

An aerial photograph of a winter sports resort in Slovenia. The scene is dominated by a large, rugged mountain peak in the background, partially covered in snow. The foreground and middle ground are filled with dense evergreen forests, many of which are heavily laden with snow. Several ski tracks and bobsled runs are visible, winding through the snowy terrain. In the lower-left corner, there are various structures and facilities, including what appears to be a bobsled track and some buildings. The sky is a clear, bright blue with some light clouds. A green brushstroke-like graphic element is overlaid on the top part of the image, containing the text.

SLOVENIA

the land of outstanding sports achievements

I FEEL
SLOVENIA



PLANICA
FIS NORDIC WORLD SKI CHAMPIONSHIPS
2023 Presented by  **storaenso**

DOBRODOŠLI DOMA.
DOBRODOŠLIV PLANICI.

WELCOME HOME.
WELCOME TO PLANICA.

Photo: Planica Nordic Centre archives

PLANICA NORDIC CENTRE WILL HOST THE NORDIC WORLD SKI CHAMPIONSHIPS IN 2023

The long-awaited FIS Nordic World Ski Championships Planica 2023 will begin with the opening ceremony on 21 February 2023 at 20.23 and will last for two weeks. The championships will be concluded on 5 March with 50 km cross-country skiing for men. During this time, 24 competitions for medals will be held in three disciplines.

Planica Nordic Centre, which is an exceptional venue for ski jumping and ski flying, is also one of the most modern Nordic centres in Europe. For several years, the organisers have been striving to bring this great event in Nordic skiing to Slovenia, and in 2023, the Upper Sava Valley will finally host the top Nordic skiers in the world. During two weeks of competition, we will see twelve final decisions in cross-country skiing, seven in ski jumping and five in Nordic combined. All competitions will take place at the state-of-the-art venue in Planica, which boasts top-notch facilities, ski jumps and cross-country skiing tracks.

Team Slovenia

The Slovenian national teams are already preparing for the national championships, and so are the fans. Support for our Nordic skiers has already been expressed by many successful Slovenian athletes, who have wished all the competitors a lot of success.

Anže Kopitar, twice the Stanley Cup winner with the Los Angeles Kings team, expressed his delight that Planica, the valley of Nordic skiing, will be hosting the World Championships in Nordic disciplines. Planica also has a very special place in the life of **Primož Roglič**, the Olympic Champion in the Tokyo 2020 Chronometer and a three-time winner of the Spanish Vuelta, the cycling race across Spain: "When I was still ski jumping, I won the title of junior world champion in the team competition right here in Planica with my team."

Tadej Pogačar, a two-time winner of the Tour de France cycling race, hopes that he will be able to watch at least some competitions, as he loves to follow the performances of Slovenia's athletes. "To compete at the World Championships is a special privilege and reward for every athlete; it is often a competition that you think about and prepare for over a long period of time," said **Janja Garnbret**, Olympic champion in sport climbing from Tokyo 2020.

Planica Nordic Centre

Planica Nordic Centre is a state-of-the-art national complex for Nordic sports. It covers 100,000 square metres of sports terrain, where seven ski jumping hills and the flying hill take centre stage. Planica hosts World Cup competitions every year and in 2023, it will host the FIS Nordic World Ski Championships.

The core activity of the Planica Nordic Centre is to provide top conditions for ski jumping, cross-country skiing and Nordic combined. In addition, the centre provides athletes with basic training and competitions at the highest level. In addition to the ski jumps, the complex includes a cross-country skiing centre with a stadium, a sports area and various cross-country skiing tracks. There is also an artificial snow-making system, ski lifts, a stadium for football and track and field events, a wind tunnel, a zipline, cycling and walking paths, a cultural heritage park and an information area with catering facilities.

The centre is also intended for recreational sports enthusiasts who will be able to test their endurance with a range of challenges and thereby spend their leisure time engaged in active pursuits. In the summer months, adrenaline junkies have the opportunity to

test their nerves on a 566-metre long zipline with a 202-metre drop in altitude. With a 38.8 per cent gradient, it is the steepest zipline in the world, where you can descend with a speed of up to 90 km/h. Strict rules apply to ensure safety.

Exceptional architectural and technological solutions

Planica Nordic Centre is also an architectural masterpiece and an example of sustainable construction, with its ideal placement in the protected area of the Triglav National Park. "Planica is special, unmatched, unrepeatable and unique. We don't know of any other Nordic centre that combines jumping and cross-country skiing in one place, fully embedded in the natural environment," states the architect Aleš Vodopivec.



The architects laid out the ski jumps at the very threshold of the Triglav National Park in a fan-like shape, so that they extend downwards from a single point at the top of the hill in the form of a scree slope. In this manner, they introduced into the area – an alpine valley – the appearance of orderly infrastructure.

Interestingly, upon arrival in Planica, visitors can only see 15 percent of the total 8,500 net square metres of surface area, as the remaining 85 percent is hidden deep underground. By integrating sports facilities into the natural environment, the centre is extremely sustainable, while at the same time facilitating year-round sports activities through its several multifunctional facilities intended for both athletes and visitors.

In the summer, for example, parking spaces in the basement turn into a cross-country ski trail, while simultaneously serving as a storage for large quantities of snow for the

next winter. The innovative heating, cooling, irrigation and snow-making system is most efficient in the autumn, when the cross-country skiing track is cooled and the by-product of the cooling is the heat that is used to heat the central building.

Planica Nordic Centre has received numerous awards for innovation, sustainability and architectural solutions in green management and environmental technologies.

The architecture of the sports facilities is the work of architects Matej Blenkuš, Miloš Florijančič and Klemen Kobal. The architecture of the central cross-country skiing facility and the service and heating facilities was conceived by Aleš Vodopivec and Marko Smrekar, and their location in the landscape and landscape architecture, which is of particular importance in such a natural environment, was designed by landscape architects Ana Kučan and Luka Javornik.

