



active, successful, healthy

Sport in Slovenia

**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**

FEEL THE MOVEMENT

Photo: Daniel Novaković/STA



Slovenians are closely connected with sport. Our story is also a story of sport – exercise fills us with vigour and gives us the energy necessary for recreational and professional goals. We excel at sports and cross boundaries. We ski where nobody has skied before; we climb where nobody has climbed before; we swim where nobody has swum before; we cycle for distances that others do not. We do not overcome basic natural laws and limits – we discover them.

Because we engage in sports activities we enjoy, we are capable of excelling at them. It is our persistence that makes us discover the limits set by nature. And because we value balance and safety, we respect these natural limits. Sport is a part of Slovenian identity and an indispensable element of the Slovenian brand and its green colour. Slovenia radiates a special sporting energy, because its people are constantly in motion and in touch with nature.

The desire to move is a part of every Slovenian. The eagerness with which we pursue our recreational goals comes from a desire for balance. We excel at sports because we enjoy movement. Because nature is all around us and because nature calms us and gives us renewed energy, being active is a part of our everyday life. Slovenians associate jogging, skiing, hiking, or any other physical activity with the quality of life. We cannot imagine a balanced life without physical activity.

Slovenia's rich geographical diversity and numerous year-round recreational and big international sports events offer great opportunities for recreationists and other sports enthusiasts. Slovenia ranks 6th among EU Member States in terms of active participation in sports. The EU average for people who play a sport at least once a week is 40 per cent, while in Slovenia the average is 52 per cent.

HISTORY IN BRIEF

The first Slovenian encyclopaedic writings, Slava Vojvodine Kranjske (1689), describe boating, cave exploration, fishing, hunting, mountain climbing, shooting and skiing as sports of that time on the territory of today's Slovenia.

In spite of this documented early existence of sport, Slovenian sports societies did not appear until nearly two hundred years later. The first Slovenian sports association, *Južni sokol* (The Southern Falcon), was founded in 1863. This was the beginning of the general organisation of physical activities in Slovenia.

