

Beat: Sports

THE OLYMPIC TORCH TOPPED OFF IN INDRE, THROUGHOUT ITS FRENCH JOURNEY

STAGE 17, RELAY IN CHAMPAGNE OF BERRY

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USPA NEWS - The Olympic Torch continues its journey through France. On Monday, it stopped off in the Indre department, a multifaceted area. With its picturesque villages, castles and mansions, fields of cereal crops and many hiking trails, the Indre is the perfect place to get away from it all. It is also a land of sport, a characteristic highlighted by the Olympic Torch Relay throughout the day.

The Indre is an area shaped by nature, from the Brenne regional natural park, "the land of one thousand ponds", to the romantic countryside of Le Boischaud and the Champagne Berrichonne, (i.e. "la Champagne of Berry" walked by thousands of hikers every year. It is a popular tourist destination for those seeking peace, relaxation and tranquility in a lush green setting. The Olympic Torch Relay followed in their footsteps on its discovery of the Indre.

NATURE, HERITAGE & SPORT

The route began with Le Blanc, a municipality through which the Creuse River flows, then took in the Himalayan-style footbridge between Cuzion and Baraize before crossing through Buzançais (the "town of seven bridges"). History was also on the cards during the excursion to Issoudun with its historical town centre and 13th century Tour Blanche white tower, as well as in front of the Château de Valençay. The day continued in Châteauroux, a town with a medieval flavour at the heart of the historic province of Berry. The Olympic Torch passed near to the Abbey of Deols and then those in the convoy were able to catch a glimpse of Château Raoul, a seigniorial residence that was once the centre of power in the lower Berry area.

The department is a sporty area thanks to football (with the club La Berrichonne de Châteauroux), basketball, athletics, cycling (hosting the Tour de France) and a wealth of other disciplines, such as the world aerobatics championship that was held there recently. The celebration venue was set up at the 7.5-hectare Plaine Départementale des Sports multi-disciplinary sports complex, which is much appreciated by the area's clubs and schools. As always, the day was enlivened by the stands and shows held by the sponsors of the Olympic Torch Relay, namely Coca-Cola, Banque Populaire and Caisse d'Épargne, who thrilled the audience with musical entertainment and dance choreography by a whole host of performers.

SHOOTING IN THE SPOTLIGHT AWAITING THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Châteauroux is preparing to host the shooting events at the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It was a powerful and unifying moment that captured everyone's attentions on Monday, as a collective relay dedicated to shooting took place on Place de la République. This relay was led by Sylvie Lanson, a leading local figure in shooting. Alongside her, 23 other shooting enthusiasts took it in turns to carry the Olympic Torch, including international shooter Agathe Girard, emerging young stars Emma Magdelaine and Estelle Fauchon or also Jérôme Perrochon, a member of the French para-shooting pistol team.

They were accompanied by approximately one hundred other torchbearers who have lit up the area. The first of them this morning was a dedicated young farmer, 35-year-old Rémi Fontaine. Many former sportswomen and sportsmen also took part: athlete Viviane Dorsile, a 400 m and 800 m specialist who was several times French and European champion in the late 1990s, footballer Dominique Bijotat, who was Olympic champion in 1984 in Los Angeles with the French football team, basketballer Frédéric Weis, who won a silver medal at the Sydney Games in 2000, or also para-sport table tennis player Claude Chédeau, who was a silver medallist in the team event at the Barcelona Paralympic Games in 1992. They rubbed shoulders with athletes who are currently distinguishing themselves, such as two times super featherweight boxing champion Victoire Piteau and para-triathlete Manon Genest, who was world champion in 2016.

A number of local sporting figures were also present, including Romaric Boch, the former fitness trainer at La Berrichonne de Châteauroux FC. This was also the case for the woman who had the honour of lighting the celebration cauldron, the last torchbearer of the day: Élodie Vachet. Currently a coach with the French Paralympic table tennis team, she also carries out training at the Déols table tennis club and, through her career, symbolises the incredible vitality of sport in the Indre region.

Tomorrow, the Olympic Torch Relay will continue its journey through another land of nature, leisure and sport: the Maine-et-Loire. There will be an eclectic route through the Anjou area that will finish with a flourish in Angers to celebrate the values and magic of the Olympic Torch Relay with plenty of spectators! Source: Paris 2024 Olympic Paralympic Games, COJO

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

UPA United Press Agency LTD

483 Green Lanes

UK, London N13NV 4BS

contact (at) unitedpressagency.com

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