

Sinfo

The latest from Slovenia



IN FOCUS

Find the Joy of Winter in Slovenia

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SLOVENIA**



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SLOVENIAN INFORMATION

www.slovenia.si
www.ukom.gov.si

Published by
Government Communication Office

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Print
Collegium Graphicum d.o.o., Slovenia

Number of copies
3000

ISSN
1854-0805



LET'S CONJURE UP A WINTER FAIRYTALE

Perhaps it's a habit, but winter is still most frequently associated with Alpine skiing in Slovenia. Many people will be testing themselves in ski touring, and snowboarding, sledding and ice skating are also popular. Perhaps you will find snowkiting exciting. Slovenian ski resorts are lively day and night. Frozen waterfalls are perfect for ice climbing and there are numerous lakes for ice skating in nature. Climbing the highest mountains, also in extreme conditions like in ice climbing, comes naturally to Slovenians who are ready to take on such challenges. We discuss climbing with the top Alpine climber, Viki Grošelj, and we also feature a successful ice climber, Klemen Premrl. The beautiful Slovenian landscape can also be seen during cross-country skiing when participating in the Slovenia X-country ski tour, a guided adventure on cross-country skis along Slovenia's high plateaus.

Snow has been plentiful this winter. Some could not wait for it, while others complained when they saw it falling. But, even they later admit that the winter landscape is magnificent - fairytale-like, mystical, mysterious, and also suitable for creativity. Visit the castles of King Matjaž under Peca Mountain. If you are cold, put on one of the lovely fur products from the Eber Furriery, which we present in this edition. The excellent Slovenian Kranjska sausage accompanied with supreme Slovenian wine will also warm you up.

Companies like Elan and Alpina prove that winter is a good starting point for business success. This edition features their mutual cooperation and cooperation with other companies. Alpina and Draž Pletenine produce unique knitted trainers, while Elan and Alpina design children's ski equipment. A former top Alpine skier, Jure Košir, is also enjoying a successful business career.

For some, winter is a nuisance, while others cannot wait for the snow to fall and turn the landscape into a white fairytale. We've selected several places where winter is particularly idyllic. Kranjska Gora stands out among the ski resorts this year and Planica with its new ski flying hill is also impressive.

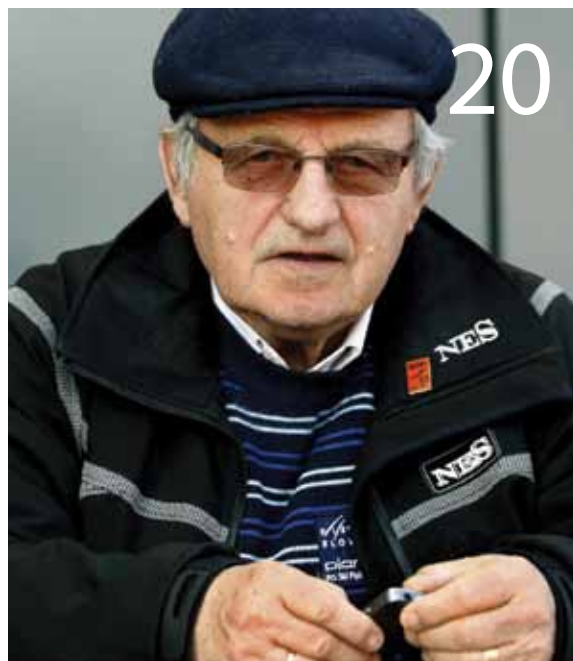
Enjoy the winter. It will soon be chased away by kurenti, škoromati, laufarji, the Cerknica witches, the Ljubljana dragon and other carnival characters. And enjoy new look of Sinfo. Change your view to Slovenia. Read Sinfo. Visit Slovenia.

Tanja Glogovčan

Tanja Glogovčan, Executive Editor

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FIND THE JOY OF WINTER IN SLOVENIA

Stories of Slovenia covered in snow and stories of Slovenians who push limits of the possible in spite of difficult winter conditions. "It's good to dream the impossible in order to achieve the possible," says Viki Grošelj, a living encyclopaedia of Himalayan mountain climbing. He is contemplating the idea that the 15,000-metre high mountains on the Moon will be the next venture for Slovenian climbers. "As excellent climbers, Slovenians will certainly be among the first there," he remarks. He is probably right. Slovenians constantly explore new territories – in sports, business or culture. We present achievements with one common denominator – winter.



SKIING IN SLOVENIA

Best Slovenian Ski resorts

POLONA PREŠEREN, VESNA ŽARKOVIČ

Until now the winter has not been so severe, but almost all Slovenian ski resorts are open and working. Ski resort operators are this year offering visitors plenty of diverse activities.

More on the conditions and events at ski resorts, the electronic purchase of uniform ski passes and the Active Slovenia benefit card can be found at www.activeslo.com

In order to bring variety to winter sports activities, a range of different events and entertainments are being organised. Slovenian ski resorts increasingly focus on family skiing, offering kindergartens, amusements for children and parents, and similar activities.

The skiing season started very early in Slovenia this winter. To the delight of many lovers of winter recreation, diligent ski workers on Vogel prepared three slopes, enabling skiing to the most avid enthusiasts already in mid-November. It should be mentioned that no artificial snow is made on Vogel and skiing takes place on natural snow only.

The second additional feature of the offer is the Active Slovenia project for active spending of free time. You can choose between individual, family and 6-day cards.

The Association of Slovenian Ski Lift Operators and the Chamber of Mountain Centres have made skiing possible in almost all Slovenian ski resorts with a uniform seasonal Active Slovenia ski card.

KRANJSKA GORA

At the World Ski Awards in Kitzbühl at the end of November 2014, the Kranjska Gora ski resort and the Ramada Resort Kranjska Gora Hotel received international awards for the best Slovenian Ski Resort and the best Slovenian Ski Hotel. The prestigious World Ski Awards are considered as ski or tourist Oscars.

The award is a great encouragement for further work at the Kranjska Gora ski resort and great responsibility for the realisation of further development projects,

which include the construction of a cable car between the top of Vitranc and the valley. The Ramada Resort Kranjska Gora Hotel also received the award for the best Slovenian Ski Hotel for the second consecutive year.

Kranjska Gora

The awarded excellence of the tourist offer is not surprising, since this skiing paradise began building its foundations already in the 19th century. Wealthy townspeople were vacationing in Kranjska Gora at the beginning of the 20th century, and a true revival of the region occurred when the first hotels were built, initiating modern tourism, which later became the main activity.

Many programmes supplementing the basic offer have been included in the tourist offer recently: family entertainment, the Culinary Journey in Kranjska Gora, where inns offer traditional dishes, and a number of winter events, such as Kranjska Gora Introduces Itself, Kekec Days and the Eskimo Night, during which the visitors are taken on snowshoes through the ski slopes to the Eskimo Village. The tourist workers of Kranjska Gora also put a lot of effort into numerous events organised throughout the year.

The new development strategy up to 2025 sets main priorities, i.e. construction of the Vitranc II four-seat chairlift, construction of the Planica Nordic Centre and a ski jump, which is to be completed in 2015, candidacy for Planica FIS Nordic World Ski Championships and arrangement of the Lake Jasna area. The public and private sectors have been successful in drawing grants from European funds and investing in the construction and renovation of cableways, hotels and other accommodation facilities, sports halls, ski jumps in Planica, shops, restaurants, running, hiking and cycling trails, a bike park and the upgrading of the trademark. One of this year's projects is the construction of a cultural centre in Kranjska Gora in the centre of the village on the site of the existing building, which is in poor condition.

ROGLA

The Rogla ski resort at 1,517 metres above sea level offers sporting delights for all generations. The altitude, suitable climatic conditions and a modern system of artificial snow production enable 100 days of skiing per season. Ski tracks are suitable both for demanding skiers and beginners. The Snowsports School where Alpine skiing, cross-country skiing and snowboarding are taught is also available for beginners.

The growing popularity of cross-country skiing is also reflected in the number of people who visit the Cross-Country Skiing Centre, with some 25 kilometres of well-maintained tracks and a polygon. Tracks for recreational skiing and the most challenging international competitions are arranged at the Rogla Cross-Country Skiing Centre.

Rogla has one of the biggest snow parks in south-eastern Europe, the Rogla Fun Park, with a polygon for snowboarders and free-style skiers.

Snowshoeing is also a lot of fun in the snowy landscape. The trail is entertaining, full of unforgettable memories and safe under the watchful eyes of guides.

The most important competitive advantage of Rogla is its close proximity to Terme Zreče. Winter enthusiasts are thus only half an hour's drive away from relaxing in the warm thermal springs of the superbly equipped wellness and spa centre.

KRVAVEC

The ski resort with the most beautiful view has 30 kilometres of superior maintained ski tracks at altitudes between 1,450 and 1,971 metres which enable skiing on natural and compact snow.

Krvavec guarantees 100 days of skiing per season.

The slopes are diverse and variegated according to difficulty, suitable for recreational and professional skiers as well as beginners. The Krvavec ski resort is located in the Municipality of Cerklje na Gorenjskem. It is 25 kilometres from the capital, Ljubljana, and only 8 kilometres from the international Ljubljana Jože Pučnik Airport.

