

## Nagano, in the Japanese heartland\*

From 7 to 22 February, the cameras of the world will be focused on the Japanese city of Nagano - situated in the heart of the Japanese Alps, 220 kilometres northwest of Tokyo, 280 kilometres from Nagoya and 453 from Osaka - for it will be the site of the XVIII Olympic Winter Games. After Sapporo in 1972, in 1998 the Olympic Winter Games are taking place for the second time in Asia. Selected during the 91st IOC Session in Birmingham in 1991, Nagano was chosen over Aosta (Italy,

“Roof of Japan”, it is surrounded by mountains 3,000 meters or higher and offers much in the way of natural beauty. It has moreover four national parks (Chubu-Sangaku, Joshinetsu-Kogen, Southern Alps, and Chichibu-Tamo) and three quasi-national parks.

The history of Nagano begins in the 8th century, when the Buddhist temple Zenkoji was built, and the city itself developed as shops were built near the temple to serve religious pilgrims who came to visit. In ancient times, a belief

regional development. This temple, which has been designated as a national treasure, is visited every year by seven million people. Another historical vestige is located 15 kilometres south of the temple, where the Matsushiro Castle is found. This was the residence of Sanada, a nobleman who lived during the Edo dynasty (1603-1867), and his School of Humanities and Military Arts is still preserved at the site, as are the white-walled houses and Samurai quarters with heavy black doors that were built on the estate. Among other historical sites, Nagano is home to one of the most important Shinto shrines, the Suwa Grand Shrine, which is adorned with more than 10,000 altar branches. The Matsumoto Castle and the Ueda Castle, also in Nagano, are considered two of the most important palatial residences in Japan. Much historical evidence of Nagano's growth as a cultural and economic centre has thus survived to the present.



*Aerial view of Nagano.*

Jaca (Spain), Oesterlund (Sweden) and Salt Lake City (United States of America).

The city of Nagano is located at 138 degrees 11 minutes east longitude and 36 degrees 38 minutes north latitude and is at the heart of Honshu, the biggest island of the Japanese archipelago, where the rivers Chikuma and Sai meet. Often referred to as the

gradually spread among commoners throughout Japan that unless a person visited Zenkoji at least once in a lifetime, he would be unable to enter heaven. This popular belief inspired pilgrims of all ages to travel to Zenkoji from every part of Japan, and in order to accommodate them roads were built, inns were established, and markets were set up, resulting in thriving

### **Nagano, a centre of learning**

Nagano has produced outstanding scholars, writers, haiku poets and other literary figures. This literary activity springs from the importance lent to education in Nagano. For example, in 1876 the graduation rate of Nagano school children was 63.2% - the highest in Japan. Beginning with the advent of Western influence at the end of 19th century, Nagano has been vigorously modernizing its curriculum. Even the school buildings of that time have now been designated as cultural treasures of Japan and survive to the present day. The spinning industry began to flourish in the latter half of the 19th century, and was the foundation on which the Japanese economy could develop dur-



ing this time. This was followed by the growth of watch making, cameras, and other industries manufacturing precision equipment. The growth of electronics in recent years has been breathtaking, as Nagano has become the centre of Japan's domestic semiconductor and computer-related industries. In addition, Nagano is well-known for agricultural products such as apples, pears, grapes, apricots, and other fruit, The cool weather of the plateau is highly suitable for raising lettuce, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, celery, parsley, and other vegetables.

**Winter in Nagano**

Winter is the most exciting time of year in Nagano. The proximity of large cities, and the abundant snowfalls in the regions of Hakuba, Shiga Kogen Nozawa Onsen and Iizuna Kogen, account for a long-standing tradition of winter sports in the area. More than 100 ski slopes, equipped with some 600 lifts

and other highly modern facilities, dot the Nagano countryside, which can accommodate up to 13.5 million skiers each season. Skating is also popular, and is practised in natural sites such as frozen lakes or in the 40 skating rinks in and around Nagano. Owing to the geological activity in the region, Nagano also has numerous hot springs which have been developed into thermal spas.

