

Beat: Sports

THE OLYMPIC TORCH ARRIVED IN CHATEAU CHAMBORD & VENDOME

24 SKATEBOARDERS IN BLOIS

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USPA NEWS - The Olympic Torch continues its joyful and passionate journey, is reaching Stage 52 a few days ahead of the climax in Paris, on 14-15th July, in Paris. 24 skateboarders navigated some of the narrow streets of Blois in a team relay organised by the French Roller Skating and Skateboarding Federation. Raphael Beaugillet, a para-cyclist who claimed bronze at the Tokyo Games, lit the cauldron at the celebration venue at the end of the day.

The Torch Relay is sponsored by Coca-Cola, Banque Populaire and Caisse d'Epargne, and navigated the French Heritage, and was today illuminating the architectural treasures, castles and châteaux of the Loir-et-Cher department.

Indeed the torch shined a light on the historical heritage of the banks of the Loire, visiting Vendome, the ZooParc in Beauval and the iconic Chateau de Chambord (Castle of Chambord) on the road from Freteval to Blois." The following clip is the full text of a press release issued by the Paris 2024. (Source Paris 2024), it is not a report

SPOTLIGHT ON FRENCH HERITAGE

Millions of visitors flock to Loir-et-Cher every year to discover its wonders. From Chambord, Blois and Villesavin to Cheverny and Chaumont-sur-Loire, the department is a jewel box of French heritage. Loir-et-Cher is also a feast for the senses, with nine protected designations of origin for wines and famous cheeses that put it on the gastronomical map. It has also thrown its weight behind sports for all. The department was awarded the "Terre de Jeux 2024" label and works hard to promote sport as part of everyday life.

The Torch Relay went through seven municipalities on another incredible day on the road. It set out from Freteval, where the relay runners illuminated Saint Nicholas's Church before moving on to the Perche and Haut Vendomois Tourist Office. From there, it set course for the ZooParc in Beauval, an emblematic park in the region and the whole country, touted as the fourth most beautiful zoo in the world. Pandas were among the members of the reception committee that gave the Olympic torch a warm welcome!

In Vendome, which has received the "Villes et pays d'art et d'histoire" (Cities & Land of Art & history) label, the torch weaved its way from Léo Lagrange Stadium to Porte Saint-Georges, once one of the gates to the fortified town. Next, the Olympic torch headed to Chaumont-sur-Loire and its famous château, a classified historic monument that hosts the International Garden Festival every year. The convoy then crossed Thésée, a wine-making village with Gallo-Roman roots. The ruins in Les Maselles stand as a memento of this period and transport visitors back in time. Along the way, it went through Romorantin-Lanthenay, the capital of Sologne, a forested natural region sprawling across 5,000 km².

The Chambord Estate was one of the highlights of the stage. This place imagined by Francis I, built in 1519 and recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site —inter alia— conceals a scrap of history around every corner. The torch got a royal welcome, took the famous double-helix staircase designed by Leonardo da Vinci to ascend to the terraces of the château and then went back down to cross its majestic gardens. This splendid destination was the last stop on the road to Blois, the terminus of the stage.

SKING IN BLOIS

Roaring crowds welcomed the Olympic torch to the capital of Blesois. Starting from Les Allées Municipal Stadium, it ran past the Royal Château, the favourite residence of the kings of France during the Renaissance. After that, the relay runners made a stop in front of the monumental Denis Papin Staircase before entering the Jardins de l'Évêché, followed by City Hall and the iconic Saint Louis's Cathedral. The festivities drew to a close at the celebration venue in Place de la République.

Towards the end of the afternoon, Place de la Résistance set the scene for a gripping skateboarding team relay organised by the French Roller Skating and Skateboarding Federation (FFSR) and captained by Benjamin Coulier. "Ben", a sports enthusiast diagnosed with Asperger syndrome at a very early age, overcame these hurdles to become a tennis champion. He has since tried his hand at new challenges such as skateboarding, which he now practises all the time. Joining him were 23 relay runners including Sissi Drégoire-Perron, who took bronze in the French O16 street skateboarding championships, as well as Eric Dimeck, who started a

skateboarding section at his local Culture and Leisure Centre, and Nina Francomme, a sk8er girl who heralds the rise of a new generation.

CLOSE TO 120 TORCHBEARERS PUT LOIR-ET-CHER IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Over a hundred Olympic torchbearers with inspiring backgrounds had the honour of carrying the torch in stage 52. Among them was Jérôme Lefer, who organises the popular Vendôme à vélo event and used to chair a triathlon club, and Nathalie Chereau, who became the president of her judo club in 2015 and has since trained 80 black belts. The Paralympian Sébastien Barc picked up the torch in Chaumont-sur-Loire. A Knight of the Legion of Honour, he won several medals at the Sydney 2000 and Athens 2004 Paralympics. The sailor Maud Fontenoy, the first woman to row around the Southern Pacific Ocean from east to west and without assistance, delivered the Olympic torch to Thésée. At her side was Marylou Oleskow, who pours her heart and soul into her track and field club, both as an athlete and as an official judge.

Claude Issorat, a consummate wheelchair racer who claimed 14 medals at the Barcelona 1992, Atlanta 1996 and Sydney 2000 Paralympics, rejoined the Olympic parade on the roads of Loir-et-Cher. Alexandra Lacrabère, a handball player who has appeared over 250 times for the French national team and won three major titles —the 2017 world championship, the 2018 European championship and gold at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games—, proudly carried the torch at the Château de Chambord.

Blois, the backdrop to the end-of-day celebrations, feted the Olympic torch with a whole constellation of stars, including a future Olympian, Mathilde Senechal, the silver medallist in the European Junior 3000 m, who qualified for the Paris 2024 marathon. The leading French baker Jean-François Feuillette, founder of a renowned bakery chain, was among the relay runners. Raphaël Beaugillet, who claimed bronze in the men's time trial B at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics, lit the cauldron in his home city to bring this wonderful stage to a close.

The journey of the Olympic torch will continue in Loiret on Wednesday, 10 July. It will shine a light on a department blessed with a rich historical and geographic heritage, known for the gorgeous panoramas of the Sologne natural region, the Beauce Plain (known as France's breadbasket) and the expansive Forest of Orleans. The capital of the Centre-Val de Loire region will host the end-of-day celebrations of stage 53 with the opening of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games just 16 days away. Source: Paris 2024

Photo credit: Paris 2024 / Cedric Bufkens / SIPA PRESS

ABOUT PARIS 2024

The mission of the Olympic and Paralympic Games Paris 2024 Organising Committee, in accordance with the host city contract signed between the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Comité National Olympique et Sportif Français (CNOSF – French National Olympic and Sporting Committee) and the Ville de Paris municipal authorities, is to plan, organise, fund and deliver the Olympic and Paralympic Games Paris 2024.

The Olympic and Paralympic Games are the greatest sporting event in the world, with unparalleled media impact. They bring together 10,500 Olympic athletes and 4,400 Paralympic athletes, respectively from 206 and 182 delegations, across five continents. They are watched by over 13 million spectators and 4 billion television viewers across the world, across a total of over 100,000 hours of TV broadcasting. They are without equal in sporting, economic and cultural events throughout the world, and this power helps to further their impact.

GAMES MAP

Find out about all the Relay of the Flame activities in your area on the Games Map.

It lists all the information on events linked to the Olympic and Paralympic Games throughout France: broadcasting of the events, sports initiations, cultural projects, etc. More than 5,000 activities can already be consulted. Source: Paris 2024

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