

ATHENS

SPARTA

How were the economies of Athens and Sparta different?

"Hey hey! Let me guess -- that Mr. Sparta has got you down, doesn't he? He always gets me depressed too. Seriously, can you believe that Sparta only focuses on a military education?

What a sad, sad way to live. Oh well!

Do you want to know how we Athenians pay the bills? It's simple: our economy is based on trade and tourism. Thousands of visitors come to Athens to visit our wonderful temples and schools, and while they are here they spend their money! Woo! The tourists also bring goods from foreign lands to trade, sell, or barter. Since we are located near the sea, trade and tourism are easy for us. Our port cities are well-kept, and our harbors are visited by many other Greek city-states on a daily basis. What do we trade away, you ask? We will trade anything we have in excess. Let me have you guess! We specialize in olive trees, beekeeping, and creating fabulous works of art. What do we think we have 'extra' of? You guessed it, we trade away olive oil, honey, and our fine pottery. We trade these for goods that we need, such as grain and barley for bread and to feed our animals. We also import pork, cheese, glass, and rugs.

You should come visit sometime and see this whole "trading" thing take place! Most of it happens in our downtown marketplace -- we call it the agora. It is truly something to see! To make trading easier, we use our own coin system. Many other city states have started to use our coins for their currency too! Since many look to us to lead the Mediterranean world, it just makes things easier! I hope to see you here sometime soon!"

"Welcome back! I hope Mr. Athens didn't bore you too much! Are you ready to hear how we Spartans do business? While Athens relies on things outside of their control -- like trade and tourism -- we go to great lengths to make sure our citizens are taken care of! We specialize in two things: farming and conquering. We farm the land to produce crops to feed our growing population, and we conquer other people nearby to ensure we have enough land to support our growing population. Is this wrong? The way I see it, it's either them or us! What happens to the people living in the areas we conquer, you ask? Well, they become our slaves. We call these people helots. These slaves are extremely important to Spartan society. The Spartan men often spend their lives away from home being warriors, so the helots are used to farm the land. We treat these helots very well -- we let them stay in their homes they originally lived in, but they have to give us the majority of food they produce. This is fair, right? We also have a group of people that don't qualify for citizenship -- we call these people perioikoi. These people are active in Spartan society but aren't true Spartans. Many of them make the goods our soldiers use, such as shoes, cloaks, knives, and spears.

Do we trade with the rest of the world like Athens? Absolutely not. We use our own currency -- iron bars -- and most people aren't too thrilled about receiving iron as a form of payment. Oh well, we don't care! If other city-states don't want to trade with us, we'll just stick to our own business!

