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The Olympic Torch Makes Its First Trip Around the World

The Olympic Torch Relay signals the beginning of the Olympic Games. The Flame begins its journey in Olympia, Greece, where it is lit by the sun. From there it travels to the Olympic stadium in the city where the Olympics are being held. In 2004, the Olympic Games were to be held in Athens, Greece, only a short journey from Olympia. That year, however, the torch made its journey from Olympia to the Olympic Stadium in Athens by a route that took it all over the world.

The year 2004 was the first time the Olympic Torch Relay took a worldwide route. That year, the Olympic torch traveled from Europe to Australia to Asia to Africa to South America and North America and finally back to Europe. It was the first time the Olympic Flame had traveled to the continents of Africa and South America and to the country of India. Along the way, it stopped in 27 countries. Its route took it to all of the cities where the Summer Olympics have been held in the past, and also to Beijing, the site of the 2008 Summer Olympics.



Between cities, the torch was flown in a special jet airplane called *Zeus*. When it reached the relay cities, the torch was usually carried by foot.

Many people applied for the honor of carrying the torch. Then, runners were selected by the Olympic Committee of each participating country. In Greece where the relay started, runners chosen had to be at least 14 years old. They had to pass a security check, and they could not be elected officials. In 2004, a total of about 11,300 torch bearers participated in the relay. Runners with disabilities also took part, carrying the torch by wheelchair or with the help of a Seeing Eye dog if necessary.

The design of the torch for the 2004 Olympics was based on the shape of an olive leaf. The olive tree is a sacred tree in Greece; it stands for both peace and freedom. Its tradition goes back to the ancient city-state of Athens. The torches for the 2004 relay were made of olive wood and magnesium. By tradition, the Flame should never be allowed to burn out. Just in case one torch accidentally does burn out, a backup Flame is always kept burning, stored in a special lantern for emergencies.

When a runner hands off to the next runner, he does not actually pass the torch. The runner passes the Flame from his torch to a new torch held by the next runner. The 2004 relay made several stops in Greece during the first part of its journey. Then it began its world tour. On June 4, it arrived in Sydney, Australia, the site of the 2000 Olympic Games. On June 6, runners carried it through the streets of Tokyo, Japan. Then it was on to South Korea, China, and India. The next stop was Cairo, Egypt, and then on to Cape Town, South Africa, on June 12. Next, the Flame flew across the world, arriving in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on the continent of South America, on

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June 13.

Then the Flame moved on to North America, stopping in Mexico, the United States, and Canada. Next, back across the Atlantic Ocean to Europe, with stops in many countries, including Belgium, France, England, Germany, and Russia. On July 9, the torch arrived back in Greece, and then travelled around the country, making many stops on both the mainland and the many Greek islands, until it reached the Olympic Stadium on August 13. Along the way, the Olympic Flame stopped at each city where the modern Olympic Games have been held. Some of the more recent ones besides Sydney are Atlanta (U.S.), Barcelona (Spain), Seoul (South Korea), Los Angeles (U.S.), Moscow (Russia), and Montreal (Canada).

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Questions

- _____ 1. The 2004 Olympics took place in _____.
 - A. Athens, Greece
 - B. Olympia, Greece
 - C. Sydney, Australia
 - D. Beijing, China

- _____ 2. The 2004 Olympic Games started on _____.
 - A. July 9
 - B. June 4
 - C. August 13
 - D. June 13

- _____ 3. The Olympic Flame travelled to _____ continents.
 - A. six
 - B. four
 - C. five
 - D. seven

- _____ 4. The Flame travelled to _____.
 - A. cities where the Olympics have been held in the past
 - B. the site of the 2000 Olympics
 - C. the site of the 2008 Olympics
 - D. all of the above

- _____ 5. For the 2004 Olympics, which happened last?
 - A. the torch arrived in Olympia
 - B. the torch arrived in Rio de Janeiro
 - C. the torch arrived in Cape Town
 - D. the torch arrived in Athens

- _____ 6. Which list is in the correct order, according to when the Olympic Flame arrived there?
 - A. Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, South America, North America, Europe
 - B. Europe, Australia, Asia, Africa, South America, North America, Europe
 - C. Europe, Australia, Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Europe
 - D. Europe, Asia, North America, Africa, South America, Europe, Australia

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- _____ 7. The Flame was carried by _____.
- A. Olympic athletes only
 - B. runners, planes, and other forms of transportation
 - C. Greek athletes only
 - D. one torch being passed from runner to runner
- _____ 8. The 2008 Olympics were held on the continent of _____.
- A. Asia
 - B. North America
 - C. Europe
 - D. Africa

