



International Ski  
Mountaineering  
Federation

# ISMF MEDIA GUIDE

SKI MOUNTAINEERING

ROAD TO MICO 26

October 2025

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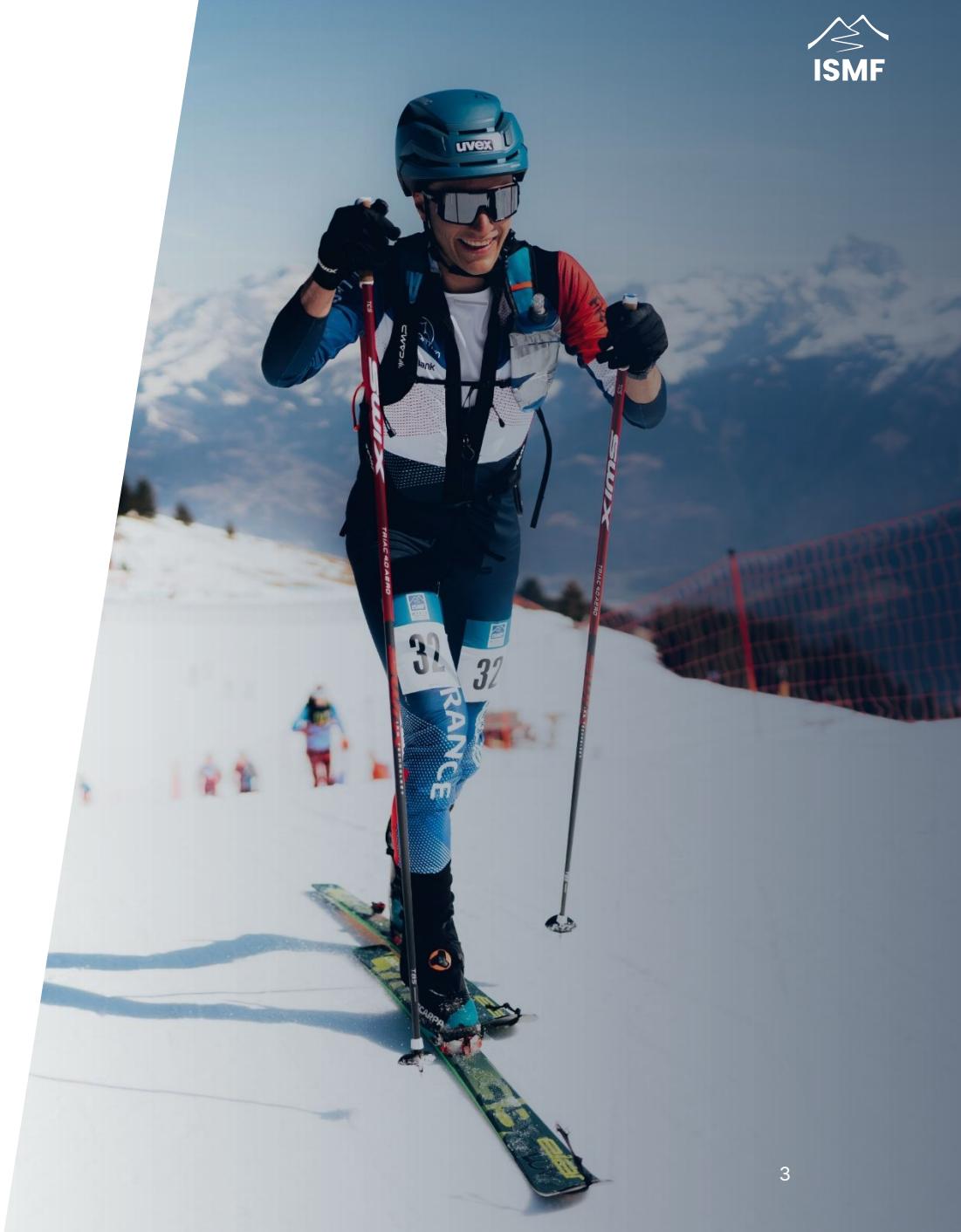
## SKI MOUNTAINEERING



# ORIGINS OF SKI MOUNTAINEERING

**Roots of Ski Mountaineering:** Ski as a sport began to take shape in Europe during the late 19th century. Because skiing started before the advent of mechanical lifts, the first alpine skiers were mountaineers. Ski mountaineering tours and races have their origins in the Alps and the start of recreational skiing and mountaineering ascending summits and traversing mountain cols. Early terms used to describe ski mountaineering competitions (civil or military) were alpine races and the 'military patrol'. The term military patrol was used because high mountain ski tours were usual for border patrols in the Alps. The first army competition was held in 1893 in Germany and the name "patrol" or "patrouille" is still used as a synonymous for teams in modern ski mountaineering team races. Initially, skiers used horse or other terrestrial animal skins or other methods for preventing backward sliding, which later evolved into seal skins and, eventually, synthetic materials for better grip during ascents.

**Evolution and Global Expansion:** Over the 20th century, ski mountaineering evolved from a practical mode of winter travel into a competitive sport. In this historic context, the Military Patrol was included in the 1924, 1928 and 1936 Olympic Winter Games. The first formal competitions began in Europe, particularly in the Alps, Tatras and Pyrenees. The first documented civil ski mountaineering race was held in the Pyrenees in 1927. Famous races as the Trofeo Mezzalama were held for first time in 1933 and the Patrouille des Glaciers in 1943. The sport gained international official recognition in the early nineties with the European Cup and the first European Championship in 1995. The first World Championships were held in France in 2002. Today, the International Ski Mountaineering Federation (ISMF) leads and provides governance of World Ski Mountaineering matters. Ski Mountaineering, or SkiMo, enjoys global popularity, with competitions held across Asia, North America, South America, Europe, and Oceania, involving more than 50 countries. The Sport's inclusion in the Youth Olympic Games in Lausanne 2020 further solidified its place in the competitive winter sports landscape, setting the stage for its Olympic debut in 2026.



