



**Athens “2500th Anniversary of Pheidippedes Marathon Run
October 25-November 2, 2010**

Rejoice! We Conquered! So said Pheidippedes 2500 years ago after his run from Marathon to Athens where he promptly died. Or so one of the stories goes. We didn’t die, but simply thought we’d died and gone to heaven.

Me! Saying Rejoice! I Conquered!



I think this was my 19th marathon of the year and my 68th finish in total.

A piece of history!

Who could resist such a temptation to run in this momentous marathon with the occasion being a 2500th anniversary run by Pheidippedes. I couldn’t. Nor could 900 runners with

www.MarathonTours.com or 640 with www.AthensMarathon.com, the latter being the official Greek tour agent for the marathon and the group I signed up with. I suspect many countries had large contingents such as a large number from



Australia’s tour agency. One would seem to need a tour agent too as the marathon numbers went from something in the 2000-4000 range to 12,500 and last I heard it had been sneaking way over even that number.

From the official website:

The tale that most people know about events in 490BCE is that a messenger named Phillipides or Pheidippides ran from Marathon to Athens to announce the victory, then collapsed and died. Out of that legend, the marathon race was born. Every time someone runs a marathon, they metaphorically retrace steps taken during one of the most momentous events in world history, the Battle of Marathon in 490BCE. A few thousand Athenian and Plataean soldiers, led by the warrior Miltiades destroyed a huge force of invading Persians on the plain of Marathon, a victory widely acknowledged to have ensured the democratic legacy of Western culture. The significance of the Hellenic victory has not gone underestimated, either then or now. The poet and dramatist Aeschylus fought at Marathon (his brother was one of the 192 dead, compared to thousands of Persians). But when Aeschylus died, not one word of his literary achievements made it onto his tombstone, only the fact that he had fought at Marathon. Similarly, though every schoolchild in the U.K. knows how the Battle of Hastings in 1066 altered the course of British history and culture, the celebrated 18th century philosopher and political theorist John Stuart Mill maintained that, in the grand scheme of things, ‘Marathon’ was a far more important event to Britons than ‘Hastings’. However, the tale that most people know about events in 490BCE is that a messenger named Phillipides or Pheidippides ran from Marathon to Athens to announce the victory, then collapsed and died. Out of that legend, the marathon race was born. But the original legend, whose first report was 600 years after the battle (thus highly questionable) was that the messenger first went to Sparta to ask for help, was rebuffed, and ran back to Marathon, before going to Athens to announce victory. Dying after a trek like that made far more sense, since the round trip, across impossibly rough, hilly terrain (and no tarmac roads 2500 years ago) is around 500 kilometres, and he did it allegedly in two or three

days. Which is why every long distance runner in the world should want to run from Marathon to Athens at least once.

It's not too late!

If you wanted to go and didn't, you still have a chance. By modern day calendar methods, it's really next year that would be the 2500th anniversary run. See newspaper clipping below.

Many countries were represented

Pictures by Diane who was afraid it would look like she had a butt fetish. Well, I do, so here they are. And there were so many more! A large contingent from Calgary, from South Africa, etc.



Results

Not to keep you in suspense – here's the commemorative medal plus a finishers medal (showing the stadium on both sides) and t-shirt and read on -- a major surprise coming in due course.



I finished at 5:53:07, oddly since I had decided that I didn't mind if I used up the entire 8 hours they allocated for finishing. Many folks finished hugely later than their usual and many claimed to have

PWs (personal worse) but a couple also had a PR. We can't figure out why the discrepancies. For me, since I walk up hills anyway and my walking muscles are my best that might have been enough to keep me in my usual time zone. The weather started perfect but later the sun beat on us resulting in many of us getting sunburned despite multiple sunscreen applications.

Also from the official website: *If you've not run the course, be warned, it's one of the most difficult of the modern popular marathons. After a relatively flat first 10k, which takes runners on a detour around the tumulus (burial ground) of the Athenian dead - the Parthians have their own burial ground - the course rises until around 32k.*

I was especially pleased because only ten days prior I had a small accident and had hurt both a toe and a wrist and I left for Greece thinking it entirely possible that I wouldn't be able to run at all. But the toe held tight by the shoes was absolutely no problem and I only belly-ached about the jarring of the wrist. All in all I was very lucky.

Here's at the start with Jeff Galloway, main host of this tour. He was tireless in his efforts to entertain us. I heard that Amby Burfoot was also and he was at one of the other hotels taken over by this tour group. At the start Jeff gathered us together and offered that if anyone had a costume malfunction he could save the day. He had three fig leaves – all in different sizes even. I ran with him for the first 5k on his 30-minute walk and 30-minute run but quickly figured out that he was on a much faster pace than I should be doing and in fact he finished at 4:50.



There were handicaps such as having to get up at 5am for an early bus and not starting until 9:25am and having spent far too long at the starting line walking around gawking at the costumes and chatting. And for me, having no shoulder of dirt or grass to move onto meant the hips took a beating and thus I knew to walk more; I can usually turn a marathon into a trail run by moving to the soft surfaces so this time staying to the pavement might have given me a bit of time edge.



From www.jeffgalloway.com - Just in from Jeff's website is his Athens trip report.

Greetings! - The Gifts That Keep On Giving

At first it seemed like your average Marathon start in Athens -- crowded, energized, full of expectation and questions about how one would feel at the finish. But as we turned the corner and saw the tomb of the soldiers who fought for our democracy in 490 BC it hit me. We were running on the same ground as Phidippides -- 2500 years later. The Marathon has more power today because it has become the most universal symbol of health excellence. As I listened to the babble of an amazing number of languages, the energy of the runners was universal. We were sharing a special moment together as we were earning our right to be called Marathoners.