Planica is traditionally the site of the Ski Jumping World Cup Finals, which is attended by tens of thousands of fans every year. This year, the picturesque valley in the immediate vicinity of the border with Italy and Austria will host the largest sports and entertainment spectacle in Slovenia.



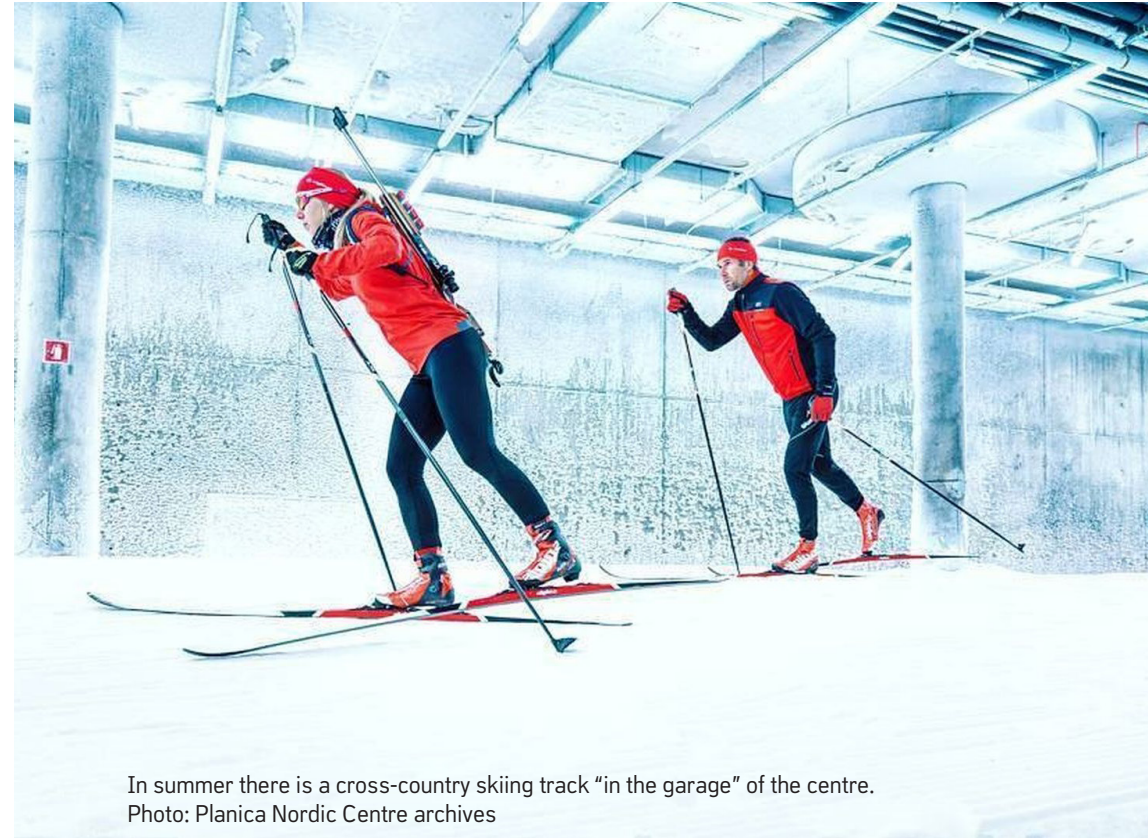
Magnificent structure for all seasons

The competition proposal focused on the rehabilitation and design of the landscape of ski jumps in Planica. The architects also wanted to adapt the architectural appearance of the buildings to this new concept. The new layout is primarily marked by the fan-shape arrangement of the ski jumps, which creates spatial order and peace. With the opening of Planica Nordic Centre, the valley beneath the Ponce mountains has become more than just a meeting place at the end of the ski jumping season, as it offers different experiences to visitors in all seasons and provides professional sports facilities for the training of athletes.

In terms of architecture and landscape, the designers of Planica Nordic Centre placed the sports complex in the majestic scenery of the mountains and the mountain world, increasing its functionality by making it usable in all seasons.



The designers of Planica Nordic Centre placed the sports complex in the majestic scenery of the mountains.
Photo: Planica Nordic Centre archives



In summer there is a cross-country skiing track "in the garage" of the centre.
Photo: Planica Nordic Centre archives

Interesting facts about the central building of Planica Nordic Centre:

- Of a total of 8,500 net m² of surface area, 85% is located underground.
- The circular cross-country skiing track is 880 m long.
- Ceiling lamps in the "garage" are designed in such a way that their layout reflects the shape of the cross-country skiing track.
- In winter there are 178 parking spaces in the underground part.
- Service booths for up to 40 competition teams can be installed in the hall during the competitions.
- Access to the centre of the cross-country stadium is through the underground corridor.
- The entire building has seven floors.
- It is cooled and heated using heat pumps that draw energy from the groundwater.

Interesting facts about sports facilities:

- In the construction and design of the terrain, more than 500,000 m³ of soil had to be excavated and 380,000 m³ of soil had to be backfilled.
- The large HS139 m ski jump was set up in exactly the same location as the old Bloudek *Velikanka (Giant Ski Jump)*, while the medium-sized ski jump was built in a new location next to the large one. The name Bloudek's Velikanka is listed as a monument, and so is also this ski jump's axis.
- Youth ski jumps are of sizes HS80 and HS61 m, and children's ski jumps are of sizes HS45 m, HS30 m and HS15. Young ski jumpers jump at speeds from 30 km/h on the HS15 m ski jump to 85 km/h on the HS80 m ski jump.
- All ski jumps are furnished with plastic mass which makes it possible to use them even in the summer.
- The ski flying hill has undergone several transformations. The last one was started in 2013 and completed in 2015.
- A total of 28 world records have been set on the Gorišek brothers' ski flying hill, which is the largest number achieved on any ski jump in the world.
- The highest point of Planica Nordic Centre is the inrun of the Gorišek brothers' ski flying hill at 1,151 m.
- Several transportation devices are located between the ski jumps: a chair lift with an altitude gain of 202 metres, an inclined elevator which facilitates easy access to all the inruns and thus a greater number of jumps within one training unit, and the Hugo inclined elevator, which is listed as cultural heritage.
- The Hugo inclined elevator was the world's first transportation device for ski jumpers, built in 1952 and renovated in 2015.
- The setting up of cross-country ski trails included the arrangement of trails on the landslide beneath Ciprnik and the connecting trails between the ski slope of Slatna to the neighbouring forest clearing. Three bridges and a skateboarding park were also built as part of the construction of cross-country ski trails.
- In Planica, there are 7.5 km of approved trails for the major competitions which are connected to recreational trails leading to Tamar, Kranjska Gora and Italy.

