

# TO BHMA

International edition

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## What's All The Fuss About Bone Density?

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

By Emma Rosenblum

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

A couple of months ago I was out to dinner with my sister when she turned to me with a serious look. “Emma, I’m worried about something,” she said, warily eyeing my pasta bolognese. She paused long enough for my mind to go to a dark place—our parents? One of the kids? “It’s your bones,” she said dryly. “I’m worried about your bone density.” As far as I know, my bones are fine. In fact, the only bone I’ve ever broken is my thumb, in tenth grade, when a friend kicked a soccer ball into my hand at close range. Since then my bones have done their job without a hitch.

*Please turn to Page 8*

## When Paul McCartney Almost Quit Music

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

By Elias Leight

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Paul McCartney emerged from the wreckage of the Fab Four in 1970, eager to ferret out a fresh sound. “I had to look inside myself, look at my world and find something that wasn’t the Beatles,” he says in “Paul McCartney: Man on the Run,” a new documentary directed by Morgan Neville. He fell flat on his face, at least according to many leading critics at the time. The U.K. publication NME called McCartney’s 1971 album “Ram” an “excursion into almost unrelieved tedium.” When the singer put out “Red Rose Speedway” in 1973, the Village Voice spurned it as “possibly the worst album ever made by a rock and roller of the first rank.”

*Please turn to Page 8*



Local resident Giorgos Markatos (right) points to the flood-stricken Evros plain and describes the recurring flooding issues to journalist Antonis Diniakos (left).

GIORGOS KALKANTIS

TO BHMA International edition

# A River in Crisis: Evros Floods Now, Dries Up Later

By Antonis Diniakos

The mud is a heavy, metallic color. It sits in courtyards, clings to boots, climbs into ditches. In the Evros plain,

the land has lost its edges. Roads end abruptly in a glossy surface you can’t tell is field or lake. From afar, the place looks still. Up close, you hear only pumps. Everywhere, people fear the water level.

Ten centimeters of water is enough. Thousands of hectares disappear beneath a quiet sheet that looks harmless—until you try to cross it.

In recent days, Evros has been living through

something its residents no longer call an “extreme event.” For them, it’s become familiar—something that returns every few years. Huge volumes of water descend from the northern catchment. Local

waters have nowhere to go and become trapped in the fields. They press against the levees, which in some spots give way or overflow under the force of the increased water pressure.

*Please turn to Page 4*



Iranian lawmakers are seen wearing Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) uniforms in the country’s parliament, known as the Islamic Consultative Assembly, to show support for the powerful paramilitary force charged with defending Iran’s regime.

# The Iranian Forces Defending the Regime Now Face the Ultimate Test

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

By David S. Cloud and Benoit Faucon

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

U.S. and Israeli airstrikes killed many of Iran’s top leaders in just hours, including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. But the huge security apparatus they oversaw to ensure the regime’s survival is still intact.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is best known as an armed force of nearly 200,000 paramilitary members. It also functions as a parallel government and economic force whose main mission is defending the Islamic regime formed after the 1979 Revolution and spreading its influence throughout the Middle East.

Unless the IRGC is de-

feated or somehow turned, it will retain its ability to generate cash through illicit activities and help proxies like Houthi militants in Yemen harass the U.S. and its allies. The IRGC has its own military and intelligence divisions separate from the conventional armed forces and is deeply entrenched in the country’s businesses.

*Please turn to Page 2*

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# The Iranian Force Built to Defend the Regime Now Faces the Ultimate Test

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

### Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is designed to thwart attempts to overthrow the government and outlast more powerful enemies

Continued from Page One

Its secretive Quds Force handles Iran's relationships with militant groups around the region, while other IRGC components are responsible for its missile program and for domestic security.

Israel struck severe blows to the IRGC on Saturday, killing its top commander, Mohammad Pakpour, and Ali Shamkhani, who headed the country's war committee, as well as other high-level officials—a sign that the U.S. is seeking to degrade the IRGC's power. Attacks on IRGC facilities could fracture its control over lower-level operatives and shrink its capacity to put down domestic opposition, analysts said.

"If you decapitate the head of the IRGC, the body will start to shake," said Saeid Golkar, associate professor at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

Among the targets hit by Israel was the IRGC's Tharallah Headquarters. During times of unrest, Tharallah coordinates intelligence, policing and street-level enforcers in the Basij militia, as well as psychological operations.

The IRGC is a dominant force inside Iran, but in a matchup with the U.S. and Israel, it is hopelessly outgunned. Still, crippling the organization could take weeks or even months of additional airstrikes and other military steps, analysts and Iranian opposition leaders said. Without doing so, the Iranian regime is likely to remain in place and become even more repressive as hard-liners who survived the initial U.S. and Israeli strikes further unleash the IRGC's armed loy-



Iranian Revolutionary Guard cadets march during an annual military parade marking the anniversary of the beginning of war against Iraq, just outside Tehran, Iran, 2024.

alists in hopes of clinging to power.