It was my 155th marathon, and I don't take any of them for granted. But as I entered the sacred ground of the original stadium of the modern Olympic games I was more emotional that I had been since I ran the Boston Marathon with my 75 year old father in 1996.

As you finish your special race or workout run during the next year, give thanks for the rich history of the ancient messengers, for the endorphins that change our attitude for the better in a few minutes, for the unique blend of body, mind and spirit that we receive from running.

On to the next 2500 years of inspiration.

Signed: Jeff Galloway, US Olympian

Friends

It was Judy Altman who got me into going and then I'm sorry to say that she wasn't able to attend.



Diane Bolton did attend and we had a particularly good time spending her money on a shopping day and all the time finding an amazing amount of coincidences. We are both DBs, our husband's names are both Tommy with the exact same birth date. We share the same birth month, have the same marathon PR, have fun nearly the same marathons and have the same total number.

We purchased the same big-deal necklace in Athens (a Greek symbol for longevity and eternal life) and our upcoming marathons just happen to be similar. There's more, much more, with silly things like the favorite brand of purse and backpack. But then again I flatter myself as Diane is a very accomplished runner.



Here's Diane and I at the hotel just before boarding the bus to the start line, plus a picture of the big-deal necklace.



I didn't just purchase the necklace, but then again, Diane didn't just purchase the necklace either. She got a major dangle to add to her necklace and it was of Athena and the Owl – so very appropriate for Greece. I got a coin of a charm that has written "Marathon 2500th".

Here's a picture of my charm and the charming Greek who sweet talked us all and we gladly bought. He is George the designer. George the delicious.



While at George's Jewelers I finally ran into Amy. Remember Amy from Buffalo Marathon? Where she ran in honor of her fallen sister? Remember Amy and I were featured in the Buffalo Marathon advertisement? Then Amy was with me for part of Tampa's Gasparilla this year.

Here's Amy! She'd bought a jewelry memento too.

A Woodstock in the making?

Well, the Greek's have not been known for having the best of marathon organization. A letter from friend Seth makes that very clear. I'm sure you'll



enjoy and be amused by his account of a past Athens Marathon and then will understand why I thought a tour agent accompanying me was the safest way to go.

I'd written to Seth: This is encouraging that you say Athens Marathon is well organized. I'd heard that they've changed the direction of the start at the starting line on marathon date, that they've ran out of water, and even without all their government striking now, and fiscal woes, one should count on being on their own. Coupled with the increase in numbers to about 20,000 from what, a couple thousand, this might be one major Woodstock event. I'll carry my own Gatorade, money and credit card for sure!

A return email from Seth: Perhaps I accidentally misrepresented the situation. I didn't intend to imply that Athens Marathon is well-organized now, but rather only that it is better now than it was in the mid 90's when it was REALLY a mess.

I have no first-hand knowledge of how it is currently but a few folks have commented they thought it needed help in some areas. Their complaints seem modest compared to what I recall. In 1996 there were no shirts, or medics or aid stations. I never did see exactly where the start line was. Hundreds of us just began running in what seemed like the correct direction when we saw others doing likewise. I suspect there was a gun or something but I'll never know for sure.

The only actual water stop I saw was at about 7 miles where there was a truck handing out 1-liter bottles of water. These were too large for most folks and there were not nearly enough for everyone so most folks drank their fill then set the bottle down or handed it off for the next stranger drink from and so on. I was fortunate to be following a relatively clean younger European-looking woman and was only the second consumer from that bottle. Janice ran Athens with me and she has a now locally-famous photograph she calls "Athens Marathon Aid Station" that shows her drinking from a garden hose out front of a shopkeeper's store. She stopped to drink from the hose when she saw him washing down the front deck and windows.

Approaching downtown Athens the air pollution got more noticeable. I hear it is better now but I recall my eyes burning. Traffic was hostel near town. One aggressive driver was attempting to cross the course from a cross street and a policeman drew a gun to stop him. The driver got out and began pounding the policemen's car with his fists.

I recall at least one other funny thing. The race photos were snapshots by a local photographer who shot all the pictures himself, developed one set and put them in a box in no particular order outside his photography shop downtown. The night after the race, folks were invited to come fumble through the box to see if they could see themselves in any of the shots and they could buy THAT picture. If there were two people in the same shot whoever purchased it first got it.

Several of us went over with Marathon Tours who warned us of nearly non-existent course support so we all left early race morning and stashed drinks and power-bars along the route. Had it not been for them I'd have been pretty confused, lost, hungry and dehydrated.

All that said, I had a great time and would do it again if I could. I hear that it is better in many ways now but still could use some improvements. I'd say just go with it and be ready for whatever happens. It will surely make a good story in any case. Here's wishing you tailwinds and safe running.

I later learned from Janice, Seth's wife, that the story was actually much more exciting and part of it self-imposed. They had overslept, Marathon Tours called and woke them up but then couldn't wait long enough for them, and they had to take a cab to the start, all the while scurrying around for proper clothing and foodstuff. The Marathon Tours group had positioned water along the course but of course Seth and Janice hadn't been able to so it was the hose water or nothing for them.



So -- when I arrived at the Athens airport and found the metro on strike, I was not surprised. I had been prepared to find alternate transportation and rather easily found a bus into town for some little amount like 3 Euros. Once in town there were oodles of demonstrators marching in Syntagma or Constitution Square towards Parliament House and the riot police were out in droves. See picture above.

So how did the marathon organizing committee do?

They absolutely couldn't have done anything better! It would be very hard to find anything to change. Shocking, yes?



