

Beat: Sports

THE OLYMPIC TORCH GETS CLOSER TO THE D-DAY OF 26th TRAVELLING IN VAL DE MARNE

FROM ORLY TO CRETEIL, STAGE 63

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USPA NEWS - This especially thrilling week for the Olympic Torch Relay came to a close on Sunday 21st July in the Val-de-Marne. In this area combining conurbations and natural sites, the Olympic Torch was taken from Orly airport to Créteil, via Vincennes and Vitry-sur-Seine. Two collective relays, devoted to rowing and handball, lit up the area and in total almost 200 torchbearers took it in turns to carry the Olympic Torch and enliven the area's inhabitants' enthusiasm for the Olympics. Sportspeople Estelle Mossely (boxing) Jason Lamy-Chappuis (Nordic combined) and Didier Dinard (handball) were present. Another major figure from handball, Nedim Remili, lit the cauldron at the celebration venue." Source : This is not a report, iwe publish teh full extx of a press release form the COJO, press office, Paris 2024

The Olympic Torch Relay continued its adventure in the Ile-de-France region by heading southeast of the French capital, to the Val-de-Marne. While its closeness to Paris is an asset for its economic influence, the area is also known for its proximity to water, with 37 of its municipalities bordered by a water way. It therefore offers a balanced environment, between urbanised areas as well as natural spaces and these qualities were illuminated by the route of the Olympic Torch Relay.

MANY SITES IN THE VAL DE MARNE LIT UP BETWEEN ORLY & CRETEIL

This sixty third stage began in the early morning at Orly airport, a particularly powerful symbol, given that France's second largest airport is one of the gateways to the country for foreign delegations and fans from all over the world. Millions of fans are expected to pass through it throughout the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Afterwards, the Olympic Torch was taken to Ormesson-sur-Marne, visiting one of the gems of the area, the listed historical monument of the Château d'Ormesson mansion, built in the 16th century. The relay then made its way to the Champigny railway station, a strategic point on the Grand Paris Express network.

The Olympic Torch then illuminated the Marché International de Rungis, the world's largest fresh produce market, spread over 234 hectares of land and comprising 1,400 companies supplying professionals throughout France and Europe. The next part of the day took place in Vincennes where the Olympic Torch Relay illuminated the castle, Notre Dame church and the Pavillon Baltard concert hall. The relay's route also took in the Domaine de Grosbois estate and its 412 hectares of woods and lakes. In Villejuif, the Olympic Torch Relay set off from in front of the Institut Gustave Roussy, the leading cancer treatment centre in Europe, before heading to Vitry-sur-Seine, passing in front of the MAC VAL, the first modern art museum to be established in the suburbs of Paris.

The day came to a close in Creteil, the last town visited during the day. From the headquarters of the local authorities, the Hôtel du département, the convoy passed by the lake, the Maison des Arts et de la Culture arts and culture centre before visiting the Maison du Handball, a leading centre for the discipline. Finally, the day's last torchbearers headed to the Parc des Sports Dominique Duvauchelle sports complex where the celebration site was located. As on every day, the relay's official sponsors, Coca-Cola, Caisse d'Epargne and Banque Populaire had set up their stands, which were very popular with the crowds before the cauldron was lit.

PRIDE OF PLACE FOR ROWING FORM NOGENT SUR MARBE TO JOINVILLE LE PONT

The first of the day's two collective relays took place between two of the area's most emblematic rowing towns. The French Federation of Rowing organised the first collective relay between its headquarters located in Nogent-sur-Marne and the one-hundred-year-old AMJ club in Joinville-le-Pont. The chairman of the International Federation of Rowing, who was also two times world champion (in 1993 and 1997) and once Olympic Champion (in 2000), Jean-Christophe Rolland was the captain of the relay. Alongside him were many rowing enthusiasts.

Olympic Champions such as Michel Andrieux (at the Sydney Games in 2000), Adrien Hardy (at the Athens Games in 2004) and Jérémie Azou (at the Rio Games in 2016) were all present to take part in the relay, but also other medallists such as Christine Gossé (bronze in 1996) and Antoine Jesel (bronze in 2020). Paralympic athletes Gylaine Marchand, who was world champion last year and a finalist in Rio, as well as Stéphane Tardieu (a silver medallist at the London Games; bronze medallist in Rio) were also present.

