

ETAPE 8 Distance 31 km. Route: Modi - "Thermopylae"

Last ascents on Mount Kalidromo, before starting the 10 km descent that will lead us to Thermopylae and the statue of Leonidas. This is our today's route, an Etape of not too many kilometers, but very important nevertheless.



We cross the picturesque village of Modi with its extremely friendly people. It is worth mentioning that all villages around Thermopylae share stories on the battle, king Leonidas and the 300 Spartans. These stories have been going from mouth to mouth, from generation to generation for 2,500 years now.



Modi

Modi's ascent is our last one. The fields are in front of us. Destination: Thermopylae. It seems unbelievable. We are so close! Our feet are not aching, our body is not heavy. Because our soul is flying high on emotion. We run, we walk, we run again towards the memorial of Leonidas. We will see his statue, this time not coming out of a tour bus, but running towards it, from Sparta, for 378 kilometers, for 8 consecutive days! And there we are. Our eyes search for the inscription of Simonides of Ceos:

“Tell them in Lacedaemon, passer-by
That here, obedient to their word, we lie”
(translation from Greek by F L Lucas)



Plaque engraved with Simonides' famous epitaph for the 300 of Sparta. The sea has receded greatly over the last 2,500 years. In 480 BC the water was approximately where the modern highway runs today.

Each one of us bears his own sentiments, thoughts, answers to the question why to go ahead with this endurance race, what each of us has gained, what we feel. Because we surely feel something immense when we find ourselves under the shadow of the great Spartan King.



Thespian Soldier

Epilogue:

I would like to share my thoughts with you, now that several months have passed from this running expedition, and now that, with a clear mind, I can evaluate these 8 days of our own "Odyssey" that started from my native city of Sparta and ended in Thermopylae, following the historic course.

It might sound a bit extravagant, but now I somehow feel part (albeit a small one) of Greek history. I also feel that our decision to create this race, to re-create part of history, has definitely been worthwhile. This special race, this magnificent and unique journey back in time, will help more people understand the heroes of that era, realize that they were human beings of flesh and blood, just like us. It is this realization that will make us bond with them, love them and, above all, admire them for the immensity of their soul and their self-sacrifice for the common interest. I believe it is precisely through the selfless, magnificent and heroic endeavor of those 300 different personalities that one can find a part of oneself.

Thus, by running this historic route, by making this unique and sentimental "pilgrimage", by following this moral imperative, and by following the traces of those whose destination and destiny was to guard Thermopylae, I undoubtedly feel victorious!



Jacques-Louis David, Leonidas end las Thermopiles, 1814. Oleo sobre lienzo, 395 x 531 cm. Musée du Louvre, París

Thermopylae (C.P. Cavafy)

Honor to those who in the life they lead
define and guard a Thermopylae.
Never betraying what is right,
consistent and just in all they do
but showing pity also, and compassion;
generous when they are rich, and when they are poor,
still generous in small ways,
still helping as much as they can;
always speaking the truth,
yet without hating those who lie.
And even more honor is due to them
when they foresee (as many do foresee)
that in the end Ephialtis will make his appearance,
that the Medes will break through after all.

(C.P. Cavafy, Collected Poems. Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard.
Edited by George Savidis. Revised Edition. Princeton University Press, 1992)



Leonidas' monument . The monument stands opposite the historical hill of Kolonos and represents Leonidas in full armor. It was designed by B. Phalereus, and was erected in the 1950s at the expense of Greeks living in America.