- The expo was in the palace in the botanical gardens and plenty big (and plenty crowded).
- The freebie t-shirt was by *addidas*, well designed and in a bright blue with white stripes. I later heard that they had XS sizing available which I needed.
- There were lots of give-aways at the expo.
- Goodie bag was a reuse-able and fairly large cinch backpack in the same blue as the t-shirt, filled with a commemorative water bottle, logo pen, GU, plastic for wearing at the start, logo mouse pad, and samples. I thought there was to be a towel but it wasn't in my pack. .
- Starting location at Marathon was full of port a potties and permanent toilets, a famous track for warm up, the Olympic torch, and basically enough room though there were heavily trafficked ways.
- A 9am start was prompt with 7 corrals starting each 3 minutes, complete with good announcements, dignitaries giving speeches, and the release of a large number of balloons and colorful foil confetti.
- The course couldn't be more famous – the original marathon course running by the marathon tomb, a number of important statues and sculpture, an older Olympic stadium and ending with a run into the most famous Olympic stadium of all. (See picture of the stadium at the very top, following, plus pictures in the newspaper coverage at the bottom.)
- All along the way were massive amounts of medics, fluid stations, complete with full bottles of water and/or Poweraide, granola bars, bananas and GU.
- The entire course was totally closed to traffic in both directions. Unique and very special.
- We went through many little village towns giving more to look at and more spectators.
- We found a great number of enthusiastic spectators yelling BRAVO! over and over. (Different was that there were no signs like in the U.S. and no unofficial food given out.) Example -- though not as many as NYC, there were more than Hartford.
- Course didn't close for 8 hours.
- Port a potties along the course did NOT have lines!
- Shower location at the end as well as massages were still be given at 6-hours.
- Newspaper pictures and coverage the next two days – if not more.



Oops or Oddities

- They yell BRAVO but there were no signs for anyone. Not that we needed them, just different.
- Spectators were in great numbers but no offerings of food.
- T-shirts were only in men's sizing.
- Official merchandise was either sold out or nearly non-existent – a missed opportunity.
- Offerings of merchandise included cuff links. Who uses cuff links? Especially within the running community.



See the picture to the side of the first modern Olympics at the same stadium.

It was all that I hoped for and more

Here's a note from friend Ellen the night before and I couldn't agree more. For a hard core runner Boston might be the more important, but for a tourist and adventurer and lover of history – this one can't be topped. I am double fortunate to have been able to do both Boston and Athens.

The race tomorrow is really a big deal! Of all the marathons you've run, I'd think this one would be high on the list of specials! Are you running the original route from Marathon to Athens? I hope it's a wonderful experience. For me, I'd think that running this race would come with more bragging rights than the Boston marathon. The 2500 anniversary of the original marathon run on site!! Ellen

And then portions of Kathrine (K.V.) Switzer's report which I feel honored to be in touch with and who was there with www.marathontours.com as well as her husband Roger Robinson. She rightly titles her message as "Athens Triumph" and she must be in heaven with her return to fame at such a location and she says it all so eloquently! Her picture is from www.kathrineswitzer.com. And if you really want a treat and memento of the Athens Marathon, subscribe to Marathon & Beyond and get the Athens Special Edition so you can read Kathrine's lovely article about what Athens means to her. You'll be glad you did.



Dear Friends and Family! YAAA! We did it! This is just a quick note to say a big THANK YOU to all of you for your support and best vibes and wishes. I finished the Athens Classic Marathon in 4 hours 48 minutes on a hot day and a very tough course and I am thrilled, wishing only that Roger could have run it also. Roger, however, had triumphs of his own as he held 900 visiting Americans spellbound with his speeches in the days leading up to the race. Together we know our presentations to these people made their trip even more significant, so we're delighted!

To finish in the great Panathenaic Stadium on the 2,500th anniversary of the Battle of Marathon was an ultimate running experience. For me, it was my first road marathon in 34 years (I did an off-road marathon in March in New Zealand) and was extremely validating from the point of view of being able to just finish a marathon at age 63 on an unforgiving road surface after 50 years of running. I have no idea of my age group placing but am unconcerned. Frankly, I am just grateful as my thighs cramped at 30km and I had to walk, dreading the prospect of walking 8 miles; somehow I got it back and began running again and finished only 20 minutes slower than I had hoped as a best possible outcome. The whole experience in Greece was marvelous, but I won't bore you with it now; in a day or so I hope to have a blog entry up on my website which tells more.

By the way, for those of you who lived through the saga of our shipping 750 of our books to Greece only to have them sit on the pier for a month while a strike and various other bureaucratic nonsense was going on,

they miraculously appeared at the hotel five days before the conference in perfect condition. Rejoice we conquer!

We are now back in New Paltz and will head to New York City for the marathon tomorrow—Wednesday. Roger is covering it for Running Times and RunningTimes.com --see Roger on Running; I will be doing the global TV broadcast to 230 countries which you will only see if you are outside of the USA. More later, keep in touch, and thanks a million for your support!!! Love, Kathrine and Roger

The tour agency

Amusingly, I had expected a marathon organizing disaster and paid up to be with this tour group who serve as the official marathon tour agency. Apostolos Greek Tours is the only tour group with rights to sweep the course and be available at the half way point. They are dual-citizen employees and have handled this marathon for years. Yet they probably over-committed (4-5 buses for just our one hotel versus usually having one bus) and as it turned out the only problems encountered were agency self-imposed. (I believe they had 640 sign ups.) They were good in that there were 3 days of excellent touring to (including the entire marathon course), we were delivered to the start and picked up at the finish, and by supplying running dignitaries with big names such as Jeff Galloway (who is tireless with his time offering morning runs or hikes in addition to his talks.) I was told Amby Burfoot was in attendance but I don't think I saw him except in costume on the course (see picture in newspaper clippings at the end.) With three hotels being filled it is no surprise. I also say they over-committed since I signed up (reluctantly) for a hotel in Glyfada (which was already too far out of town) and was put in a hotel another 20 minutes out. (Fortunately I'd come in early on my own and stayed downtown first before joining up.) Why anybody should want to go to a historically significant foreign country and then stay in an American-type new resort I can't fathom. It also meant that friends like Amy from Tampa that I'd intended spending time with was at a different hotel.