The Krvavec ski resort offers a ski school (Alpine, carving and Telemark skiing, and snowboarding), ski equipment rental and service, a snow park, a polygon for beginners, a conveyor belt for children and a merry-go-round, a competition polygon, a ski run with electronic timing, a ski run with non-compacted snow, night sledding, snowbiking, cloakroom, sauna at Hotel Krvavec, restaurants and free parking.

The Julian Alps ski pass is available for Krvavec this year, which is valid for several days' skiing also at Vogel and Kranjska Gora.

In summer, Krvavec is transformed into a hospitable oasis for spending free time. Fresh mountain air, beautiful views, home



Krvavec

VOGEL

ŽIČNICE / LIFTS

1 štirisedežnica Brunarica
Brunarica four-seater chair-lift

ODPRTO
OPEN

2 vlečnica Storeč
Storeč drag-lift

ODPRTO
OPEN

3 štirisedežnica Orlove glave
Orlove glave four-seat

ODPRTO
OPEN

4 vlečnica Konta
Konta drag-lift

ODPRTO
OPEN

5 vlečnica Kratki plaz
Kratki plaz drag-lift

ODPRTO
OPEN

6 enosedežnica Šija
Šija single chair-lift

ODPRTO
OPEN

7 dvosedežnica Zadnji Vogel
Zadnji Vogel double chair-lift

ODPRTO
OPEN

gondola
cable-car

ODPRTO
OPEN

Poleg smučanja nudimo še:

diržki poligon, vrtec, snežni park, smučarska šola, krpjanje, turno smučanje, polet v tandemu, tekmovanje...

Apart from independent skiing, we also offer:

children's area, nursery, snow board ramps, skiing school, snowshoe lift, off-track skiing, tandem para-gilding (summer), competitions...

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Vogel

made food, numerous medicinal herbs, Krvavec Summer Park, arranged hiking and biking trails and Plečnik's Chapel of St Mary of the Snow provide an incredible high mountain experience.

CERKNO

At the meeting point of the Gorenjska and the Primorska regions lies the Cerklno Ski Centre, which is considered the most modern ski resort in Slovenia. It can take pride in having the fastest and most user-friendly ski devices. The slopes are suitable for skiers of all ages and skiing skills. An arranged Snow Fun Park and cross-country tracks are also available at the ski centre.

Special attention is paid to the youngest skiers, since there are several locations where children can have fun and spend time on the snow.

A restaurant offering diverse local dishes is situated at the top of the main lift station, with an attractive viewing terrace..

The Cerklno Ski Centre is an excellent location for winter school excursions, which many primary and secondary schools from all over Slovenia annually hold there.

The ski school at the ski centre offers various possibilities for learning and perfecting skiing skills for pupils of all ages. The ski school also has a conveyor belt which helps beginners build up their confidence.

The Cerklno Ski Centre includes another special feature in its offer - winter weddings. A winter wedding is a unique event, with particularly romantic charm of a landscape covered with a thick layer of snow and snowflakes dancing in the air.

VOGEL

The Vogel Ski Centre is situated in the Triglav National Park above Lake Bohinj.

The stunning location and magnificent natural environment combined with excellent service guarantee a unique experience.

Vogel's slopes are arranged exclusively on natural snow since they do not produce artificial snow. This is a true paradise for lovers of skiing, snowboarding, cross-country skiing, ski touring and free-style skiing or sledding. Children can learn skiing in the Children's Park, while adrenaline and acrobatics addicts can test their nerve in Vogel Snow Park. To top it all off, you can enjoy a winter tandem paragliding flight. A special feature is the Full-Moon Walk around the snowy Vogel.

Bohinj is a very environmentally conscious town – after all, it is part of the Triglav National Park – and visitors are encouraged to use public transport. The ski centre has been organising public transport combining train and coaches with different partners for years. The Bohinj ski train, which allows skiers who arrive in Bohinj by train to have reductions on train tickets, ski passes and equipment rental, is also available this winter. Skiers will also be able to get from the railway station to Vogel Ski Centre free of charge by ski bus.

MARIBORSKO POHORJE

Mariborsko Pohorje annually hosts the FIS Ski World Cup in Alpine skiing for the Golden Fox. With 250 hectares, it is the largest ski centre in Slovenia.

Mariborsko Pohorje is a perfect combination of excellent ski slopes, first-class wellness and spa centres, beautiful nature and the close proximity of Maribor, the second largest Slovenian town.

From Maribor, the Pohorje circular cable car can be reached with city bus no 6. Some 43 kilometres of skiing slopes situated between 325 and 1,327 metres above sea level are suitable for beginners and the most demanding skiers.

The ski centre is about one hour away from the capital, some two and a half hours from Koper on the coast and two hours from Novo mesto. The centre also has the longest night skiing track in Slovenia, measuring 10 kilometres.

The ski centre has a new circular cable car, three double chairlifts, one four-seat chairlift, one six-seat chairlift and sixteen ski lifts. The centre guarantees 100 days of skiing per season and 95 per cent of the terrain is additionally covered with artificial snow. Ski and snowboarding schools for all generations are organised for all who want to learn or upgrade their skiing techniques.



Photo: Rogla archives



Rogla skiing resort.



OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES BY SLOVENIA'S WINTER SPORTS ATHLETES

Down the snowy slopes to the top of the podium

DANILA MAŠIČ, Photo: STA

Slovenians excel in many sports, but given the time of year, let's highlight the achievements of Slovenia's winter sports athletes. Although the season has not yet ended, our champions have already been winning and winning. Slovenian fans faithfully follow them from one event to another, cheering them on to the top.

SLOVENIAN SKI-JUMPERS HAVE BEEN AT THEIR BEST THIS SEASON

The Slovenian men's ski jumping team is very strong this season. All of the team members – Peter Prevc, Jurij Tepeš, Jernej Damjan, Nejc Dežman, Matjaž Pungertar, Robert Kranjec, and Rok Justin – have made the podium. Their rankings are nearly the same. The selection among the top athletes is quite fierce, almost brutal. At each competition athletes must perform to their maximum to achieve a high ranking.

Slovenia's ski jumpers have proven several times that they are able to endure the strain and stress experienced on such occasions and focus on their goal: the best possible result for each individual and the national team.

SLOVENIA'S TWO-TIME OLYMPIC CHAMPION IS SECOND TO NONE

Slovenia's top skier, Tina Maze, has spoiled us with her successes for a number of years.

Her explosiveness, boldness, skills, maturity, and ability to adapt to extreme conditions are just some of the strengths of the greatest female skier of all time and the winner of two gold medals at the Winter Olympics in Sochi.

At the end of the season we may again see her win the overall World Cup title, as she has further increased her lead in the overall World Cup standings. All of Slovenia is rooting for Tina to win the Crystal Globe.

A PROMISING FEMALE SKI JUMPER WHO LIKES TO GET THE ADRENALINE FLOWING

The ski jumper Špela Rogelj won the first Ladies' World Cup competition of the new season in Lillehammer, Norway. Špela, who is a member of the Ilirija Ski Jumping Club, whose youth and senior teams are coached by the famous Jaroslav Sakala, began her ski jumping career when she was nine years old.



Tina Maze

Špela Rogelj also did very well at the ski jumping World Cup in Sapporo, Japan. After encountering some logistical problems due to which all of her equipment went missing on the way to Paris, she was unselfishly offered a helping hand by one of her rival competitors. The Austrian Daniela Iraschko Stolz lent her some skis, and for this gesture the Ski Association of Slovenia will be nominating her for the International Fair Play Award.

IT RUNS IN THE FAMILY

Anamarija Lampič is one of the young Slovenian skiing hopefuls. She took second place at the Continental Cup cross-country skiing event in Oberwiesenthal.

Anamarija is the daughter of Janez Lampič, a cyclist who finished ninth in the team event at the Olympic Games in Los Angeles in 1984. The foundations for outstanding results in the Lampič family were laid by her father with his performance at the Olympic Games, and Anamarija has demonstrated that we can count on her achievements too. She has even inspired her younger brother Janez, who is also a member of the Triglav Cross-Country Skiing Club from Kranj, to follow in her footsteps.

SNOWBOARDING ACES

The best Slovenian snowboarder is Žan Košir. He invests a great deal of effort in what he does. He carries out various tasks that are usually performed by the team support staff. Yet despite the fact that in addition to his training he also performs other related tasks, his sporting achievements are outstanding. He won the parallel slalom event in Bad Gastein, Austria, claiming his second career World Cup win. In so doing he also took over the top spot in the overall parallel slalom World Cup standings.

Rok Marguč, who has won four medals at World Cup competitions, is one of our best snowboarders. Despite an unfavourable start to the season, he finally won a bronze in the parallel slalom.

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING TO HELP YOU RELAX AT THE END OF THE DAY?

