Sparta, the warrior state
The other important Greek city-state was Sparta. Spartan citizens were forbidden to work. They depended entirely on helots, land slaves who worked on the farms. Because the Spartans were always afraid the helots would revolt, they developed a strong warrior society.

Little culture
Sparta was little more than a collection of wooden houses and farms. It had no magnificent temples, and its people produced few works of art or literature. Today, only a few Spartan ruins remain. They lie outside the modern Greek city of Sparta, in the southeast Peloponnese.

A soldier's life
Every young male citizen of Sparta served as a full-time soldier, called a hoplite. He wore a bronze helmet, an armored breastplate, leggings, and a red cloak. He carried a shield, a spear, and sometimes swords or bows and arrows. Hoplites were a fearsome sight as they marched against Sparta's enemies.

Rugged training
In ancient Sparta, children did not belong to their parents but to the state. State officials examined every newborn, and if the baby was sick or weak, it was left to die in the mountains.

At the age of seven, boys were taken from their families to live in military barracks, where they stayed until they were thirty. They were trained for war and taught the values of discipline and a rugged life. They received only one tunic to wear for the entire year. Young boys were whipped to teach them to accept pain. Some let themselves be whipped to death to show their bravery. If a young soldier broke any rules, he lost his citizenship and the right to own slaves. He was forced to wear special clothing that identified his crime.

Girls and women
Spartan girls had more freedom than other girls in ancient Greece. They exercised and wore short tunics that allowed them to run freely. The state wanted girls to be strong so they would grow up to become mothers of warriors. Like women in other city-states, Spartan women could not vote or hold positions of power.

Sparta's government
Sparta valued security more than personal freedom. It did not have a democratic government and was ruled by kings. Anyone who broke the law or spoke out against the government or its rules could be put to death.

The ups and downs of Sparta’s power
Sparta was at the height of its power between the eighth and fourth centuries BC. In 431 BC, Sparta, wanting to end the growing influence of its rival city-state, went to war with Athens. This conflict led to a series of land and sea battles, known as the Peloponnesian Wars. In 404 BC, Sparta defeated Athens. Years of war had weakened all the Greek city-states, however, and they became easy targets for invaders from the north—the Macedonians.

Spartan: You can look it up!
Sparta was a warrior society that produced the best soldiers in ancient Greece. The ancient city-state has left one important reminder of its past: the word spartan, which describes someone who shows discipline and courage. It also describes something that is simple, rugged, or without decoration, such as a spartan lifestyle, a spartan room, or a spartan diet.

This carving of a Spartan warrior was made around 490 BC.
Thousands of years after reaching the height of its power as a mighty city-state, Sparta today is a quiet town in southern Greece.

By Sierra Adare

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