

OLYMPIC TORCH CEREMONY BEGINS THE JOURNEY OF WINTER OLYMPICS 2014



The Olympic torch is a symbol of the beginning of Olympic Games and it has already started its journey for the next XXII Winter Olympic Games to be held in Sochi, Russia. The countdown has begun and within 123 days, the Olympic torch relay will be covering over 65,000 km through every region of Russia.

The route designed by the authorities has made sure that over 90 percent of the Russian population is able to attend the ceremony within one hour of relay at the stage. It has also been confirmed that nearly 14,000 torchbearers and 30,000 volunteers will be participating in the relay.

On Sunday, October 6, **the great flame of Olympic was presented to Russians for the first time at the Red Square** of the capital city, after its arrival from Athens. It has been nearly three decades since the Summer Olympics were organized in Russia back in 1980.

The great flame was lit on 29th September near the Hera Temple in Olympia, Greece and transported to Moscow on October 6, on a special flight from Athens. The flame was offered to the Russian delegations at Panathenaic Stadium, Athens. Aboard, the torch was accompanied by the Sochi 2014 Organizing Committee head Dmitry Chernyshenko, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Kozak, and six-times Olympic speed skating gold medalist Lidia Skoblikova. From the airport, the torch was escorted to Red Square by 200 bikers.

The welcoming ceremony programs were full of enthusiasm and warmth, signifying the rich cultural diversity of Russia. Blazing dance and song performances by citizens of Russia in multi-color national costumes were a true bliss.

The stadium was full of enthusiasts waiting eagerly for the games to be held. As soon as the first torchbearer hit the ground, the crowd burst out with a storm of chanting and applause. A lot of celebrities and sports personalities could be spotted at the event - Prince Albert II of Monaco with his wife Princess Charlene, Hollywood actor Steven Seagal and his wife.

Vladimir Putin in his speech declared that the torch will pass through 83 regions and 130 cities of Russia. The torch will travel from westernmost exclave of Kaliningrad to Far East, submerge into the Lake Baikal, will be taken to the North Pole and even to space.

The relay will end in Sochi, followed by the grand opening ceremony of the XXII Winter Olympics to be start on February 7, 2014.

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