Norway, a small country of 5.5 million inhabitants, has won more Winter Games medals than any

other nation. It became the first country to win 100 Olympic gold medals, and reached the 300-medal

milestone in the Winter Games of 2010. Norwegians go cross-country skiing , ski-jumping

, or downhill skiing on weekends, on holidays, and after work. When the snow starts melting in

spring, they move it up to the mountains. And if there is no access to snow, they skate on ice. 2,500

lit tracks all over the country make it possible for people to ski in winter, although it gets dark early.

Norwegians have enjoyed skiing for thousands of years. A rock carving in Nordland County in the

north provides evidence that the use of skis dates back to the Stone Age. Until about a century ago,

skis were the only means of transport in winter and essential for hunting. Skiing did not become a mass sport until the mid-1880s when the first competitions were arranged. Sondre Norheim, who is considered the father of modern skiing, was the originator of the Telemark skis, which are narrower in the middle than at the front and back and have stiff heel bindings.