



## **PARALYMPIC TORCH RELAY**

Since 1988, the lighting of the Paralympic Flame and the Paralympic Torch Relay has become an institution and a signal for the starting of the Games. The Paralympic Torch Relay is one of the most important communication tools in the aim to raise awareness for the arrival of the Paralympic Games.

The Paralympic Torch Relay was first launched in Seoul in 1988 with a lighting ceremony at Mani Mountain of Kangwa Island in Korea. The torch was carried by 282 torchbearers – 111 of which with a disability – on a route of about 105km. From then on, the Flame was the signal for the starting of the Games.

In the Paralympic Games that followed Seoul, the Torch Relay has become a more and more powerful institution, incorporating typical cultural elements of the host country.

At Barcelona in 1992, the Paralympic Games shared the same Flame as the Olympic Games. The route took the Flame over 242km and on its way passed through 30 municipalities of the region of Barcelona. A total of 505 torchbearers were involved.

This number doubled when in 1996 over 1,000 torchbearers carried the Flame more than 1,660km through 100 cities. The Paralympic Flame came from the undying flame at the Martin Luther King monument. The then President of the United States, Bill Clinton, passed the flame to the first torchbearer at the White House.

At Sydney in 2000, the Flame was transported by plane to all Australian state capitals covering a distance of more than 11,500km. Special emphasis was given to the city of Sydney and the surrounding areas.

In Salt Lake City in 2002, Eric Weihenmeyer, the first blind man to successfully climb Mount Everest, carried the Paralympic torch to the podium of the Stadium - guided by his dog – and passed it to Muffy Davis and Chris Waddell, who jointly lit the Paralympic cauldron.

In Athens 2004, the Flame was lit in in the Hephaestus Temple. A total of 680 torchbearers carried the Flame through 54 municipalities, visiting all archaeological sites of Attica and all Games venues.

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After an exciting Paralympic Flame lightning ceremony of the Torino 2006 Paralympic Winter Games, in Rome and Torino, a total of 150 torchbearers carried the Flame through the Piedmont Region, including several accessible landmarks and to the top of Monte Rosa.

The lighting ceremony of the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Torch Relay took place at the Temple of Heaven in Beijing, China. The Paralympic Flame was lit using the optical focus of a concave mirror, thus demonstrating the “integration of Heaven and Man”, a core concept of traditional Chinese culture. The theme of the relay was “Transcendence, Integration and Equality”, with a total length of 13,181km. There were 850 torchbearers and two different routes, with people with a disability accounting for 20 per cent of the participants. The “Ancient China” route includes Huangdi Mausoleum, Xi’an, Hohhot, Changsha, Nanjing and Luoyang. The “Modern China” route includes Shenzhen, Wuhan, Shanghai, Qingdao and Dalian. The relay lasted nine days from 29 August to 6 September, with the two routes occurring simultaneously.

More than 600 torchbearers proudly carried the flame during the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Torch Relay. The torch visited 11 communities across Canada in 10 days, leading to a 24-hour long circular relay through downtown Vancouver before the Paralympic Cauldron was lit at BC Place.

The London 2012 Paralympic Torch Relay will take place from 24-29 August 2012, beginning in the British capital. The United Kingdom’s three other capital cities – Greater Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh – will then light a flame on each of the following days at special Flame Lighting events. Once a flame has been lit, it will visit local community groups and key locations in and around the city. Each flame will then be taken to Stoke Mandeville, home of the Paralympic Movement, where the four flames will be combined at the Paralympic Flame Lighting Ceremony on 28 August to create the London 2012 Paralympic Flame. Later that evening, there will be a 24-hour Torch Relay from Stoke Mandeville, and torchbearers in teams of five will carry the Paralympic Flame to the Olympic Stadium to light the cauldron and open the London 2012 Paralympic Games.