If you are looking for something to help you relax and forget about your stressful day, the large skating rink that has been set up in Ljubljana's Trg republike in front of the National Assembly building is a great place to start. The skating rink measures 1,800 m² and has two prefabricated stands that can seat up to 4,500 spectators. Once there, you can sign up for skating lessons, hire an ice bowling instructor or take part in one of the events, such as student happy hour, disco night, recreational skating at the end of the workday, or a party with a DJ and entertainers.

At least for the present, Slovenia has an eighth skating rink. During the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, following the immense success of the Slovenian hockey team, who beat Austria in the qualification playoffs, Sean Gentile of the Sporting News shared nine interesting facts about Slovenia. One of them was that we only have seven skating rinks, two of which are open-air. For comparison, Austria has 45 skating rinks, while the United States has 1,898.

RETURN TO TOP FORM

Health problems prevented biathlete Jakov Fak from achieving top results at the beginning of the season, but now he's back to best form with third place in the World Cup sprint race in Anterselva, Italy. Biathlete Teja Gregorin, winner of two medals at the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, is also returning to her best.

Freestyle skier Filip Flisar successfully overcame problems he had on the starting line in Val Thorens with coordination training. The result – a gold medal in the Ski Cross World Championship in Kreischberg, Austria.



Filip Flisar



'Sport is part of the fabric of the Slovenian nation'

At the end of 2014, Slovenia gained a new President of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia. The Assembly of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia – the Association of Sports Federations elected Bogdan Gabrovec, the Vice-President of the Olympic Committee, as the President of the Olympic Committee by a strong consensus.

In 2013, the Olympic Committee adopted a new strategy for the period 2014–2023 as the basis for its operations in the next decade. With the amended rules of operation of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia – the Association of Sports Federations, management structures within the organisation changed too, thereby introducing a more democratic and transparent selection of members.

JANEZ GORIŠEK – CONSTRUCTOR OF GIANT SKI FLYING HILLS

Slovenians set world standards in designing ski flying hills – ski jumping’s “Formula 1”

UROŠ MAHKOVEC



The best ski jumpers have just been testing a renovated ski flying hill at Kulm in Austria. Contributing to the remodelling have been a Slovenian family which has set new standards in the design of ski flying hills – where ski jumpers dare each other to fly further and further. The Gorišek family also constructed the famous ski flying hill at Planica in Slovenia, and were involved in its recent reconstruction, which enables safe ski jumps approaching new world records.

Without Slovenian knowledge, the world of ski flying would not have developed in the direction it has.

Although the lengths are truly formidable, the safety of ski jumpers always comes first, stresses design manager Janez Gorišek, “The calculation depends on us - we have to construct the profile of the ski flying hill. So, the head is ours and the hands and work are provided by the local people.”

The impressive ski flying hill at Planica constructed by the Gorišek brothers Vlado and Janez between 1967 and 1969 now bears their name, and has set standards which other ski flying hills try to challenge.

SKI FLYING HILLS – IMPRINTED IN HIS SOUL AT THE AGE OF 81

Gorišek transferred his knowledge to his son Sebastjan who has been involved in the work for ten years.

They travel around the world because Slovenian knowledge is highly appreciated abroad.

“In the 1970s, my father and uncle constructed the Planica ski flying hill, which triggered an evolution. Everything was done on an amateur basis then. It is great success for us to be the main constructors in a winter sport. Ski flying is the ski jumping Formula 1,” said Sebastjan Gorišek.

Janez Gorišek is an honorary member of the FIS Ski Jumping Committee and the main authority in the Ski Jumping Hills Sub-Committee. “They contact us frequently. When it comes to ski flying hills,

Janez Gorišek was born on 13 September 1933 in Ljubljana. He graduated in 1961 from the Faculty of Civil and Geodetic Engineering in Ljubljana. As a civil engineer, he became involved in designing and constructing ski jumping hills. He and his brother Vlado also designed the Olympic Ski Jumping Centre in Malo Polje (on Mt Igman) above Sarajevo for the 14th Winter Olympic Games.

The Gorišek brothers received the Bloudek Award for the construction of the Planica giant ski jumping hill in 1968, which is the most prestigious award for achievements in the field of sport in Slovenia.

Gorišek was also a ski jumper. He won two gold medals in ski jumping at the world university championships in 1953 and 1957.

Projects of the Gorišek family

- 1967-1969 – Gorišek brothers ski flying hill in Planica (Slovenia)
- 1973 – Heini-Klopfer-Schanze ski flying hill in Oberstdorf in Germany (enlarged/renovated)
- 1982-1984 – Igman Olympic Ski Jumping Centre (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- 1987-1989 – Great Olympic Hill in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in Germany (enlarged/renovated)
- 2009-2010 – Kiremittepe Ski Jump in Erzurum (Turkey)
- 2010-2011 – Vikersundbakken ski flying hill in Vikersund in Norway (enlarged/renovated)
- 2015 – Kulm ski flying hill in Austria (renovated)
- 2015 – Gorišek brothers ski flying hill in Planica in Slovenia (enlarged/renovated)

my father is the right man. If anyone wants to construct a ski flying hill, as the inspector he has to examine it. He has the knowledge. His life story revolves around ski jumping and snow. This world has been imprinted in his soul. At the age of 81, he's still the main man." Three ski flying hills are competing for the prestigious world record, which is now held by Vikersund in Norway and measures 246.5 metres. Oberstdorf aims to be included in this competition, but will have to modernise its ski flying hill if it wants to host the best ski jumpers in the world. This means that the Germans will have to consider an enlargement. The Gorišek family says that discussions about the renovation of Oberstdorf's Heini Klopfer ski flying hill will start in February.

Since 1936, when the Austrian Sepp Bradl was the first man in the world to jump one hundred metres, primacy in ski flying has been largely centred on the ski jumps at Planica. First, there was Bloudek's Giant and then the Gorišek brothers ski flying hill. From 1987 to 2011, world records in ski flying were set only at Planica. The Finn, Toni Nieminen, was the first to jump over the magical limit of two hundred metres in 1994. Many world records were broken at Planica after that, and the Norwegian Bjørn Einar Romøren jumped a fantastic 239 metres in 2005. The record was held for six years. The Norwegian Johan Remen Evensen jumped 246.5 metres on the renovated ski flying hill in Vikersund on 11 February 2011, which is the current world record.

PLANICA – THE QUEEN OF ALL SKI FLYING HILLS

It is clear that Janez Gorišek's heart sings when he hears the word 'Planica'. It is because of him and his brother Vlado that we can even speak about ski flying, which has a particular significance for the family. This ski flying hill was always the most feared and respected of them all, and it will remain so in the future.

Planica is the queen. There is no doubt.

"We have hidden reserves in the ski flying hill. We won't give everything away to others. My great wish is for a Slovenian to break the world record at Planica," added Gorišek.

Planica will host this year's finale of the Ski Jumping World Cup on a new giant hill in March. It is quite likely that a new world record will be set then. Compared with the old Gorišek hill, the new one is ten metres longer. Slovenian ski jumpers are pleased with their current competition results, and now prepared for the special challenge of jumping in front of national fans who come to Planica in large numbers, particularly because they have not won many first places this season. The Slovenians hope to improve their total of first places at Planica. And they also hope that one of them will break the world record.



As far as the Norwegians are concerned, I'm theirs

The Gorišek brothers ski flying hill which is still under construction is situated to the left of the old Bloudek's Giant in Planica. How long could the jumps reach after its reconstruction?

We raised the landing by 2.5 metres and pushed everything back by 12 metres. The right length will be 250 metres, which is a nice length. The Norwegians are close to that in Vikersund. We will be competitive now as well. But for such lengths, luck is also needed. When ski jumpers were jumping these distances in Vikersund, they still wore old jumpsuits. These boys now fly too high and there is too much pressure on landing. The conditions were exceptional for the record (246.5 metres) in Vikersund. The jumps will be somewhat higher and longer in Planica. There are often good conditions in the valley under Ponce. Ski flying hills elsewhere are built in such way that they don't allow any space to manoeuvre, but here we can always add and enlarge some more.

What is buoyancy like in Planica?

Planica has the worst conditions. Other ski jump hills have better buoyancy due to their latitudes. Air pressure depends on it. We make up for this with air circulation between both hills (Ponce) to create thermic conditions. But this is possible only for a short period, from half an hour to an hour, when the conditions change again. When the sun generates enough heat to have two to three metres of wind per second, this is ideal. That's when the conditions are right. If this is exploited, the ski jumpers will jump long distances.

Have the Russians or the Chinese ever contacted you to build the largest ski flying hill in the world?

They can't currently undertake such a project because we have five or six ski flying hills and that's the optimum. No one can succeed, although they've tried. Others don't have the conditions; unless they dig a tunnel. You also need people and tradition.