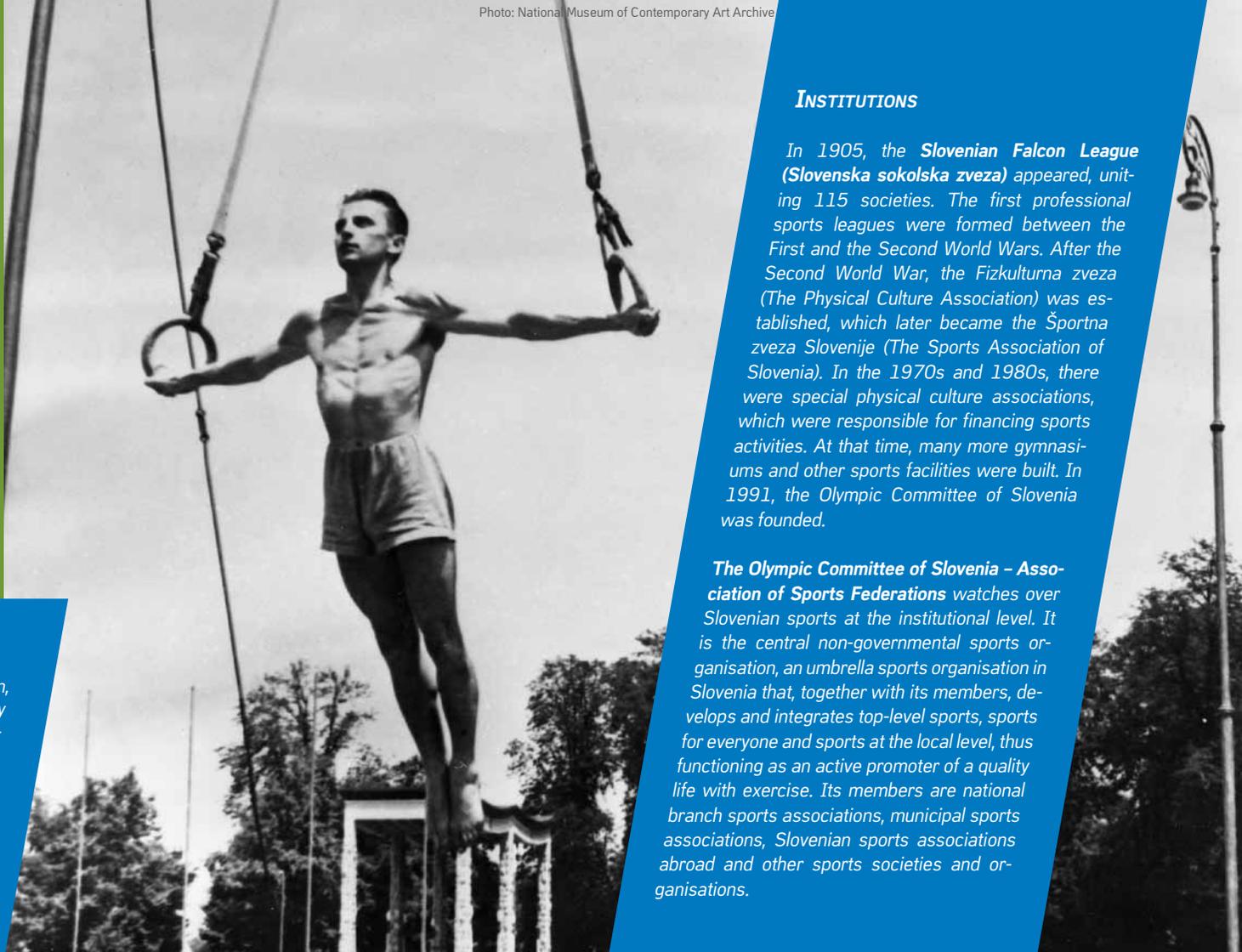
SLOVENIAN SPORTS COLOURS

Slovenian sports colours – green, blue and white – are increasingly used. Everyday, more sports organisations are becoming aware of the significance of having a uniform visual identity. The Olympic Committee of Slovenia suggests that sports organisations use the following ratio when designing national sports equipment: 50% green, 30% blue and 20% white.

INSTITUTIONS

*In 1905, the **Slovenian Falcon League (Slovenska sokolska zveza)** appeared, uniting 115 societies. The first professional sports leagues were formed between the First and the Second World Wars. After the Second World War, the *Fizkulturna zveza* (The Physical Culture Association) was established, which later became the *Športna zveza Slovenije* (The Sports Association of Slovenia). In the 1970s and 1980s, there were special physical culture associations, which were responsible for financing sports activities. At that time, many more gymnasiums and other sports facilities were built. In 1991, the Olympic Committee of Slovenia was founded.*

*The **Olympic Committee of Slovenia – Association of Sports Federations** watches over Slovenian sports at the institutional level. It is the central non-governmental sports organisation, an umbrella sports organisation in Slovenia that, together with its members, develops and integrates top-level sports, sports for everyone and sports at the local level, thus functioning as an active promoter of a quality life with exercise. Its members are national branch sports associations, municipal sports associations, Slovenian sports associations abroad and other sports societies and organisations.*



WE CROSS LIMITS AT SPORTS



It seems incredible that a nation of two million achieves such great results at sports events. For many years now, Slovenia has been at the top in terms of the number of medals won by population ranking. We are the only small nation to have made it to the greatest competitions in team sports (football, ice hockey, basketball, handball, volleyball) and whose exceptional athletes achieve outstanding results in individual sports (skiing, cross-country skiing, ski jumping).

The achievements of Slovenian athletes are truly outstanding – their best results are in skiing, athletics, ski jumping, gymnastics, rowing and white-water canoeing. In team sports, too, Slovenian clubs and teams hold their own in all international competitions. The best results have been achieved in basketball, hockey, volleyball, handball and football.

Tina Maze, Slovenian World Cup alpine ski racer, won the overall FIS Alpine World Cup in the 2012/13 season. She broke all records with her inspiring results that season. She won 2,414 points, beating the runner-up by a fantastic 1,313 points, and finished among the first five in 31 of 35 competitions in five different disciplines.