Planica Nordic Centre is an ideal place for training, regeneration and other activities in nature for both professional and amateur athletes. In addition to the seven new ski jumps and the principal one among them – the ski flying hill – there are several kilometres of cross-country skiing trails arranged in winter for the enjoyment of cross-country skiing enthusiasts.



Planica is the place of the longest ski jumps in the world.
Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

History of ski jumping in Planica

Since the first international ski jumping competition in Planica in 1934, we have seen countless unforgettable sports stories created in this Alpine valley. However, a whole new story in the valley beneath the Ponce mountains began with the construction of the Gorišek brothers' ski flying hill, which marked a turning point in the development of ski flying.

A long and innovative tradition of ski jumping in Planica called for the development of new infrastructure, and at the beginning of the 1960s a decision was made to build a ski flying hill. At that time, the largest ski flying hills were the Vikersund ski flying hill in Norway, the Oberstdorf hill in Germany and the Kulm hill in Austria. The Planica Organising Committee entrusted brothers Janez and Lado Gorišek, both of them engineers and former ski jumpers, with the task of drawing up plans for the construction of the ski flying hill. Their project has left a lasting mark on ski jumping.

The opening in 1969

The construction of the ski flying hill, at that time named *Velikanka (Giant Hill)*, began in 1967 and was completed in November of the following year. The ski flying hill made its debut between 21 and 23 March 1969 with a competition in which top athletes in this sport took part, representing fifteen countries. The competition proved to be very successful and, most of all, attractive. The nearly 90,000 visitors who gathered on that occasion at Planica would have confirmed this.

Ski jumping is about length, not depth

Later, they changed and adjusted the landing angle because it was too big, and as there was too much pressure at the landing point because the ski flying hill was too steep, they changed that, too. Swiss ski jumper Walter Steiner found a solution, suggesting that the angle of the landing slope be reduced. The Gorišek brothers then used their engineering knowledge and put this idea into practice; other ski jumping and ski flying hills followed suit. This has now become the standard in all constructions and renovations. To date, the ski flying hill has been renovated eight times; all renovations were under the supervision of Janez Gorišek.

SLOVENIA – THE LAND OF OUTSTANDING SPORTS ACHIEVEMENTS

Slovenia as a sporting country is not only known globally for the exceptional achievements of its athletes, but also because it is an outstanding organiser of major sports events. The teams of sportsmen and sportswomen we Slovenians support are part of our identity, and we can feel close to them. We celebrate with them when they win, but are also proud of them when they do not make the top rankings. They are always heroes for us. **Our hearts beat as one with theirs.** Slovenian sportsmen and sportswomen are heroes famous throughout the world.



Slovenians have a close relation with sport, and we like to spend our free time engaging in various sporting activities, either indoors or outdoors. Our story is also a sporting story, as moving fills us with energy and gives us a boost in reaching our recreational as well as professional goals. So it's not surprising we are so successful in sports. Being active is simply in our genes, and we see it as part of a high-quality, balanced life. Slovenia's geographic diversity and the numerous recreational sports events held throughout the year provide a wealth of opportunities for amateurs, fans and professionals.

This is helped to a large extent by Slovenia's exceptional natural features, its good quality sports infrastructure, which receives investments from the state, the EU, and

business – with close links between tourism and sport – and of course from local communities. In addition to its extensive infrastructure for sports and tourism, Slovenia has also contributed various innovations and improvements to the world of sport.

It seems impossible that a nation of just two million could achieve such success. Indeed, we are probably the only country of this size that has qualified for the highest-level competitions in team sports (football, hockey, basketball, handball, volleyball), and whose exceptional athletes have achieved top-level individual results (skiing, cross-country skiing, ski jumping, climbing, and athletics). The exceptional achievements of Slovenian sport over the past decades have set numerous important milestones, and taken Slovenian fans and their enthusiastic cheering across the globe.

Slovenia ranks second in the world when it comes to the number of Olympic medals per capita, and Slovenian sportsmen and sportswomen have won numerous world championship medals. Outstanding sports achievements, exceptional natural features, highly developed infrastructure, active programmes in nurseries, and physical education in primary and secondary schools, are only some of the factors that contribute to our life-long connection with sport and motivate us to spend a large part of our free time being active, both inside and outdoors.

Number of Olympic medals per capita at the Beijing 2022 Olympic Games

Norway (146.520)
Slovenia (296.991)
Austria (500.355)
Sweden (618.187)
Switzerland (618.187)



In Slovenia sport is a reason to celebrate

Slovenia has school playing fields full of children, mountain huts with hikers and climbers, sports halls with professionals and amateurs, and great interest in various forms of exercise, gyms and other recreational centres throughout the country. Regular physical activity is very important for both our physical and mental health, and contributes to an overall healthy lifestyle. Slovenians are well aware of this.

Sport is a central part of our culture, and this has also been recognised by the state. In 2020, on the initiative of the Slovenian Olympic Committee – Association of Sports Federations, **it declared the 23rd of September the Day of Slovenian Sport**, although this is not a work-free day. On this day, Slovenians put on their sports shoes, hop on their bikes, roll out their yoga mats, jump in the pool, don their skates, and engage in many other physical activities.

