International Olympic Committee

FACTSHEET

The Olympic torch relay

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Origins and values

The Ancient Greeks considered fire to be a divine element, and they maintained perpetual fires in front of their principal temples. This was the case in the sanctuary of Olympia, where the Ancient Olympic Games took place. The flame was lit using the rays of the sun, to ensure its purity, and a skaphia, the ancestor of the parabolic mirror used today for lighting the Olympic flame. A flame burned permanently on the altar of the goddess Hestia, and such fires were also lit on the altars of Zeus and Hera, in front of whose temple the Olympic flame is lit today.

Today, the purity of the flame is guaranteed by the way it is lit using the sun's rays. The choice of Olympia as a departure point emphasises the link between the Ancient and Modern Games and underlines the profound connection between these two events.

Ceremonials

A relay precedes the arrival of the flame at its final destination: the Olympic stadium in the host of the Olympic Games. "*The Organising Committee of the Olympic Games is responsible for bringing the Olympic flame to the Olympic stadium*." (Olympic Charter, Chapter 5, Rule 54). When the flame finally arrives at its destination, the final torchbearer(s) run into the stadium to light the Olympic cauldron with the flame, which remains lit for the duration of the Games and is extinguished only at the Closing Ceremony of the Games.
Like the messengers who proclaimed the sacred Olympic truce, the runners who carry the Olympic flame carry a message of peace on their journey.

History of the first torch relays – summer and winter

"*The Olympic flame is the flame which is kindled in Olympia under the authority of the IOC*." (Olympic Charter, Chapter 1, Rule 13). Although a symbolic fire had already been used as early as the 1928 Games in Amsterdam, the Olympic flame's modern history begins with a proposal by Carl Diem, Secretary General of the Organising Committee of the Games of the XI Olympiad. Inspired by torch races that were held in ancient Greek times, Diem suggested that for the 1936 Summer Games a Flame be lit in Olympia and transported to Berlin for what would be the first Olympic torch relay. It marked the start of what is now an Olympic tradition.

Over the years, torches used to carry the Flame have been created for each celebration of the Games and the Torch relays that have brought it from Olympia to an Olympic host have become one of the most symbolic events associated with the Games.

Olympic Winter Games

In the case of the Olympic Winter Games the Olympic flame has a slightly different historical timeline. Similar to the Summer Games it was a symbolic fire that was first used at the Olympic Winter Games Garmisch-Partenkirchen 1936 , in Germany. In the context of the Winter Games, the first relay took place during the Olympic Winter Games Oslo 1952. This first relay did not start in Olympia, Greece, but in the valley of Morgedal in Norway. The region, considered as the birthplace of skiing, was chosen as a reminder of the origins of this sport. The flame was lit in the hearth of the chalet belonging to Sondre Norheim, a legendary figure in Norwegian skiing.

At the Olympic Winter Games Cortina d'Ampezzo 1956, the flame was lit in front of the Capitole in Rome,

as the city had been elected host of the Games of the XVII Olympiad. The tripod used for the ceremony was sent from Olympia. At the Olympic Winter Games Squaw Valley 1960, the flame was once again lit in Norway, at Sondre Norheim's chalet. The inscription on the torch "Olympia to Squaw Valley" is a reference to an attempt to start the relay in Olympia, which did not succeed as the time period was too restricted. Since the **Olympic Winter Games Innsbruck 1964, the relay for the Winter Games has begun in Olympia.**

Itinerary of the relay – basic route

Choosing a route for a relay is not as easy as drawing a straight line between Olympia and the Olympic stadium of the host of the Games! Each relay has its own "flavour" and enables people from all over the world to discover the history and culture of the host and country.

From Olympia to Athens ... the organisation of the lighting of the flame in Olympia is always handled by the Hellenic Olympic Committee (HOC). This Committee also organises the transport of the flame by runners to Athens or, more precisely, to the ancient Panathinaiko stadium which was used for the 1896 Games.

From Athens to the host ... the rest of the relay to the host of the Games is handled by the relevant Olympic Games Organising Committee (OCOG). The Committee chooses the theme and vision of the relay, which helps them determine the cities towns, regions and monuments to be visited and the different modes of transport. The following are some examples of themes which have influenced the itineraries of the flame.

