site of a great battle in 490 B.C. The outnumbered Greeks defeated the Persian army. A messenger ran to Athens to spread the victory news. This is the origin of the marathon running race.

Olympia was home to the ancient Olympic Games. Athletes came from all over Greece to compete.

Sparta was a place of soldiers. Boys left their families at age seven to train for decades. Those who completed their training were considered true Spartan soldiers and citizens.

Athens was a key place in Greece from 500 to 400 B.C. Some of Greece's most important thinkers, artists, and writers lived here. Athens was also the world's first democracy.

Only a very powerful ruler could control all of Greece. One man did in the 300s B.C. He was Alexander the Great, from Macedonia. He led his army to conquer an empire that stretched as far as India.

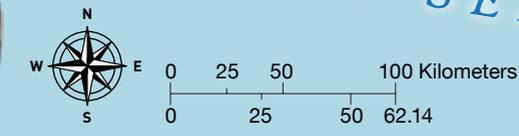
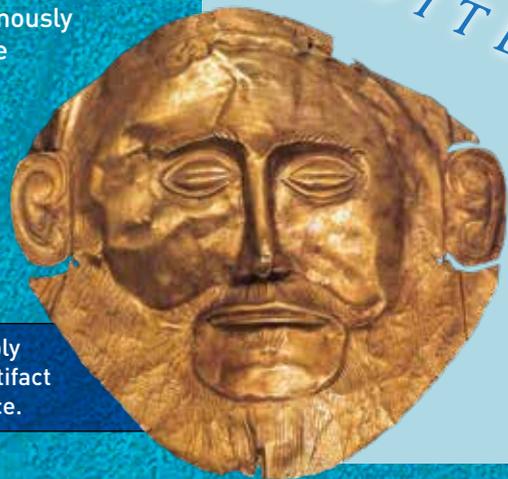
Knossos was the oldest city and the center of the Minoan civilization.

Legend has it that Knossos was home to a man-eating bull, called the Minotaur. It roamed the palace labyrinth, an elaborate maze.

The Mycenaeans

The Mycenaeans were a great civilization of traders and soldiers on the mainland from 1600 to 1100 B.C. They famously fought in the battle of Troy. Homer, an important Greek writer, told their story in his books the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

This mask is probably the most famous artifact of Mycenaean Greece.



The Minoans were the first great Greek civilization. They lived on the island of Crete, from 2200 to 1450 B.C. They were named after their legendary king, Minos.

CRETE



Ships and Trade

The ancient Greeks relied on the ocean for food, trade, and exploration. Greek sailors had small rowboats for fishing, big trading ships, and fast warships.



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