The youngest national referee, Émile Abraham, French champion Camille Leclerc, who is the granddaughter of rowing legend Lucie Mercier, specialist Pauline Rossignol Tollard, whose family are all involved in the discipline, and young Capucine Jeanjean were also part of this relay.

THE SPOTLIGHT ON HANDBALL IN CRETEIL

A little later, a second collective relay took place, near to the celebration venue this time. The French Federation of Handball organised its relay in Créteil, which was an apt location seeing as the Maison du Handball, the discipline's centre of excellence which plays host to the French national team, was inaugurated here in 2019. The FFH wished for this collective relay to highlight all those involved in making handball a dynamic discipline throughout France.

Mathieu de Cillia, a member of the French wheelchair handball team and chairman of the para-sports association Handisport Antibes Méditerranée, was the captain of this collective relay. Alongside him were handball enthusiasts with inspiring stories to tell: Arken Boutouria, who takes part in adapted handball with his autistic younger brother, Rougui Sow, a Masters student and handball player for the last seven years, Vincent Valet, a volunteer for more than 30 years, and Théo Breant, who is both a coach, referee and instructor.

MORE THAN 200 TORCHBEARERS ILLUMINATED THE VAL DE MARNE

Alongside the handballers, more than 200 torchbearers took it in turns to carry the Olympic Torch this Sunday and as on each day, many sportspeople who have shone in their disciplines were present. Jason Lamy-Chappuis, Nordic combined Olympic Champion in Vancouver in 2010 and a five times world champion, was the first torchbearer of the day, at Orly airport. Following on from him, other sportspeople took part in the day's relay in the Val-de-Marne, such as boxer Estelle Mossely, an Olympic Champion in Rio, karate athlete Aurore Bourgois, judoka Coralie Haymé, former figure skating French champion Anne-Sophie de Kristoffy, Clara Mallien (taekwondo), Ugo Fleurot and Léo Bories (modern pentathlon), as well as chairman of the French National Olympic and Sports Committee, Denis Masseglia.

Handball was most definitely in the spotlight during the day's relay, with two emblematic figures of the discipline enjoying the honour of individually carrying the Olympic Torch. In Villejuif, it was the turn of Didier Dinart, a two times Olympic Champion (in 2008 and 2012) as well as three times world champion (in 2001, 2009 and 2011). The day's last torchbearer was Nedim Remili. A current holder of the Olympic title (won in 2020), a world champion (in 2017) and European Champion (in 2024), the man who plays for Veszprém in Hungary is a native of Créteil. Naturally, he was more than delighted to light the celebration cauldron on Sunday evening.

TORCHBEARERS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE SHARE THE OLYMPIC VALUES

In addition to the sportspeople who brilliantly represent France in their respective disciplines, the crowds in the Val-de-Marne were able to cheer on chef Guillaume Gomez, who cooked for the French presidents from 1997 to 2021, singer-songwriter Gauvain Sers, as well as singer and musician Hervé. Additionally, many members of the general public who share the values of the Olympics took part.

Such was the case for Alexandre Arlé and Catherine Augoyard, who are respectively heavily involved in para-dance and para-sport. René Caillet, a sports instructor, coach and teacher shares the same passion at the age of 78 years. There was also Audrey Difernaud, who offers personalised support for future champions, and Barthélémy Fendt, who has created a podcast to share inspiring stories about sport.

Many more inspirational personalities, both well-known and little-known, will carry the Olympic Torch until next Friday and the last day of the Olympic Torch Relay. Tomorrow, the relay will explore the Essonne, a more recently created administrative department which stands out thanks to its research centres, cutting-edge companies and universities, but also its considerable historical heritage

The Olympic Torch Relay will begin the day in Étampes, will visit Marcoussis for a collective relay and will finish the day in Évry-Courcouronnes where the celebration venue will be located." SOURCE: PARIS 2024

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