It was on the 23rd of September 2000 in Sydney that the Slovenian national anthem was heard for the first time at the Olympic Games. On that day, the first Olympic gold medals were won for Slovenia by the rowers Iztok Čop and Luka Špič, followed by the shooter Rajmond Debevec.

The 23rd of September is also traditionally the first day of the European Week of Sport, an initiative organised by the European Commission, whose aim is to encourage people to take part in physical activities and look after their health.

A high level of sports culture in Slovenia: Slovenians are also proud to have a high level of sporting culture. We are aware that sporting behaviour relates to values such as honesty, respect and tolerance.

Slovenian fans have so far proven themselves to be excellent ambassadors of Slovenia and Slovenian sports. With their fair-play cheering they made an impression wherever they were supporting Slovenian sports heroes, be it at various competitions around the world or at home. The fan's favourite shout is: "Anyone who doesn't jump isn't Slovenian!"

SOC – sports umbrella organisation

The Slovenian Olympic Committee – Association of Sports Federations (SOC) takes care of Slovenian sports activities on an institutional level. This is the main non-

governmental sports organisation of national sectoral sports associations, which as Slovenia's umbrella organisation for sports works to develop and connect professional sport, sport for all and sport on a local level.

There are 8,264 sports and recreational societies active under the auspices of the SOC that are recorded in the central register of Slovenian societies. These are not only for professional sportsmen and sportswomen, but also for amateurs, and play an important role in encouraging people to live high-quality, active lives.

The SOC also ensures the visual appearance of sports clubs is unified. A combination of green, blue and white has been chosen for Slovenia. The SOC advises sports organisations to use the following colour proportions when designing their national sports equipment: 50% green, 30% blue, 20% white.



A short history of organised sport in Slovenia

The beginnings of organised sport in Slovenia date back to 1 October 1863, when the first gymnastics society, called *Južni Sokol* (meaning Southern Hawk, or Falcon), was founded. This laid the foundations for the development of organised sport in Slovenia, the development of sport in schools and sports clubs, the training of coaching staff, and the formation of a solid base for the many achievements by our sportsmen and sportswomen.

Legends of Slovenian sport

The path trodden by Slovenian sport has been paved by legendary sportsmen and sportswomen who have been breaking world records and pushing the boundaries of what is possible, putting us on the world map, making us proud and strengthening our national consciousness. At the same time, they encourage Slovenians to be more active and do sports at all levels.

Slovenian sport has been marked by many outstanding sportsmen and sportswomen who pushed the limits in their disciplines. Their successes have gone down in sporting history, and in Slovenia they have been made timeless by the **Sporting Heroes Hall of Fame**. Each year the Slovenian Association of Sports Journalists selects the sportsman, sportswoman, team and young hopes who will appear in the Hall of Fame. Its aim is also to preserve sports equipment connected with Slovenian sportsmen and sportswomen, and various historical sporting events.



Leon Štukelj – Olympian Champion and legend of Slovenian sport. Photo: Rasto Božič/STA

The first Slovenian Olympic medal winner was Rudolf Cvetko, who won the silver in fencing in 1912 in Stockholm. The legendary Olympic Champion Leon Štukelj won the highest number of Olympic medals for the country – six – including three golds. So far three Slovenian sportsmen have won Olympic gold, silver and bronze – Leon Štukelj, Luka Špik and Iztok Čop.

List of all sportsmen and sportswomen registered in the Athletes Hall of Fame:

| Year | Name and surname (discipline) |
|------|---|
| 2011 | Leon Štukelj (gymnastics), Miroslav Cerar (gymnastics) |
| 2012 | Rudolf Cvetko (sabre), Josip Primožič Tošo (gymnastics), Stane Derganc (gymnastics), Stanko Lorgjer (athletics), Ivo Daneu (basketball), Jože Šlibar (ski jumping), Janez Polda (ski jumping), Draga Stamejčič Pokovec (athletics), Janez Žirovnik (cycling), Nataša Urbančič Bezjak (athletics), Branko Oblak (football), Aljoša Žorga (basketball), Vinko Jelovac (basketball), Mima Jaušovec (tennis), Rudi Hiti (ice hockey), Peter Šumi (gymnastics), Miro Steržaj (bowling), Albin Felc (ice hockey), rowing eight (4. Olympic Games Tokyo 1964) |
| 2013 | Franc Smolej (cross-country skiing), Ciril Praček (alpine skiing), Branko Zihelr (diving), Tone Cerer (swimming), Tine Mulej (alpine skiing), Janko Štefe (alpine skiing), Ivan Toplak (football), Janko Kosmina-Mario Fafangel (sailing), Tine Šrot (gymnastics), Jurij Uršič (cycling), Edvard Vecko (table tennis), Ištvan Korpa (table tennis), Tone Gale (hockey), Milan Zadel (kayak canoeing), Stanko Topolčnik (ju-do), Bojan Križaj (alpine skiing), Peter Vilfan (basketball), Bojan Ropret (cycling), Boris Strel (alpine skiing), Alenka Cuderman (handball), Borut Petrič (swimming), Miran Tepes (ski jumping), Jure Franko (alpine skiing), Primož Ulaga (ski jump-ing), Andrej Jelenc (whitewater kayaking), Darjan Petrič (swimming), Matjaž Debe-lak (ski jumping), Mateja Svet (alpine skiing) |
| 2015 | Srečko Katanec (football), Rok Petrovic (alpine skiing), Jure Zdovc (basketball), Iztok Puc (handball) |
| 2016 | Rolando Pusnik (handball), Polona Dornik (basketball) |
| 2017 | Marko Elsner (football) |
| 2019 | Alenka Dovžan (alpine skiing), Katja Koren (alpine skiing), Jure Košir (alpine skiing) |

The baton is now in the hands of an exceptional new generation

The exceptional legacy of historical names is now in the hands of the next generation, which upholds our small country's global reputation with its annual achievements in sports competitions. Some of the greatest names include the NBA basketball players **Luka Dončić** and **Goran Dragić**, the NHL hockey player **Anže Kopitar**, who has won the Stanley Cup twice and is captain of the LA Kings, one of the world's best goalkeepers **Jan Oblak**, and **Rok Možič**, one of the world's most promising volleyball players.

