



ENGADIN
SKIMARATHON

PRESENTED BY **helvetia** 

ENGADIN SKIMARATHON

The story of the biggest cross-country event in
Switzerland

The experience is the focus

The demands on modern sports events are constantly increasing. 50 years ago, the focus was only on reaching the finish, but today's participants place higher demands on the organization and the services on offer. The Engadin Skimarathon has made many new improvements over the years for the benefit of the skiers and fans alike. The focus is to always strive for positive overall experience.

The first contact with the Engadin Skimarathon is the registration. Since 2002 it can be done online via the website www.engadin-skimarathon.ch. The contact with the participants is fully digitized, so the "Engadiner" is available 24 hours a day.

The actual marathon week starts when picking up the race number. In the meantime the marathon village has developed into a veritable cross-country skiing meetup. In 2020 the marathon village as well as the bib distribution has moved from St. Moritz Bad to Pontresina, in the village center. From Thursday to Saturday, sponsors invite you to wine tastings in the marathon village. Sporting gear can be tested new at the cross-country center in Pontresina, also information and tips of all kinds are given. The marathon village has become a meeting place. Participants and spectators meet here, and friendships are often started here.

The issuing of the start numbers in the St. Moritz-Bad spa, which took place in St. Moritz Bad until 2019, was completely reorganized and improved in 1999, so that long waiting times for the more than 14,000 starting numbers have since disappeared. In 2020 the bib distribution is now taking place at the congress center (Rondo) in Pontresina.

Since 2000, the train ticket for the Engadin Ski Marathon has been included in the entry fee so that all participants do not have to pay travel costs when traveling to and from the Rhaetian Railway's operating network. To transport the 14,200 participants to the start, more than 150 extra trains travel to St. Moritz. From there, the skiers are carried on with 65 extra buses. The Rhaetian Railway and Engadin Bus are important partners of the Engadin Skimarathon.

Less crowds at the start and on the track

The mass start with the starting shot ("Böllerschuss") from a cannon has been part of the legendary reputation of the Engadiner since 1969. However, the steadily growing starting fields led to more and more crowding and congestion on the track. In 1993 therefore, the popular mass start was abandoned, and the block start was introduced. In 2012 the different blocks were started with larger time intervals between them.

Due to the large quantities of snow in 2014, it was not possible to start on Lake Sils. The organizing committee made a virtue out of necessity and introduced the new "box-start" procedure with net time. The start begins from waiting boxes, with skis in hand. From there, the participants go into the starting area and put on their skis. Only when they cross the start line does their individual time begin to run. Under this method, pushing at the start is pointless.

The box-start procedure introduced in the emergency led to much positive feedback from the participants, since the start was much less hectic and the congestion at the bottlenecks on the track were reduced. The benefits were recognized and caused the organizers to retain the box-start in the following years.

At the same time as the skiers, a caravan of almost 40 trucks sets off in Maloja: they transport the personal effects of the skiers to the finish. The system has been continuously improved over the years. Today about 60 volunteers are tasked with making sure all the bags are transported from start to finish, and that there are hardly any waiting times when delivering and returning the effects.

A separate train station for the «Engadiner»

The descents from the Olympiaschanze to St. Moritz and through the Stazerwald to Pontresina are among the most technically difficult sections on the 42-kilometer route. Feared by many participants, they are loved by fans and the media because of the spectacular images they foster. Although the falls usually go without injury, they cost a lot of strength. For this reason, since 2009 it has been possible for participants to take off their skis and use the specially marked footpath in the Stazerwald section.

Another milestone in the history of the Engadin Skimarathon was the relocation of the finish from Zuoz to S-chanf in 1998. The generously designed military facility and the infrastructure of the existing buildings are optimal for the uses of the Engadin Skimarathon. With the introduction of the new finish area, the "Engadiner" also received its own train station: the extra trains stop at a nearby wood platform. Just a few meters from the finish line, the train can be boarded - a huge improvement for participants and spectators.

The personal ambition to reach a certain time or ranking drives many of the participants. Others wish simply to reach the finish. They have a lot of, but not unlimited, time: The finish closes, regardless of weather or snow conditions, at 4pm. Skiers arriving after 4pm will no longer be ranked.

After the finish, many treat themselves with something to eat and drink; Together with other skiers and their families, they review the marathon that has just been overcome. Since 2004 there is therefore an extra storage service for skiing equipment. It allows unabashed enjoyment of the unique atmosphere in the finish area until it is time for the return journey. Incidentally, the revenue from this service is donated to "Schweizer Sporthilfe" for the promotion of young talent.

Not all manage 42 kilometers

With the 40th anniversary race in 2008, the half marathon distance was offered for the first time, covering a 21 km stretch over the original route from Maloja to Pontresina. The start takes place at the same time as the full marathon. This offer is aimed primarily at beginners, less well-trained people, very young skiers who are not yet eligible to start the marathon, and older participants who can no longer master the full marathon distance. To make entry for adolescents (15- and 16-year-olds) even more attractive, the entry fee has been waived for them for the half-marathon since 2010.

Following the successful launch of the free start for adolescents at the half marathon, the "School classes at the start" program was launched in 2011. It encourages teens to participate in the Engadin Skimarathon with their whole class. Since 2011 as a result of this program, around 740 adolescents have been attending the half-marathon every year.

Since 2013, as part of the project "companies at the start", company teams can also compete in a separate company ranking against each other. In the first year, 40 teams took advantage of this opportunity to participate, where team spirit is paramount. The number of teams rose to 46 in the second year and reached 56 in the third year. At least four co-workers form a team. Two team members must run the marathon (42 km). In 2020 a new rating was introduced. Now, for the evaluation, the average speed of the whole team is calculated. The teams with the highest and lowest average time as well as the team which is closest to the average speed of all marathon participants are eligible to win. The winning team will be named "Engadin Skimarathon Company Champion" at the award ceremony at the Marathon Festival and will receive a prize.

If you do not want to miss the Engadin Skimarathon, you can follow the "Engadiner" live on the Internet since 2016. The race is shown from 08:15 to 10:15 as a live broadcast on SRF zwei. The start in Maloja, the most important events from the lead, and the crossing of the finish line by the race winners are just as much part of the program as the popular pictures from the spectacular descent in the Stazerwald.

In addition to the live broadcast, the Engadin Skimarathon also offers live data: the interim rankings are available in real time via www.engadin-skimarathon.ch.