Thematic routes – some examples

The relay of peace – London 1948

In a Europe sorely afflicted by the war, the 1948 relay carried a welcome message of peace. The first runner, Corporal Dimitrelis, took off his military uniform before carrying the flame, commemorating the sacred truce observed in Ancient Greece. The planned route highlighted border crossings, where festivities were organised to celebrate the return of peace. In homage to the restorer of the Olympic Games, the relay passed through Lausanne, Switzerland and a ceremony was organised at Pierre de Coubertin's tomb in the Bois-de-Vaux cemetery.

The ancient Relay – Rome 1960

The relay shone the spotlight on the two poles of classical civilisation: Athens and Rome. Lesser-known ancient sites in Greece and Italy were thus brought to the public's attention. For the first time, the relay was televised and the event closely followed by the media.

The relay to the New World – Mexico City 1968

The relay retraced the steps of Christopher Columbus to the New World. The idea was to underline the link between Mediterranean and Latin-American civilisations and between ancient (Greco-Latin) and Pre-Hispanic civilisations. A direct descendant of the great navigator, Cristóbal Colón de Carbajal, was the last runner on Spanish soil. The Olympic flame made a stop at the Great Pyramid of the Moon in Teotihuacan. A "New Fire" ceremony was organised which, in the Aztec tradition, was celebrated to mark the end of a 52-year cycle. The reappearance of the sun at dawn symbolised the renewal of the world.

The Korean relay "Harmony and progress" – Seoul 1988

The relay showcased the traditions of Korea. Its route, which was a zigzag from east to west, symbolised the harmony to be found in the balance between two opposite poles. Some of the torchbearers did not wear the official uniform provided by the Games Organising Committee, but instead wore regional or traditional costumes.

The "Down Under" relay – Sydney 2000

The relay had a twofold goal: to situate Australia within Oceania and to promote the culture and heritage of the different regions in the country. The Torch relay visited 12 Oceanic countries before it arrived in Australia. The start of the relay on the Australian continent was in the "red centre" at Uluru (Ayer's Rock), a sacred site for the indigenous population. The Aboriginal athlete Nova Peris-Kneebone, Olympic field hockey champion, was the first runner in the relay. The enthusiasm of the crowd along the relay route grew bigger and bigger. One million spectators welcomed the arrival of the flame in Sydney. In a ceremony which recalled the elements used in the design of the torch (fire, water, earth),

Cathy Freeman "walked on water" before lighting a circle of fire which revealed itself to be the monumental cauldron.

"Moment to shine" – London 2012
The London 2012 Olympic Torch Relay set out to showcase and shine a light on the best that Great Britain has to offer culturally, geographically, and from a human standpoint. Indeed, the torchbearers for the relay were selected based on their contribution to society. This selection process also played a key part in underlining London's Olympic Games' philosophy of inspiring a generation.

The relay to the Eleonas camp – Rio 2016
To draw the world's attention to the plight of refugees, and at the initiative of the HOC, the torch relay, during its journey in Greece, passed through the Eleonas camp for refugees and migrants in Athens, with the torch carried by a refugee.

"Hope lights our way" – Tokyo 2020
The symbol of the torch has taken on added significance over the past year, as the COVID-19 pandemic led to the postponement of the Olympic Games in Tokyo. As the flame began its 121-day journey across the 47 prefectures of Japan in the lead-up to a historic Olympic Games, the message "Hope lights our way" has been more poignant than ever.

Originality of transportation

Traditionally, relays have been carried out on foot (for Berlin 1936, London 1948, and Moscow 1980 the relays were entirely run in this way). Although at the beginning, runners were mainly selected from amongst athletes, gradually the general public began to participate as well. As the celebration of the Olympic Games has evolved, so has the Olympic torch relay. The **modes of transport** have slowly become more and more diversified, not only for practical reasons, but also to showcase the particularities of the regions crossed.

The flame in the snow! Legendary Norwegian skiers (or their descendants) carried out the entirety of the transport of the flame (Oslo 1952). The flame went into the Arctic Circle at Inuvik, with stages carried out by snow-bike and skidoo (Calgary 1988), also it has visited Alert, the northernmost permanently inhabited community in the world (Vancouver 2010), and has been to the North Pole (Sochi 2014).