We have a wealth of great cyclists, particularly **Primož Roglič** who won Olympic gold in Beijing, and the two-time winner of the Tour de France **Tadej Pogačar**, and also by our climber **Janja Garnbret**, judoka **Tina Trstenjak**, canoeist **Benjamin Savšek**, discus thrower **Kristjan Čeh**, ski jumper **Peter Prevc**, and the promising para skier **Jernej Slivnik**.

The retired alpine skier **Tina Maze** set records in the number of points won in one season – winning 2,414 in the 2012/13 season, during which she won the gold medal eleven times. Tina Maze is one of six skiers who has won in all five disciplines, and one of only three who succeeded in doing this in the same season. She won 26 races in her career, and was Olympic Champion in the downhill and giant slalom.



Luka Dončić and Goran Dragić – Slovenian basketball players in the NBA. Photo: Nace Hočvar/STA

Exceptional achievements at the Paralympic Games

In Slovenia we are also exceptionally proud of the achievements of our Paralympians who represent our country in various sports disciplines. In the 30 years since Slovenia gained its independence they have won an enviable number of Paralympic medals: four gold, ten silver and nine bronze medals.

In recent years, Slovenians have been particularly successful in winning medals in air rifle shooting in the standing position, where we have been represented by **Franček Gorazd Tiršek**, **Veselka Pevec** and **Franc Pinter**. Successful performances in the Paralympics have also been made by **Mateja Pinter** – one of our most successful table-tennis players. The swimmer **Darko Đurić** has also made our country proud with his achievements in his discipline. **Gal Jakič** had a very successful sporting career, and the excellent skier **Jernej Slivnik** is following in his tracks.



Franček Gorazd Tiršek with the Paralympic silver medal in Tokyo 2020. Photo: Tinkara Zupan/STA

SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE

In Slovenia we are aware of the importance of investment in sports infrastructure. The many sports facilities throughout the country are our long-term investment in a healthy future. They offer all who live in Slovenia access to sport and recreation, provide our greatest talents with the possibility to train, and also make it possible for our small, Alpine country to host some of the world's most important events.

Co-financing of investments in Slovenian sports facilities by year

| Year | Data |
|------|----------------|
| 2014 | €49,092,442.85 |
| 2015 | €57,327,479.68 |
| 2016 | €36,104,555.17 |
| 2017 | €35,792,536.33 |
| 2018 | €66,207,987.11 |
| 2019 | €99,965,738.36 |
| 2020 | €87,516,745.36 |

One of our latest infrastructural gems is undoubtedly the Planica Nordic Centre. This is an extremely modern complex for Nordic sports, and an example of sustainable construction and management. It boasts numerous initiatives for green mobility and clean energy. Its core activity is the provision of the best possible conditions for ski jumping, cross-country skiing and Nordic combined.

Amateur sports enthusiasts are excited by almost 10,000 kilometres of Alpine hiking trails and the 1,200 kilometre long Slovenian Mountain Trail. There are picturesque

cycle routes all over the country and a gym next to each school, where recreational activities are organised alongside the regular school curriculum. There are many football pitches and basketball courts throughout Slovenia, some of them set up by the brothers Goran and Zoran Dragič – the first smart basketball courts in Slovenia.



Stožice Arena – venue of the World Volleyball Championship 2022.
Photo: Tinkara Zupan/STA



Planica Nordic Centre - venue of the Nordic World Championships.
Photo: Planica Nordic Centre archives

Ski jumping - Planica

The valley below the Ponca peaks should probably take the credit for the largest shift in the mindset that a person can fly on skis. Planica provided for two major milestones in the history of ski jumping. The first was set by the Austrian Josef Bradl, who in 1936 was the first to jump over 100 metres (101.5 metres). Toni Nieminen of Finland was the first to fly over 200 metres (203 metres) in Planica in 1994.

The Planica Ski Jumping Centre developed from the Bloudek Giant to the Gorišek Brothers Flying Hill, as well as from the first ski lodge to an innovative Nordic centre, the likes of which cannot be found anywhere else in the world. Among various activities, it offers an indoor snow circuit where you can play curling or do cross-country-style skiing even in July or August.

Ski jumping centre Kovk

The Predmeja - Otlica - Kovk Ski Jumping Centre has built a new ski jumping centre, which has been set up in an area where the forest was badly damaged by an ice storm. Instead of reforestation, members of the centre first cleared and performed heavy earthmoving work on the rocky terrain with the help of volunteers, developed an access road and connected water and electricity supplies to the ski jumping centre. They reached out to the Triglav Kranj Ski Jumping Club and obtained a free ceramic jumping ramp from them. The plastic material for the landing slope was second-hand, but it still serves its purpose.

By establishing the centre, they provided children from the region of Primorska, all the way from Grgar, Nova Gorica and Vipava to Črni Vrh, with the opportunity to acquire ski jumping knowledge under the guidance of the successful ski coach and former ski jumper Danilo Pudgar so that they could get closer to their role models, successful ski jumpers of today such as the Prevc brothers, Timi Zajc and Anže Lanišek among male jumpers and Tina Križnar, Urša Bogataj and Ema Klinec among female jumpers.

Major sports events in Slovenia

Slovenia is also an excellent organiser of major sports events, thanks to its good infrastructure and natural features. In recent years, Slovenia has hosted numerous major events, both European and World championships, as well as various tournaments on a European or World level.

Every year in Slovenia we organise major international competitions such as the annual ski flying competition in Planica, the Alpine Ski World Cup in Kranjska Gora and the Golden Fox competition, the Tour of Slovenia cycling race, the WTA tennis tournament in Portorož, and recreational athletes get excited every year about the Franja Cycle Marathon and the Ljubljana Marathon.