# CURRENT SITUATION

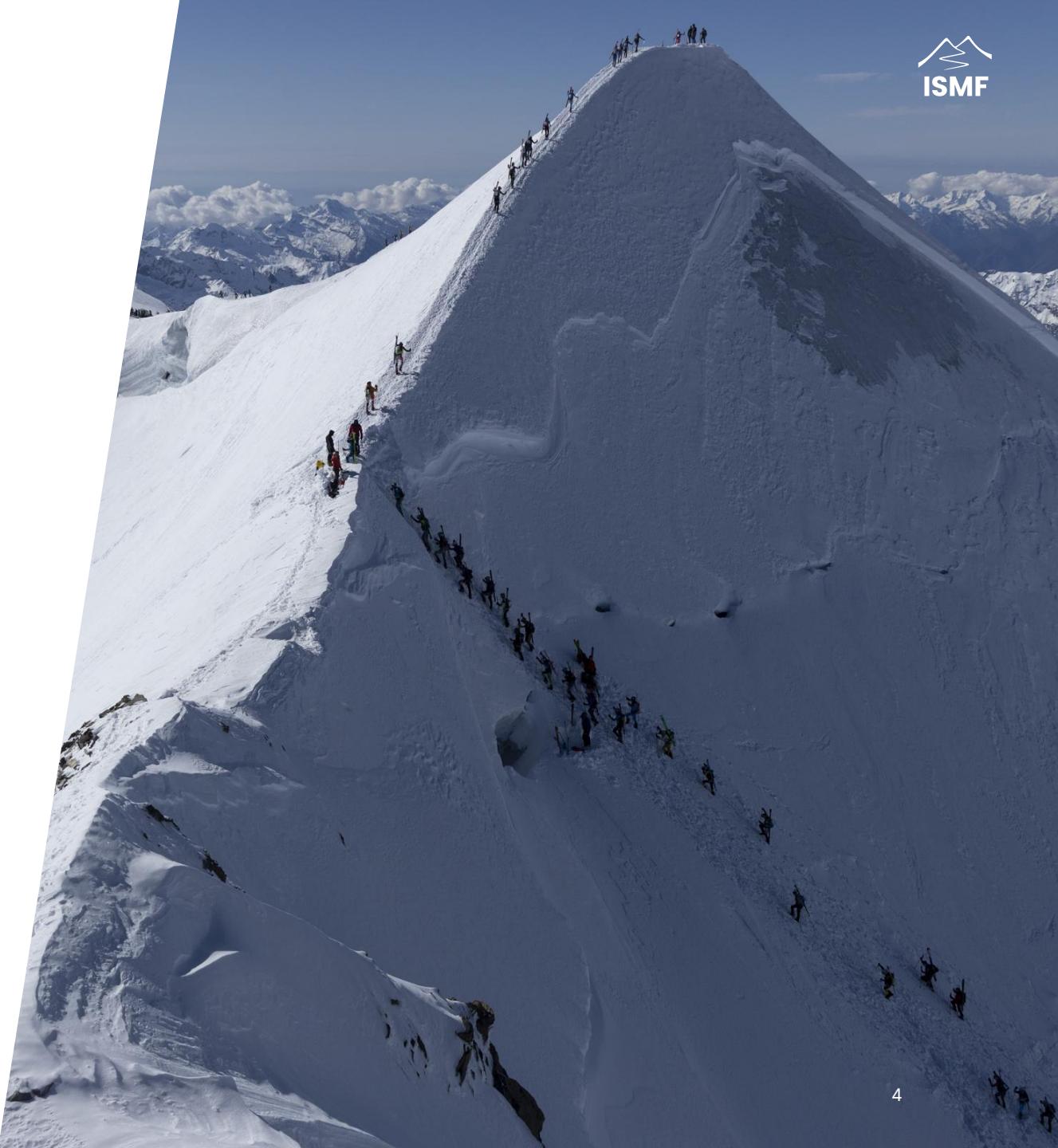
## SKI MOUNTAINEERING

Ski mountaineering has grown rapidly from a niche Alpine discipline into a global winter sport. Combining endurance, climbing skill and technical downhill ability, it features multiple race formats at elite level. These include individual races, vertical races (uphill only), sprint races on short technical courses, and mixed relays. All events are contested on steep, often high-altitude terrain, where athletes climb using skins, transition to boot-packing or crampons, and descend on skis.

The ISMF, which has 55 member National Federations spanning five continents, organises an annual World Cup circuit as well as Continental and World Championships, which take place biennially. World Cup and Youth World Cup races are held at venues across Europe, North America and Asia.

Ski mountaineering will feature on the Olympic programme for the first time at Milano Cortina 2026, following a successful appearance at the Winter Youth Olympic Games Lausanne 2020, where 48 athletes representing 16 NOCs competed across three events: individual, sprint and mixed relay.

France, Italy, Switzerland and Spain currently dominate the elite circuit, with strong emerging athletes from Austria, Germany, China and the USA. The sport's popularity has surged in recent years due to its mix of adventure, athleticism and connection to nature, as well as the rise in recreational ski touring.



# A MODERN MOUNTAIN SPORT WITH PURPOSE

## ISMF AT A GLANCE



**GLOBAL GOVERNING BODY** – The ISMF regulates and develops ski mountaineering worldwide, with **55 National Members** across 5 continents



**OLYMPIC RECOGNITION** – Fully recognised by the IOC, ski mountaineering made its debut at the Lausanne 2020 Youth Olympic Games and will feature at the **Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic Winter Games**.