The flame in the water, on the water and under water! In the sea off Veracruz, Mexico, swimmers carried the flame from the boat Durango to the shore (Mexico 1968). A diver swam across the port of Marseilles holding the flame out of the water (Grenoble 1968). The flame travelled on the frigate Cataluña for the passage between Greece and Spain and arrived on Spanish soil in Empuries, the gateway to Greek civilisation on the Iberian peninsula (circa 600 B.C., Barcelona 1992). A diver even carried the flame under water at the Great Barrier Reef (Sydney 2000). In Venise, a Gondola was used to cross the Canal Grande (Torino 2006) and for the 2010 relay, the flame was carried by a surfer (Vancouver 2010). During the Sochi 2014 Olympic Torch Relay, the flame was relayed under the surface of Lake Baikal, the largest and deepest freshwater lake in the world. For the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018, the flame was carried into the sea off the coast of Jeju, the Republic of Korea's largest island, by "haenyeo" divers – known for harvesting seafood without using any breathing equipment. The torch was then taken underwater to a state-of-the-art deep-sea exploration robot.

The flame in the air, through the air and in space! The flame made its first trip in an aeroplane (Helsinki 1952). It later travelled faster than the speed of sound on its journey from Athens to Paris – aboard the Concorde! (Albertville 1992). The wonders of technology were highlighted when the Canadians organized the transmission of the flame by satellite between Athens and Ottawa (Montreal 1976). For the first time in the history of the Olympics, the transfer of the flame took place between two parachute jumpers (Lillehammer 1994). It also made an impressive entry at the opening ceremony of the Games, carried by a ski jumper, who jumped from the ski jump while holding the lit torch! (Lillehammer 1994). The torch (but not the flame) was carried into space by astronauts (Atlanta 1996 and Sydney 2000) and went on a spacewalk (Sochi 2014).

The flame on horseback and on a camel! To mark the fact that the equestrian events were held separately from the other Olympic events, the torchbearers for the journey of the flame from Kastrup (Denmark) to

Stockholm carried the flame entirely on horseback (Melbourne/Stockholm 1956). Horses played a special role again when the history of the Pony express was featured as a part of a torch relay (Atlanta 1996). They were replaced by camels when the flame crossed the Australian desert (Sydney 2000).

Relays facts and figures at a glance

Games of the Olympiad

Berlin 1936
- Number of torchbearers: 3,075.
- Total distance: 3,075 km (not included special stages in Kiel and Grünau).
- Countries crossed: Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Germany.

London 1948
- Number of torchbearers: 1,416.
- Total distance: 3,365 km.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Italy, Switzerland, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, and England.

Helsinki 1952
- Number of torchbearers: 3,042.
- Total distance: 7,492 km.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland.

Melbourne 1956
- Number of torchbearers: 3,181.
- Total distance: ~20,470 km (including air transport), distance covered on foot: 4,912 km.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Australia with stopovers in Istanbul, Basrah, Karachi, Calcutta, Bangkok, Singapore, and Djakarta.

Stockholm 1956 (Equestrian Games)
- Number of torchbearers: 330 runners in Greece and approx. 160 horse riders in Denmark and Sweden.
- Total distance: 325 km by foot. Distance by horse uncertain.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Denmark, and Sweden.

Rome 1960
- Number of torchbearers: 1,529.
- Total distance: 1,863 km.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Italy.

Tokyo 1964
- Number of torchbearers: 101,473 (this high number is explained by the fact that in Japan, 1km was covered by the bearer of the flame, two reserve runners and up to 20 accompanying people).
- Total distance: 26,065 km (including air transport).
- Countries crossed: from Greece, Turkey, Lebanon, Iran, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Hong Kong, Taiwan. Three routes and two other flames lit with the sacred one inside Japan.

Mexico 1968
- Number of torchbearers: 2,778.
- Total distance: 13,536 km (including transport by boat).
- Countries crossed: Greece, Italy, Spain, Bahamas and Mexico.

Munich 1972
- Number of torchbearers: ~ 6,200.
- Total distance: 5,532 km.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Austria, and West Germany.

Montreal 1976
- Number of torchbearers: 761.
- Total distance: 775 km.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Canada.

Moscow 1980
- Number of torchbearers: ~ 5,435.
- Total distance: 5,000 km.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, and USSR.

