

Beat: Sports

## **MINISTER OF CULTURE RACHIDA DATI PARTICIPATED IN TORCH RELAY IN MONT ST MICHEL**

### **LIGHTING THE CAULDRON BY ROGER LEBRANCHU**

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**USPA NEWS** - Today, on Friday, 31st May the Olympic torch arrived in the iconic Mont Saint Michel, in La Manch Department, Normandy. One of the most notorious native from Normandy, the French astronaut Thomas Pesquet, carried the Torch, from the top of the hill of the Mont Saint Michel, lit the cauldron, lit up by Roger le Branchu, a dynamic and highly beloved and respected veteran, who at one hundred and one years, carried the torch. The French Minister of Culture Rachida Dati, held his arm, and walked with him, in the arena, of Paris 2024

THE OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY COINCIDE WITH THE 80th ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY IN NORMANDY 6 JUNE 1944

Normandy will bear the scars of this moment in history forever, and every year we remember and pay tribute to the veterans from America, Britain, Canada, Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Poland, Australia, France and to their brothers in arms, to those many heroes who lost their lives here during that summer of 1944, and are at rest in the cemeteries to be found throughout the area. In Sainte-Mere-Eglise, the site of one of the most striking military feats in history, the Olympic torch passed by the Signal Monument before heading towards the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption, made famous by a soldier who got entangled on its steeple during Operation Overlord. The town made the most of the relay's stopover by putting on a show around para-sports and adapted sports, with demonstrations of wheelchair basketball and adapted football on the bill.

THE MINISTER OF CULTURE RACHIDA DATI ACCOMPANIED ROGER LEBRANCHU DURING THE LIGHTING OF THE CAULDRON"

The Minister of Culture went to Mont Saint Michel, for the Olympiade, this day of festivities organized in a world-famous and emblematic place of French heritage, which welcomes more than 3 million visitors each year.

The minister, citing officials from the Manche department, Jean Morin, President of the Department, the prefect, greeted the families who came to support the flame bearers, around the arena, where the cauldron was burning. Once the centenary Roger Lebranchu, the veteran, ex-deportee and ex-rowing champion, carried the flame to light the cauldron. She went to the arena, where she took Roger Lebranchu by the arm and accompanied him in his symbolic gesture, while smiling or even laughing. The real star was Roger, cheered by members of his family, chanting his name, as this survivor of the Nazi camps succeeded 76 years ago in participating in the Olympic Games in London in 1948. He is still alert, at his age, and answers us on the microphone as a message to the younger generations "we must play sport, and stop violence and above all practice sport, because it allows us to transcend" and he answers our question of what is his secret to staying in such a beautiful form of "sport, sport, sport"

Few hours before joining this celebration of the burning of the cauldron, Minister Rachida Dati had made a quick visit (from 5:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.) of the Mont Saint Michel abbey, using the footbridge, before the departure of the passage torchbearers.

The Center for National Monuments (CMN), a public establishment under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, involves a large part of its network in this program at the intersection of art, sport and the values of Olympicism.

During her trip, the Minister discussed with the artists of the company "Hors Surface" which offers a program of high-flying National Monuments and the public establishment of Mont- Saint Michel.

The Manche department brought down the curtain on May with a fabulous stage of the Torch Relay. The Olympic torch shone a light on this corner of West France, from Cherbourg-en-Cotentin and Granville to Mont-Saint-Michel. Thomas Pesquet, an Ambassador for the Torch Relay, was on hand in this splendid bay, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Roger Lebranchu, a centenarian and former Olympic rower, lit the celebration cauldron to end the festivities on a high note. The Partners of the Torch Relay —Coca-Cola, Banque Populaire and Caisse d'Epargne— continued painting the convoy and the celebration venue red to give spectators the experience of a

lifetime!

#### MANCHE DEPARTMENT PUTS ITS BEST FOOT FORWARD FOR THE CELEBRATION

The coast of Manche is an ideal place to take a break from routine, with a whole constellation of activities ranging from discovering water sports to sampling local produce and strolling around its enamouring ports. On Friday, 31 May, the Olympic torch began its journey on the seafront when it went across Passerelle Michel-Legrand, a footbridge named in remembrance of the famous composer for the film *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. Escorted by sailing and rowing boats, it crossed the port to the Plage Verte, a space where a host of schoolchildren came out to engage in sporting activities and crank up the volume of this popular celebration. " Source Paris 2024

In the eastern part of the department, the Olympic torch paid a visit to Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue, a village oozing character, where it started the segment on the long jetty, towered over by a lighthouse keeping watch over the high seas. It also swung by the Sailors' Chapel, which has extended its protection over the bay since the 11th century. The torch had to depart for Saint-Lô before it got a taste of Saint-Vaast's famous oysters. In the second-biggest town in Manche, it blazed past the Haras National, an iconic equestrian venue, and the Manche Departmental Archives. It wrapped up the segment on the Passerelle Henri-Liebard, a footbridge straddling the Vire river at a height of 67 meters, all while taking part in activities such as canoeing and kayaking.

A cultural Olympiad brought Mont-Saint-Michel to life. The spectacular artistic performance by Compagnie Hors Surface gave visitors a fresh perspective of the Abbey and the entire site. High-flying shows fusing acrobatics, music and performances left the crowds in awe. Damien Droin, a former French trampolining silver medallist and now a circus artist, captures the essence of the synergy between the realms of culture and sport. His show *Tentative du ciel* conjured up the ancient individual and collective dream of reaching for the skies. Some bodies took flight while others plummeted, taking the audience on a journey spanning land, sea and the Olympic torch." Source Paris 2024

In Granville, the Olympic torch took in the splendid views from the gardens of the Christian Dior Museum, which served as inspiration for the fashion designer back in the day. Come mid-afternoon, it rolled into Villedieu-les-Poëles-Rouffigny to admire a huge mural decked out in the colours of the Games, painted by eight artists, before heading to Mont-Saint-Michel, the backdrop to some of the highest tides in mainland Europe. The building, which welcomes three million visitors every year, set the scene for the unforgettable final leg of the day. Relay after relay, the torch made its ascent from the bridge all the way to Abbey Cloister, eventually reaching the celebration venue set up at Place du Barrage.

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