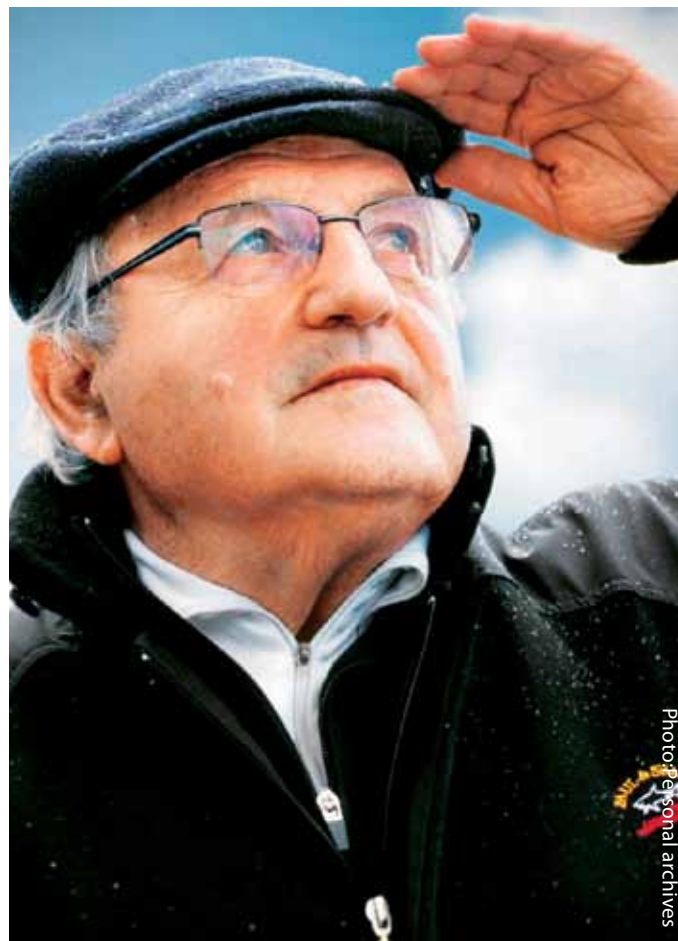
What we have in Planica is incredible. We've nurtured national awareness.

How appreciated are you abroad?

As far as the Norwegians are concerned, I'm theirs. They use my name and are very pleased. I'm surprised at how much they appreciate me and are also happy.

It was said that you were thinking about a novelty regarding wind protection along ski flying hills. Can you elaborate on that; has the idea progressed?

We also develop such things. We are cooperating with a scientist



who works in Slovenia. He's a doctor of physics, civil engineering and mathematics. He's been developing algorithms which reveal how the wind will be blowing on site. I prepare data and he calculates where and why the wind intensifies at a certain spot and where the gusts of wind might occur. We don't construct ski flying hills randomly or only draw them. You can see in Vikersund that the hill is moved somewhat inward and has sidelines. This prevents shocks in the air which you find at Oberstdorf, for example, because of the old construction. Planica is now quite nicely anchored. The wind bounces off and returns. We have prepared a novelty for wind protection. It's not the curtain walls which you now see at ski jumps, which are 17 metres high. I'm thinking about spoilers whose function is similar to the ventilation system in a car. If there's wind, you simply close it down. If there's no wind, you can open it.

JURE KOŠIR

Slovenia's Alpine Skiing Legend

POLONA PREŠEREN



Jure Košir was competing on the white slopes in the 1990s and his successes had a significant impact on Slovenian national awareness at the time.

He was the world youth champion in Super-G, but was most successful in technical disciplines. After he finished his career as a top sportsman, he continued with successful business ventures, mostly connected to sports. A sportsman, a businessman, an advocate of an active and healthy lifestyle, a husband and father of three children.

On my way to the interview, I was reliving the feelings when we were watching you compete, how we were cheering on our skiers and what a positive effect your successes had on national awareness. I remembered the 1993/1994 season, when you won your first World Cup race, which was the first victory for our then very young country. Those were really exceptional times.

That's true. I think that really coincided with our independence and the pride we all felt at the time. We were more emotionally involved in everything that was happening. That wasn't just in skiing. There was also great enthusiasm and cheering in other sports on the occasion of more significant results. So much time has passed since then. The array of different top sports results has widened so much. We have many top sportspeople who also compete abroad, such as Anže Kopitar, Goran Dragić and others. Perhaps we're not so keen anymore and there is less enthusiasm. I'm very happy to have experienced that period. The atmosphere was fantastic; many fans were present at competitions.

And then came the Olympic Games in Lillehammer and the first medals in skiing for Slovenia (Jure Košir won bronze in slalom). Those were exceptional Games.

They really were. But perhaps Albertville in 1992, when Slovenia took part in the Winter Olympics for the first time, was even more special for us. We didn't know until the last moment whether we would be able to participate as Team Slovenia. We were such a small team, but

"Jure Košir is a sport ambassador for rh+ and also part of the rh+ #MountainMasters program. He endorses our products and has lent his name to represent the style, values and passion that rh+ pour into each collection. Jure Košir embodies pure competitive spirit and experience and he is an athlete that perfectly understands the value of innovation in sports. We are a technical brand, Jure was a top technical skier, so it fits perfectly with rh+", said the representatives of Zero Industry.

extremely proud when we walked behind the Slovenian flag carried by ski jumper Franci Petek at the opening ceremony. I was 18 years old and I savoured that moment. Of course, Lillehammer was also wonderful because of the medals we won. It was only after we returned home that I realised the reaction these medals had triggered when ten thousand people gathered at a spontaneous reception. That was a huge surprise for all of us. In moments like that, you realise how much these things mean to people.

Skiing for many years was our national sport, the number one sport. Is it still the same?

No, I don't think skiing is the number one sport, and I don't think about which sport could be number one. If you look globally, it's definitely football. Although in skiing everything more or less relies on the really exceptional Tina Maze, it is still nevertheless an important part of our history, of Slovenian heritage. For the last 50 years, I can say that Slovenians have liked this sport very much. And I'm not talking only about following results and cheering, but also recreation on snow. Many Slovenians still ski. And when there's snow, they still go on ski trips in large numbers, which means that it's a part of the Slovenian culture. Even if there aren't any top results – the cheering part will somewhat die away, of course – but skiing will still continue as a recreational sport.

During your career, you also made many friends among your rivals. When you ended your sports career, many familiar skiing faces participated at the events you organised in Kranjska Gora. Do you still keep in touch?

I have to say that I was extremely surprised and honoured when everyone who was invited to the event actually came.

Although I never competed against him, even Ingemar Stenmark turned up. And of course, Alberto Tomba and everyone from our golden generation.

That was probably one of the greatest awards in my career – to be able to make contacts and friends in spite of the fact that we were rivals when it came to competing. Perhaps it was my ability to approach people in a somewhat different way and make friends. I'm really proud of these ties and friendships. We became and remained really good and close friends with some of them. We keep in touch and also organise certain joint projects.

When you ended your sports career, you were involved in sports through your business.

That's true. Already during my sports career, I was thinking about what I would be doing after I retired from sport. I said to myself that I had to start doing something immediately because I couldn't be inactive. I made a plan with my long-term agent about how to go into business. So I immediately started doing sports marketing, the organisation of sporting events, representation of sportspeople and later the sale of sports and fashion equipment. At that time, I thought I would have more free time than I had as an active sportsman, but I was quite wrong. (laugh) Perhaps I'm trying to do too many things at once and I am always running out of time. But I'm not sorry about that; I've learned a lot over the years about business and life. It has to be said that as a top sports person, you live completely different from

ordinary people. The transition is quite challenging. I knew I wanted to do something that is connected to sports, and I think I went in the right direction.

Which projects do you mean?

We organise various sponsorships, particularly in ice hockey and Alpine skiing. We've also organised sporting events, like the Ski Legends Hit Challenge in Kranjska Gora and at the anniversary of the Winter Olympics in Sarajevo, and ice-hockey events; we also organised an ice-hockey match in the Pula Arena in Croatia. We represent sportspeople, which means dealing with the whole business side of sports. We deal a lot with ice-hockey and have been cooperating with Medveščak Ice Hockey Club from Zagreb for several years, whose approach was updated, and which took the club into the expanded Austrian EBEL league. In the last two years, the club has been in the Continental Hockey League, which is the expanded Russian league, and that was really a big project. It was an interesting process which received a vast response. When we started, we didn't imagine that we'd be so successful. We have a broad base of supporters, matches are well-attended, and the numbers are really exceptional. Prior to that, we worked with Jesenice Ice Hockey Club, which had just joined the EBEL league at the time. I'd like to see more successful stories with the same response from the fans.

You're also involved in charity work.

This has a long history, and I don't want to emphasise the things I've done. I am socially conscious and I try to do something for the benefit of society. It started when I donated my prize money for the win in Kranjska Gora in 1995 to the Bosnian skiing team so they could afford training and equipment. I later received an official recognition from Bosnia and Herzegovina for that. I did that completely spontaneously, and I am not sorry, because they were able to train in Italy and compete in spite of the difficult situation in their country. I want to organise a charity event every year. In spring, with some friends I'm organising a charity family run called Formaraton, which is intended for all, and everyone can run the distance they want. This year, it'll be the seventh. This really makes me happy, because anyone can help in their own way. I've noticed that Slovenians are much more aware of the importance of solidarity than in the past. I certainly consider myself a socially conscious member of this society.

Our good deeds can make a difference. With willingness and energy, we can help many people and we don't need a lot of money for that.



