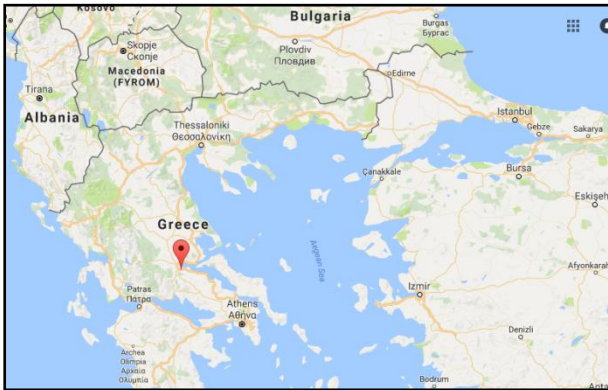


Thermopylae

Etymology

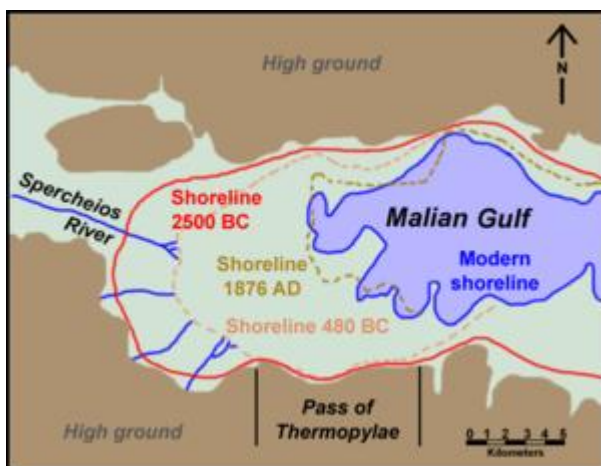
In Greek Thermopylae means “hot gates” due to its situation and sulphur springs.

Location/Description



Thermopylae is a place in modern Greece where a narrow coastal passage existed in antiquity. It derives its name from its renowned hot sulphur springs. The Hot Gates is “the place of hot springs” and in Greek mythology it is the cavernous entrance to “Hades”.

A main highway now splits the pass. It has many turns and has been the site of many vehicular accidents. The hot springs from which the pass derives its name still exist close to the foot of the hill.



Famous characters

The 300 Spartans and their compatriots from the Greek city states who defied the massive army of the Persian Empire under Xerxes in

BC 480 for three days until betrayed by one of their own.



View of the Thermopylae pass from the area of the Phocian Wall. In ancient times, the coastline would have been much closer to the mountain, near the road to the right. This is a result of sedimentary deposition.



Brief history

Thermopylae is primarily known for the battle that took place there in 480 BC, in which a hugely outnumbered Greek force, probably of around seven thousand (including the famous 300 Spartans, 500 warriors from Tegea, 500 from Mantinea, 120 from Arcadian Orchomenos, 1,000 from the rest of Arcadia, 200 from Phlius, 80 from Mycenae, 400 Corinthians, 400 Thebans, 1000 Phocians and the Opuntian Locrians) held off a substantially larger force of Persians under Xerxes. Probably about one thousand Greeks remained in the pass when most of the army retreated.

For three days they held a narrow route between the hills and the sea against Xerxes' vast cavalry and infantry force, before being outflanked on the third day via a hidden goat

path named the Anopaea Pass. According to the Greek legend, a traitor named Ephialtes of Trachis showed the path to the invaders. The following epitaph by Simonides was written on the monument: “Go tell the Spartans, stranger passing by, that here obedient to their laws we lie.”



The Hot Springs of Thermopylae today

Sources:

Wikipedia

(Compiler – John Tierney)