My Hotel Plaka downtown Athens was next to ideal. Had I realized how small it was, I'd have paid up for a larger or double room however. It reminded me of a Japanese room in its space allocation being very well planned. It's only a 3-star but recently renovated and with excellent quality and design. Best of all I had a huge picture window that looked out to the Acropolis which is lighted through the night.

Hotel Plaka also has a rooftop garden with a bar, sofas and tables which has a perfect view of many sights, none the least being the huge Acropolis mountain. Even better is the location; virtually everything I wanted to visit was within a very short and convenient walk. It felt safe; after having worried in Rio de Janeiro, I was glad to have a comfort level to walk around at night safely. (By the way, a P.S. to my Rio report: a month later my ATM card was also compromised in Rio.) Here's the view from my hotel window of the Acropolis at night.



Taverna

Though I had been up the entire night in flight (and I never can sleep on a plane) my usual goal is to keep going during the day and stay up until night time so as to get the body onto local time. This was a particularly difficult challenge in this case. So I booked an evening tour of the city followed by a late night dinner with entertainment at a Taverna. You'll readily see how I was assisted in staying up until 12:30am. (Then an 8am city tour the next morning.)



Here's one of the Olympic stadiums in the full moonlight, set against the harbor of Piraeus, Greece's principal commercial port, and at the edge of the Marina Zea which is one of the busiest yacht harbors in the Mediterranean and home port to many luxury pleasure yachts. We went through Mikrolimano as another picturesque yachting center, saw the Royal Yacht Club and loads of ritzy looking restaurants, before walking through the Plaka district for our dinner and tavern show. I only briefly yawned.



Though touristy to the extreme, the live band, dancers and particularly the belly dancers were very entertaining and the food just kept coming. Sitting next to me was a momma with her three knock out gorgeous children named Octave, Olympe and Achille. They were of Greek heritage but this was their first trip to Greece having been born in France and now living in Great Britain.

Dress and fashion -- alive and well in Athens. I packed light and with primarily marathon clothing under the logic that with 12,500 plus runners in Athens there would be plenty of marathon garb. Wrong. Athens is much like we remember Paris without a pair of sneakers except on Americans. And where I was with a short sleeve shirt and no jacket, the typical gal was wearing boots and a sweater and plenty were in coats. Guess they are used to warm. I didn't find 22 degrees Celsius to be cold enough for even a light jacket. This picture was at an elegant jeans store in the ritzy section.



Greek Ego – It's probably alive and well too. Here from a dear friend who always gives me good insights, food for thought about the Greeks. Well, about any civilization.

The (Greek) remains still give us some idea of past glory. The thing I found so sad in Greece is the people's assumption that they are great because Greece was great 2500 years ago. Hierarchy is so insidious. In order to be OK we have to either accomplish and create some claim to fame, or have an accomplished fore-bearer. Such nonsense. I look for the day when people can just be and be OK. My only criteria are: Are you a nice person? Are you an interesting person? The rest doesn't matter.

Tourist sites

This is almost silly. You all know the famous Athens sites but here they are again as seen through my eyes. Or maybe just to remind you.



On the pedestrian shopping street the Roma/Gypsies were abundant with any number of beggars. This church as 10th century is one of the oldest and sitting right in the center of the pedestrian shopping mall. Here's one of my pretty tour guides. Most of the Greeks seemed into fashion, good looking and sure of themselves. Shopping and fashion were alive and well too.



All up on the Acropolis which had been considerably re-built since my mid-70s trip.



My first city tour on my own took from around 8am to 2pm and included the New Acropolis Museum and then I walked down the backside of the Acropolis via the springs and caves and into the Agora. I saw it better and more complete on my own but when I toured with the group tour it became clearer what I was looking at. Our guide, Eva, was one of the very best and even her explanations of some Greek Mythology made sense. If you're going to Athens try to hire Eva. She is available and I'm sure worth every Euro she might charge if you can afford her. Tele: (0030) 6938184484 or email: andrikoueva@hotmail.com.



In front of the Flea Market, colorful fruit stands. Contented and well fed dogs everywhere even though they are said to be ownerless and numbering in the 150,000 range.



Tower of the Winds – how the ancients told time with this 39 foot high tower. It was also a compass, sundial, water clock and weathervane. The Agora Museum is a recreation and houses the American Archeology Society on the top floor who are excavating the Agora or old Market Place. Statuary atop their University complex.