Khamenei's death "strengthens the most hard-line and militarized elements inside the regime," said Mohammed Albasha, founder of Basha Report,

a Washington-based risk-advisory firm. "There is no organized opposition ready to seize this moment. The likely outcome is not reform but consolidation, closer to a closed military state." President Trump called

Saturday for the IRGC and police to "peacefully merge" and "work together" with ordinary Iranians who oppose the government. "We are hearing that many of their IRGC, Military, and other Security and Police

Forces no longer want to fight and are looking for immunity," he said in a social-media post.

But a transition away from 47 years of hard-line Islamic rule and hostility to the U.S. is the least likely

scenario in the short run, analysts said.

There are pragmatists within the IRGC, but they are no less committed to religious fundamentalism than Khamenei and the clerics who ruled by his side. Many of the group's leadership came of age as soldiers fighting in the brutal war against Iraq in the 1980s, an era that cemented its central role in supporting the regime. Under Khamenei, ideological indoctrination became even more prevalent, analysts said.

Iran's government could evolve into some form of military dictatorship under IRGC control. It is hard to imagine the emergence of a figure like Delcy Rodríguez, the Venezuelan vice president who has toed Washington's line since the capture of Nicolás Maduro in a U.S. raid in early January, analysts said.

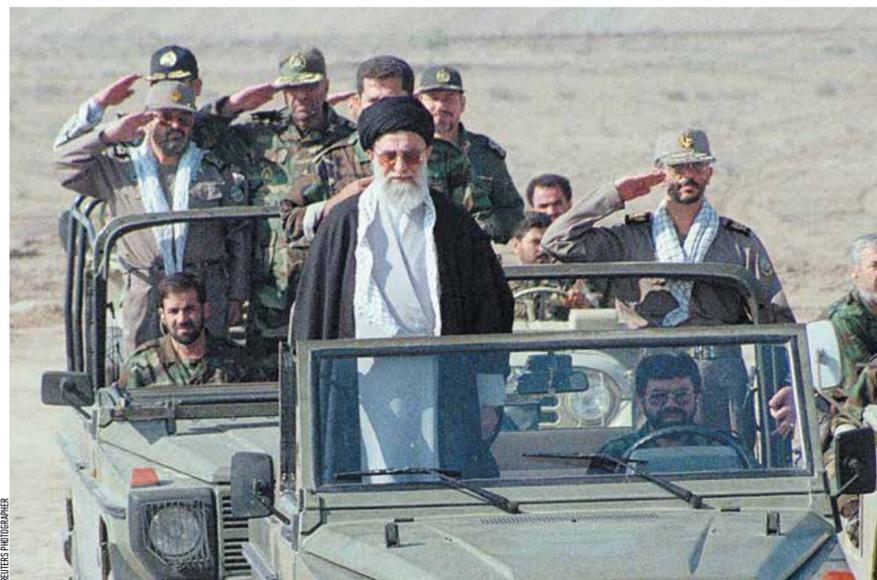
"The IRGC is a highly radicalized and indoctrinated force," said Kasra Aarabi, the director of IRGC research for United Against Nuclear Iran, a policy organization that opposes the Iranian regime. "So the idea of them switching sides, I think, is unlikely."

In Tehran, the IRGC oversees bases in each of the city's 22 municipal districts manned by the Basij, the voluntary paramilitary group that spearheaded the government crackdown on protesters in January, according to a report written by Aarabi and Golkar. Another 3,000 smaller Basij facilities are located in most of Tehran's neighborhoods.

A similar infrastructure is in place across the country, the report said.

Without occupying the country and putting troops on the ground, toppling the

**The Islamic Republic has set up four layers of replacements for its entire leadership, in case of a sustained military campaign, Iranian officials said**



Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, stands in front of a jeep as he inspects 110,000 hardline Basij militia volunteers, October 20, 2000, during maneuvers in support of the Palestinian intafada (holy war) against Israel.

**'We are hearing that many of their IRGC, Military, and other Security and Police Forces no longer want to fight and are looking for immunity'**

**Mohammed Albasha, founder of risk-advisory firm Basha Report**

# What Images of Kim Jong Un's Daughter at Military Parade Tell Us About Her Rise

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

### Costume and choreography guide Kim's possible successor across the country's biggest stage

By Dasl Yoon and Andrew Barnett

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

At military parades of authoritarian regimes, it's not often a girl takes center stage. But Kim Ju Ae, believed to be roughly 13 years old, is far from typical. She's the

daughter of Kim Jong Un, the third-generation leader of North Korea—and the only one of the dictator's children to have ever been shown in public. Her growing profile has South Korea's spy agency believ-

ing she is increasingly positioned to succeed her father, although North Korea has stayed mum on the succession topic. In photographs and videos released by state media, the Wednesday night ap-

pearance at a military parade signaled much about her growing prominence and the power dynamics among the regime's elite—in a country where images of the ruling Kims are carefully orchestrated pieces of propaganda.



