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Sochi to Send Olympic Torch Into Space

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DURBAN, South Africa — Russia plans to send the Olympic torch into space ahead of the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi, Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Zhukov said.

In a presentation to International Olympic Committee members, Zhukov said his country aims to be the first to take the torch beyond the Earth's atmosphere as part of the longest-ever Olympic relay.

"Russia was the first country to send a man into space some 50 years ago," Zhukov said. "So, we are proud that now we have the opportunity to be the first nation to send the Olympic torch into space."

Zhukov said Sochi organizers also planned to take the torch to the top of Russia's highest mountain and the bottom of the world's deepest lake.

Visits to Mount Elbrus and Lake Baikal will form part of the Olympic flame's 20-day, 28,000-kilometer journey, with 14,000 torch bearers used in the buildup to the Sochi Games, Zukov said.

Zhukov announced the torch relay plans in a Sochi presentation to IOC members at their session, or general assembly, in Durban, South Africa, late last week.

"The torch relay is to demonstrate the character of modern Russia, its great historical and cultural achievements and the achievements of the common people," Zhukov said.

Sochi will host Russia's first-ever Winter Olympics.

With less than three years to go, Jean-Claude Killy, head of the IOC Coordination Commission for the Sochi Games, said there had been "huge progress" in Sochi for the games but there was still "no time to lose."

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