We have also shown our talent for organising major events with the World Rowing Championships in Bled, the European Men's Basketball Championships in 2013, the European Men's Volleyball Championship in 2019, the World Ski Flying Championships in 2020, the Biathlon World Championships in 2021, and the hockey tournament of World Championship Division 1/A in Ljubljana 2022.

The sporting year 2023 will begin in Slovenia with the Nordic World Ski Championships in Planica, followed by the European Rowing Championships in Bled, and the European Women's Basketball Championship in Celje, Koper and Ljubljana.



Sport and the economy go hand in hand

Sport is an important branch of the economy, which is driven by numerous innovative approaches, companies and innovators who develop products and services for recreational and professional sports purposes. These combine the functionality demanded by each sport with sustainable solutions.

The first amongst the fastest is Akrapovič, the world's leading manufacturer of exhaust systems for motorbikes and sports cars. These systems are famous for their enhanced performance, unmistakable sound, innovative design, light construction, quality workmanship and durability. More than 100 world champions have won their titles using Akrapovič exhaust systems.

Another significant market player is Alpina, which has been developing new technologies and materials since 1947. Among fierce global competition from other manufacturers of sports footwear, Alpina is famous for supplying cross-country ski boots to some of the world's top cross-country skiers and biathletes. At the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, competitors wearing Alpina boots won 12 Olympic medals.

One of the best-known Slovenian companies in the world is undoubtedly Elan, which has been making some of the best skis for almost 80 years. Over the last two decades alone it has received more than 70 awards for innovation, quality and design from independent institutions. Their most prominent innovations include carving skis and the revolutionary Ibx Tactix folding touring skis. Meanwhile, the production of Elan's ski jumping skis has been taken over by another Slovenian company, Slatnar.



We may also find innovative Slovenian solutions in recreational sport. Many top Slovenian athletes, who are now retired, are involved in the sports industry. The former whitewater kayaker Andraž Vehovar and retired professional cyclist Jure Berk have joined forces and are developing and manufacturing their own carbon fibre cycle parts. The one-time world-class cross-country skier Petra Majdič is innovative in the field of team building, while the Tepeš and Debelak families, which have given us some excellent ski jumpers, are producing ski jumping suits.

Slovenian science is also deeply involved with sport, especially in the field of artificial intelligence, where Slovenian scientists are among the global elite. An exceptional story is that of **Primož Roglič**, a one-time ski jumper who is now an extremely successful cyclist. After he was injured in a ski jumping accident, scientists at the Jožef Stefan Institute used artificial intelligence to suggest cycling as the sport in which he could potentially achieve the best results.

The former captain of the Slovenian Davis Cup tennis team, **Miha Mlakar**, is a scientist who combines knowledge of algorithms, artificial intelligence, data processing and sport. At the Jožef Stefan Institute he focuses primarily on applicative research, which strives to apply artificial intelligence methods to practical problems. His role and that of the team dealing with data processing is to help coaches by telling them what should be improved based on objective data. Miha Mlakar is mostly involved with tennis, but would also like to apply this knowledge to other sports.

SPORT IS IN US FROM AN EARLY AGE

The achievements of our athletes are no coincidence, as sport is something we are in touch with from an early age in Slovenia. Slovenian children engage in various physical activities from a young age, and in nurseries they already have the option of choosing extra activities such as swimming, mountain walking and dancing. This means children in nurseries – and 94% of all children in Slovenia attend one – are involved in various physical activities.

These children are thus able to develop their motor skills, and can join different programmes, such as *Mali sonček* (Little Sunshine), which includes mountain walking, skiing, gymnastics and many other sports, and *Ciciban planinec* (Ciciban the Hiker).

In primary schools the two programmes continue as *Zlati sonček* (Golden Sunshine) and *Mladi planinec* (Young Hiker), there is also the Let's learn to swim programme, and other sports programmes such as *Krpan* (Krpan) and *Hura, prosti čas* (Hurray for Free Time). Their aim is to acquaint children with different sports activities and for them to live as actively as possible.

Sports interest programmes and total number of children and adolescents enrolled in 2014-2021:

| Sports programme | Number included |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Mali sonček | 313,165 |
| Zlati sonček | 211,939 |
| Krpan | 154,550 |
| Naučimo se plavati | 213,372 |
| Ciciban planinec | 19,130 |
| Mladi planinec | 11,111 |
| Hura, prosti čas | 11,416 |
| Športna tekmovanja | 436,190 |
| Zdrav življenjski slog | 155,295 |

In primary and secondary schools, sport is a compulsory subject. Schools organise sports days with different themes, and pupils can engage in various extracurricular activities that cover a wide range of individual and team sports.

As part of the learning process, Slovenian schoolchildren may attend various optional sports subjects or the 'school in nature week', in which they can try sports such as skiing, swimming and hiking. This is why we say it is no coincidence that we are successful in professional sports.

As young people grow up with sport, schoolchildren also actively participate in various sports competitions. According to statistics from the Planica National Institute of Sport, over 90,000 Slovenian primary and secondary school pupils participate in such competitions, more than one in three.



In Slovenian schools each pupil receives an average of 4.46 teaching hours of physical education per week.

Monitoring of physical fitness and SLOfit

Ever since 1987 we have been monitoring the physical fitness and motor development of children and teenagers in Slovenia who attend primary and secondary schools as part of the Sports Education Card programme (SEC). The project – which began with real cards – is now a modern programme supported by the web application Moj SLOfit, which makes life-long monitoring of physical fitness and other connected data accessible to all.

The SLOfit system consists of the SEC measurement tasks, measurement tasks for adults, questionnaires on movement habits and details of parent, the SLOfit database and reporting systems for individuals and primary schools. The SLOfit database is now the largest database on the physical fitness of children in the world, as it

contains medical data of more than 40 birth cohorts of children who were monitored by the programme continuously for approximately 13 years.

All individuals may access their test data via the My SLOfit application. In addition to promoting active participation in sports, the application also encourages people to drop unhealthy habits and avoid certain conditions, such as smoking and obesity. They can share their SLOfit data with health and physical exercise experts, allowing them to improve their quality of life by undertaking structured physical exercise.