Kim Ju Ae attends a military parade to commemorate the Ninth Congress of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) in Pyongyang, North Korea, February 25, 2026.



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un meets with leading officials and military commanders, accompanied by his daughter Kim Ju Ae, in Pyongyang, North Korea, in this picture released on February 28, 2026.

## The look

### 1. Hairstyle

Kim Ju Ae's "half-updo" mirrors the hairstyle favored by her mother, North Korea's first lady, Ri Sol Ju. Gone are the bangs and ponytail of her first public appearances. The more sophisticated look signals she is a figure to be respected despite her age.

### 2. Outfit

Kim Ju Ae and her father sported matching black leather trenchcoats. Just as Kim Jong Un has dressed to echo his predecessors, the sartorial symmetry underscores his daughter's connection to the "Mount Paektu blood-

line"—those with a direct lineage to North Korean founder Kim Il Sung.

### 3. Posture

She stands upright in heels and with confidence. Her poised smile and claps resemble her father's gestures. That contrasts with the linked arms and shy looks of the past.

### 4. The positioning

Proximity is power in North Korea. Kim Ju Ae, in various parade photos, stood closest to her father. Top military and diplomatic officials often faded to the background.

### 5. The women

Of the females close to Kim Jong Un, his daughter took center stage. Her mother was photographed to the side, behind or even out of focus. Parade photos of Kim Yo Jong, the dictator's powerful younger sister, weren't prominent.

The intrigue swirling around Kim Ju Ae will persist. North Korea hasn't even officially confirmed her age or full name.

Her frequent appearances are a stark departure from the traditional secrecy surrounding children of the ruling Kim family. Whether she is the successor or not, the Kim regime is curating a public rollout to normalize a fourth generation of leadership.

# A River in Crisis: Evros Floods Now, Dries Up Later

In Greece's far northeast, fields vanish under water every few years—only for the plain to thirst months later—fueling anger over aging levees, missing water-management projects, and a cross-border river no country can control alone



Children's toys hung up and away from the ground to avoid being swept up by the water.

## Continued from Page One

In places, the water reaches roads, creeping toward homes. Elsewhere, destruction arrives silently where it hurts most: in the soil that should now be worked on for spring sowing.

### 'It's receding'—but that doesn't mean it's over

In Lavara, at the village entrance, the water reached close to courtyards without crossing house thresholds. Tractors move slowly, pulling local waters toward lower ground, as if trying to push the plain back into place.

Rafail Giannakopoulos, a farmer from Soufli, stands by a pump, on shift since early morning.

"The municipality has hired our tractors so we can push the water out. Fortunately, at least there was no issue with houses. The water is slowly receding, the level is dropping, but the damage is huge," he tells TO BHMA.

In Evros, "receding" doesn't mean the alarm is over. It means constant monitoring of the water level. It means shifts and exhaustion. The region has lived it before—under harsher terms.

Dimitris Petrovits remembers 2015, when, as dep-

uty regional governor for Civil Protection, he faced flows that reached, "2,500 cubic meters per second."

"Back then we spoke about a once-in-a-century flood. The volumes were enormous," he notes.

### The river as a 'tree'

Today, flows have hovered around 1,600 cubic meters per second. However, Petrovits explains, the story isn't just in the numbers.

"Think of the river like a big tree. The trunk is the Evros basin. When the trunk carries water and the 'branches'—the tributaries—also carry water at the same time, that's when the big pressure builds."

The 'branches' in question are the Ardas, which meets the Evros in the Trigono area, and carries water released from Bulgarian dams. Farther downstream on the Turkish side, the Tundzha and the Ergene add their own flows. When their surges coincide, pressure on the Evros 'trunk' multiplies.

Petrovits insists that Evros is not a local river swelling after a storm, but "a huge cross-border hydrological system" that requires constant monitoring, coordination beyond borders, and the creation of projects that reduce the

flood peak. Because when the water level reaches the crest of a levee, the laws of physics takes over.

"Either it will overflow, or it will break it. Water always finds its way to the weak point," he says.

### At 'Che's' coffeeshop, the farmers' parliament

On a cobbled narrow street in the center of Didymoteicho sits "Che's" hangout—the city's unofficial farmers' parliament. A small, low-ceilinged cafe with wooden paneling halfway up the walls, green tables marked by decades of vibrant debate, and a stove that always stays warm, come rain or snow.

On the wall, Che Guevara in a wooden frame watches all who come and go, next to a gold-framed mirror and AEK football stickers from neighborhoods across Greece: Nea Ionia, Peristeri, Livadia, and of course Didymoteicho.

"The Serb" sits by the stove, slightly hunched. He has ankylosing spondylitis—an autoimmune disease that "cements the vertebrae." He takes a biological injection every month.