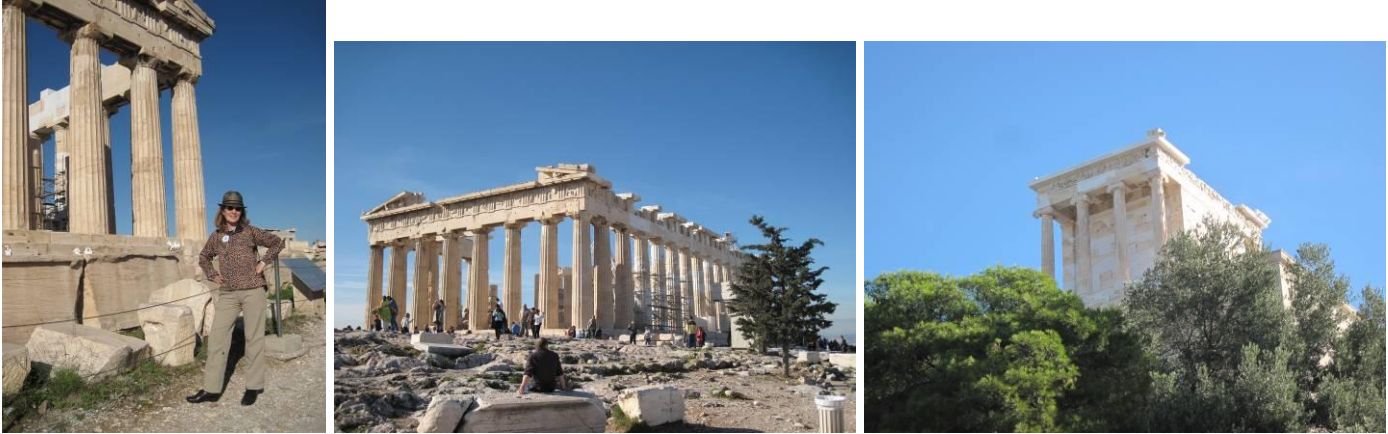
Pigeons survive everywhere though Athens smog has allegedly been cleared up in recent years. Here they are in the grounds of Parliament House where changing of the guards happens each hour, and here they are in the adjoining Imperial Gardens.



Some Old Athens Plaka streets and then a darned Haagen Daz sign that just doesn't belong. There's a McDonalds on the corner of Syntagma Square too but it's a rare one. It is the Plaka where I stayed the first three days. It is the oldest district in Athens and the district's three major streets form a triangle at the base of the Acropolis.



My second visit up to the top of the Acropolis afforded a much clearer view. Athens has about 5 million people. Compare that to only about 11 million in all of Greece.



The Acropolis or the Pinnacle of Athens contains the Parthenon – the temple dedicated to the goddess Athena and considered to be one of the finest achievements in Ancient Greece and the world.



Was this a costumed guard or somebody readying for Halloween? The guard and the ancient walkway contrasted with the modern tones of the New Acropolis Museum, a major effort by the Greeks to convince the international community that they can safely house their relics “stolen” by Lord Byron. They want Great Britain to return a number of items that they believe belong in Greece since that’s where they started. Now they have a magnificent place to be shown.

Marathon related tourist



Everyone wanted their picture taken at the monument at the starting line. Diane and I got ours at the road sign “Marathonas to Athens.” This runner figure was multi stories high and made of sheets of glass, while the discus statue was in front of the stadium where we finished.



More statuary at the stadium. The palace outside and inside was home to the expo.



Inside the palace, adjacent to the expo, was a costume museum. Do you suppose these are making fun of runners? Yes, I was in runner's costume – my past glory days of Boston clothing supplanted by this momentous event in Athens.

Eva our tour guide

I talked about Eva before and what a wonderful guide she was with excellent historical perspective and a way of explaining Greek mythology that made sense. She claimed she bonded with all her Marathon Family and that just might be true because it didn't take very much prompting until Eva hinted that she might be interested in running enough to do a marathon herself. One member of our group offered to assist in coaching. One member offered to come next year and run with her. I cornered her that if she wants to that she needed to commit before God and everybody. So it was not a huge surprise, though a sweet and special one, when she announced the last day that she was committing to the 2011 Athens Marathon. Here's Eva!



From the course and at the finish as taken by Diane



Plenty of costumes. And isn't this a treasure? Old momma on an old course!



We were handed laurel leaves and olive branches by kids and spectators all through the course. And just like MCM there were good looking cops on hand, both male and female.

But darned, there was no nude running. Apparently they used to run in togas but when one man's toga fell off and he continued to run unencumbered and won every other runner complained. Then came totally nude running along with women being banned from the course on penalty of death.

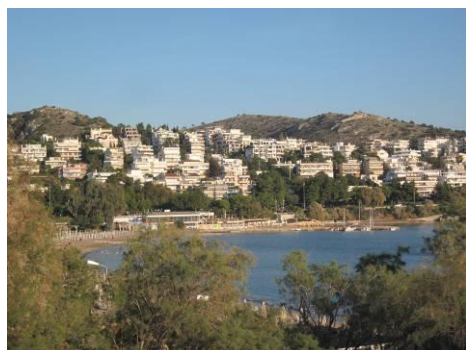
Jeff told us that the early messenger runners took walk breaks. Of course for Galloway walk-run method, this was an important piece of information. Did I tell you that the course is not considered easy? It is all uphill until about the 32 km mark and then there are still some hills. It's said to be 2.5% to 7% upgrade on the hills, but then most of the last 10 km is downhill. (42.2 km makes for the full 26.2 miles of a marathon.)

This marathon is the second biggest event for the Greeks following the Olympics. It's said that there was great prosperity during the building of the Olympic set up but that when the Olympics were over then life became suddenly quiet and stark and that's when some financial difficulties set in with Greece and the EU.

Did you know that the name Marathon comes from "fennel" valley which is covering this starting area? The Battle of Marathon only lasted about one hour and yet is said to have saved Greece. The first modern Olympics was in 1896 when the huge stadium of all pure white marble was built to seat 69,000.

Our southern hotel

I remain dismayed that we would stay 45 minutes outside of Athens downtown but it was a lovely area and the hotel was considerably more modern and larger than anything we could have downtown.