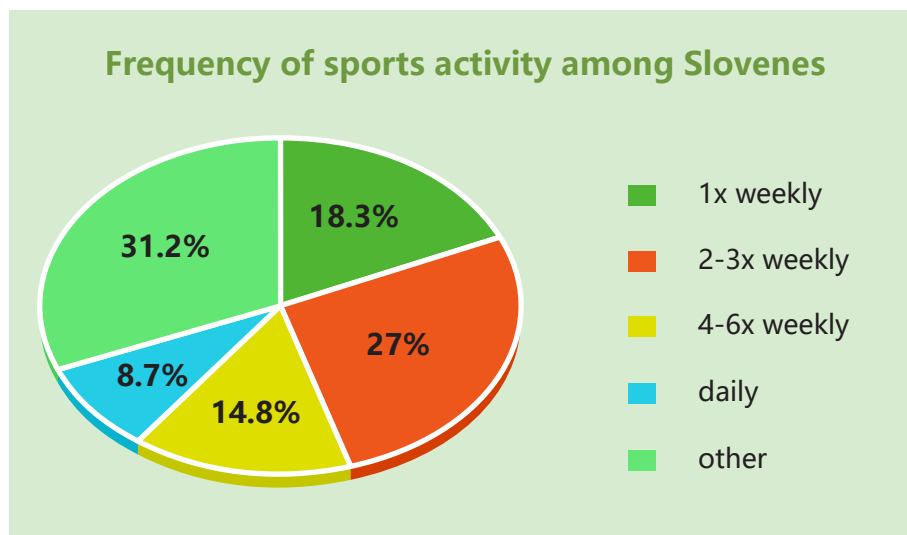
SLOfit testing in a primary school.
Photo: Faculty of Sports archives



More than one million Slovenians – half the entire population – have undergone testing as part of the SLOfit project in the past 30 years.

Dedication to sport for all

It is important, however, that everyone finds the right form of activity for themselves. In Slovenia everything is close at hand – nature, well-developed public infrastructure and numerous sports facilities – allowing us to remain involved in sport and recreation throughout our lives. Six out of ten Slovenians spend more than two and a half hours each week engaging in recreational sports activities – in line with WHO recommendations. Four out of ten spend more than five hours per week doing some kind of sporting activity.



We are active international promoters of a healthy lifestyle and life-long physical activity, which we emphasised in particular during our Presidency of the Council of the European Union, in the second half of 2021. We are aware that a physically active society is a healthier society, so we earmark funds for both professional and also recreational sport.

One of the greatest achievements of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union was the formation of the European Sports Model, which is intended to provide appropriate conditions for the whole population to participate in sports activities. It is based on European values such as solidarity, open competitions, fair play, mutual respect and integrity, and emphasises the importance of organised sport in the EU having common features.

Many examples of good practice in Europe are also evident in Slovenia: structured organisation of sport in nurseries, schools, clubs, associations and sports federations; emphasis on the importance of local communities from the point of view of public infrastructure and the promotion of local communities by successful athletes; providing health insurance for athletes; and the financial solidarity of the international umbrella federation with national associations and clubs.

As we are aware that we do not all have equal opportunities for active participation in sports, we also devote much attention to making sport accessible to persons with reduced mobility in Slovenia. This is the aim of the project entitled Active, healthy and satisfied, which aims to encourage disabled persons of all ages to participate in sports, and to train professional staff to work in this field.



SLOVENIA – A POPULAR SPORTS TOURISM DESTINATION

Despite covering a relatively small area of just over 20,000 km², Slovenia has a wide variety of landscapes and an extremely varied topography. From the plains of Prekmurje, wine-growing hills, unspoiled forests, Alpine valleys and snow-covered mountains, to the limestone caves, crystal-clear rivers, breath-taking waterfalls and intermittent lakes.

And it is precisely due to its small size that Slovenia can boast of the very small distances between these very different landscapes. It is only a two-hour drive from the coast, where you can swim in the Adriatic Sea, to the snow-covered slopes of the Julian Alps, down which you can ski.

The diversity of Slovenia's nature has also contributed to the development of different ecosystems and incredible biodiversity. Our territory is home to over 15,000 different animal species – 850 of which are endemic, and thus mostly live only in Slovenia.



Piran – view of the Julian Alps from the Slovenian coast.
Photo: Jošt Gantar/www.slovenia.info

Slovenija se ponaša z bogato paleto naravnih, zgodovinskih in kulturnih znamenitosti, bogato kulturno tradicijo, raznolikimi gastronomskimi doživetji in se lahko pohvali z rastočo ponudbo športnih, kulturnih in drugih dejavnosti.

Slovenia offers a wide range of natural, historical and cultural attractions, a wealth of tradition, diverse culinary experiences, and a growing range of sports, cultural and other activities.

In fact, the whole of Slovenia can be seen as one large sports venue, and this is why we welcome increasing numbers of visitors each year, who prefer green, active and healthy experiences. Tourism and sports tourism first developed in those parts of Slovenia that have many different natural resources – sunshine, thermal and sea water, clean air, unspoiled nature, and a climate favourable for different sports.

Sports tourism is linked to both recreational and professional sport. An important part of sports tourism is sport for young people and children. This involves organising various retreats, 'school in nature weeks', multi-day training sessions, and so on.

It is also interesting how Slovenia's top athletes organise their own training camps for promising young athletes. For example, Anže Kopitar and Goran Dragić prepare annual camps that are attended by children from all over the world.



View of Lake Bled.
Photo: Michael Matti/www.slovenia.info



The Tour of Slovenia cycling race.
Photo: Nace Hočevnar/STA

Tour of Slovenia

Every year, the traditional multi-day Tour of Slovenia cycling race attracts some of the most famous names in world cycling. The slogan of the race, Fight for Green, reflects Slovenia's sustainable orientation towards nature conservation. Due to the picturesque landscapes of Slovenia, the race is also attractive to many foreign cycling enthusiasts, who follow it live or through the media.