**GLOBAL COMPETITION CIRCUIT** – ISMF World Cup, World and Continental Championships span **Europe, Asia, and the Americas**, with an average **800,000 live & digital reach per event** and over **14M across the season**.



**DYNAMIC DISCIPLINES** – Sprint, Mixed Relay, Vertical, Individual and Team events blend endurance, technique, speed, and alpine skill.



**AUTHENTIC MOUNTAIN CULTURE** – A sport with deep alpine tradition, attracting committed athletes and passionate fans.



**PROVEN GROWTH PLATFORM** – Leveraging Olympic momentum, digital transformation, and a professional global event series.



# THE ULTIMATE ALPINE CHALLENGE

## NOW AN OLYMPIC SPORT

- / **DUAL CHALLENGE** – athletes climb and descend on skis, testing both aerobic capacity and technical skill.
- / **STUNNING ENVIRONMENTS** – races unfold in spectacular mountains and high-altitude alpine terrain.
- / **DYNAMIC FORMATS** – from explosive sprints to epic endurance tests, each discipline offers a distinct spectacle.
- / **FROM ALPINE HERITAGE TO THE OLYMPIC STAGE** – born from alpine rescue and exploration, Ski Mountaineering debuts at Milano Cortina 2026 with Sprint and Mixed Relay events, delivering fast, tactical racing and global appeal.



### SPRINT

*Short individual heats race*

Ascent with skins, walking part and single descent

**Qualification > heats > finals**

 Per circuit, approx. **3 mins**

 Up to **70 m**

[WATCH NOW ►](#)



### MIXED RELAY

*Team race with 1 female / 1 male*

Team members execute the circuit two times each, one after the other

**Qualification > finals**

 Finals, approx. **30 mins**

 Approx. **140m-180m**

[WATCH NOW ►](#)



### VERTICAL

*Individual race to the top*

A single ascent with skins

**Mass start**

 Approx. **30 mins**

 Up to **700 m**

[WATCH NOW ►](#)



### INDIVIDUAL

*Ultimate solo test*

3 ascents & 3 descents, combining all elements of ski mountaineering

**Mass start**

 Approx. **1 h 30 mins**

 Up to **1,600 m**

[WATCH NOW ►](#)



### TEAM

*Technical team endurance race*

Teams of 2, navigate long, technical ascents & descents together

**Mass start**

 Approx. **2 h 30 mins**

 Up to **2,600 m**

[WATCH NOW ►](#)

# RACE TRACK COMPOSITIONS

ASCENT ————— TRANSITION  
FOOTPART ————— START  
DESCENT ————— FINISH



SPRINT



MIXED RELAY



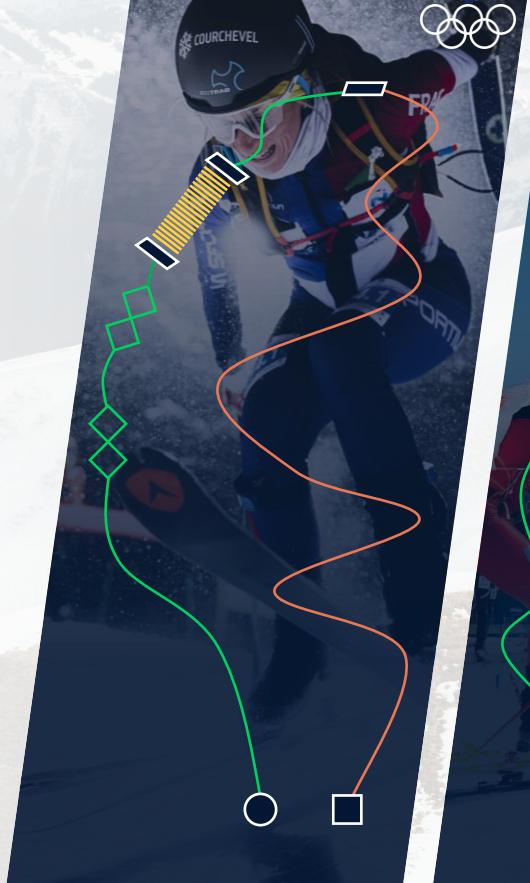
VERTICAL



INDIVIDUAL



TEAM



WATCH NOW ►



WATCH NOW ►



WATCH NOW ►



WATCH NOW ►



WATCH NOW ►

# SKI MOUNTAINEERING ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

## BACKPACK

- Compact and lightweight.
- Includes a dedicated pocket or external strap to quickly store skins during race transitions.
- Also used to carry mandatory safety gear like a shovel, probe, and avalanche beacon in non-competition settings.

## RACE SUIT (OR TRAINING SUIT)

- Slim, stretchy, and breathable.
- Often includes integrated pockets on the thighs or chest for storing skins, gloves, or snacks.
- Designed for speed, comfort, and easy access during transitions.

## BOOTS

- Dual-function boots for walking uphill and skiing down.
- Lightweight, with a switch between walk and ski mode.
- Compatible with specific bindings.

## BINDINGS

- Specialized ski mountaineering bindings allow for:
  - Free heel movement when climbing.
  - Locked heel for skiing downhill.
- Very light and designed for fast transitions.

## SKINS

- Adhesive fabric strips placed on the bottom of skis during ascents.
- Allow the skier to grip and glide uphill without sliding back.
- Skins are removed for the downhill and stored quickly (see backpack info below).

## SKIS

- Lightweight and narrow for uphill efficiency.
- Shorter than alpine skis to improve agility and control.
- Designed to handle both ascents and descents.