Los Angeles 1984
- Number of torchbearers: 3,636 in the USA.
- Total distance: 15,000 km in the USA.
- Countries crossed: Greece, United States.

Seoul 1988
- Number of torchbearers: 1,847.
- Total distance: 8,693 km.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Thailand, and Republic of Korea.

Barcelona 1992
- Number of torchbearers: 9,849.

- Total distance: 6,307 km (transport by boat not included).
- Countries crossed: Greece, Spain.

Atlanta 1996
- Number of torchbearers: 12,467 in the USA.
- Total distance: 26,875 km in the USA.
- Countries crossed: Greece, United States.

Sydney 2000
- Number of torchbearers: ~900 in Greece, ~1,500 in Oceania, 11,000 in Australia.
- Total distance: 1,693 km in Greece, ~17,000 km in Oceania, 27,000 km in Australia.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Guam, Palau, Micronesia, Nauru, Salomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Samoa, American Samoa, Cook Islands, New Zealand, and Australia.

Athens 2004
- Number of torchbearers: ~7,700 in Greece, ~3,600 for the international relay.
- Total distance: 6,600 km in Greece, 78,000 km for the international relay.
- Countries crossed: Greece, plus international route covering all five continents and visiting all previous Summer Games hosts. The Torch Relay travelled along the following route: Ancient Olympia, Athens, Sydney, Melbourne, Tokyo, Seoul, Beijing, Delhi, Cairo, Cape Town, Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City, Los Angeles, St. Louis, Atlanta, New York, Montreal, Antwerp, Brussels, Amsterdam, Geneva, Lausanne, Paris, London, Barcelona, Rome, Munich, Berlin, Stockholm, Helsinki, Moscow, Kiev, Istanbul, Sofia and Nicosia.

Beijing 2008
- Number of torchbearers: 21,800.
- Total distance: 137,000 km (97,000 km in China).
- Cities visited: Almaty, Istanbul, St. Petersburg, London, Paris, San Francisco, Buenos Aires, Dar es Salaam, Muscat, Islamabad, New Delhi, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, Canberra, Nagano, Seoul, Pyongyang, Ho Chi Minh City, Macao. The 2008 Olympic Flame also reached the summit of Mount Everest.

London 2012
- Number of torchbearers: 8,000 in Great Britain.
- Total distance: 15,775 km.
- Duration: 78 days, from the 10 May to the 27 July 2012, including the relay in Greece.
- Countries crossed: Greece, United Kingdom, Ireland.

The Olympic flame was lit in Ancient Olympia, Greece, on 10 May and was handed over to the London 2012 Organisers in the Panathinaikos stadium in Athens on 17 May before arriving in Great Britain on 18 May 2012.

The Olympic flame travelled to within an hour of 95 percent of people in the UK, the Isle of Man, Guernsey and Jersey. It also visited Dublin in Ireland for the first time. The London 2012 Torch Relay had a strong focus on the nation's youth in line with the commitments made during the 2012 Candidature. The theme of the Relay was "Moment to Shine".

Rio 2016
- Number of torchbearers: ~450 in Greece, ~12,000 in Brazil.
- Total distance: ~2,235km in Greece, 36,000km in Brazil (20,000 by road and 16,000 by air).
- Duration: From the 21 April to the 5 August 2016, including the relay in Greece and the visit of the flame in Switzerland.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Switzerland, Brazil.

In Brazil, the Torch Relay route passed through the five regions of the country and took in some of the most impressive features, like the Fernando de Noronha archipelago, the Lençóis Maranhenses National Park, the beaches of Bahia and the Iguaçu Falls. Lasting 95 days, the Relay took the Olympic flame within the reach of 90% of the population, visiting more than 300 cities and towns.

Tokyo 2020
The flame was originally lit in front of the ruins of the Temple of Hera in Ancient Olympia on 12 March 2020, and after its week-long stay in Greece was handed over to Tokyo at a ceremony at the Panathenaic Stadium in Athens. For the first time in the history of the Olympic torch relay, a woman, Anna Korakaki, was the first torchbearer.