Jure Košir is an advocate of an active and healthy lifestyle.

Photo: Personal archives



With Alberto Tomba (left) and Ingemar Stenmark (middle) in Kranjska Gora in 2006, when he finished his sports career.

Photo: Personal archives

SLOVENIAN MOUNTAIN CLIMBER VIKI GROŠELJ

I experience mountain climbing as a magnificent allegory of life

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ, Photo: VIKI GROŠELJ



Self-portrait on Annapurna at 7,500 metres above sea level.

Viki Grošelj is a PE teacher, a mountain rescuer, mountain guide and above all, a living encyclopaedia of Himalayan mountain climbing. His achievements in the Himalayas have been described in many books. The most recent is entitled *Giants of the Himalayas*.

Viki Grošelj ventured to the Himalayas for the first time at the age of 23, and he is the Slovenian who has conquered the most mountains in the world. With no experience and plenty of good luck, he climbed the 8,463-metre high Makalu at the first attempt. Of the fourteen eight-thousand-metre mountains in the world, he has climbed ten, including the highest peaks on every continent.

How do you experience the Himalayas today?

The foothills of the Himalayas are much more accessible than in the past. The infrastructure has progressed in all aspects. There are more roads, airports and aircraft which can take you close to the mountain. The fact is that, in spite of the modern equipment and development of alpinism, one must still climb to the peak. The success of a Himalayan climber is based on strength, persistence and experience and these can also be nurtured in more mature years.

How much fear is still present when you climb in the Himalayas?

Just the right amount. I consider fear a positive quality because it protects you. To find an optimum limit or an optimum degree of fear is a particular skill. I can say for myself that I have been quite successful in achieving that after everything I've been through.

At the time when I was obsessed with the Himalayas, I was completely focused on eight thousand-metre mountains, and now I have time to admire the beauty of Nepal.

I would like to walk across it from east to west and write a book about it.

In the introduction to your latest book, *Giants of the Himalayas*, you write that you dedicated it to Slovenian climbers who died in the Himalayas and to three foreign climbers who died during expeditions you joined. The total death rate of 24 is high. How did you cope with these tragedies?

With more and more difficulty. Seven climbers have died on expeditions in which I participated. The first death was a terrible shock. It is difficult to understand that in such a beautiful place such a cruel interruption of dreams and life happens. I think too many Slovenians have died in the Himalayas. In spite all its beauty, top Himalayan climbing has only one bad side and that is danger. A small percentage of objective danger awaits you on the rock face which can't be influenced regardless of your experience - falling rocks and ice, avalanches; everything else except these can be predicted.

Nevertheless, climbing for me is the most beautiful activity in the world.

Nejc Zaplotnik, also a climber, said to me that if anything happened to him he would like to stay in the Himalayas and, unfortunately, he did.

Who are the giants of the Himalayas to which you dedicated the book with the same title?

The giants are the fourteen highest peaks in the world higher than eight thousand metres. These are the main characters to which I added the most outstanding stories of foreign and Slovenian climbers who wished to climb them. All climbers have great respect for the giants.

In a way, Slovenians are the ambassadors of alpinism and positive values in Nepal.

That's true. We give work to the locals, and also free medical services, and we promote them to other tourists. In 1979, we established a school for mountain guides where we taught the local people climbing skills. The head of the project was Aleš Kunaver. The number of casualties among the sherpas was simply too high because they lacked mountaineering skills. So we decided to educate them. Now, the Nepalese run these courses themselves. As a climber, you need many other skills. You have to be diplomatic and organise things. Language skills are also important, and also logistics, a sense of teamwork and finally, cooking skills.

Is climbing also about self-confidence?

Certainly.

Climbing has definitely helped me in everyday things. The feeling that I can achieve good results somewhere gave me a lot of self-esteem.

Foreign landscapes move me also because of the constant exploration of my own limits. I'm faced with universal values which rule the world. It's about sympathy for people, for the world. I have learned a lot from the local people, particularly patience and gratitude; travelling has been at least one additional university for me. In addition to sport, I'm also interested in people, and I ask myself: how far can human kindness and also madness go? I have fewer and fewer answers.

What comes after 8,000 metres?

Perhaps peaks on the Moon. They are fifteen thousand metres high. Perhaps I will live until the tickets are cheaper. As excellent climbers, Slovenians will certainly be among the first there. To have a goal is the most important thing - to try to go beyond the possible, to explore something new. Commercial expeditions also require a lot of effort - they aren't easy. But it's not the same if you tackle the mountain alone or with a small team. There are plenty of challenges. That's real passion. There are many possibilities even for more difficult climbing routes.

It's good to dream the impossible in order to achieve the possible.

In 2000, the legendary Reinhold Messner stated that it was the Slovenian climbers who took a decisive step in developing modern Himalayan climbing.

The first complete Slovenian success was achieved with the ascent of Annapurna, which is close to the magic limit of 8,000 metres. The

main connection with the climbing superpowers was made in 1975 with the ascent of Makalu. For objective reasons, such as the lack of Himalayan experience and other priorities at the end of the Second World War, we missed the pioneering days of the first ascents of the Himalayan giants, and then, as Aleš Kunaver put it, caught that last train by overtaking it. We were very successful. In the 1980s, the Alpine style of climbing was established. The pioneer was Stane Belak, followed by Silvo Karo, Janez Jeglič, Andrej Štremfelj, Marko Prezelj, Tomaž Humar, Pavle Kozjek and Iztok Tomazin. Their followers were Rok Blagus and Luka Lindič and the recent winners of the Golden Ice Axe, Luka Stražar and Nejc Marčič. These are names which I hope will be at the top of world Himalayan climbing.

Let's end with your beginning in the fifth grade of primary school.

Yes, I came across climbing by coincidence. I read a lot of mountaineering literature and that drew me in. I wanted to see the Himalayas at least once with my own eyes. So far, I've seen them more than forty times, but I'm always as stunned as I was the first time. I am grateful that my life has led me to where I can enjoy and learn more about life.

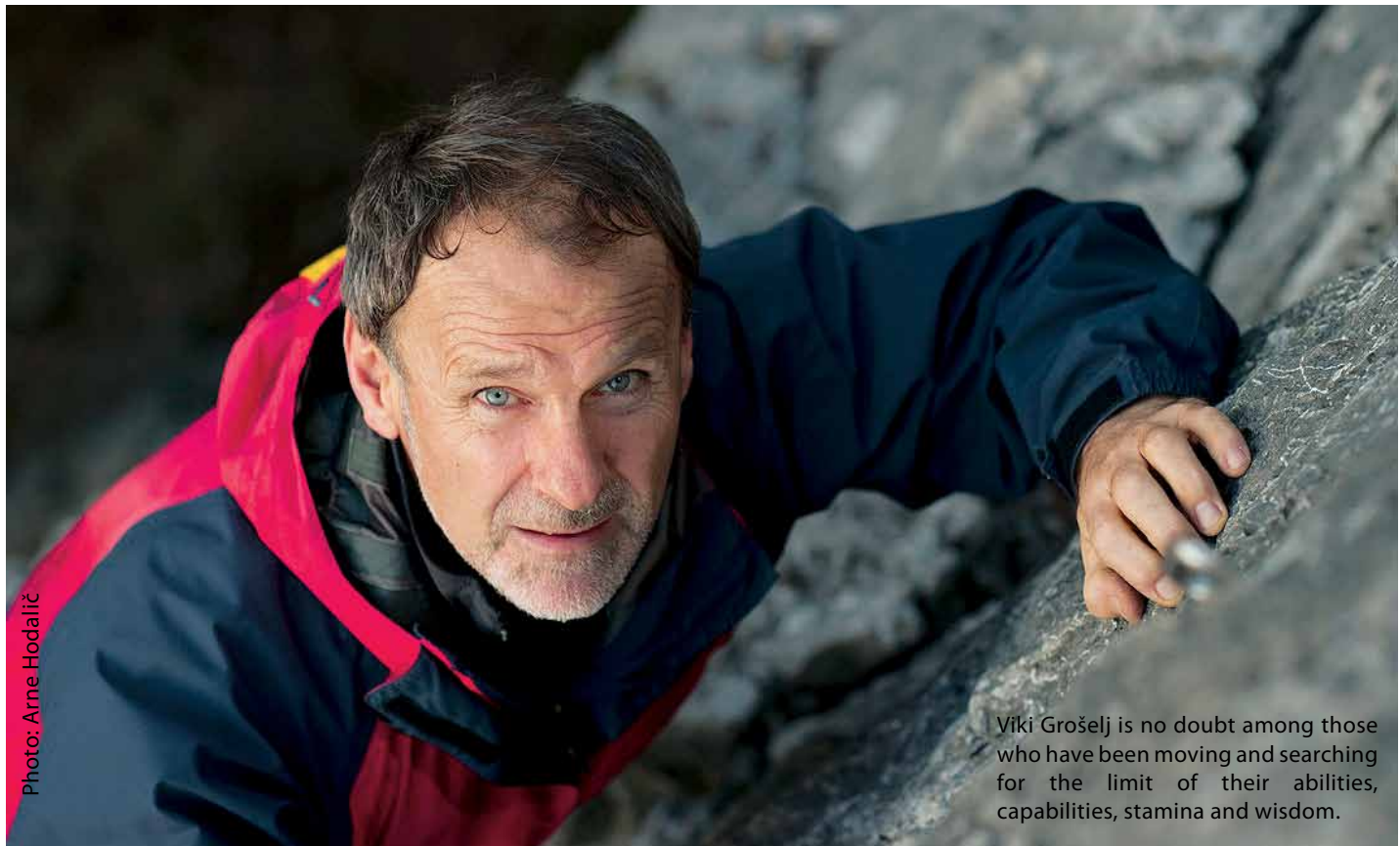


Photo: Arne Hodalič

Viki Grošelj is no doubt among those who have been moving and searching for the limit of their abilities, capabilities, stamina and wisdom.