# WE ARE ALREADY A LARGE COMMUNITY AND WE ARE CONTINUING TO GROW

**>650**

ISMF Athlete License Holders,  
competing in ISMF International  
Competitions

**>30K**

Active athletes competing in over  
250 Ski Mountaineering competitions  
across each season

**>3M**

Conservative estimate of total global  
Ski Mountaineering Practitioners

**55**

National Federations from NOCs in Europe,  
Americas, Asia, Oceania and Africa.

Increase of over 45% since Ski Mountaineering  
was added to the Olympic Programme in 2021 (38)



ALBANIA	FRANCE	POLAND
ANDORRA	UNITED KINGDOM	PORTUGAL
ARGENTINA	GEORGIA	QATAR
ARMENIA	GERMANY	ROMANIA
AUSTRALIA	GREECE	RUSSIA
AUSTRIA	INDIA	SLOVENIA
AZERBAIJAN	IRAN	SWITZERLAND
BELGIUM	IRELAND	SLOVAKIA
BRAZIL	ITALY	SWEDEN
BULGARIA	JAPAN	THAILAND
CANADA	KAZAKHSTAN	TURKEY
CHILE	SOUTH KOREA	UKRAINE
CHINA	LEBANON	UNITED STATES
COLOMBIA	LITHUANIA	UZBEKISTAN
CZECH REPUBLIC	MEXICO	SPAIN
DENMARK	MONGOLIA	INDIA
SPAIN	NETHERLANDS	MONGOLIA
FINLAND	NORWAY	MOROCCO
	PAKISTAN	

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## ISMF – THE FEDERATION



# ABOUT ISMF



International Ski  
Mountaineering  
Federation

The ISMF is a non-profit and nongovernmental international association in accordance with Art. 60 ff. of the Swiss Civil Code having its legal seat and headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland and an administrative office in Mondovì, Italy.

 HEAD OFFICE - SWITZERLAND

 ADMIN OFFICE - ITALY

Recognised by:



International  
Olympic  
Committee

Associate member of:



WOF  
Winter Olympic Federations

Member of:



Code signatory of:



Aligned with:



Partners of:

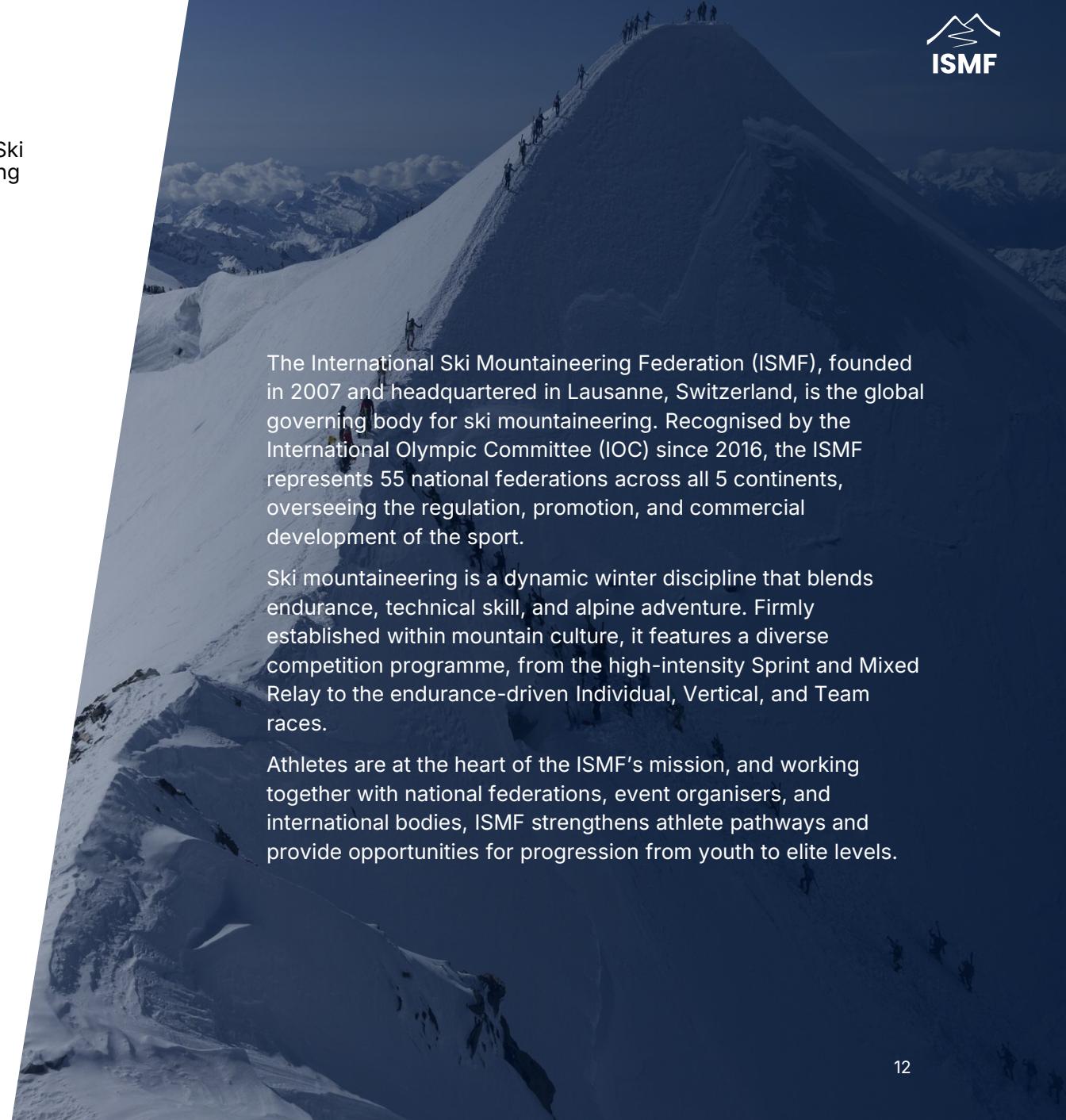


Supported by:



MILANO CORTINA  
2026

Sport on the programme of:



The International Ski Mountaineering Federation (ISMF), founded in 2007 and headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland, is the global governing body for ski mountaineering. Recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) since 2016, the ISMF represents 55 national federations across all 5 continents, overseeing the regulation, promotion, and commercial development of the sport.

