

## **Trail running meets tradition**

When 1,300 athletes from 70 nations compete for world titles at the World Mountain and Trail Running Championships 2023 from 6 to 10 June in Innsbruck and the Stubai Valley, they will not merely be able to savour the beautiful landscape: they will also get an insight into Tyrolean traditions as they experience the custom of a Catholic Corpus Christi procession, a spectacle for both athletes and locals, when functional gear meets traditional costumes.

As chance would have it, Corpus Christi, a public holiday in Tyrol, falls right in the middle of the WMTRC, on Thursday 8 June: it is celebrated sixty days after Easter and is a solemnity in the liturgical year of the Catholic Church. To celebrate the occasion, so-called Corpus Christi processions are held all over Tyrol, including in the villages around Innsbruck and the Stubai Valley during the week of the World Championships.

### **An insight into the cultural customs of Tyrol**

It is quite possible that the procession – with priests, altar servers, companies of marksmen and brass bands – will be accompanied by trail runners this year or, vice versa, that the achievements of the runners will draw the admiration of the locals.

“I think it’s great that our Corpus Christi procession will take place at the same time as the World Mountain and Trail Running Championships. It means that visitors from all over the world will get an impression of the culture and customs of Tyrol. And, who knows, maybe some of them will like it all so much that we’ll see new members joining our associations”, smiles one of the musicians from the Neustift music band.

### **Processions are also held in other countries**

For the processions, which are also held on other occasions during the church year, the village community proceeds through the village, stopping at designated places that are decorated with small altars; prayers are said at each stop and the brass band blasts out one of its tunes. The marksmen also fire salutes into the air.

This may seem strange to participants in the World Mountain and Trail Running Championships, but there perhaps exist customs in their countries of origin that are reminiscent of the Tyrolean processions: such events are particularly popular in countries like Greece, Portugal or Argentina, but they also exist in Buddhist lands, for example Indonesia or South Korea.

### **Function meets uniform**

“I think the canopies and flags that are carried through the village are beautiful. I love the uniforms of the music bands and the marksmen with their lederhosen and colourful loden jackets. I also find it delightful that so many of the farmers’ wives still wear traditional dirndls and costumes. That’s how you imagine the people of Tyrol”, enthuses one trail runner from Mexico who saw pictures of the Corpus Christi processions while she was training for the World Championships.

After the procession, a party of some kind is usually held in the village square. Then, at the latest, competitors wearing their sports gear will get the opportunity to mingle with the locals in their traditional costumes, lederhosen and dirndls.