

Athens Classic Marathon
Athens, Greece
Sunday, 10 November, 2013
9:00 AM

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In 490 BC, in the Battle of Marathon, Athenians defeated the Persians. Phidippides ran from Marathon to Athens to deliver the news of the victory. Upon arrival, he was only able to say “nenikamen” which means “we have won” before dying from exhaustion. Athens Classic Marathon commemorates this event.

In 1896, Athens organized the first Modern Olympic Games. Spyros Louis ran the distance of 42.185 kilometers from Marathon to Panathenaic Stadium in Athens in 2:58:50 and won the first ever marathon race. Athens Classic Marathon follows the same course.

I flew into Athens on Thursday, 7 November. My sister, Homeyra, had already arrived from Tehran to watch her brother running his 100th marathon! We were with Apostolos Greek Tours, which did a nice job in organizing all “land” aspects of the trip (airport transportation, hotel reservation, guided tours, marathon registration, pre-race pasta dinner, marathon transportation, and post-race dinner/dance party). We stayed in Amarilia Hotel in Vouliagmeni, an Athens’ suburb, which we found it relaxing, quiet, and scenic.



The hotel was within a short walking distance from the beach and a nice paved trail. Vouliagmeni hosted the Triathlon event during the Athens 2004 Olympic games.



On Friday, we visited the Acropolis and had lunch in a sidewalk café in the Plaka district, which is located in the shadow of Acropolis.



After the lunch, we went to the Marathon Expo for packet pick-up. Each runner received a short-sleeved technical Adidas shirt, a towel, a tote bag, and a pen.

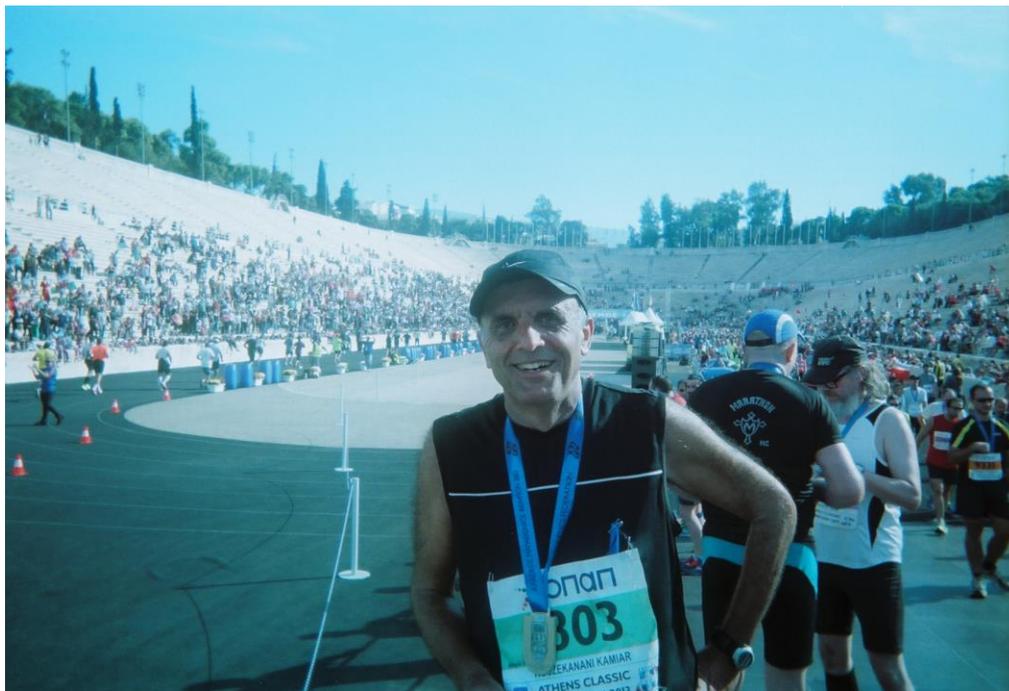


On Saturday, we went to Sounion to visit the temple of Poseidon. The drive from our hotel to Sounion and back was scenic. The pre-race pasta dinner at the hotel was quite good.



The 31st Annual Athens Classic Marathon was on Sunday, 10 November. We left the hotel at 6:45 AM for the start line in Marathon, which was an hour-long drive. It was a sunny, warm, and slightly humid morning. Wind was not a factor. Thousands of runners were expected. There were plenty of portable toilets. DHL trucks carried our drop-off bags to the finish line. There was a wave start system. The first block started at 9 AM, followed by the second block at 9:01 AM, the third block at 9:03 AM, and the other blocks in increments of 4 minutes. The first aid station was at kilometer 5, then every 2.5 kilometers, which provided plenty of water, sports drinks, wet sponges, sport gels, and bananas. I was impressed by a large number of emergency medical personnel throughout the route. The crowd support was excellent as we were running through several towns; I heard “bravo” numerous times! As expected, the course was hilly from kilometer 9 to kilometer 32. The last 10K was easy and the last kilometer was mainly downhill. The finish line was in Panathenikon Stadium, and we were greeted by a large number of spectators. The finisher medal was nice. There were adequate recovery food items and drinks.

There were 7205 male and 1284 female finishers, respectively. The winning times were 2:13:51 (male) and 2:41:32 (female). I ran within my limits. I did not walk any of the hills. I walked the aid stations. I ran the first half in 2:13:58 (10:13 pace) and crossed the finish line in 4:39:37 (10:40 pace). I felt comfortable throughout the run and had a great time.



There was a post-race dinner/dance party for us in our hotel. All runners in our group received a Greek head wreath and a hand-made pottery. I was recognized for having run my 100th marathon, and I must say that I am glad that I ran it in the birthplace of marathon running.





On Monday, we visited the Agora and the Theseion, which is the best preserved building of ancient Athens.



We then had few hours of free time to walk in and around Plaka district, have lunch, and do some shopping before returning to our hotel.



On Tuesday, my sister returned to Tehran and I returned to Corpus Christi. We both enjoyed a nice and memorable trip. Meeting several friendly tour-mates was the icing on the cake. Apostolos Greek Tours is highly recommended.