Ski mountaineering is a dynamic winter discipline that blends endurance, technical skill, and alpine adventure. Firmly established within mountain culture, it features a diverse competition programme, from the high-intensity Sprint and Mixed Relay to the endurance-driven Individual, Vertical, and Team races.

Athletes are at the heart of the ISMF's mission, and working together with national federations, event organisers, and international bodies, ISMF strengthens athlete pathways and provide opportunities for progression from youth to elite levels.

# WHAT WE STAND FOR

# VISION VALUES MISSION

The ISMF is the global platform to develop and promote recreational & competitive ski mountaineering and its values.

Respect: we are always respectful; people, rules and mountains.

Responsibility: we are personally accountable.

Well-Being: we promote quality of living through our sport.

Innovation: we innovate.

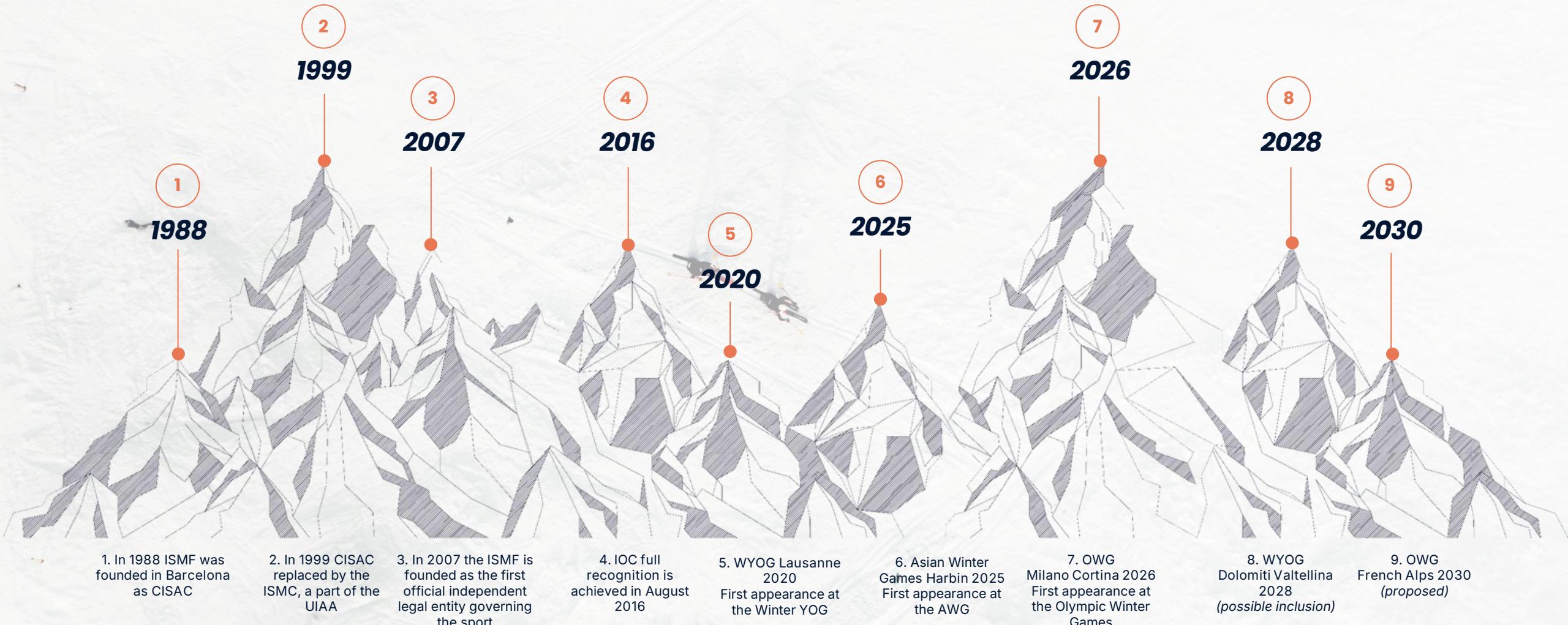
Excellence: we never compromise.

Provide high quality international races: in cooperation with member federations, local and institutional partners and supporters.

Develop ski mountaineering worldwide: more nations, more athletes, more youth engagement.

Foster a global ski mountaineering community: through a unique digital services & communication platform.

# THE ISMF JOURNEY SO FAR



# OUR GLOBAL COMMUNITY TODAY

## AN ENGAGED BASE READY TO GROW WORLDWIDE

**72,000**

**TOTAL FOLLOWERS**

### ISMF CHANNELS



**FOLLOWERS/  
SUBSCRIBERS**

**30,700**



**29,100**



**7,000**



**3,100**



**1,100**



**750**



**450**

### MONTHLY REACH

**285,000**

**760,000**

**620,000**

**7,500**

**750**

**35,000**

### MONTHLY INTERACTIONS

**11,500**

**85,000**

**300**

**80**

**70**

**1,500**

### FOLLOWERS

25-44 (core)  
45-54 growing

18-34 (core)  
13-17 growing

18-34 (core)  
all ages

18-34 (core)  
35-49 rising

25-44  
(active adults)

25-44  
(professionals, core)

13-24 (core)  
25-34 growing



# GLOBAL BROADCAST REACH

**Mass reach and premium visibility across international broadcasters**

>14M

TOTAL AUDIENCE

## ISMF WORLD CUP BROADCASTERS (2024/2025 SEASON)



## TOP 5 MARKETS



**16 LIVE BROADCASTS, 11 ON EUROSPORT 1**  
**AVERAGE BROADCAST REACH: >800,000 PER EVENT**

### REACH & SCALE

- Broadcast in 40+ countries across Europe, Asia, and the Americas.
- Average 800,000 viewers per event, totalling 14M+ cumulative audience per season.
- Olympic Games debut in 2026 will drive further mainstream visibility.

