



1983 - 300meters from the start

FOUNDING & HISTORICAL FACTS

The König Ludwig Lauf was born in 1967 in an Oberammergau Wirtshaus, the idea of Fritz Lang and Benedikt Stueckl. Their aim was to create a popular cross-country ski race that would be longer than the world-famous Vasaloppet. Vasaloppet at that time was 89 km in length and so the original König Ludwig Lauf course was set at 90 km.

At first the race was called 'Bayerischer Skilanglauf auf König Ludwigs Spuren' (Bavarian cross-country ski race in the tracks of King Ludwig), but within a few years the name had been changed to 'Ludwigslauf'. The name was derived from the fact that the race ran through land that at one time belonged to the king. In the early years the 90 km race consisted of two 45 km laps, but when the Alpentriss was founded in 1973 the course was changed to one 90 km loop from Oberammergau to Wildsteig and back.

In 1971 a 20 km distance for ladies and young skiers under 18 years of age was added to the programme and this year too saw the first Scandinavian participant: Ragnar Blackstad from Norway. The founding of Euroloppet a few years later brought foreign skiers to Oberammergau on a regular basis. The number of skiers taking part from outside Germany has grown steadily over the years. In 2006 the race attracted skiers from 34 different nations, bringing very positive benefits to the local economy as well as adding to the atmosphere of the race itself.

Problems arose in 1977 when the elite Finnish skier Pauli Siitonen, who won the race a record six times, introduced a new technique known as the 'Siitonen-step'. Nowadays this is commonly known as Marathon Skate and soon it was being widely used by many of the competitors. As a result the organisers decided to run two different races – skating on Saturday and Classical technique on Sunday. This change was very popular with the skiers as many of them now had the unique opportunity to take part in two races.

In 1980 women were allowed to take part in the 90 km race for the first time and the number of participants set a new record of over 3000.

By the mid 1980s recurring problems with snow forced the organisers to shorten the course to 50 km. The weekend now also included a shorter 23 km race and a 5 km 'Mini Kini' for children.

THE MOST EXTREME RACES

A memorable incident in the history of the race took place in 1981, when the leading group of five skiers had a lead of several minutes, only to lose their way, arriving in Oberammergau after the Russian Alexander Jurassov and the Finn Jorma Kinnunen had already finished. After lengthy debate the Jury decided to have seven winners, Ivan Garanin and Alexander Jurassov (both USSR), Rudolf Kapeller (AUT), Per Knotten (NOR), Matti Kuosku (SWE) and Pauli Siitonen and Jorma Kinnunen (both FIN).