Slovenia is also traditionally visited by one of the three largest three-week cycling races, the Giro d'Italia, which is followed by a large number of cycling enthusiasts due to the successes of Primož Roglič and Tadej Pogačar. Mountain biking is also increasingly popular, with the Maribor Pohorje Hills hosting the best cyclists for European and World Cup competitions every year.

A large number of recreational cycling competitions also take place throughout Slovenia, the most popular being the Franja Marathon or the ascent of recreational cyclists to Vršič, the highest Slovenian mountain pass.

Running in Slovenia

Slovenia is a country of many running delights. The largest event of this kind is the Ljubljana Marathon, with more than 20,000 participants. With its diverse landscapes, Slovenia also attracts runners to the Soča Valley, to the entirely flat Radenci for the Three Hearts Marathon or to the Istrian Marathon, where runners cover the distance of the entire Slovenian coast.

The most daring runners can try their hand with a run up the ski flying hill at Planica or an endurance run called the Vipava Valley Ultra Trail.

A unique running event is the run of trios as part of the memorial Walk along the Wire of Occupied Ljubljana, when three runners - men, women or a mixed team - must run together, with the time of the last runner to cross the finish line counting as their result.



Ljubljana Marathon.
Photo: Anže Malovrh/STA

The national I FEEL SLOVENIA trademark

Slovenia presents itself abroad with the national I FEEL SLOVENIA trademark. Its visual appearance is based on the colour green, which represents Slovenia's forests. These cover more than half our country's surface area and put us in third position on the list of the most forested European countries.

The green I FEEL SLOVENIA trademark reflects our balanced lifestyle, characterised by perseverance and self-confidence, which push us to realise our personal goals every day, and the shared vision of sustainable development, which will preserve our country's natural, cultural and historical features for many generations to come.

The Slovenian green speaks of the harmony of all the senses with which we can experience different parts of the country. This is why we never remember Slovenia just for what we have seen, but our memory of the country is a combination of its picturesque landscapes, the smell of the forests and the clean Alpine air, the babbling of brooks and rivers, and the tastes of our traditional cuisine. You don't just visit Slovenia, you feel it.



I FEEL SLOVENIA trademark at Expo 2020 in Dubai.
Photo: Aleš Osvald/STA

Why is Slovenia so good at sports?

- Because its small, diverse, and offers so many different outdoor activities. The share of people living in the urban and rural areas is approximately 50:50, and the towns and cities are small. So most people have nature on their doorstep.
- Slovenia is one of the OECD countries with the lowest income inequality, which means most people can afford to engage in recreational sport.
- Slovenia has well-developed sports infrastructure, and most school gyms are also used for recreational sport. Although most activities are not free of charge, they are often subsidised by local communities. Many local sports clubs rely on volunteers.
- The development of physical activities and sports is carried out following a strategic approach and scientific basis.

Why is it no coincidence that Slovenia is among the world's best at sports achievements?

- The whole system of public interest in physical activity and sport establishes a framework in which the civil sports domain can best develop.
- The system of sports education, physical activity and sport is integrated in the national education system.
- This system ensures every school has a gym or sports hall, while sports education is present in all primary and secondary schools.
- Public funds are provided systemically from two sources: the state budget and the lottery.
- The system functions on a national and local level in the spirit of good cooperation with the civil sports domain, which functions on the basis of voluntary association and is autonomous.
- Each individual at every level of the education system, from pre-school to university, is included. This is why Slovenia has such success, despite having only two million inhabitants.
- It is through public interest that the state provides systemic assistance in the development of sport on a competitive and professional level through various government departments or civil sports domains (see more details in the attachment).
- The state cooperates well with the civil sports domain.
- The Slovenian nation's soul and tradition are dedicated to sport, and it is aware of its benefits for the individual and society with regard to health, learning, social cohesion, and more.

And some additional figures:

1. In 2017, almost 40% of Slovenia's inhabitants spent at least five hours a week engaging in sports activities. Only six other members of the EU-28 spent more hours per week on sports. The share of those who spent a sufficient amount of time per week engaging in recreational physical activity (according to WHO recommendations at least 150 minutes per week), was 61%.
2. The proportion of inhabitants who spent at least five hours a week on sport in 2017 was highest in the Central Slovenia statistical region (47%), and lowest in Posavje and Koroška (29%).
3. We also take time for sport and recreation while on holiday. In 2020, Slovenians on holiday in Slovenia spent €84.5 million on sports, recreation, and visiting sports events, and €7.9 million abroad.
4. In 2018, households spent an average of €228 (EUR 92 per household member) on recreation and sports, i.e. 1.1% of all their expenditures in one year. That's more than in 2000, when households spent 0.8% of their budgets on recreation and sports.
5. In 2018, households spent an average of €64 (€26 per household member) on equipment for sport, camping and recreation, i.e. 0.3% of all their expenditures in one year. However, this percentage was higher in 2000, when households spent 0.4% of their budgets on such equipment.
6. At the end of 2021 there were 739 professional athletes in Slovenia (676 men and 63 women), and 1,705 coaches, umpires and other official staff.
7. In 2021, Slovenia imported €76.6 million worth of equipment for general physical wellbeing, exercise, athletics and other sports (e.g. skis, golf equipment, tennis rackets, surf boards, skates and roller-skates, etc). The value of exports in this sector was even greater, at €78.3 million. The import of these products in 2021 was 119% higher than 10 years previously (2011), while exports grew by 61% over the same period.
8. The average cost of going to a gym, including the registration fee and the possibility of going there throughout the day, was €57 in 2021.
9. Some Slovenians even have surnames that come from the world of sport, e.g. Kolesar (Cyclist) (five people in Slovenia), Lopar (Racket) (five) and Tekmec (Rival) (25).
10. The average height of the men's volleyball team members is 198 cm – exactly 20 cm more than the average height of Slovenian men.

Source: SURS



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