1	ESP	12:52.2
2	SUI	SWITZERLAND 1 +5.7
3	FRA	FRANCE 1 +6.7

### PREMIUM CONTENT

- Optimised durations ensure a perfect fit for linear TV scheduling.
- Live race coverage, highlights, and recap shows.
- Integration with professional commentary, storytelling, and athlete profiles.
- Spectacular alpine backdrops enhance visual impact.

### DISTRIBUTION PARTNERS

- Broadcast via Eurosport, national broadcasters, and regional sports channels.
- Digital simulcast and OTT replays expand audience accessibility.

Event Type	Duration	Coverage Focus
Sprint	65 min	Semi-finals & Finals (W/M)
Mixed Relay	60 min	Final A only
Vertical	60 min	30 min per gender (W + M)
Individual	90 min	90 min per gender (W + M)

# OUR GLOBAL EVENT PORTFOLIO

## FROM GRASSROOTS TO THE OLYMPIC STAGE

	ISMF WORLD CUP	ISMF YOUTH WORLD CUP	WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS	OTHER WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS	MULTI-SPORT GAMES	CONTINENTAL CHAMPIONSHIPS
 FREQUENCY	Annual series	Annual series	Biennial (every two years)	Annual	<b>Olympic Winter Games</b> Winter Youth Olympic Games Asian Winter Games European Youth Olympic Festival  <b>Military World Games</b> World Masters Games FISU Winter World University Games	Biennial (every two years) (alternating with World Championships)
 EVENTS PER SEASON	7 – 9 events	3 – 4 events	5 races over 6-7 days	*LDT: Long Distance Team WCH  *MAS: Masters WCH		Asian Championships European Championships North American Championships
 WHO COMPETES	Elite athletes (ISMF Elite licence holders)	U18 & U20 athletes (ISMF Youth licence holders)	Top national team athletes (by ISMF quota criteria) (ISMF Elite licence holders)	*LDT: Senior athletes-team of 2 (ISMF Elite licence holders)  *MAS: Athletes aged 35+ (ISMF Competition licence)	Top-ranked ISMF athletes based on quota and qualification (ISMF licence holders)	National team athletes within respective continents
 DISCIPLINES	Sprint, Mixed Relay, Vertical, Individual	Sprint, Mixed Relay, Vertical, Individual	Sprint, Mixed Relay, Vertical, Individual, Team	*LDT: Long Distance Team  *MAS: Vertical, Individual	According to sports programme	Sprint, Vertical, Individual, Mixed Relay (optional)
 ORGANISED BY	ISMF in collaboration with National Members and LOCs	ISMF in collaboration with National Members and LOCs	ISMF in collaboration with National Members and LOCs	*LDT: ISMF & LOC, often part of 'La Grande Course' series  *MAS: ISMF & LOC	Event owner with cooperation with ISMF	ISMF, respective Continental Councils and LOCs
 SEASON TIMING	November – April	December – March	February/March (every two years)	*LDT: March – April  *MAS: December – March	Varies based on Games calendar	January – March
 PURPOSE	Flagship competition series of the ISMF, bringing together the world's top athletes across multiple venues and disciplines	Development pathway for youth athletes	Crown world champions, highest-level competition outside of the Olympics	*LDT: Test endurance over ultra- long courses  *MAS: Competitive platform for Masters athletes	Showcases ski mountaineering on the global stage	Determine continental champions, develop regional talent

**+ MORE** (ISMF Series, ISMF Youth World Championships, Vertical 500, Vertical 1K and Open Challenge events)



**SENIOR 25 WORLD CUP 26**

**01 SOLITUDE USA** **02 COURCHEVEL FRA** **03 ANDORRA AND** **04 BOÍTAÜLL ESP** **05 SHAHDAG AZE** **06 VALMARTELLO ITA** **07 PUY-SAINT-VINCENT FRA** **08 VILLARS SU-FINAL**

**25 CONTINENTAL CHAMPIONSHIPS 26**

**01 SHAHDAG AZE** **02 KICKING HORSE CAN** **03 ASIAN TEC CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**25 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS LONG DISTANCE 26**

**01 PIERRE MENTA FRA** **01 LA PLAGNE/GRANIER FRA**

**25 SERIES 26**

**01 ALTTTOY FRA** **02 GANGWON STATE KOR**

Event details for each competition, including dates, categories, and relay details.

**U20 U18 25 YOUTH WORLD CUP 26**

**01 BERICHTESDAGEN GER** **02 SURNADAL NOR**

**YOUTH WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS 03 FRA**

**25 SERIES 26**

**01 ALTTTOY FRA** **02 GANGWON STATE KOR**

Event details for each competition, including dates, categories, and relay details.

03

## SKIMO OLYMPIC DEBUT



# OLYMPIC DEBUT

## MILANO CORTINA 2026

Ski mountaineering will debut at Milano Cortina 2026 with three medal events—men's sprint, women's sprint, and a mixed-gender relay—featuring 36 athletes (18 men, 18 women).

The competition will take place in Bormio on 19 and 21 February 2026, integrating into the programme with a compact format tailored for Olympic delivery.

This inclusion marks a critical step in positioning ski mountaineering within the Olympic framework, establishing the technical, logistical, and competition standards that will serve as a reference for future editions.