HEROES

Photo: UKOM Archive



ATHLETES RECORDED IN THE SLOVENIAN SPORTS HALL OF FAME

2011: Leon Štukelj (gymnastics), Miroslav Cerar (gymnastics)

2012: Rudolf Cvetko (fencing), Josip Primožič Tošo (gymnastics), Stane Derganc (gymnastics), Stanko Loriger (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), rowing eight (4th place at the Olympic Games in Tokyo, 1964), Rudi Hiti (ice hockey), Peter Šumi (gymnastics), Miro Steržaj (ninepin bowling), Albin Felc (ice hockey)

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 (ice hockey), Milan Zadel (kayaking canoeing), Stanko Topolčnik (judo), Bojan Križaj (alpine skiing), Peter Vilfan (basketball), Bojan Ropret (cycling), Boris Strel (alpine skiing), Alenka Cuderman (handball), Borut Petrič (swimming), Miran Tepeš (ski jumping), Jure Franko (alpine skiing), Primož Ulaga (ski jumping), Andrej Jelenc (wild-water kayaking), Darjan Petrič (swimming), Matjaž Debelak (ski jumping), Mateja Svet (alpine skiing).

Many top athletes have made their mark on Slovenian sports. Their achievements will not be forgotten. The sports heroes who left a mark not only in Slovenia, but also on global sport, are recorded in the Sports Hall of Fame.

Fifty-six sports heroes are currently listed in it; they were selected by the Association of Sports Journalists of Slovenia. This Hall of Fame is unique, as it is the only one in the world that unites athletes from all branches of sport. Another purpose of the Hall of Fame is to preserve sports items associated with famous Slovenian athletes and keep a record of various historical sporting events.



Slovenian athletes are among the best in the world in terms of medals won in major championships per capita.

58 Slovenians have won at least one Olympic medal

14 Slovenians have won more than one Olympic medal

Leon Štukelj won the most golden Olympic medals: 3

Leon Štukelj, Iztok Čop and Luka Špiš have won medals of all three colours

22 Slovenians have won at least one Paralympics medal

12 Slovenians have won more than one Paralympics medal

Rudolf Cvetko was the first Slovenian to win an Olympic medal; he came second in fencing at the 1912 Summer Olympic Games in Stockholm