Skiing was introduced to Japan as a competitive event in 1911. Records show that by 1912 there were already middle school teachers skiing down Nagano slopes in such places as Iiyama, Omachi, and Kurochime. About the same time, a ski club was founded in Iiyama Middle School and work was begun on the Iiyama slope. More slopes were gradually developed for skiing, and by the time the Second Winter Olympics were held at St. Moritz in 1928, a skier from Nagano Sakuta Takefushi, was able to represent Japan

for the first time. Since the 1950s, skiing has come to be regarded as a leisure activity as well as a competitive sport, and more ski lifts have been built.

The origin of skating in Japan is not well recorded, but Lake Suwa, 759 meters high with an area of 14.5 square kilometres, has been known as a natural skating rink for many years. The Suwa area has drawn particularly large numbers of skaters ever since it was linked by rail to Tokyo and Nagoya in 1905. In 1908, a skating race around Lake Suwa was held - the first skating contest in Japan. In 1992, Lake Suwa was host to the first public figure skating championships in 1924, and the first speed skating event to take place on a man-made course. Since that time, most skaters have gone to indoor rinks in large cities, but in Nagano skating continues to be a popular winter sport along with skiing. Moreover, the first Japanese bobsleigh contest took place in Nagano in 1938.

**Facts and figures about the XVIII Olympic Winter Games**

**Duration**

From Saturday, 7 February to Sunday, 22 February 1998

**Competition Venues**

*Nagano City:*

Population: 360,913 (as of 1 July 1997)  
 Area: 404 km<sup>2</sup>  
 Flower: Apple Blossom (*ringo*)  
 Tree: Linden Tree (*shinanoki*)  
 Olympic Competitions: Ice Hockey, Speed Skating, Figure Skating, Short Track, Speed Skating, Bobsleigh, Luge, Freestyle Skiing

*Yamanouchi Town:*

Population: 16,569 (as of 1 July 1997)  
 Area: 266 km<sup>2</sup>  
 Flower: Apple Blossom (*ringo*)  
 Tree: Japanese Hemlock (*tusga*)  
 Bird: Bush Warbler (*uguisu*)  
 Olympic Competitions: Alpine Skiing Slalom, Snowboard Giant Slalom, Alpine

Skiing Giant Slalom, Snowboard Half-pipe

*Hakuba Village:*

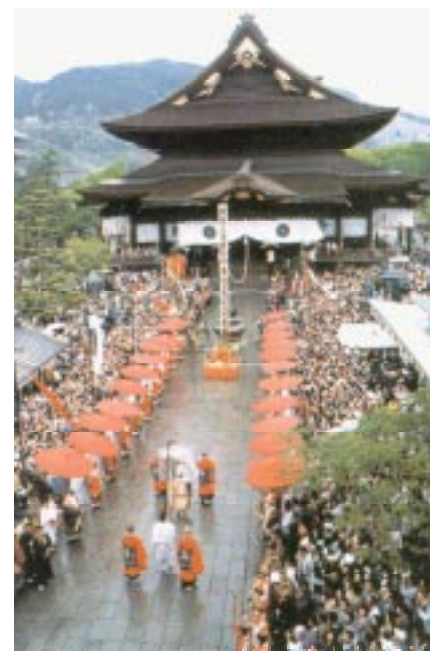
Population: 9,421 (as of 1 July 1997)  
 Area: 182 km<sup>2</sup>  
 Flower: Dogtooth Violet (*katakuri*)  
 Olympic Competitions: Cross Country Skiing, Ski Jumping, Downhill, Super G, Alpine Combined, Nordic Combined

*Karuizawa Town:*

Population: 15,409 (as of 1 July 1997)  
 Area: 156 km<sup>2</sup>  
 Flower: Primrose (*sakurasou*)  
 Tree: Magnolia kobus (*kobushi*)  
 Olympic Competitions: Curling

*Nozawa Onsen Village:*

Population: 4,759 (as of 1 July 1997)  
 Area: 58 km<sup>2</sup>  
 Flower: Canola Seed Plant (*nanobana*)  
 Olympic Competitions: Biathlon



*The Zenkoji temple.*



*Skiing in Nagano.*

**Participation (prior to the deadline for individual registration):**

Approximately 2,000 athletes representing 72 National Olympic Committees.

**Sports on the Programme:**

68 events in 7 sports (33 in Skiing, 20 in Skating, 2 in Ice Hockey, 6 in Biathlon, 2 in Bobsleigh, 3 in Luge and 2 in Curling): 37 men's events, 29 women's events and 2 mixed events.