# QUALIFICATION SYSTEMS

- Athletes must qualify by earning a quota place for their respective NOCs through one of three opportunities: the 2025 ISMF World Championships in Morgins, Switzerland from 2-9 March, the Olympic Mixed Relay Ranking List, and the Olympic Sprint Ranking List.
- At the 2025 ISMF World Championships, quotas were awarded in each of the three ski mountaineering events on the Milano Cortina 2026 sports programme: Four (two men and two women) in the mixed relay, two in the women's sprint and two in the men's sprint.
- Athletes are given further opportunities to earn quotas through the Olympic Mixed Relay Ranking List and Olympic Sprint Ranking List during the qualification period lasting from 1 November 2024 to 21 December 2025.

MAXIMUM QUOTA PLACES PER NOC	
Men	2
Women	2
Total	4

MAXIMUM NUMBER OF ATHLETES	
Men's Sprint	18
Women's Sprint	18
Mixed Relay	18 Teams (maximum)
Total	36

QUOTA PLACES		HOST COUNTRY QUOTA PLACES	TOTAL
Men	17	1	18
Women	17	1	18
Total	34	2	36



# COMPETITION FORMAT

## MILANO CORTINA 2026

### WOMEN'S SPRINT AND MEN'S SPRINT – 19 FEBRUARY 2026

The sprint events comprise three phases: heats, semifinals and final.

- **HEATS:** consist of three heats of six athletes each. Athletes start in a mass start lined up in rows according to their Olympic sprint ranking list. The first three athletes in each heat and the three fastest athletes from the combined heats phase ranking not already qualified (lucky losers) will advance to the semifinals.
- **SEMIFINALS:** consist of two heats of six athletes each. Qualified athletes are assigned to the semifinal heats as follow:

SEMIFINAL 1	SEMIFINAL 2
1 <sup>st</sup> from Heat 1	1 <sup>st</sup> from Heat 3
1 <sup>st</sup> from Heat 2	2 <sup>nd</sup> from Heat 1
2 <sup>nd</sup> from Heat 3	2 <sup>nd</sup> from Heat 2
3 <sup>rd</sup> from Heat 3	3 <sup>rd</sup> from Heat 1
Lucky Loser 1	3 <sup>rd</sup> from Heat 2
Lucky Loser 3	Lucky Loser 2

- The first two athletes from each semifinal and the two fastest athletes from the combined semifinals ranking not already qualified (lucky losers) will advance to the final.
- The athletes with the best time in the previous phase are assigned their start line position.
- **FINAL:** the top 6 athletes in the previous phase are assigned their start line position.



# COMPETITION FORMAT

## MILANO CORTINA 2026

### MIXED RELAY – 21 FEBRUARY 2026

- Each mixed relay team consists of one woman and one men who will compete in the following order: W-M-W-M.
- Teams will be lined-up in two rows or three if there are more than 12 teams. Starting positions are seeded based on the Olympic mixed relay ranking list.
- After a mass start, each athlete covers two runs of two loops each with one ascent and one descent.
- The relay is exchanged when the finishing athlete enters the handover zone and touches any part of the next athlete's body with his hand. This handover must take place within the relay handover zone.
- Lapped athletes will be stopped by a competition official.