"If my feet or knees get cold, it hits me all the way up to the spine," he says quietly. They call him "the Serb"

because of his grandfather's origins. His name is Giorgos Markou, 49, and for the past few days he has been among those affected by the latest flood.

"In another era, I would have gone into the water without a second thought. Now I think twice because of my autoimmune disease," he says, as we head toward his property.

His house is just outside Didymoteicho, right after the bridge: a quaint, standalone building on a small, uneven plot.

"This time the water reached the yard. If you'd come a day earlier, you would have seen it touching the boxes I'd stacked."

Furniture is raised on top of other furniture, belongings piled hastily—an entire life on alert. Before leaving, he moved his chickens so they wouldn't drown, lifting them onto a makeshift platform.

"They turned into ducks," he says, trying to laugh the situation off.

Thirty chickens, two dogs, a small vineyard, a few machines. It's not a big fortune, but it's his life. He gathered what he could, took his two dogs, and temporarily moved to his family home inside the city.

Every two or three years

he uproots his life up to protect it from the river—then waits, like everyone here, for the water level to fall.

### Crops under water, a year at risk

In Ormenio—the first village to "see" the waters when they come down from Bulgaria—Stratis Vasileiadis, 40, assesses the damage not only as the community president, but as a farmer himself. He cultivates about 800 stremmata (around 80 hectares) of wheat and cotton.

"About 4,000 to 4,500 stremmata are under water in the Ormenio community," he says. "The wheat has been damaged. And where we had prepared fields for spring crops, we may not be able to utilize them for up to two months. Essentially, we'll lose the year."

His tone is calm, almost technical. "I've taken a hit on about 300 of my stremmata. But that won't show anywhere. Only we will realize it again."

The water level no longer threatens homes in Ormenio, but anxiety lingers.

"The plain doesn't have big elevation differences, so the water level rises slowly before it becomes dangerous for the settlement. But if it rises

another 10 centimeters, another 300 stremmata will flood."

The same scene replays every few years: 2012, 2015, and now once again.

"Unfortunately, this situation keeps coming back," he says. And when the conversation turns to what's being done wrong, his answer is blunt:

"We don't plan ahead for anything. We only do crisis management and communication."

### 'Now 190,000 stremmata are under water—then no water to irrigate'

A few kilometers south, in Orestiada, the head of the farmers' association Ilias Angelakoudis, waits in the main square. In recent years he has repeatedly traveled to Athens for meetings—some even at the Maximos Mansion, the seat of the prime minister—carrying the same picture that marks northern Evros every two or three years.

"It's not that they don't know," he says. The problem isn't only when there's a flood. It's that three months later we may not have water to irrigate. We told that to the Prime Minister clearly.

"We can't be looking at 190,000 stremmata under wa-

ter now, and in three months be searching for water."

### Water management projects: nowhere to be seen

The contradiction is almost ironic. In winter and spring, water rushes through. In summer, the plain thirsts. For Angelakoudis, the issue isn't compensation after disaster. It's prevention and above all, permanent water management.

"The water leaves. Everything you see now will end up in the sea. Nothing stays here," he stresses.

"That's why for years we've been saying we need management of the local streams. Small dams where possible. Hold back part of the water—not to stop the Evros, that can't be done—but to have reserves.

"In Evros you can't do whatever you want. But in the tributaries and local waters you can do things. The point is to design them in time."

Delay, he says, costs twice as much: first as flood pressure, then as summer drought.

"Now we'll wait six to seven days for drainage. Some fields will keep trapped water. With evaporation and sun, maybe they'll dry. But we probably won't get in before Easter. And early crops like sunflower fall behind. There you already have production losses."

And the flood, he adds, is hitting land that was already fragile.

"Pressure on us farmers doesn't start with the water. Prices are low, costs are high, wages are down. This is another blow—maybe the final one for some."

In a region that depends almost entirely on agriculture, the damage doesn't stay in the fields.

"When the farmer loses, the shop in the square loses. Restaurants lose. The whole market loses."

### 'The levee is a defense line, not a solution'

Kostas Venetidis, deputy regional governor for Civil Protection in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, knows that in Evros the word "emergency" has lost its meaning.

"The issue isn't only how many cubic meters are pouring down," he explains. "It's when they coincide. When the Evros trunk rises and at the same time we have intense local rainfall, the ground—already saturated—can't absorb anything."

He remarks that a levee is a line of defense, not a permanent solution.

"We maintain about 200 kilometers of levees. There are interventions, reinforcements, monitoring. But when the water level reaches the crest, it's over."

"Evros is a cross-border river. Its drainage basin lies mostly outside Greece. The flows that arrive here started hundreds of kilometers away.



Thousands of hectares of farm land turn into a lake due to the flooding.



The few remaining chickens secured by their owner on a tall fixture to avoid the flood.



'Che' kafeneion in Didymoteicho is the city's unofficial farmers' parliament.

