

New record and celebrity guests at the 45th Ötztaler Cycle Marathon

The 45th Ötztaler Cycle Marathon is going down in history: Never before has the proportion of female participants been as high as in this year's edition. At the same time, countless former winners and prominent athletes ensure one of the most star-studded starting lists within recent years.

Over 4,000 cycling enthusiasts from 40 different nations will take on one of the greatest challenges in amateur cycling on 30 August 2026. The legendary 227-kilometer route featuring 5,500 altitude meters leads over the four alpine passes of Kühtai, Brenner, Jaufen and Timmelsjoch, making the Ötztaler Cycle Marathon a fixture on the international cycling calendar already for decades. Once again this year, top athletic performances, emotions and the unique Ötztal atmosphere will be the focus. The majority of cyclists again come from Germany (56 percent), followed by Austria and Italy.

Many former winners in Sölden

The starting list reads like a "Who is Who" of international amateur cycling, with no less than nine former winners back at the start this year: last year's triumphant Daniel Federspiel, the course record holder Janine Meyer from Germany, Jack Burke, the former amateur world champion Johnny Hoogerland, the strong German cyclists Catherine Rossmann and Monika Dietl, the Italians Stefano Cecchini and Roberto Cunico as well as the Salzburg veteran Ekkehard Dörschlag, who has already won four times. "We are very happy about the fierce competition in the starting field. But just as important to us are the many 'dreamers' who reach the finish line many hours after the fastest competitors. They are what make the Ötztaler Cycle Marathon so special and characteristic. Among them are 27 participants who are taking part more than 20 times this year. A standout is Martin Strobl from Graz, who at 81 years old will be competing in his 36th Ötztaler Cycle Marathon," says Dominic Kuen, head of the organizing committee. And Tirol's Daniel Federspiel aims to defend his title this year: "Of course, it would be fabulous to win again and I am very motivated!"

Toni Palzer and ski legends hop on their bikes

When thousands of cyclists leave the starting area in Sölden on 30 August, a lot of familiar faces will be among them. Like former WorldTour professional and top ski mountaineer Toni Palzer. "This will be my first time competing in the marathon myself," states the Red Bull athlete. Joining him are former world-class skiers Werner Heel and Manfred Mölgg, who have both already posted top times at the Ötztaler Cycle Marathon. Former ski racer Florian Scheiber, currently coach of the Norwegian Alpine Ski World Cup team, will be at the starting line for the third time. Multiple MTB Marathon World Champion Alban Lakata is aiming for his first victory too, as is young Ötztal

native Jonas Holzknecht belonging to the Tirol KTM Cycling Team, who secured a great second place-finish last year. Another former WorldTour pro and mountain bike specialist will make his debut in 2026: Hermann Pernsteiner who finished tenth overall at the 2020 Giro d'Italia! "The course and its many altitude meters should suit me well. In 2017, I took part in the Pro Ötztaler 5500, which was a professional race back then, and I finished 15th. So I know the marathon course fairly well. This year, I definitely want to fight for the win at the Ötztaler Cycle Marathon," says the former runner-up in the Tour of Austria.

Women on the rise

Looking at the countless mountain bike trails and cycling routes spread across Ötztal valley and its winding roads, one thing becomes clear: the proportion of women in cycling is significantly increasing. "We have noticed that over the last years. The percentage of female participants is already at 10.44 percent this year, an increase of 87 percent since 2016," explains organizing committee head Heike Klotz, adding: "Many women are still hesitant to participate in our race. That's why we want to further increase their visibility at the Ötztaler Cycle Marathon. This strategy also includes measures such as same-sex transfer of starting places, ensuring that reserved starting places are actually filled by women. That's how we want to further break down existing barriers."

Next ÖRM TV broadcast with Toni Palzer on 12 August 2026

The next ÖRM TV magazine will air on 12 August 18:00, live from Sölden with former WorldTour pro Toni Palzer as our studio guest. The embed code for online integration: `<iframe width="560" height="315" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/avOmPhSo_LU?si=wIoXyOH7VG_uUgbX" title="YouTube video player" frameborder="0" allow="accelerometer; autoplay; clipboard-write; encrypted-media; gyroscope; picture-in-picture; web-share" referrerpolicy="strict-origin-when-cross-origin" allowfullscreen></iframe>`