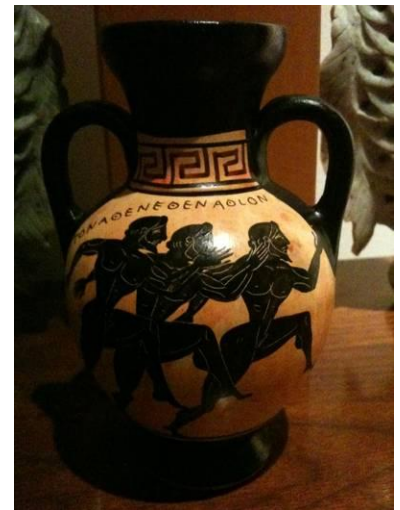
The beach areas were expansive and the housing ran up the hillsides. Here's our area and the hotel.



Other than a walk to the restaurant area, along the seaside and into a neighborhood up a hill, I couldn't see or figure out why I'd come so far to stay in a resort town.

The last supper

The tour company gave us a celebratory dinner Sunday night after the marathon, complete with a multi-course dinner, wine, entertainment and the offer of wearing costumes. We were enthroned with our own laurel wreath and gifted with a nice hand-made pottery copy.



Here's a representative costume with a humorous background (that's Jill), dancing and then dancing lessons. That's the famous Elaine Doll-Dunn in a chorus girl type dance looking half her 73 years of age. She's amazing.

Dogs – that being nothing to do with the earlier dress and fashion subject. Athens apparently has some 150,000 stray dogs but oddly they are all rather docile and well-fed. These are big dogs and not straggly looking. I read that many had been neutered or spayed and that there's a contingent that feeds them. Maybe they tried to clean them out like Palm Beach tried to get rid of their feral cats only to find they disliked rat's worse? The dogs seem to have a permanent home and their numbers easily top those of Minneapolis-St Paul.

Retsina – their local wine versus yogurt (what a comparison!)

Maybe it's an acquired taste but I didn't acquire it through my bottle. It's pretty bitter. It comes with an appellation traditional rating in Ancient Kleone or Korinth Greece. The price should have tipped me off as it was dirt cheap. Pun intended. I usually find a grocery store for supplies and in this case the milk was more than the Retsina. But nothing is cheap in Europe – except Retsina.

Retsina (Ρετσίνα in Greek) is a Greek white (or rosé) resinated wine that has been made for at least 2000 years. Its unique flavor is said to have originated from the practice of sealing wine vessels, particularly amphorae, with Aleppo Pine resin in ancient times. Before the invention of impermeable glass bottles, oxygen caused many wines to spoil within the year. Pine resin helped keep air out, while at the same time infusing the wine with resin aroma. The Romans began to use barrels in the 3rd century AD, removing any oenological necessity for resin, but the flavor itself was so popular that the style is still widespread today.

But for all I didn't care for Retsina, I can say unequivocally that the Greeks sure know how to make Yogurt. At the breakfast buffet I thought it must be a bowl of cream cheese it was so thick. Yes, I'm used to Greek Yogurt purchased in the U.S. but this was much thicker and tasty. I've always fondly remembered Greek Yogurt from our visit in the 70s.

Plumbing – I used to wonder who in the world puts all that TP in the trash cans. Now I know: There are warnings all over that the Greek toilets and/or their plumbing system can't accept ANY paper. Somehow it doesn't surprise me that the plumbing is old, nor that the Greeks are easy going enough to just live with it.

The Greek might have EU financial difficulties but they're sure healthy in other ways

Everyone knows the Greeks are in a world of hurt financially and have to get their house in order. Yet I couldn't help but continually notice that they appear to be far ahead of America in another important way – health. Our fatso population with heavy diabetes risk might be the 'death' of America in many ways. The Greeks might get a major financial advantage over us in health costs.

The Greeks are said to be willing to spend their last dime on entertainment or fashion and they clearly keep their health, so maybe they are the big winners overall. It looked that way to me.

Current headlines - Politically it was an active time during this trip.

Parcel bombs target heads of state, Athens embassies - A suspect package addressed to Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and linked to a series of parcel bombs posted in Greece caught fire at Italy's Bologna airport, ANSA news agency reported.

Greek police intercept parcel bomb addressed to Sarkozy - Police in Athens said Monday that an explosive device addressed to French President Nicolas Sarkozy was one of four packages intercepted by Greek authorities in the capital. A female courier was injured when one of the devices exploded.

Counter-Terrorism: Aviation security tightened globally in wake of bomb threat - Governments around the world tightened air security on Monday, after two bombs were intercepted on the way to the US from Yemen. Tighter international regulations on air cargo may have a negative impact on the global economy.

Reminders of how lucky we are to be a part of the Athens run

So glad you are finished with Athens. Congratulations on such an awesome time! That is amazing considering all that your body has been through. Simply amazing! I'm so proud of you, Diana. Relieved that it was well organized - and this memory will last you forever. You are very blessed indeed! Love, M.a.

Questions I'm still pondering

Why did some run PRs and others had PWs?

Why did many of us have very sore necks?

How can I be so lucky?

What's this miracle of travel?

Sane?

And if you really want to question my sanity, and see what a real record is, look at our friend Yolanda

Holder's record: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtwDIDidRR4>

What's next?

Nov 7 – Manchester Marathon in NH

Nov 14 - OBX – Outer Banks, NC Marathon

Nov 21 – Gobbler Grind Marathon in Overland Park, KS and some time with family in K.C.