The Olympic Torch Relay started its journey on 25 March 2021 from the J-Village National Training

Centre in Fukushima Prefecture, and then traversed all 47 prefectures across Japan over a period of 121 days.
As 2021 marked the 10th anniversary of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, the rescheduled Tokyo 2020 Olympic Torch Relay aimed to showcase the recovery of the areas worst affected by the disaster, in line with the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Torch Relay concept of "Hope Lights Our Way." In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it additionally symbolised the light at the end of the current dark tunnel; a beacon of hope for the world in the run-up to the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, themselves a symbol of the resilience, unity and solidarity of humankind.

The torch reached Tokyo on 9 July 2021 in time for the flame to light the cauldron in the Olympic Stadium at the Opening Ceremony of the Games on 23 July.

Paris 2024
- Number of torchbearers: ~10,000.
- Duration: From 16 April to 26 July 2024.
- Countries crossed: Greece, France.

In addition to the energy and emotion of sport, the Paris 2024 relay aimed to showcase the host country's history, natural heritage, creativity and knowhow. After a relay in Greece and the handover ceremony at the Panathenaic Stadium on April 26, the flame arrived on French soil on May 8 in Marseille, aboard the historic sailing vessel Belem. The flame visited iconic locations, including the Lascaux caves, Mont Saint-Michel, the Millau Viaduct, and the steps of the Palais des Festivals in Cannes. Between 8 and 17 June, it travelled to the overseas territories of Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Martinique, French Polynesia, and La Réunion. On July 26, 2024, the celebrations reached their climax during the Olympic Games opening ceremony. After an unprecedented parade of athletes on the Seine, spectators and television viewers saw the last two torchbearers (Marie-José Pérec and Teddy Riner) lit the Olympic cauldron with the torch at the Opening Ceremony.

Olympic Winter Games

Garmisch-Partenkirchen 1936
For the first time at an edition of the Olympic Winter Games a symbolic fire was lit. A symbolic fire was also used a second time for the Olympic Winter Games St. Moritz 1948.

Oslo 1952
- Number of torchbearers: 94 skiers.
- Total distance: ~ 225 km.
- Countries crossed: Norway, departure from Morgedal, valley in the Telemark region, Oslo.

Cortina d'Ampezzo 1956
- Number of torchbearers: unknown.
- Total distance: unknown.
- Countries crossed: Italy.

The flame used for the Torch relay was again a symbolic rather than Olympic one. This time it was lit at the Temple of Jupiter at the Capital in Rome.

Squaw Valley 1960
- Number of torchbearers: more than 600.
- Total distance: not available.
- Countries crossed: Norway, Denmark, United States.

A symbolic Nordic flame was again lit in the hearth of the Morgedal House in Norway, birthplace of Sondre Norheim, the great pioneer of modern skiing. From there it was sent across the Atlantic and on to Squaw Valley by torch relay.

Innsbruck 1964
- Number of torchbearers: unknown.
- Total distance: 2 in Austria, figures not available for Greece.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Austria.

Grenoble 1968
- Number of torchbearers: ~5,000.
- Total distance: 7,222 km.
- Countries crossed: Greece, France.

Sapporo 1972
- Number of torchbearers: ~16,300.
- Total distance: 18,741 km.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Okinawa (under US administration), Japan.

Innsbruck 1976
- Number of torchbearers: unknown.
- Total distance: 1,618 km divided in two routes.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Austria.

Lake Placid 1980
- Total distance: 12,824 km (1,600 km in the USA).
- Countries crossed: Greece, USA.
- Number of torchbearers: 52. Each torchbearer carried the torch multiple times on the 1,600km national leg of the relay route.

Sarajevo 1984
- Number of torchbearers: ~1,600 in Yugoslavia.
- Total distance: 5,289 km in Yugoslavia (2,602 km for the Eat route and 2,687 km for the West route). A second flame was created from the original sacred one and the relay was divided and conducted in two separate routes from Dubrovnik to Sarajevo.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Yugoslavia.

Calgary 1988
- Number of torchbearers: ~ 7,000.
- Total distance: 18,000 km in Canada.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Canada.

Albertville 1992
- Number of torchbearers: ~ 5,500.
- Total distance: ~5,700 km in France.
- Countries crossed: Greece, France.

Lillehammer 1994
- Number of torchbearers: unknown.
- Total distance: ~6,000 km.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, and Norway.

Nagano 1998
- Number of torchbearers: 6,901 in Japan.
- Total distance: ~1,162 km in Japan, 451 km in Greece. The flame was split into three and carried along separate routes.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Japan.

