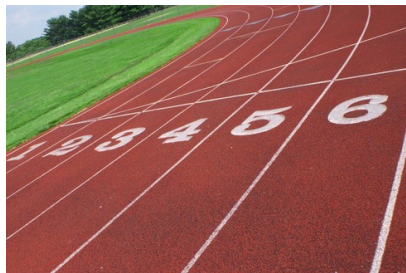


OLYMPIC TOURISM: A REAL FLAME LIGHTER



The Olympic Games may seem to some to be only important to those who walk away from them with a gold, silver or bronze medal around their neck. This is far from true. Not only are the games of extreme importance to the place and people hosting the ancient event. Even when we take the games back to their origin of the so-called Panhellenic cycle in Greece, the games represent a huge amount of interest in terms of ancient history and the ancient stadiums. Knowing the facts about the Olympic Games goes a long way towards enjoying such a trip.

The Panhellenic cycle consists of the four original Olympic venues in Greece: **Nemea, Isthmia, Delphi and Olympia**, which were the scenes of very different games to what we know today. Firstly, victorious athletes walked away with a wreath and not a medal around their neck. Whereas athletes today who are forced to drop out are treated with utmost sympathy, ancient athletes were either heavily fined or flogged. Although some may argue that doping is rife in today's games, cheating and bribery were much more common in ancient times. Even Nero managed to 'win' the chariot race despite having fallen off the chariot. Indeed, one of the tourist attractions of the Panhellenic sites consists of the material and demonstrations on how ancient referees used to deal with the problem of cheating.

The Delphi stadium has been hailed the most spectacular of all. At a high altitude it takes an athlete to get there. Over 7000 spectators used to fit in this modern day evidence of ancient entertainment. In Isthmia there is a small museum, which is actually run by the University of Chicago. When one learns about the differences between the games of today and the games of ancient times, such sites can easily be appreciated.

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