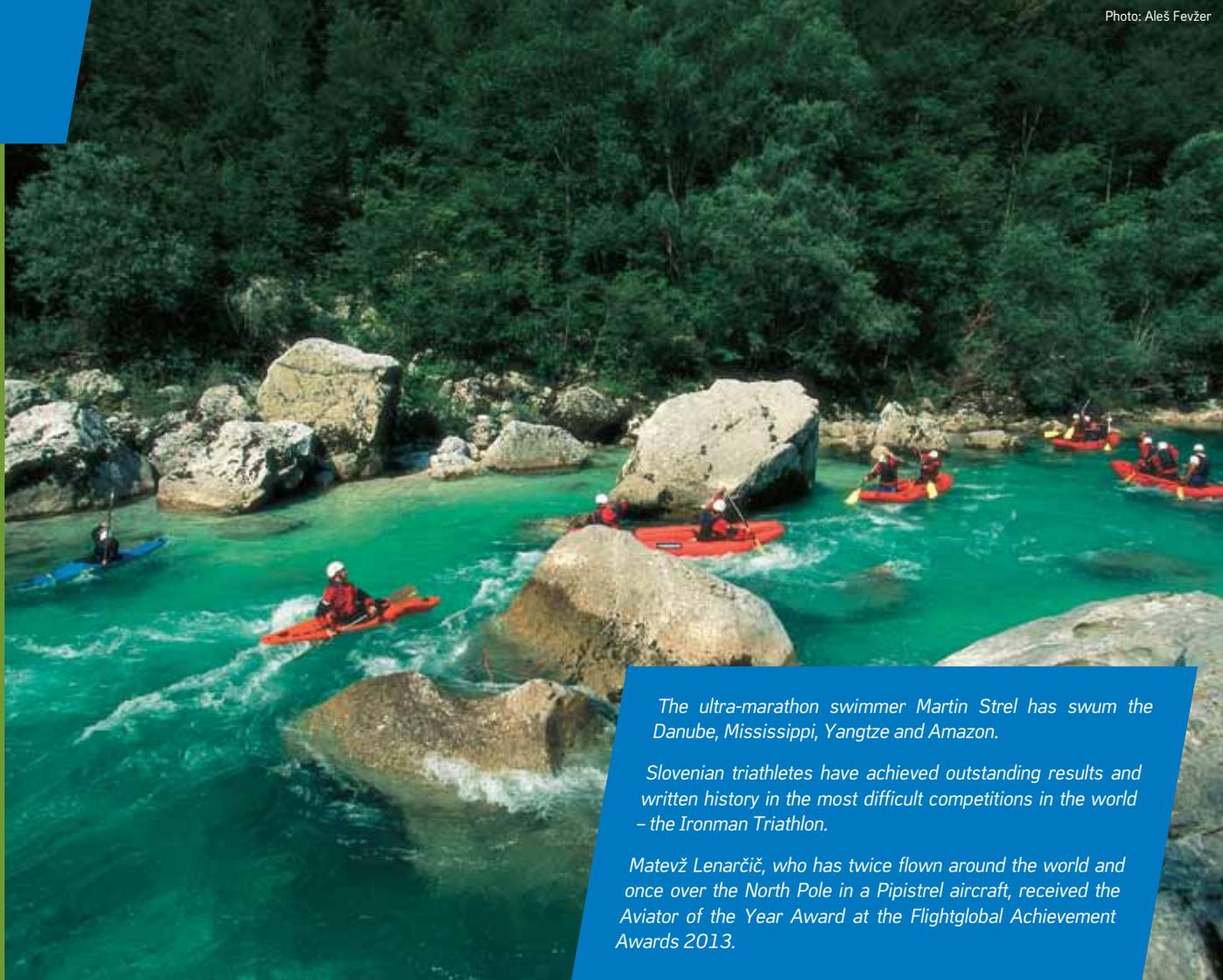
BECAUSE WE DARE...

...and because we pursue the activities we love, we are capable of excelling. Diligence is part of our character, pushing us to discover nature's limits and move them. Many Slovenians also like extremes: they swim and climb to places that at first glance seem unreachable. They include extreme alpinists and alpine skiers who are among the best in the world.

Alpinists occupy a special place in Slovenian sport. Their achievements at the extremes of human endurance, among which are the first ascents of some of the most difficult faces in the Himalayas and other mountain ranges, are not a matter of coincidence. Mountaineering and alpinism have a very long tradition in Slovenia, and mountaineering is also one of the most popular forms of recreation.

In 2000, the alpinist Davo Karničar was the first to ski continuously for five hours from the 8,848-metre peak of Mount Everest down to the base camp at 5,360 metres above sea level without taking off his skis. For the Seven Summits project, he descended on Elan skis from the summits of all the highest peaks of all seven continents.

By climbing the south face of the Dhaulagiri, Tomaž Humar opened a new horizon in Himalayan climbing. His solitary battle with the highest face in the Nepal Himalayas went on for over a week, and people all around the world were able to watch it directly on their computer screens, just like Karničar's descent.



The ultra-marathon swimmer Martin Strel has swum the Danube, Mississippi, Yangtze and Amazon.

Slovenian triathletes have achieved outstanding results and written history in the most difficult competitions in the world – the Ironman Triathlon.

