

Veteran Polar Explorer to Take Olympic Torch to North Pole

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Artur Chilingarov holds an Olympic torch in a lecture-hall of the Russian Geographical Society on Sept. 12, 2013. **Mikhail Potapov**

Polar explorer and federal lawmaker Artur Chilingarov will lead an expedition to the North Pole as part of the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympic torch relay.

The arctic stage of the torch's route, which will feature its own ceremony, was presented Thursday at a meeting of the Russian Geographical Society, Itar-Tass reported.

A nuclear ice-breaker, named 50 Years of Victory, will leave the port of Murmansk and take the torch to the Arctic at the end of October.

Once there, a group of runners from different nations will light additional torches onboard the ship before racing to the final destination where the Olympic cauldron will be ignited.

Chilingarov, 73, was presented with the Hero of the Soviet Union award in 1986 and the Hero

of the Russian Federation award in 2008 for showing courage during a number of polar expeditions.

A former State Duma deputy for the United Russia party, he now represents the Tula region in the Federation Council.

Chilingarov will lead the expedition and does not expect to face any difficulties.

"Expeditions to the North Pole have been routine practice for Russian ice-breakers for a long time," he said, adding that the ship "has a very experienced captain who knows how to get there and back."

The expedition is an opportunity for Russia's nuclear fleet to flex its muscles, he said.

"We will show the whole world once again that the Arctic is completely accessible to our fleet," Chilingarov said.

As part of the overall relay, the torch will be taken to the bottom of Lake Baikal on Nov. 23 before going to the summit of Mount Elbrus in the North Caucasus on Feb. 1.

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