Salt Lake City 2002
- Number of torchbearers: 12,012 in the USA.
- Total distance: 21,725 km in the USA, 368 km + 8 nautical miles in Greece.
- Countries crossed: Greece, United States.

Turin 2006
- Number of torchbearers: 10,001 in Italy, 2,006 in Greece.
- Total distance: 11,300 km in Italy, 2,006 km in Greece.
- Countries crossed: Greece, France (to former Olympic Winter Games hosts Albertville and Grenoble), San Marino, Slovenia, Austria, Switzerland, and Italy.

Vancouver 2010
- Number of torchbearers: ~12,000 in Canada, ~560 in Greece.
- Total distance: ~45,000 km in Canada, ~2,180 km in Greece.
- Countries crossed: Greece, Canada.

Sochi 2014
- Number of torchbearers: ~14,000 in Russia, ~280 in Greece.
- Total distance: ~65,000 km in Russia, 1,998 in Greece.
- Countries crossed: Greece (7 days), Russia.
- This edition of the Olympic Torch Relay is the longest national relay ever held for the Winter Games.
- Approximately 90 per cent of Russian population was within one-hour of experiencing the Olympic flame.
- Travelled to the North Pole, Mount Elbrus, Lake Baikal and the International Space Station (ISS).

PyeongChang 2018
- Number of torchbearers: 505 in Greece, 7,500 in the Republic of Korea.
- Total distance: 2,129 km in Canada, ~2,018 km in the Republic of Korea.
- Countries crossed: Republic of Korea.

With the motto “Let everyone shine”, the PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Torch Relay was an invitation for people to join in. The relay’s journey lasted over 101 days and visited 17 metropolitan cities and provinces nationwide. It gave the host nation’s entire population the opportunity to share the excitement of the Olympic Torch Relay. The flame was carried on diverse means of transport like a robot, a steam train, a marine cable car or a turtle ship.

Beijing 2022
- Number of torchbearers: ~1,200
- Total distance: ~70 km in the regions of Beijing, Yanqing and Zhangjiakou.
- Countries crossed: Greece, People’s Republic of China.

On October 18, 2021, the flame was lit in Olympia and then taken directly to Athens, where it was handed over to the Beijing 2022 representatives the following day. On October 20, the flame was welcomed in China. A relay involving around 1,200 torchbearers was held during the three days leading up to the Opening Ceremony in the regions of Beijing, Yanqing, and Zhangjiakou, all three of which hosted competition venues for these Winter Games. On February 2, the relay passed through two parts of Beijing, the Olympic Forest Park and Shougang Park. On February 3, the flame visited various locations such as the Great Wall at Badaling and Dajingmen. On February 4, the relay returned to Beijing for the Opening Ceremony. The flame was brought into the Stadium by Olympian speed skater Weichang Zhao. A series of Olympic medallists then successively carried the flame, which was passed to the last two torchbearers, Dinigeer Yilamujiang and Jiawen Zhao, who were lifted up on a platform to a position beside the centre of the snowflake-shaped cauldron where they light it with the torch.

Milano Cortina 2026

The Olympic flame for the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026 came to life on the 26th of November at an official ceremony in Olympia. The flame travelled across Greece for nine days, carried by more than 450 Torchbearers and stopping in 36 cities and towns, including the country's 12 major ski resorts before arriving at the Panathenaic Stadium on 4 December for the official Handover Ceremony.

From 6 December 2025 to 6 February 2026, the Olympic flame will travel a remarkable 12,000 kilometres across all 110 Italian provinces, visiting 60 cities, 300 towns, and every UNESCO World Heritage site in the country. A total of 10,001 Torchbearers will carry the flame from the mountains of the Alps to the southern coasts, celebrating Italy's culture, history, and deep connection to winter sport.

The Olympic Torch Relay will conclude at the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026 at Milano San Siro Stadium on 6 February 2026, where the final Torchbearer will light the Olympic cauldron and signal the official start of the Games.

For more information:

- The Olympic Torch Relay
- Torches and Torch Relays of the Olympic Games from Berlin 1936 to Paris 2024.
- Torches and Torch Relays of the Olympic Winter Games from Oslo 1952 to Beijing 2022.

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