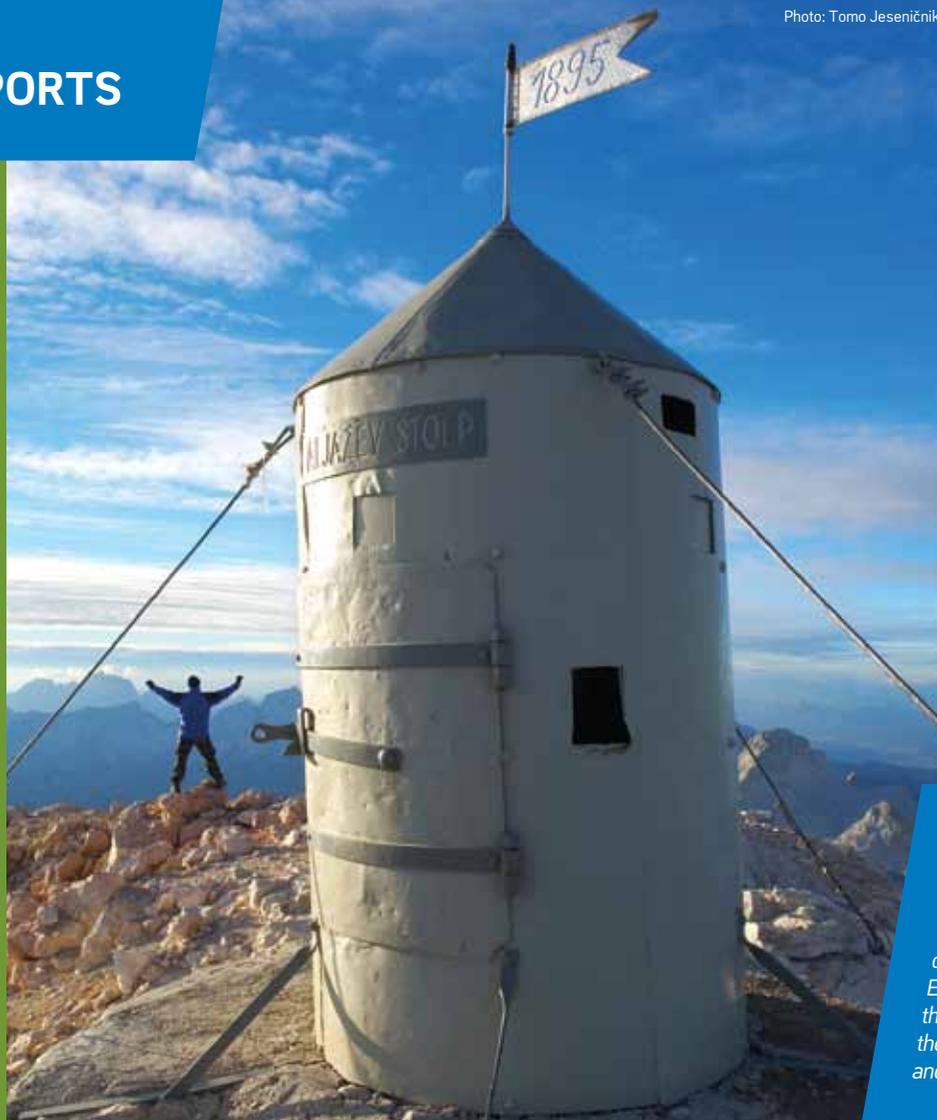
Matevž Lenarčič, who has twice flown around the world and once over the North Pole in a Pipistrel aircraft, received the Aviator of the Year Award at the Flightglobal Achievement Awards 2013.

FEEL NATURE, DO SPORTS

Slovenia is a natural sports venue, and its diverse geography allows for numerous sporting activities. So it is no surprise that Slovenians are very fond of recreational sports. Practising sports is one of the most popular pastimes. There are also many recreational sporting events held throughout the year around the country. Naturally, sporting activities also exist at the institutional and professional levels.

THE MIGHTY MOUNTAINS

Slovenians feel for mountaineering and alpinism. Throughout the year, Slovenia's mountain world offers splendour for the spirit, and an abundance of activities. Its seven thousand kilometres of marked and protected trails and 165 mountain lodges attract hikers, climbers and other nature lovers. The whole country is a network of trails and footpaths of varying difficulty.



The countless mountain trails make mountaineering a very popular pastime. At the plentiful huts and cottages along these paths, travellers can find somewhere to stay overnight and enjoy a hearty meal.

The Slovenian Alps do not reach extreme heights, and even if you are climbing a high peak, you will not be surrounded by lifeless wilderness, but a world of flourishing life.