So management can't be unilateral."

Venetidis speaks of the need for a multi-layer strategy: constant maintenance and strengthening of levees, small retention works in local streams, and better cross-border cooperation with Bulgaria on flows.

"We can't control the trunk. But we can manage local waters better," he stresses.

That brings the discussion back to long-debated projects—small dams or reservoirs in areas such as Therapio and Komara.

"The goal isn't to 'close' the river. It's to relieve the system—to reduce the flood peak and have reserves for irrigation season."

### From the field to politics, and back again

At a recent New Democracy pre-conference in Alexandroupoli, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis spoke about "shielding" Evros, promising faster flood-protection works, the use of European funds, and stronger cooperation with neighboring countries on water management.

The announcement of a "comprehensive plan" may sound institutionally sufficient. But for farmers, the damage is not only the lost harvest—it's the year that gets pushed back, the soil that changes, the uncertainty that piles up.

And so the same questions return: Why does Evros flood again and again? Is it only the rain? Is it the volumes coming from Bulgaria? Is it the levees that confine the river to a narrow corridor? Is it the lack of water-management infrastructure—or all of it together?

Evros is a river of three countries, with a drainage basin that ignores borders and policies that don't always align in time. Peaks released from Bulgarian dams, timing overlaps with the Tundzha and Ergene flows, local rainfall on already saturated ground, levees that are maintained but aging—together they form an equation that cannot be solved through cycles of announcements and post-disaster management.

In Evros, each wave of water tests the same limits: technical, administrative, political. Farmers lift furniture, raise chickens, move animals, wait for the level to fall. The state speaks of plans, projects, cooperation.

The question is whether these two timelines—the plain's and the administration's—will ever meet.

Because if they don't, then in two or three years the image will be the same again. Pumps will run through the night. The same stremmata will be counted. And the word "emergency" will keep being used for something that, here, has long since become normal.

# Meet the Athenians



If you've spent time in Athens as a visitor or a resident, you'll know how chaotic, charming, exasperating and irresistible the city can be—often all at once

**Where do Athenians spend their time?**

Where do they unwind, meet friends, or enjoy their daily coffee? Where does work end and the city begin? In *Meet the Athenians*, we talk to the people of Athens about the places and moments that make them love the city they call home.

**A:** Athens, with its multicultural character, is like a living organism - and for me, a city is defined by its people. My profession has a direct, creative connection with the Greek capital, as the city is filled with people from diverse cultures, experiences, and needs. As a journalist, the constant search for new stories and my interest in travel leads me to meet people and ideas that enrich my work. At the same time, through social media, I communicate and collaborate with young people, which is something that excites me about the city. Athenians are restless and active, which gives my work a sense of constant change and adaptation.

**P:** I'm not sure about the city itself. My films don't take place in any specific country. When I'm shooting in the streets of Athens, I try to find locations you could find in other cities, anywhere. As for the people, I find the generosity that persists in the face of our times touching.

**2 A:** Twenty-four hours in Athens are certainly not enough, but three stops can capture the essence of the city — its history, daily life, and views. I would start with a walk in around Plaka, allowing myself to get lost in its narrow streets, among neo-classical houses and small courtyards. Plaka has a traditional and



**Artemis Skoufou**

**Travel Influencer & French Language Teacher**  
Giving travel tips through her social media profile @travellersbyartemis on Instagram and TikTok



**Petros Sevastikoglou**

**Film Director**  
His newest movie titled "Cries" is showing in cinemas in Athens and Thessaloniki

a city with a rich history, but at the same time it remains lively, restless, and unpredictable. I love how, within just a few minutes, you can move from an archaeological site to a neighborhood full of life, cafés, culture, and people from diverse backgrounds. On the other hand, something that bothers me is the daily routine. Traffic, noise, and a lack of respect for public spaces often make Athens feel suffocating. The city needs more organized transportation infrastructure and a more sustainability-rooted orientation. So, the lack of respect for the environment and cleanliness is something I would like to see changed, as I believe we all share responsibility for improving the quality of urban life. Perhaps that is why, living in Piraeus and loving to travel, I feel the need to escape often to the sea or nature — places where everything feels more human and balanced.

**P:** First stop, Athinas Avenue. It's one of the few places downtown that hasn't been entirely distorted by tourism. You can find anything from screws and screwdrivers, meat and fish, saddles, sails and a thousand and one miscellaneous things on sale. Second stop, Mercouri Square in Petralona, which is in a true Athenian neighborhood and exudes the local sense of humor. Third stop, Philopappos Hill, because I live close by and a dose of greenery and calm is good for the soul.