Climbers are aware that in addition to knowledge and skills, we are also very lucky that the mountain allowed us to reach its peak and even more lucky to descend from it safely.

On the West Ridge of Everest at 6,600 metres.




ALPINE CLIMBERS TINA DI BATISTA AND TOMAŽ JAKOFČIČ

Renowned around the world

POLONA PREŠEREN, Photo: PERSONAL ARCHIVES

Their home life in a suburb of Ljubljana gives the impression that they are a completely ordinary couple. But Tina Di Batista and Tomaž Jakofčič are far from ordinary. Top alpine climbers, mountain guides with international licences, instructors of ski touring, climbers, and above all lovers of mountains. They are top sportspeople and are both employed in the Slovenian Police.



Tomaž Jakofčič – Jaka – has been involved in climbing since he was 17. He has climbed many difficult mountains and taken clients to Mount Everest as the first Slovenian mountain guide. I know Tina from school and have always admired her love of mountains and the calmness with which she took on her ventures. In 2001, she participated in the women's expedition to Denali with Anja Bervar and Mojca Žerjav, from where she and Anja were the first women to descend on skis. A few years ago, when listening to their lecture on how they climbed El Capitan in Yosemite National Park, I was fascinated by the boldness of their venture. Tina and Jaka undertook several expeditions together: one of their favourite places is Patagonia, "which is very respected and popular among climbers. It suits me because the mountains don't reach extreme altitudes, which I don't tolerate well," says Tina. As climbers, they are enthusiastic about technically challenging routes which are not the most famous but require a lot of knowledge and are true challenges.

Both are distinguished by their versatility; they are involved in rock and ice climbing, alpine and ski touring.

They are also mountain guides with international licenses working for the Slovenian Mountaineering School established in 2004 which offers various mountaineering activities from climbing, alpine and ski touring and consulting.

MOUNTAINEERING SCHOOL

"The school is intended to educate people on mountaineering, which means that we prepare them to climb in the summer, which include completely ordinary approaches and ascents and also more demanding ascents on mountain or alpine routes off the beaten track. In winter, we prepare them for winter ascents where more equipment and knowledge are needed of the conditions and weather and

ski touring," explains Tina.

They mostly work as mountain guides in Chamonix in the summer, from where they lead numerous tours, most frequently to Mont Blanc and elsewhere in the Alps: four-thousanders are particularly popular. "We don't do much in Slovenia in summer, only more demanding climbing tours, like the Slovenian route to Triglav," says Jaka.

But they are more active at home in winter when conducting ski touring courses on which they introduce the world of ski touring to their interested participants. "We also accept complete beginners. The only condition is that they know how to ski. Once they complete the ski touring course, we take them on more demanding ski touring trips," they explain.

We cannot avoid the topic of this year's winter conditions, which are currently not good for ski touring, but may still improve. They went ski touring at the Kanin ski resort this year. The Slovenian ski touring season lasts until May. "Spring ski touring is actually safer, because the snow is more compressed. That is to say avalanches present the greatest danger. In spring, the conditions for ski tour-

ing are more predictable, the days are longer and it's warmer," explains Tina. Freshly fallen snow is the most dangerous in winter, because it does not stick to the base and may trigger avalanches. Snowslips are also among more frequent dangers.

Which routes do they think are the most beautiful? That depends on the conditions, but there are many fine ski touring routes in the Julian Alps. The problem in Slovenian Alps is that most of the mountain huts are not open in winter and it is difficult to organise an attractive multi-day programme, they say.

The Mountaineering School is completely adjusted to participants. When someone decides to learn or upgrade their mountaineering knowledge, the guides first speak to them about the problems, fears, particularities and experience which they already have in mountaineering.

Although we are a mountaineering nation where heading for the mountains is an important free-time activity, they have noticed that many Slovenians want to improve their mountaineering knowledge.

They particularly wish to improve their skills on protected climbing routes and self-protection skills. So the Mountaineering School is not a classic school. The majority of things are learned on the site and also by the examples set by Tina, Jaka and other guides.

OUR WORK IS ALSO OUR PASSION

They say that Slovenia is perfect for all lovers of climbing.

We have many natural climbing locations and good options for climbing in all seasons, particularly sports climbing. Triglav is one of the most popular mountains in Slovenia for Slovenians and foreigners who visit Slovenia, since many routes lead towards it.

Tina and Jaka are employed by the Slovenian Police as top sportspeople, since no sponsorships are available in the field of climbing which would at least provide them with equipment. Mountain guiding is thus the basis for their mountaineering endeavours and they are very lucky that their activities intertwine. Guiding also helps them maintain their fitness. "We really like doing this. Our work is also our passion," says Jaka. And although their family will soon welcome another member, that will not be an obstacle to their mountaineering activities. They will be returning to Chamonix this summer, with an additional team member.





They are exploring the most beautiful mountain routes.



Tina Di Batista (left) on top of Mont Blanc with Richard Branson as part of charity event.

What is your advice on climbing mountains?

It's important to be aware of your abilities, not to exaggerate and overestimate your own abilities. It's important to go only to the point where you're truly certain that you'll be all right. Otherwise, it's better to go on a tour with a guide. Overestimating one's own abilities, particularly in summer, is the most frequent reason for accidents in the mountains. An additional risk factor in winter is the lack of knowledge about the conditions. It's wrong to rely only on good equipment to save your life. They advise beginners to learn and study as much as possible before going on a tour, or attend a course or a guided tour.

Tina Di Batista started climbing in the Ljubljana – Matica Mountaineering Club in 1996. She was a fast learner and soon began climbing the highest rock faces in Europe. In 1999, she climbed the southern face of Chakrarahu (6,001 m) in Peru on her first expedition. Further expeditions followed: Denali (2001) and Patagonia in 2002 with the primary route in the North Tower of Paine. In 2004, she participated in the first women's expedition to Fitz Roy and was the first woman to be roped up in Trango Tower (6,253 m) in Karakoram in 2006. In 2005, she ascended Ama Dablam (6,856 m). In 2008, she repeated the challenging route in the south face of Mt Bradley in Alaska. In 2009, she gave birth to her daughter Ula and set aside more difficult expeditions. In 2012, she returned to Patagonia and climbed the longest route to Fitz Roy, Afanassieff.

Tina is a versatile climber. She has climbed sports routes with an 8a rating, climbed routes with a 9 rating in the Dolomites and a demanding new route on the north face of Triglav called Ula's route. She enjoys combined winter climbing on alpine rock faces. She has completed 'the last three problems of the Alps in winter' (the second Slovenian to do so after Tomo Česen), i.e. the north faces of the Eiger, the Matterhorn and the Grandes Jorasses; other ice routes above Chamonix; the direct north couloir Dru, Omega in Petites Jorasses and Beyond Good and Evil in the Pelerins. She has been declared the best female alpinist of the year eight times.

She has been a mountain guide with an international IFMGA license since 2004.



Tina Di Batista and Tomaž Jakofčič - Jaka.
Photo: Anže Čokl, www.anzecokl.com

Tomaž Jakofčič – Jaka joined the Academic Alpine Climbing Section in 1987 and two years later became an alpinist. He successfully completed many difficult ascents and routes, including Dhaulagiri (8,167 m) in 1998 and Gyachung Kang (7,952 m) in 1999 in the Himalayas on a new route. He completed the first ascent in the alpine style to Trango Tower (6,254 m) and the first ascent to Trango Monk (5,850 m) in Karakoram.

He has spent a lot of time in Patagonia, where he climbed four new routes and ascended 12 challenging Patagonian peaks. He has climbed the mightiest Patagonian mountain, Fitz Roy, four times. His favourite Slovenian route is the north face of Triglav with six new routes and the most difficult, Ula's route. In sports climbing, he has climbed some routes with 8b or 10 ratings. Tomaž Jakofčič – Jaka was also the first Slovenian mountain guide to take clients to Mount Everest. From a non-climber's point of view, an ascent to Mount Everest is something special, but as Jaka explained, many of their ventures were technically much more complicated and more effort had to be put into the arrangements. "If you take people somewhere, you have to be one hundred per cent. You have to manage the entire situation," says Jaka.