Two smaller runs locally

Nov 30 -- Tourist and hike and bike in San Francisco

Dec 12 -- Honolulu Marathon

Long term thinking? Seriously looking for ideas but leaning towards most of these trips

Jan 15 – Charleston Marathon including a week to tour with Tom in Charleston

Jan 30 – Houston Marathon including a week to tour in the area

Feb 11 – Hiking Maui with Timberline

Feb 26 – Hiking Big Bend National Park with Timberline

Mar 20 – Rome Marathon with a week to tour

April 13 – London Marathon with a week to tour

May 7 – Capon Valley WVA 50K

May 10 – Tahoe touring with Tom and then Bay to Breakers 100th Anniversary run in SFO

May 26 – Michigan Road trip with possible Marathon

Jun 18 – Taos NM and Great Sand Dunes hiking with Timberline

Jul 16 – Glacier National Park hike with Timberline

Aug 20 – Mt Rainier hike with Timberline

Sep 10 – Medoc Marathon in France?

Sep 9 – to Dordogne with Tom for week in Sarlot then a week in Nice

Sep 25 – Berlin Marathon?

Oct 30 – Dublin Marathon?

Nov 12 – Richmond Marathon

Nov 20 – Tulsa Marathon

I sort of want to try for the Five Major Marathons while I can, if I can. It's time to get serious. I've done NYC, Boston and Chicago with London booked and thus only need Berlin.

I was wondering about collecting more Olympic cities with Athens, LA, Calgary, Atlanta, Rio, Paris, St Louis, Antwerp, Amsterdam, Montreal, Sydney and Beijing all visited and Rome, London and Berlin on the schedule. Where else? Munich, Helsinki and Stockholm at least.

Athens and Athens Marathon in the news

From Diane: Wow, we got out just in time. Heard suspicious items found in Athens. Stupid me, had an apple in my carry on...did not declare bringing in fruit. Security found it, was detained with customs agent. Told them I forgot it was in my bag for breakfast. Let me go after telling me I could've been fined \$1000.00.

Marathon & Beyond – They dedicated most of an entire issue to this marathon and its history and meaning. It is a special memento that anyone who attended would want to have. Subscribe at www.marathonandbeyond.com

Note – for newspaper articles and more pictures, inquire of Dianab@juno.com since the file wouldn't fit on the website.

Itinerary

Mon Oct 25

5:40pm Depart Newark via Continental #104

Tues Oct 26

10:20am Arrive Athens

Note: Diane Bolton arrives 10:35am via Delta 138 from Atlanta – going direct to host hotel outside of Athens

Metro to downtown La Plaka: From the airport take the metro direct line number 3 until Monastiraki Square. The train runs every 30 minutes and takes about 40 minutes. It operates from 06:35- 23:35. A single fare costs 6 euro. Don't forget to validate your ticket.

From Monastiraki Square you have to walk up Mitropoleos Street. On the second street on your right you will see the hotel.

Taxi: Takes approximately 30-45 minutes. The cost is not more than 40-45euro, with an extra charge during the evening. If you are asked for more, ask for a receipt and write the number of the taxi.

Hotel Hotel Plaka – great location and 4 stars – Hermes chain
Mitropoleus 7 Kapnikareas, Athens 10556 GR Tele: 302 10 3222096
<http://www.plakahotel.gr> - 5 minutes to Syntagma Old City Square - Renovated 2/10.

City night tour and late night tavern experience – until 12:30am!

Wed Oct 26

8:00 am City day tour and Acropolis walking tour including the New Acropolis Museum

Note: Gordon Rodgers staying at Divani Caravel Hotel and he will come to Hotel Plaka to pick up Jan Seeley's 12 copies of M&B

Thu Oct 28

Transport to Hotel: From the Plaka Hotel to the Armonia Hotel you can take a taxi for about 40-50 euros. That's the easiest. The Metro does not go all the way to Vouliagmeni where the Armonia Hotel is located. You could take the Metro as far as Glyfada (the end of the line) and then get a taxi to Vouliagmeni. Taxi fare would only be 5-10 euros that way. If you do take taxis, remember you don't have to tip them.

PM : Three orientation times during the day for arriving guests including introductions, beverages and hors d'oeuvres. On hand through tour will be a large staff of born Greek speakers with English language. The tour owner was born in Greece and is on hand.

Dinner on your own but beverages and hors-d'oeuvres might be sufficient.

Hotel Hotel Armonia
1 Armonias Str. Vouliagmeni 166.71, Athens Greece
Tele from US: 011 30 210 891 4700 www.armonia.gr and armonia@armonia.gr

Fri Oct 29

7:30 am. The day begins with an early morning 30-minute run followed by a buffet breakfast

Morning: leave for the town of Marathon where we will view the start of the marathon and the earth mound tomb of the Fallen Athenians located on the Marathon battlefield. Then we will drive on the course for a firsthand preview.

Lunch on your own in one of the sidewalk cafes in the Plaka. Our guide will escort you. Shopping opportunity in the Plaka.

Marathon Expo optional. Apostolos Tours will pick up packages and bibs.

5:00 pm. Return to our hotel with dinner on own and evening free.

Sat Oct 30

Buffet breakfast, but no early run.

8:00 am: City tour of Athens and the Acropolis with lunch on your own.

3:00 p.m. Race number distribution and orientation. Jeff Galloway will give a presentation followed by questions and answers.

6:00 p.m. Pasta Dinner (included) at the hotel.

Sun Oct 31- RACE DAY!

After a buffet breakfast (included), we'll leave for the starting line in plush, chartered buses. All the pre-race details are taken care of so you can save your energy to run the Marathon, not use it up getting there! We depart from the hotel at 6:30am.

9:00 Marathon start - may the spirit of Pheidippides run with you.

www.athensclassicmarathon.gr ; click on British flag for English

2010 will be a momentous celebration for the Athens Marathon because it will be the 2500th anniversary of the battle of Marathon in 490 BC and the legendary run by Pheidippides from the Marathon Battlefield to the city of Athens. Not many events have a 2500th anniversary celebration.