**3 A:** What I really like about Athens is its contrasts and the energy it radiates. It is

**P:** I like the Athenians, most of whom have roots in other regions. This creates a climate in which people can misunderstand each other, but it's also a multicultural tapestry. Athens is a surreal urban landscape, charming even in its ugliness. I wouldn't change a thing. If I didn't like it, I'd move to another city.

charming atmosphere, offering a calm stroll while at the same time allowing you to admire the city's history and culture, ideally ending at the Roman Agora for a brief encounter with antiquity.

The second stop would inevitably be the Acropolis, the ultimate symbol of Athens, combined with a visit to the Acropolis Museum, which perfectly completes the experience. I would end the day on a hill - either Philopappos or Lycabettus - to watch the sunset over the city. From above, Athens seems calmer and more charming, and a beautiful sunset would be the perfect closing moment.



Lycabettus Hill



Philopappos Hill

**1** How does your work connect with the city and its people?

**2** If you only had 24 hours to spend in Athens, which are your 3 must-visit places?

**3** What do you really like about Athens and what would you change if you could?

A project coordinated by Nikos Markatos

## Is Greece a Destination for Sports Lovers?



Think Greece is only about history, beaches, islands and great food? Think again

By Maria Paravantes

Welcome to "All About Greece", part of "TO BHMA International Edition Travels Greece With You" series. Here we answer your questions and introduce you to this wonderful country we call home and you call vacation!

When travelers dream of visiting Greece, they usually imagine golden beaches, turquoise waters,

sunset cocktails at music-filled beach bars, and especially for culture lovers, long hours exploring ancient sites under the Mediterranean sun. But how many of you know that Greece is a dynamic, year-round sports destination, attracting athletes, teams, and spectators from around the world to major international sporting events. Beyond its beaches and ancient ruins, Greece offers something

unexpected: an exciting year-round sports calendar. And although many of you associate Greece with the origins of sport - this is after all where the first Olympic Games took place - very few realize it is also an ideal destination for sporting experiences. As a result, most vacationers don't plan a sports-focused trip to Greece. They discover sports tourism accidentally, if at all.



**As a Participant**

The Athens Authentic Marathon takes place in fall and is one of the world's most iconic races, retracing the original route from Marathon to Athens run by the ancient messenger Pheidippides. The Acropolis Rally, held in late spring, is a legendary motorsport event and part of the World Rally Championship. The Tour of Hellas, Greece's premier professional cycling stage race, is also held in spring. The Aegean Rally, one of the Mediterranean's best-known sailing regattas, alongside dozens of other sailing events, takes place on the islands in the summer. The Navarino Challenge is a high-profile multisport endurance event (triathlon, swimming, running) held in the Peloponnese in the fall, welcoming elite and amateur athletes from around the world. The Messinia Pro-Am Golf Tournament and other pro-am events bring players from across the globe. In addition, many Greek cities and islands, including Rhodes, Spetses, Tinos, Kea, Corfu, Crete, and Andros, host marathons, half-marathons, mini-runs, and trail races. In the summer, there are dozens of paddle-board (SUP) competitions, climbing events, paddle tennis tournaments, kite- and wind-surfing tours. Greece also hosts purpose-driven events such as the annual Race for the Cure, raising awareness about breast cancer. For the ultimate endurance challenge, elite runners travel to Greece every September to compete in the Spartathlon, one of the world's toughest and most historic ultra-races. Participants run 246km (152.8 miles) from Athens to Sparta (road and trail) in under 36 hours, testing physical and mental limits.



**As a Spectator**

For travelers who prefer to watch sports instead of compete, Greece also hosts major international championships, including the EuroLeague Final Four, EuroBasket group games, UEFA Cup volleyball, water polo tournaments, UEFA youth competitions. Visitors to Athens can easily attend a football (soccer) or basketball match between Greece's top teams. Famous clubs include Olympiacos, Panathinaikos, PAOK and AEK, but there are also many strong regional teams worth catching. For the most part, football or basketball matches are safe, well-organized, and family-friendly. You can book tickets for most major sporting events online. You will need your passport to book your personalized digital ticket. Main stadiums are centrally located and easily accessible by public transport. For international or high-profile matches, it's best to arrive at least an hour before kickoff to allow time for security checks and to get to your seat without rushing. Avoid large bags and backpacks.



**Discovering the Origins of Sport**

Sports fans visiting Athens can also discover more of Greece's athletic heritage at the Athens Olympic Museum, which offers an immersive journey through Olympic history, featuring medals, torches, and artifacts from both the ancient and modern Games. And of course no visit to Greece for a sports lover can be complete without a visit to the archaeological site of Ancient Olympia in the Peloponnese. This is where the ancient Olympic Games first took place in 776 BCE. And you can walk through the original ancient stadium where athletes once competed, explore temples and training grounds, visit the archaeological museum featuring artifacts from the Games, and stand where athletes once competed for glory, honor and in fair play. So just a reminder: in Greece, sport isn't just entertainment, it's part of the country's way of life and so worth discovering.