The flora is mostly Alpine, but due to the proximity of the Mediterranean region, it is intertwined with neighbouring floral regions. Famous inhabitants are the chamois, ibex and golden eagle.

Mt Triglav, the highest peak, which rises to 2,864 m, is also a national symbol. The mountain is surrounded by Triglav National Park, an area of 84,805 hectares and one of the most extensive nature reserves in Europe. The Soča and Sava rivers have their sources in Triglav Park, along with the Seven Triglav Lakes, and lakes Bohinj and Bled.

THE EXCITEMENT

Can you imagine a summer holiday where, instead of lying idly on the beach, you boldly take on a series of adrenaline-filled adventures? This can be either a visit to an 'adrenaline park', tackling white-water rapids on a raft, or on a hydro-speed board, a parachute jump, or a free-ride mountain-bike descent.

Adrenaline sport aficionados from around the world flock to Slovenia to enjoy activities which demand a great deal of courage, concentration, nerve and, finally, offer pleasant relaxation. Such outdoor centres can be found all around Slovenia, but especially in the Alpine world.

Guided rafting, kayaking and river-boarding trips on the rapids of the Soča and Krka rivers offer unforgettable adrenaline adventures, and a high level of safety, as the guides at the vast majority of sports centres have a lot of experience and use the best equipment. Canyoning and rock climbing provide a particular adrenaline rush.

Some may find descending into these caves rather eerie, as the underground world proves an entirely new experience.

Another very popular sport is mountain biking, especially the downhill variant, which requires great physical strength. Downhill bike parks can be found all around Slovenia. If you are one of those enthusiastic cyclists, you could suddenly find yourself on the other side of the country. Cycling is possible in all seasons in Slovenia, as the mild coastal climate allows pleasant riding even in the winter months.



Slovenia's idyllic natural environment offers many splendid opportunities to play golf. Nature has provided an ideal backdrop for golf courses here, and there is a wide range of attractive golf clubs, courses, and practice courses to choose from. The country's different landscapes provide many different natural backdrops, providing a true golfing challenge.

SPECIFIC FEATURES

The Slovenian contribution to the glory of sport: Stanko Bloudék, the civil engineer was a pioneer of sports in Slovenia. He was one of the first football players, skaters and athletes. He dreamed of men flying on skis, and in the 1930s he constructed the first ski-jumping premises in the Slovenian valley of Planica.

Speaking of ski-jumping... It's a crazy sport invented by Slovenians. Every year in March, up to 50,000 spectators visit the Planica ski-jumping event, where numerous ski-jumping records take place.

Continuing with winter: cross-country skier Petra Majdič and alpine skier Tina Maze have won our admiration with their exceptional results.

Few in numbers, but with a heart which counts: Slovenia is one of the rare countries to qualify for world championships in team sports (football, basketball, ice hockey, handball, volleyball). Slovenian athletes win medals in major competitions. Slovenia boasts an enviable number of medals per capita.

Swimming skills among children and youth: The teaching of swimming skills includes systematic swimming lessons within the mandatory school programme for all children of 8 to 9 years of age. In the last 18 years, the share of swimmers has increased from 72% to 92%, which places us among the top EU countries in terms of the swimming skills of the population.



Ice hockey: There are just under one thousand registered hockey players in Slovenia – of which only 200 are club members – and only one full-time ice hockey club. Nevertheless, the Slovenian ice-hockey team has played in the World Championship Division I A and qualified for the ice-hockey tournament at 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

INTERNATIONAL SPORTS EVENTS

- The successes of Slovenian sportsmen and women are complemented by the people working in sports organisations, who are regarded as excellent organisers of world competitions.
- The Vitranc Cup in Kranjska gora and the Zlata Lisica Cup on the Pohorje are included in the World Cup skiing programme.
- The annual final competition of the ski-jumping World Cup takes place at Planica, on the largest natural ski-jump in the world.
- EuroBasket 2013, which took place in September 2013 at different locations in Slovenia, was the largest international event organised by independent Slovenia to date.
- The Ljubljana Marathon last weekend in October.

I feel olympic.