Beat: Sports

THE OLYMPIC TORCHTRAVELLED FROM FONTAINEBLEAU TO MEAUX SEINE ET MARNE

GUY DRUT AMONG THE 150 TORCHBEARERS

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USPA NEWS - The Olympic Torch brought the magic of Seine-et-Marne to the world on Saturday, 20 July! Travelling from Fontainebleau to Meaux, it showcased the incredible diversity of this incomparable department, a true Olympic heartland on the doorstep of Paris.
Among the more than 150 torchbearers who joined in were Guy Drut, an Olympic silver medallist in the 110 m hurdles in 1972, along with Margot Boulet, a bronze medallist in para-rowing at the Tokyo Paralympic Games, and the social media influencer Just Riadh.

The atmosphere reached fever pitch during the pentathlon team relay in Fontainebleau and during the visit to the Vaires-sur-Marne Olympic Nautical Stadium, accompanied by the cream of the crop of French paddle sports athletes. The day culminated in a spectacular finale with the lighting of the cauldron in Meaux by Jocelyne Busson, a charismatic local teacher" Paris 2024.

This is not a report, we publish the full text of the Press Release as it was delivered by the Press Office, from COJO, 20 July2024.

A KALEIDOSCOPIC ROMP THROUGH SEINE -ET- MARNE
Seine-et-Marne, an archetypal Olympic destination, also pulls in visitors with its mosaic of landscapes and diverse heritage. This department is a winning combination of natural abodes of peace and vibrant historic towns. Those with a penchant for culture are in for a treat, with castles and châteaux dotting the landscape.
The Olympic torch hit the ground running in Fontainebleau this morning, starting from the National Defence Sports Centre. It made its way to the town's famous château, a former royal residence, and its park, recognised by UNESCO as a biosphere reserve. In Pontault-Combault, it journeyed from the Town Hall to the Roger Boisramé Space. As the clock ticked towards noon, Lagny-sur-Marne and Torcy feted the torch with much fanfare.

In Melun, the procession began in Place d'Armes, swinging by the towering three-storey Saint Bartholomew's bell tower and the Seine-et-Marne Prefecture building before wrapping up its visit on Pont Jeanne d'Arc. The following segment took it from Vaires-sur-Marne to Chelles. It shined a light on the Vaires-sur-Marne Nautical Stadium, set to make a splash hosting the (para-)rowing and (para-)canoe-kayak events at the Paris 2024 Olympics and Paralympics. This brand-new venue became the first purpose-built facility to finish construction back in 2019.
In Provins, the relay began at the Tour César, a symbol of the town's medieval splendour. After that, the Olympic torch lit up Saint Cyriac's Church, Porte de Jouy and the town walls before setting course for Meaux. Once there, it blazed a trail from the Great War Museum and hopped across the Marne river via the Jean Bureau and Foch bridges to get to the celebration venue near Georges Tauziet Stadium.

MODERN PENTATHLON TAKES CENTRE STAGE IN FONTAINEBLEAU
Following Font-Romeu on 15 May, Fontainebleau hosted the second team relay organised by the French Modern Pentathlon Federation. This special moment brought to life the legend of a young French cavalry officer tasked with delivering a message on horseback. To complete his mission, he reportedly rode a horse, fought with a sword, fired a rifle, swam and ran, thus giving birth to modern pentathlon, which combines these five disciplines.
23 participants joined Blandine Lacheze, a former pentathlete and bronze medallist in the relay at the 2004 World Championships in Moscow, to retell this tale. The line-up included Gauthier Jedrzejewski, a 10-year member of Noyon Pentathlon Moderne, and Jérôme Jolly, president of the modern pentathlon club at CSA-CNSD Fontainebleau. Also present were Aline Penas, a member of the Rambouillet Sports Pentathlon Moderne organisation, and the baby of this relay, Alixane Wuiot, a future champion of modern

pentathlon!

OVER 150 OLYMPIC TORCHBEARERS CONVERGE ON SEINE- ET-MARNE
As usual, the crowds went wild for famous athletes on the roads of the Torch Relay. Chloé Rudkiewicz, the only female show jumping rider on the French military team, opened the proceedings in Fontainebleau. Come the afternoon, Laurine Desfosses, a para-swimmer who has claimed silver in multiple swimming events at the French championships, including 100 m breaststroke and 100 m butterfly, carried the torch in Chelles. Youssef Hocine, a silver medallist in team foil at the 1987 World Championships in Lausanne and bronze medallist in individual foil at the 1991 World Championships in Budapest, was present in Melun. Guy Drut, an Olympic silver medallist in 110 m hurdles in Munich 1972 and IOC member, opened the final leg in Meaux at the end of the day. Ramy Aggoun, the 2019 Kidz breaking world champion, Margot Boulet, the Tokyo Paralympic bronze medallist in para-rowing, and Julie Lenglet, a two-time Thai boxing world champion, also took part in the celebrations.

At the Vaires-sur-Marne Olympic Nautical Stadium, legendary kayakers and canoeists enjoyed the fabulous playground offered by this new Olympic venue. Among them were Benoît Peschier, the gold medallist in kayak slalom in Athens 2004 and the 2005 team world champion, as well as Émilie Fer, the Olympic champion in canoe slalom in London 2012 and world champion in Prague the following year. Jean Zoungrana, the president of the French Canoe-Kayak Federation, was also part of the group, alongside Jean Laudet, the Helsinki 1952 Olympic champion in C2 canoe sprint, and Christine Gossé, bronze medallist in coxless pair rowing at Atlanta with her teammate Hélène Cortin and a two-time world rowing champion in 1993 and 1994. Rounding out this dream team was Sylvain Curinier, a silver medallist at the Barcelona Games turned coach who has honed some of the biggest talents in the sport.

Along the route, visitors also clapped for well-known public figures. The line-up included the YouTuber and comedian Malcolm TotheWorld, as well as Just Riadh, who boasts over 7 million TikTok followers, and the contemporary artist Jordane Saget, whose works adorn the streets of Paris.
As with each day, ordinary people with inspiring stories also took part in the celebrations. Rémy Boyer, a torchbearer in Fontainebleau, organised the Lieusaint "Olympics". A volunteer at the Rio Games, he carried the French delegation flag after Teddy Riner during the opening ceremony. In Torcy, there was Baba Ahmed Ould Kher, a specialised prevention educator who promotes sport as an educational tool. At 57, he has participated in the last two Paris half marathons, each time coming away with a medal. Delphine Lau also carried the torch.

This entrepreneur has quite a tale to tell. Badly burned at just 5 years old, she now leads a brand of innovative and sustainable furniture. Jocelyne Busson, who shared her knowledge and left her mark on several generations of students over 35 years, had the honour of lighting the cauldron. Through her initiatives, she taught fundamentals while broadening her students' perspectives on the world around them.
Tomorrow, the Olympic torch will stop in Val-de-Marne, the largest department of the inner suburbs of Paris. It will start from Orly and blaze through Rungis and Boissy-Saint-Léger before calling it a day in Créteil.

THE PROGRAMME FOR SUNDAY, 21 JULY
For the full programme of the stage, see https://olympics.com/fr/paris-2024/relais-de-la-flamme-olympique/etapes/val-de-marne-creteil
CELEBRATION VENUE PROGRAMME
Open to the public from 3:30 to 7:45 pm
Free admission, limited capacity
3:30 pm: opening to the public
4–5:30 pm: local authorities' activities on the sports esplanade
5:45–6:50 pm: partners' activities on the sports esplanade
7:20–7:30: finish of the last runner
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