**Sea, Sun, and Sport**

According to Expedia's latest travel trends report, 57% of travelers want to attend a local sporting event while on vacation. Well, Greece is perfect for that. Whether you

want to catch a local game as a spectator or try your luck as a participant, the country hosts an impressive range of sporting events throughout the year.

Send your questions to Maria Paravantes at mparavantes@tovima.com

# When Paul McCartney Almost Quit Music

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

A new documentary takes on the post-Beatles period when critics hated McCartney, and fans blamed him for breaking up the band

*Continued from Page One*

“Paul McCartney: Man on the Run” revisits this period when the former Beatle’s music was often dismissed and he was cast as a villain who drove the final nail into his old group’s coffin. Even as fans kept buying his albums, McCartney contemplated quitting music.

“I was getting slagged off by everyone, and that does make you question if you’ve still got it,” the star says in the book, “Wings: The Story of a Band on the Run,” an oral history which expands on Neville’s documentary interviews. “I did seriously consider packing it all in on a number of occasions.”

Few members of popular groups make the leap to become vital solo artists. Although a handful break big—think Michael Jackson, Beyoncé or Harry Styles—most wash out.

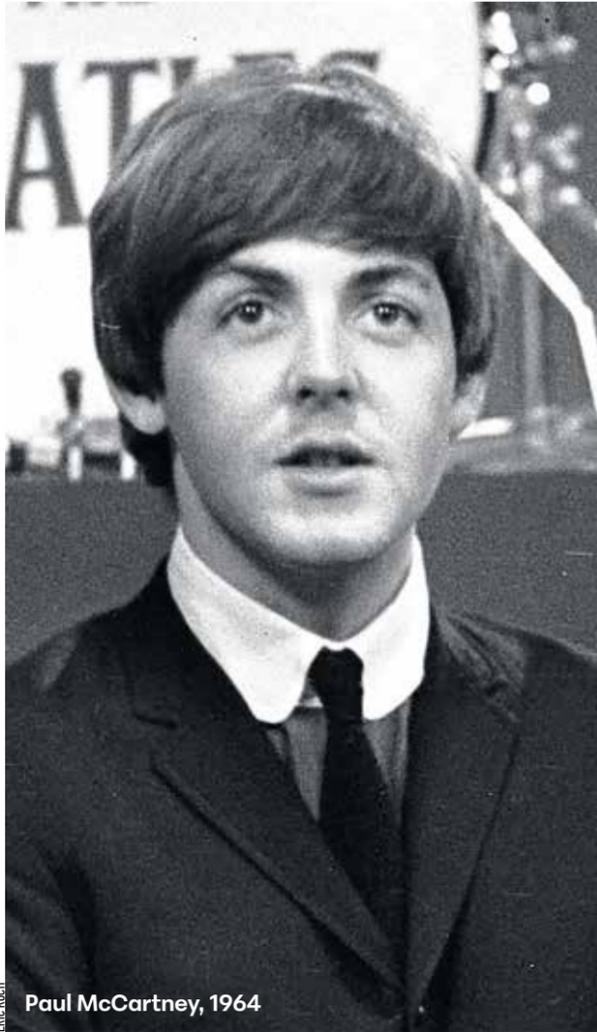
“There are always great challenges for members of a hugely successful group to step out on their own, and most of these are dramatically underestimated by the artist,” said Barry Weiss, founder of

Records, a label that is a joint venture with Sony Music. “Unless the leaving member has a unique point of view and specific direction artistically, the odds are high that they will fail.”

Neville, who won an Oscar directing a documentary about backup singers, “20 Feet From Stardom,” hoped to understand how McCartney battled those odds. “I know there were missteps along the way,” Neville said. “I give Paul complete credit, because he let me 100% make the film I wanted to make.” McCartney is one of the movie’s executive producers.

Some of the venom aimed at the star in the early 1970s was less about his music and more about his politics—or lack thereof. By the end of the previous decade, rock had become self-serious; many listeners expected artists to engage with the urgent issues of the day.

In contrast, McCartney was largely writing “songs about how much he loved [his wife] Linda and how cool their life was,” said Peter Ames Carlin, the author



Paul McCartney, 1964

of “Paul McCartney: A Life.” Some critics sneered at these topics as “f—ing bourgeois,” Carlin continued.

Linda, who died in 1998, was credited along with Paul on “Ram” in 1971. When he formed the band Wings, she played keyboards, sang and co-wrote songs for several years.

Wings debuted with “Wild Life” in December 1971, less than 12 months after McCartney sued the rest of the Fab Four to dissolve their contractual partnership. While this was more the final step in a drawn-out, painful process of separation than the decisive blow, “everyone was saying I broke up the Beatles,” he says in the documentary. “I kind of bought into it.”

Still, McCartney kept recording. He frequently took a shoot-from-the-hip approach in the studio, reveling in “the freedom of not having to answer to anyone else,” as Neville put it: “Paul’s whole thing is the madcap idea is often the brilliant idea.”

