

PRESS RELEASE



Winter sports in SalzburgerLand — a love affair through the decades

From the early days to the 2025 FIS Alpine World Ski Championships in Saalbach

Winter sports have been a way of life in SalzburgerLand for generations. When the mountains are right on your doorstep, it's only natural to want to explore them — to hike up to the peaks and carve your way back down through fresh powder. Making the most of these incredible surroundings has always been the goal of bold visionaries and pioneers — from local hosts and mountaineers to inventors and innovators. Thanks to their ideas and determination, SalzburgerLand became the stage for international sporting events, spectacular cable car projects, top-tier hotels, world-class athletic performances, cutting-edge technologies and iconic winter resorts like Bad Gastein, Zell am See-Kaprun, Saalbach Hinterglemm, Flachau and Obertauern. Now, this remarkable success story reaches its next chapter with the 2025 FIS Alpine World Ski Championships in Saalbach.

From vision to two-time World Championship host: Saalbach Hinterglemm

Hans Dschulnigg was just 25 in 1945, hiding in the damp potato cellar of his family home while soldiers played cards upstairs. The war was almost over, though Hans didn't know it yet. His escape from southern Italy back to his hometown of Saalbach was still fresh in his mind. The war had taken part of his youth, but not his dreams. He was already thinking about the mountains, skiing and the growing tourism industry. Just a year later, on 17 February 1946, Saalbach opened Austria's first drag lift — at 1.8 kilometres, it was the longest in the country. Hans Dschulnigg was the driving force behind the beginnings of Saalbach's ski resort. Today, his granddaughter, Isabella Dschulnigg-Geissler, continues that legacy, keeping the family's deep connection to the valley alive. Now in its fourth generation, the family business is still thriving, with Isabella at the helm as a hotelier, managing director of Saalbach's cable car company and operator of several ski huts and clubs. Her heart is firmly rooted in the valley she calls home, and she remains dedicated to carrying forward her family's heritage.

More than just a family legacy: Altenmarkt-Zauchensee

Pioneering work in Altenmarkt-Zauchensee began even earlier, in the 1930s. Former ski world champion **Michael Walchhofer** loves to share the stories that have been passed down through his family: "For us, the mountains are everything. They're in our DNA. That's why we're so grateful for what our ancestors achieved. My grandfather was just a simple farmer, but in 1936, he had the vision to start the first horse-drawn transport service, taking winter tourists and their luggage up to

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Zauchensee. Today, the area is part of Ski amadé, Austria's largest ski region. And I can honestly say – speaking for all of SalzburgerLand – we've never lost our way. Every step forward has been gradual, and we locals have always held onto our identity. Our guests feel that too." Being part of a long-standing family of hosts and one of Austria's most successful skiers is just another chapter in Michael Walchhofer's family history.

"We live for that" — key winter sports milestones from SalzburgerLand

There are countless stories like this in SalzburgerLand, each one a key part of a much bigger success story. What ties them all together is a deep love for winter and snow — a passion that connects generations. It's this love that has driven innovation and produced some of the world's best winter athletes, who in turn inspire and motivate others. This blend of stories, people and passion for winter is what has helped SalzburgerLand host over 400 World Cup races to date. Here are a few more milestones from the region:

- 1894** The **Hoher Sonnblick** in the Rauris Valley becomes the first 3,000-metre peak in the world to be skied.
- 1910** Austria's **first ski factory**, the "K + K Heeresskifabrik", opens in Salzburg.
- 1910** **Colonel Georg Bilgeri** publishes "**Der Alpine Skilauf**", combining Mathias Zdarsky's techniques with Norwegian methods, and plays a key role in army ski training until 1918.
- 1923** Peter Radacher opens SalzburgerLand's first professional **ski school** in Mühlbach am Hochkönig.
- 1927** The Schmittenhöhe cable car opens in Zell am See, **SalzburgerLand's first cable car**, and Austria's fifth.
- 1929** Rudolf Lettner from Hallein patents his invention of **steel edges** for skis.
- 1936** Mühlbach ski jumper Bubi Bradl makes the world's first **100-metre ski jump**.
- 1953** The **first Four Hills Tournament** is held, with Bischofshofen hosting the famous "Three Kings Jump" finale every year since.
- 1955** Alois Rohrmoser founds what would later become **ATOMIC**, now the global leader in alpine ski equipment, in Altenmarkt.
- 1958** The **Alpine World Ski Championships** are held at Graukogel in Bad Gastein, marking the first-ever live TV broadcast of a sporting event.
- 1963** **Austria's first snow groomer** starts working in Obertauern.
- 1965** Austria's first **glacier ski resort** opens at the **Kitzsteinhorn mountain** in Zell am See-Kaprun.
- 1980** Six-time World Cup overall winner and five-time World Champion **Annemarie Moser-Pröll** from Kleinarl caps her career with Olympic gold in Lake Placid.
- 1980** **Zauchensee** hosts its first **Skiing World Cup women's race**.
- 1991** The **FIS Alpine World Ski Championships** are held Saalbach Hinterglemm, remembered as the "Sunshine Championships" thanks to the perfect weather.
- 1993/96** **Flachau** hosts its first Skiing World Cup women's race in 1993, followed by its first World Cup men's race in 1996.

- 2009** **Hermann Maier** from Flachau, a two-time Olympic champion and three-time world champion, retires after winning five overall World Cup titles.
- 2019** **Marcel Hirscher** claims his eighth consecutive overall World Cup title, setting a world record. By then, the star from SalzburgerLand had earned six Slalom and six Giant Slalom World Cup titles, two Olympic golds, one silver, seven world championship titles, 67 World Cup wins and 138 podium finishes in 245 races. Hirscher is set to return to the World Cup circuit in the 2024/25 season, racing for the Netherlands.
- 2024** Saalbach hosts the **Skiing World Cup men's finals** prior to the 2025 World Championships.
- 2025** The **FIS Alpine World Ski Championships** will run from 4 to 16 February in Saalbach, with 11 medal events taking place on the Zwölferkogel mountain in Hinterglemm. Around 600 athletes from 75 nations are expected to compete.