

TALKING TO THE GODS

The Greeks held festivals at various times right through the year, to pay respect to their gods, and persuade them to grant people's wishes, such as providing a good harvest, or winning a victory in war. Festivals were much more than just religious ceremonies: plays, music, dancing, athletic events and good food played a large part too. Some were small local events, but others drew crowds from miles around.

This sculpture shows water carriers at the festival of Athene in Athens. It is taken from a frieze on the Parthenon.



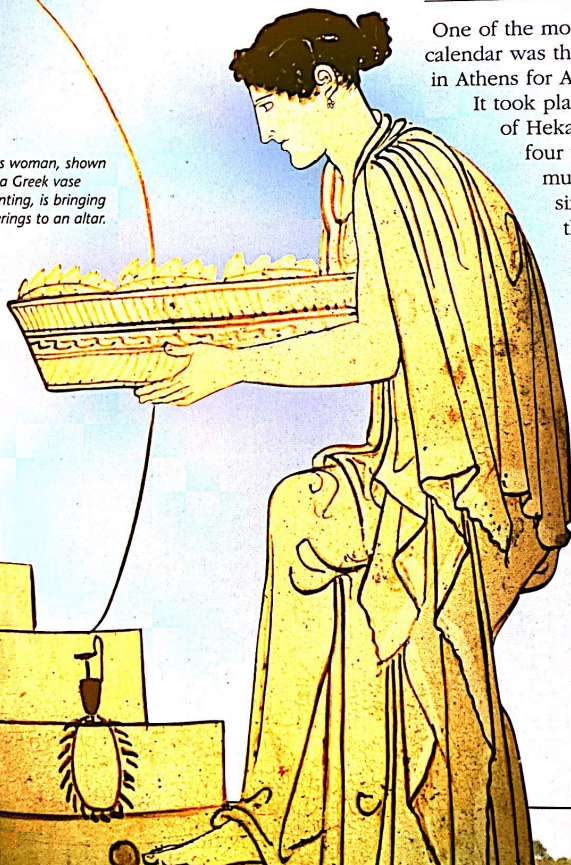
THE GREAT FESTIVAL OF ATHENE

One of the most important dates in the Greek calendar was the Panathenaia, the festival held in Athens for Athene, patron goddess of the city.

It took place each year, in the Greek month of Hekatombion (July/August), but every four years, it was celebrated on a much grander scale. Then, it lasted six whole days and was known as the Great Panathenaia

The celebrations began with music and singing, followed by athletic competitions, called the Panathenaic Games. The winners were presented with pots of the finest olive oil, from Athene's sacred olive tree. A grand procession led up to the Acropolis, where 100 cattle were slaughtered as an offering, and a magnificent new dress was draped around the statue of the goddess.

This woman, shown on a Greek vase painting, is bringing offerings to an altar.



INTERNET LINK

For a link to a website where you can have a look at the sacred site of Delphi, go to www.usborne-quicklinks.com