KLEMEN PREMRL

The World's Most Accomplished Ice Climber

NATAŠA BUŠLJETA, Photo: GOPRO.COM

Many Slovenians search for extremes, to reach unreachable. One of those outstanding extreme lovers is ice climber Klemen Premrl. He has in his pocket five most difficult ice or mixed climbing directions in the world and ... His last adventure was scaling a giant iceberg in Greenland.



Let's talk about the icebergs first. No one really climbs them! Why? Icebergs are very unpredictable floating masses of ice. They are prone to cracking, collapsing, and capsizing from the smallest disturbances so climbing on them brings with it enormous risks.

AN ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME

But Klemen always wanted to climb on an iceberg. Last summer he received the invitation from GoPro Company to shoot with producer Zak Shelhamer a promotional video which he accepted immediately. And so he went with his climbing partner and long-time friend Aljaz Anderle to Greenland to chase his childhood dream. The result of this adventure is an extraordinary footage that has been published on line. The uncertainty of every swing of the ice axe is captured beautifully from a number of interesting angles along with the uncertainty and moment-to-moment intensity of the razor thin edge they are constantly on while climbing the icebergs. The video is so amazing that even mainstream media such as Britain's The Daily Telegraph has published it.

The Disko Bay in Greenland offered stunning scenery only surpassed by the bravery of Klemen and Aljaz. They climbed several icebergs, the highest one had 70 m.

The lessons learnt are that one needs to respect icebergs and to listen to them

or as Klemen put it in one interview: "You need to be gentle. You don't just jump on them and climb them for the sake of it. Climbing icebergs is a process of finding the right one, finding the right line, figuring out how you can approach it, and finally getting out of that boat and trying to climb it. Then, you climb as gentle as possible and you just might climb all the way to the top. But you must be prepared to back off; you don't want to push it. You need to listen to the iceberg and if it's telling you (usually pretty loudly) that you should leave it alone, then it might be wise to slowly climb back and jump on that boat again."

DISCOVERING THE NATURE'S LIMITS AND MOVING THEM

Ice climbing is form of rock climbing with the added adrenalin elements of cold and ice. It is possible to climb flowing water that is frozen, such as waterfalls or steep, compact snow, and ice typically found high on a mountain. The Helmecken Falls in Canadian Wells Grey Provincial Park offers the wildest, steepest and most difficult ice climbing in the world.

What Himalaya is to alpinists or big ocean waves for surfers is Helmecken Falls for ice climbers.

This ice climbers paradise was discovered by Will Gadd who put up in 2009 the most difficult route and called it 'Spray On'. But not too difficult for Klemen. He and English ice climber Tim Emmett went further. They wanted to climb to the top of the cave. At the end they succeeded the most epic and difficult mixed climbs in the world. They named it 'Spray On...Top!' – a 230 meter, wildly overhanging route.

Besides 'Spray On ... Top!' Klemen climbed all other most difficult routes in Helmecken Falls: Spreay On, Wolverine, Overhead Hazard, and Clash of the Titans. Even more! He climbed every one of them in leading or free. Which means that climber during the ascent never hangs himself on a spike, never hangs on a rope or uses any other help of man-made means but climbs only with his equipment (crampons, ice axe).

We talk proudly about Klemen and I am sure he will soon find new challenges. Because his motto is venturing new ground, looking for new possibilities, looking beyond existing and creating new things.

Slovenians are closely connected with sport. We excel at sports and cross boundaries. We ski where nobody has skied before; we climb where nobody has climbed before; we swim where nobody has swum before; we cycle for distances that others do not. We do not overcome basic natural laws and limits – we discover them.

In 2000, the alpinist Davo Karničar was the first to ski continuously for five hours from the 8848-metre peak of Mount Everest down to the base camp at 5360 metres above sea level without taking off his skis. For the Seven Summits project, he descended on Elan skis from the summits of all the highest peaks of all seven continents.

By climbing the south face of the Dhaulagiri, Tomaž Humar opened a new horizon in Himalayan climbing. His solitary battle with the highest face in the Nepal Himalayas went on for over a week, and people all around the world were able to watch it directly on their computer screens, just like Karničar's descent.

Let's snowkite!

POLONA PREŠEREN

"Polona, are we going? The conditions are excellent," asked Jernej Kastelec excitedly over the phone. He's my instructor and guide into the world of snowkiting. "Hm - let's go then," I replied, somewhat unconvinced. My hesitation was excusable; one of the coldest days had been forecast, with temperatures between minus 10 to minus 15, and we were going to Bloke, one of the coldest regions in Slovenia. "Put on warm clothes and I'll take care of the rest," Jernej assured me, and I was off on an adventure.





Jernej Kastelec actually spends more time waterkiting than snowkiting. More and more people are taking up this sport, which is very popular in Slovenia and which he first encountered seven years ago. He enjoyed it so much that he quit his job in a bank and established his own school of kiting and the KitePack tourist agency to organise kiting trips. He mostly takes people on his courses to the sea, but when the conditions are right, snowkiting is a great alternative. Snow, wind and winter are conditions which have recently made snowkiting a popular, safe and fun winter sport suitable for everyone. It is a mixture of waterkiting, skiing and boarding. And what is most encouraging, with some skill it can be learned quite fast.

FAST LEARNING

“Snowkiting is much simpler than waterkiting,” explains Jernej while spreading out the kite. With some prior knowledge of skiing or boarding, managing the kite can be learned in a day or two, and then we can already begin slowly moving on the terrain. “Once you learn that, you acquire more self-confidence and experience and snowkiting really becomes enjoyable,” says Jernej. “In contrast to water, snow always provides solid ground, which makes learning easier and you can get a sense of wind direction and the movement of the kite more quickly.”

Professionals call it ‘comfortable cruising through powdery snow’ – also uphill if so desired.



Photo: Polona Prešeren

“Snowkiting gives the limitless pleasures of moving in nature, on snow, in the sun and wind. A sense of freedom,” says Jernej Kastelec, owner of Kite Pack.

But Jernej and I were not just talking. During our chat, he had already prepared a trainer, a somewhat smaller kite for me. “The blue side in the right hand, red on the left; that’s how you manoeuvre the kite,” he explained, and I was already holding it by myself. The feeling is really exceptional. Although, a smaller so-called trainer kite is most suitable and safest for beginners, it is still possible to feel the unpredictability of the wind. Especially because the direction and wind speed are constantly changing. But that is nature and that is also the beauty of activities in nature.

WHERE CAN YOU SNOWKITE IN SLOVENIA?

Jernej likes Bloke, the Mengeš Field, and the area around Postojna, Rateče, etc.

The main criteria for selecting the terrain are suitable wind and a sufficient quantity of snow.

Strong wind is not necessary for snowkiting; about 15 km/h is enough. It is particularly important for beginners who are not fully capable of manoeuvring the kite yet that the wind is not too weak or too strong so they can ensure their own safety.

“Flat terrain is the best because it allows you to control the speed most easily. If the terrain slopes downhill, you quickly pick up too much speed. And if the terrain slopes uphill, you need more skill and experience,” says Jernej.

MY FIRST RIDE

My first snowkiting experience was on the Bloke Plateau, which is situated in the central part of Slovenia between the Cerknica Field and the Lož and Ribnica valleys. The plateau is famous for extremely low temperatures, severe natural conditions and pristine nature.