**Themes:**

"From around the world - to flower as one."

"I want to make winter my friend, and meet people from all over the world."

"My dreams will come true in Nagano."

**Goals:**

Let Nagano Winter Olympic Games be a source of inspiration leading to the blossoming of peace and friendship during the next century. The main goals are

promoting participation of children, paying tribute to the beauty and bounty of nature, and welcoming a festival of peace and friendship.

**Message:**

The Nagano Olympic Games are a link to the 21st century, inspiring our search for wisdom for the new era, respect for the beauty and bounty of nature, furtherance of peace and goodwill. Friends worldwide are heartily welcome to share, in the spirit of competition and fair play, the joys and glory of the xviii Olympic Winter Games.

"Games from the Heart - Together with Love."

**Emblem - the Snowflower:**

The design of the emblem is composed of athletes in motion arranged in a petal formation. This, combined with the hexagonal shape of a snowflake, capture the image of the Olympic Winter Games.

The Snowflower vividly expresses one of the goals of the Nagano Games, coexistence with nature.



**Mascots - the Snowlets:**

The name Snowlets is a compilation of several words. *Snow* suggests the winter season and the Olympic Winter Games, while *lets* calls on everyone to join the fun. The word *owlets* is the term for young owls. Owls are also cherished by people around the world as the embodiment of "the wisdom of the woods." Owls appeared in Greek mythology as the companions of Athena, the goddess of wisdom. There are four Snowlets, representing the four-year Olympic cycle. Their Names are Sukki, Nokki, Lekki and Tsukki. The first two letters of each name spell Snowlets in Japanese.



**International Youth Camp, The Snowlets camp:**

The International Youth Camp will be held for 16 days from 4 to 19 February at the Karuizawa Seminar House of Nihon University in Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture. Named the Snowlets Camp, it will accommodate 300 youths ages 15 to 20 from approximately 60 countries and



regions around the world. Participants will attend the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, competitions and Victory Ceremonies. Cultural activities, field trips, and homestays will offer an excellent opportunity to discover Japan and to share their own culture.

The Camp presents the themes "Global Community" and "Share Love, Share Peace".



**Music:**

"Share", the first official song for the Nagano Games, is a ballad, written and performed by popular singer Anri.

"Dream", the second official song for the Nagano Games by Masahi Sada, was writ-

ten to put the concept of the Games, Games from the Heart - Together with Love, to music.

The song "One Heart, One World/For Evermore", written and performed by Yuichiro Oda, was designated the Official Support Song for the Nagano Olympic Festival of Culture and Art.

The song "Silver Dreams - All over the World", written and performed by Deen, was designated the Official Support Song for Volunteers.

The song "Ile Aiye", written and performed by Agharta, was designated the Official Snowlets Theme Song.

The other Promotional Songs are "Shiroi Daichi Kara" by Wazab'z 21, "Nagano Toki Sports Ondo" by Akira Shimazu and Yukiko Kobayashi, and "The Flowers are For You" by Emiko Shiratori.

**Cultural Programme:**

The Nagano Olympic Festival of Culture and Art will be celebrated from 7 February 1997 through 1 March 1998. Events will be held in the five municipalities hosting Olympic competitions, all parts of Nagano Prefecture, and in major metropolitan

areas of Japan. The theme of the Festival, "One Heart - One World", embodies the desire that all nations, regions and peoples come together with the natural environment to create a single, harmonious world, as well as the desire for mankind to share in the spirit of friendship. More than 10,000 cultural volunteers will ensure the success of the Cultural Programme featuring not only professional artists, but also focusing on residents of Nagano Prefecture active in the arts or traditional performing skills. Concrete planning for the festival is proceeding on the following three concepts: reflecting on history and expressing our hopes for the 21st century; expressing respect for the beauty and bounty of nature; encouraging children to follow their dreams and maintain a sense of wonder.

\* Excerpts from the *Nagano Olympic Winter Games Guide Book* (published by NAOC and edited by the *Shinano Mainichi-Shimbun*), *Invitation to Nagano - the Dream of 2,150,000 people* (Nagano Winter Olympic Bidding Committee), the media information guide (July and August 1997) and various brochures.



*Springtime in Nagano.*