Fruit and high-energy snacks for everyone at the half way point and at the finish line. After the race, we'll enjoy a gala awards banquet and party at the hotel. A local D. J. and Greek folk dancers will be on hand to set the tone.

Mon Nov 1

Sleep late and enjoy a lazy morning. Optional hike with Jeff. Buffet breakfast (included) at the hotel.

10:00 am: Late morning we will visit the Ancient Agora of Athens (next to the Acropolis). We will see the Theseion, the best preserved building of ancient Athens and the Agora Museum.

Lunch on your own at one of the Plaka sidewalk cafes.

5:00pm Return to the hotel for free evening to relax or perhaps enjoy a stroll on the beach.

Tue Nov 2

Departure transfers are also provided from 3:30am until 12pm on Nov. 2nd and 3rd.

We will provide buses approximately every two hours as departures require. If you need a different time, our staff at the hotel will assist you with a taxi. Taxi fares are approximately 40 Euros (extra cost).

1:05pm Depart Athens (ATH) via Lufthansa

2:45pm Arrive Munich (MUC) for plane change

3:15pm Depart Munich via Lufthansa#412

7:35pm Arrive Newark

Participants

Diane Bolton

Amy from Tampa

Kathrine Switzer – with husband Roger Robinson and Marathon Tours from Oct 26-Nov.1. Tour to the stadium on the 28th, and Roger and I also will be somewhat obligated at the AIMS business meeting on the 28th and 29th. We have the dinners on Sat. Oct.30 and the race on Oct.31 and dinner afterward. All that is 'required'. But there must be time for a Greek coffee in there someplace hanging out in Constitution Square.
Mike Brandt from California

Tourist

Watch Rick Steves online at http://www.ricksteves.com/tvr/hulu_player.htm about Athens

<http://www.athensclassicmarathon.gr> for official site

www.athensmarathon.com for official travel agency site; also marathontours.com

Apostolos Greek Tours, 2685 S. Dayton Way #14, Denver CO 80231 - c/o Jill Clancy at 303 755 2888

From: Kathy Kass

Date: Fri, 15 Jan 2010 22:10:11 -0500

The airport used to be in glyfada - so I used to be happy to stay there when I had to stay over between my international and my domestic flights. Frankly, I'm not a big fan of athens, and glyfada is a nice seaside town. a few years ago, before the olympics they build a big mega airport about a half hour outside of athens. I haven't been there in a few years.

From: jill@athensmarathon.com [<mailto:jill@athensmarathon.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, October 20, 2010 3:27 PM

Subject: Athens Marathon Travel Tips

Dear Runners and Guests,

We hope you are all set for your trip to Athens for the Athens Classic Marathon. This is going to be a very big year for the marathon and we are glad that you will be joining us for all of the excitement. We would like to offer some travel tips and information to help make your journey easier.

- Make sure you arrive at the airport at least 2 to 3 hours prior to travel time.
- You are allowed to carry on liquids in 3 oz bottles packed in one sandwich size zip-lock bag. One zip-lock bag per person and you can fill it as full as you can.
- All medications should be in their original containers in your carry on. Do not pack medications in your suitcase.
- Make sure you have your passport and your airline conformation/itinerary in your carry on, do not pack.
- Make a couple of copies of your passport. Leave one at home with friends or family, place one in you or suitcase and keep one with you separate from your passport.
- Wear lightweight comfortable clothing for your flights.
- Notify your credit card company that you are leaving the country and where you are going.
- Look for our Apostolos Greek Tours signs after you exit the baggage area.

THINGS TO TAKE

- Welcome Letter from Apostolos Greek Tours with arrival information and hotel name.
- Use the luggage tags sent to you so our staff can find you at the airport.
- Take your running shoes, socks and anything else that you cannot live without for the race in your carry on, do not pack in suitcase.
- Snacks for the flight.
- Electrical converter and adaptor.

- Alarm clock.
- Personal washcloths (if you use them).
- Comfortable casual clothing that can be layered if it gets cool. Lightweight jacket for the evenings and the cruise or trip to Delphi.
- Any over the counter items such as aspirin, motion sickness pills for the cruise, Pepto, etc. that you feel you might need.

Please confirm with your airline prior to going to the airport for schedule changes. If you have a major schedule change please email Jill at jill@athensmarathon.com to advise us of the change. If there is a major delay in your flight and you arrive into Athens after our staff has already left the airport, please take a taxi to your hotel, name and address are on your Welcome Letter so carry that with you at all times.

EARLY ARRIVAL INFORMATION

If you are arriving early before October 28 you will need to make your own way to your hotel. After you depart the baggage area, go out of the terminal and look to your right for the taxi stand. Line up and take the next taxi. Give them your hotel business card or the Welcome Letter with the hotel name and address. The taxi should run between 40 to 50 Euros depending on traffic.

If your friends want to check your race results they can go to the official website, www.athensclassicmarathon.gr. Click on the British flag in the upper right hand corner for English.

For the Awards Banquet after the race, in the spirit of the race and Halloween, Classical Greek Togas and Dress are welcome. Hotel bed sheets do not qualify as Togas.

We hope you have a pleasant flight and we will see you in Athens!

Paul, Jill & Vaso
Apostolos Greek Tours, Inc.

Results of some attendees

Elaine Doll-Dunn – nothing appears

Kathrine Switzer – 4:48

Amby Burfoot – 6:19 with family?

Mike Brandt – 6:37 despite recent heart surgery

Jeff Galloway – 4:51 doing a 30/30 and I started with until 5k

Deanna Beyer – 7:00 despite being around 67

Diane Bolton –4:58