But several of those madcap ideas flummoxed fans — Carlin pointed to the

1972 single “Mary Had a Little Lamb,” which was inspired by the nursery rhyme. The oral history includes McCartney’s defense of that track: “The truth is, it was catchy.”

Yet even his closest collaborators had occasional doubts about the work they were doing with McCartney during this period. In a 1976 interview, Linda described “Red Rose Speedway” as “a non-confident record.”

“Something was missing,” she added. “We needed a heavier sound.”

They found it during recording sessions for the album “Band on the Run,” the melody-drunken highlight of McCartney’s 1970s discography. There were unmistakable echoes of his old group in the whirlwind medley of the title track and the honey-dripping ballad “Bluebird.”

“Band on the Run” was “about 4,000% better than anything that anybody at the time considered McCartney capable of producing,” Charles Shaar Murray wrote in NME. “Suddenly Paul McCartney was the golden boy again.”

## Why All The Fuss About Bone Density?

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Like most of my peers, I’m being bombarded daily with hectoring advice about my bones. What’s a 40-something woman to do?

*Continued from Page One*

My sister reminded me that I have small wrists, and since I’m generally a lazy bum who doesn’t exercise much, I should be thinking more about bone density. Plus, she’d noticed that I don’t eat enough protein. After I pointed out that, ahem, bolognese is meat, she directed me to Instagram dietitians for advice about protein intake.

I played dumb just to annoy her; that’s what sisters do. But of course, as a 40-something woman, I was already well aware of the stranglehold such topics have on my peer group.

We’re currently living through an explosion of interest—bordering on obsession—in perimenopausal and menopausal wellness. Protein! Weighted vests! Heavy lifting! More protein! I have friends who choke down Greek yogurt by the bucketful, who eat handfuls of grilled chicken at a time, who dead lift their own body weight. Google searches for “bone density” hit an all-

time high this summer, which is around when I started seeing the term pop up on my Instagram feed.

Admittedly, we are a generation attempting to age differently than our brittle-boned mothers and grandmothers. But my real and digital lives are now filled with women explaining, in excruciating detail, what I should do to strengthen my skeleton.

Did you know that jumping is very effective in building bone density? Should I hop around New York City like a kangaroo? In a weighted vest?

One of my mom group chats recently turned to strength training, and I copped to finally succumbing to peer pressure and buying weights on Amazon—5 pounders, to be exact. You have to start somewhere, right? But instead of being applauded for my effort, I was roundly shamed by my friends.

“Throw them out,” wrote one. “Definitely doesn’t count,” wrote another, a petite woman who said she lifts up to 50 pounds. “Heavy lift-

ing is much more effective than weighted vests,” she continued. I love her, but my friend is neither a medical professional nor a fitness coach.

For guidance, I consult with Dr. Karen Tang, the author of “It’s Not Hysteria: Everything You Need to Know About Your Reproductive Health (but Were Never Told),” who offers a more measured take. Bone densi-

ty is a real medical concern, she says. As women age and produce less estrogen, bone mass decreases, which can lead to osteopenia, thinning of the bones, and its more serious cousin, osteoporosis, which comes with a high risk of fracture.

“For too long, women going into perimenopause and menopause just drifted along, suffering through symptoms. Eventually, they

maybe found out they had frail bones and were put on medicines,” says Dr. Tang. “The increased awareness around this is good, because some of it is preventable, but there’s so much information, it can become a source of stress.” undefined undefined Recently, there has been chatter about DEXA scans, an X-ray test that measures bone density, recommended for women over 65—or over 50 if you have risk factors. I’ve watched cheerful “come with me to get a...DEXA scan!” videos on Instagram, followed by 20-somethings dissecting their results. None of these women were anywhere near 65, but who knows, maybe a few of them learned that their bones need help.

The ultimate trendsetter, Gwyneth Paltrow, was diagnosed with osteopenia in 2010, at age 37, and she’s still on the front lines of the issue. Last month, she joked with Amy Poehler on her podcast that she will “gag down protein 70 times a day,” a commitment I’m not willing to

make. undefined undefined So what should I do? I ask Dr. Tang if I have to dead lift my own weight, hop around the block or get a DEXA scan, and she laughs and says no. “If you’re not at high risk, you don’t have to do any of that,” she says. “For the average person, it’s just lifestyle modifications. Some weight-bearing exercises, some strength training.”

Dr. Tang also looked into the studies about weighted vests. “Maybe, if you wear one for eight hours a day, it might help a little bit, but who’s going to do that?” she says. To be fair, she hasn’t met my crazy friends.

So I won’t buy a jump rope, and I won’t take creatine. Instead, I’ll go about my life as before, carrying my groceries home, using my 5-pound Amazon weights and eating pasta bolognese.

Even so, my sister has already suggested I buy a vibrating plate. Apparently, they’re great for building bone mass. A middle-aged influencer told her so.