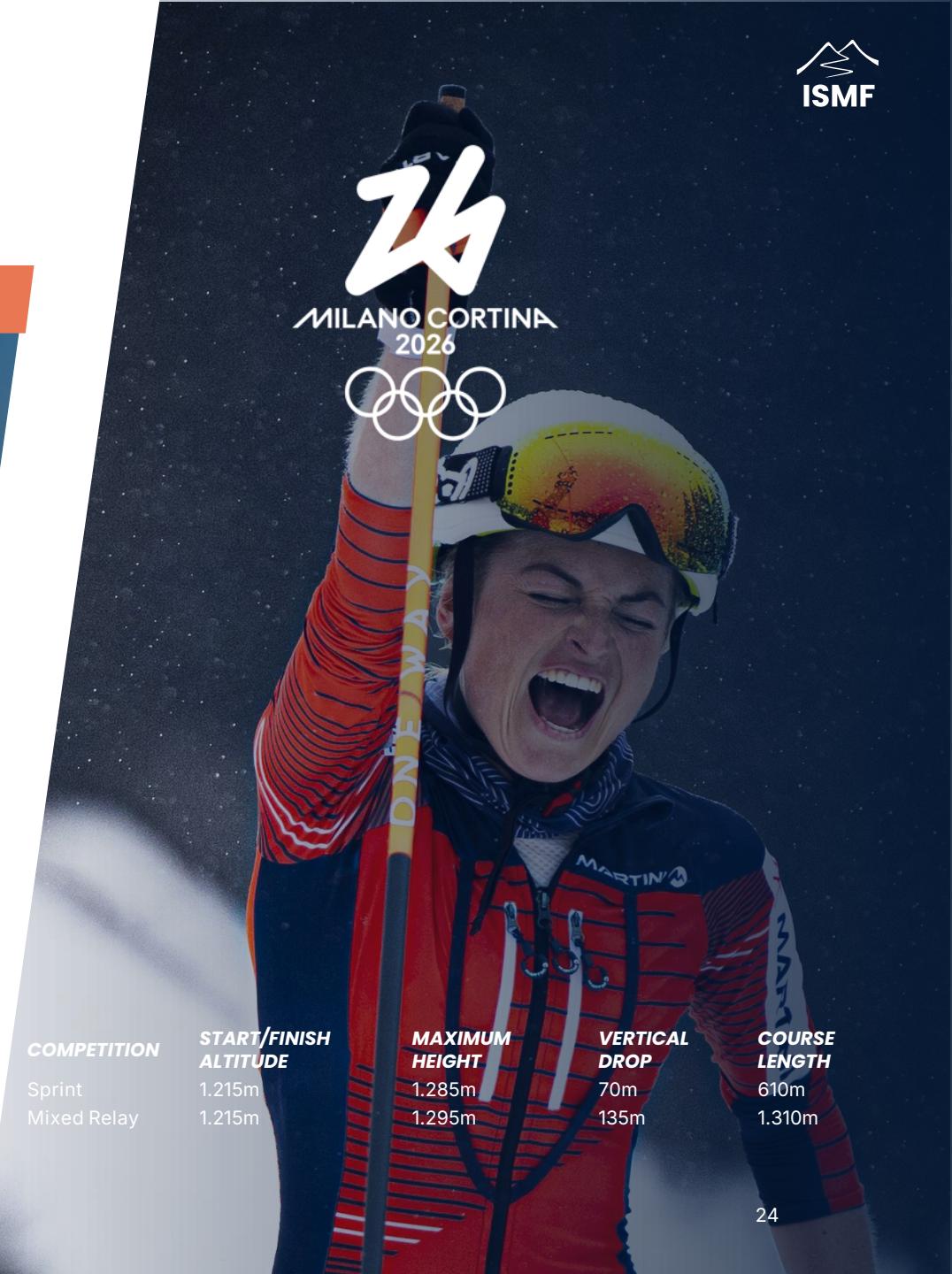
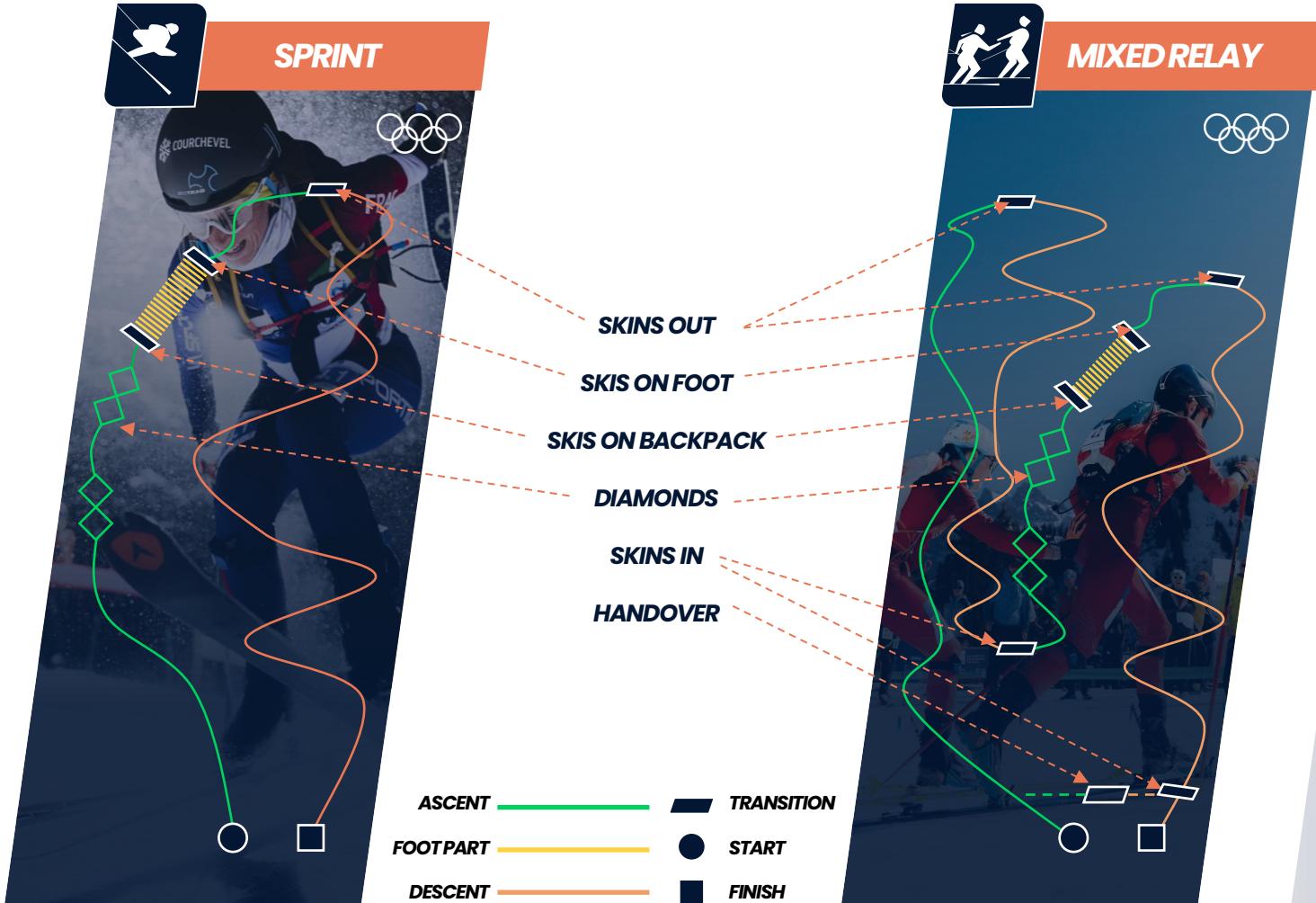
### PENALTIES

- There are penalties for incorrect or disrespectful behaviour, unsportsmanlike conduct, technical errors, missing equipment, and specific penalties for team race.
- Penalties range from disqualification to addition of 10 seconds, 30 seconds or 1 minute to the race timing, depending on the severity of the violation and on the type of event.
- For more information check the ISMF Sport Rules on the ISMF official website ([www.ismf-ski.org](http://www.ismf-ski.org)).



# TRACK SPECIFICATIONS

## SPRINT & MIXED RELAY



# CONTACT

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