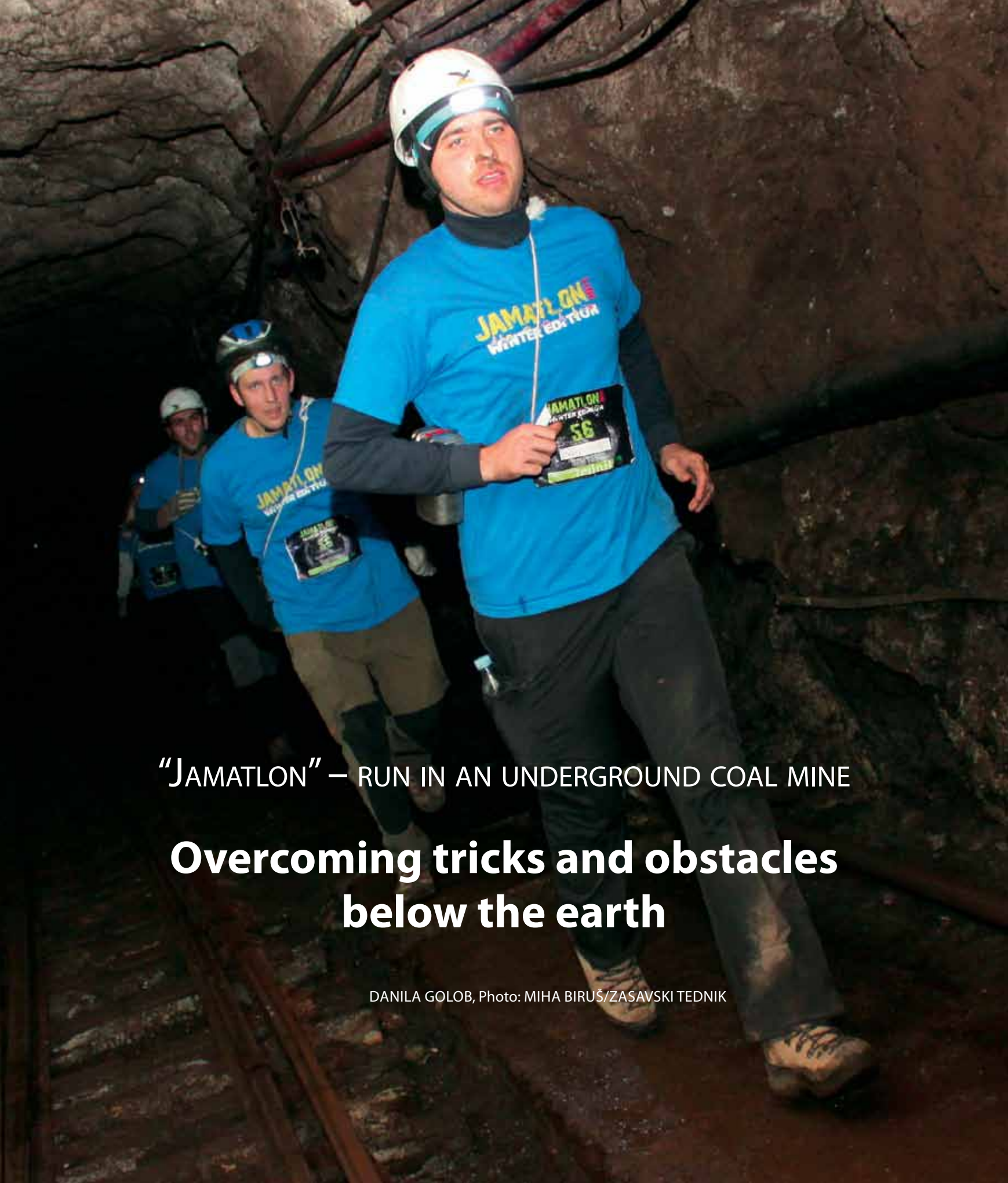
A sunny day, low temperatures, wind. The conditions for snowkiting were ideal. Bloke did not disappoint, and the cold was really chilling. And when Jernej asked me if I would start snowkiting regularly, under the influence of the cold I replied “Never!” But if he asked me today, I would say, “When are we going?”



Famous skies from Bloke.

Interesting facts about Bloke

In 1689, Valvasor described the skis used by the people of the Bloke Plateau in his book *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*. The famous skis from this region, which helped Slovenians become the first skiers in the Alps and Central Europe, were probably of local Slovenian origin. They were used as a means of getting around and made at home, usually from beech wood, but sometimes also birch, maple and ash, and occasionally cherry, elm and pear. They were attached to shoes with straps and the skier changed direction with the help of a stick.



“JAMATLON” – RUN IN AN UNDERGROUND COAL MINE

Overcoming tricks and obstacles below the earth

DANILA GOLOB, Photo: MIHA BIRUŠ/ZASAVSKI TEDNIK

Sportspeople in helmets last year twice ran the length of the Zasavje coal pits in a five-kilometre underground run called "Jamaton" – after the Slovene word for cave – jama. The Zasavje pits are part of the Trbovlje-Hrastnik coal mining complex, which is closing down. To make their adventure even more interesting, they had to overcome miners' obstacles and face the mischievous mine elf, *Perkmandeljč*.

This was a unique experience organised by Zasavski tednik newspaper in cooperation with the Trbovlje-Hrastnik Mine. "The idea of Jamaton was born when we were thinking about what to organise in the mine so that the pits wouldn't be empty and that the mine elf Perkmandeljč wouldn't die of boredom and loneliness, and also prevent in a symbolic way that coal mining would completely vanish, after more than 200 years of tradition," says Marko Planinc, the editor of Zasavski tednik. They thought of popular obstacle courses and began the organisation of the Jamaton, a recreational challenge in the tunnels of the Trbovlje-Hrastnik Mine to which they added various obstacles connected with mining.

MINERS WERE INDISPENSABLE

And what did the miners think of the idea that recreational runners would be taking over their tunnels? Before the first Jamaton, the miners were sceptical and the management of the mine also did not know quite what to expect.

But the miners gladly participated in the preparation of obstacles, suggesting certain interesting ideas, and participated at the event as mine rescuers and assistants at the obstacles.

They cheered on the competitors, helped them over obstacles, guided them and supplied them with beverages. They even lent them their lamps if the competitors' lamps went out. The participants in the Jamaton were given a nice opportunity to learn first-hand about the mines and the miner's life.

JAMATLON PARTICIPANTS IN ACTION

The first Jamaton was attended by 180 competitors. Some were so

excited that they also attended the Winter Edition, which attracted 237 competitors. The participants also included Zasavje residents whose fathers and grandfathers worked in the mines, recreational sportspeople from all over Slovenia and even some foreigners.

Certain competitors were so driven and full of adrenaline that they could hardly wait for the next interesting obstacle, while others preferred walking to running and gasping for air.

The mischievous Perkmandeljč, the elf of the Zasavje underground, provided entertainment. Each person going past him was 'baptised' by being hit with a plank on the backside. The mine elf also granted special awards. That's right - he had to select the most frightened competitor. The most original and ambitious participants were awarded the commemorative prizes and everyone was able to try a traditional miner's lunch (a quarter of a bread loaf, two Kranjska sausages or spare ribs and a mandatory half of an onion).

TWO JAMATLONS A YEAR

The organisers are planning to organise two Jamatons a year. One on Miners Day, celebrated on 3 July to commemorate the great hunger strike of Zasavje miners in 1934, and the Winter Edition on St Barbara's Day, the patron saint of miners, celebrated on 4 December. "We are planning to make Jamaton even more interesting, with better obstacles and the accompanying programme, which would be attractive for participants. We have further plans and ideas for events (sports and cultural) relating to happenings in the mine," said Planinc. Their goal is to keep the pits alive and they are certain that Jamaton can be one of the most attractive experiences in the pits.

The Jamaton is certainly an event which fairly fit recreational sportspeople should attend at least once in their lives.

"The pit is not dangerous, the running and dealing with the obstacles, meeting the miners and Perkmandeljč are unique experiences which they will fondly remember forever," says Planinc.

In an innovative and fun way, Jamaton combines recreation and learning about a tradition which will be kept only in memory due to the closure of the mine.

France Prešeren

IRENA KOGOJ

A Toast, France Prešeren, Illustrations: Damijan Stepančič,
Publisher: Mladinska knjiga, 2013, Ljubljana





Did you know?

France Prešeren is considered the greatest Slovene poet. Although he was not recognised during his lifetime, he was the first Slovene whose quality of writing could be compared to that of his European contemporaries. His best poems were published in a collection entitled 'Poezije'.

- Prešeren was born on 3 December 1800. On this day, Slovenians celebrate 'This Merry Day of Culture' when the majority of museums, theatres and exhibitions open their doors to the public free of charge.
- Part of his poem, 'A Toast', written in 1844, became the text of the national anthem of the Republic of Slovenia. The anniversary of his death, 8 February, is the national day of culture.
- He fell in love with Julija Primic, a lady from a rich merchant's family, in Trnovo church. She did not return his love, but he nevertheless dedicated one of his most beautiful poems, 'A Wreath of Sonnets', to her. Each initial letter in the last sonnet, i.e. a master sonnet composed from the first line of the previous fourteen sonnets, forms a dedication in the form of an acrostic which reads Primicovi Juliji.
- Prešeren also fell unhappily in love with an innkeeper's daughter called Zalika. In a rage after she threw him out of the inn, Prešeren wrote 'The Water Man', describing Zalika as "proud Urška".
- Prešeren Awards and Prešeren Fund Awards, the highest acknowledgements in Slovenia for achievements in the arts, are given on Culture Day to artists who have enriched the Slovenian cultural treasury with their artistic achievements or life's work in culture. The first awards were conferred in 1947.
- Prešeren's image is also on the Slovenian two-euro coin. The line, 'God's blessing on all nations', from his poem, 'A Toast', is added under his image in his handwriting.
- The central square in the capital of Ljubljana is called Prešeren Square, where his statue is also located, looking towards the house of his love, Julija Primic.
- No actual portrait of France Prešeren exists. His portrait in oils painted by German painter Franz Goldenstein in 1850 is the first representation of France Prešeren and the only one made according to the poet's actual likeness from memory. This representation, whose accuracy is doubtful, has served as the basis for poet's numerous representations since 1900.
- Prešeren was also the inspiration for a dessert. The famous speciality is Prešeren figs, dried figs dipped in cream and dark or milk chocolate. The name of the product is connected with Prešeren, who was nicknamed Doctor Fig, because he kept dried figs in his coat pocket which he gave to children in the street.

PREŠEREN DAY

Celebration of culture and art

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ, Photo: DANIEL NOVAKOVIĆ/STA



The Prešeren laureates for lifetime achievement and recipients of the Prešeren Fund Awards.

This year marks the 70th anniversary since 8 February was officially designated the Slovenian cultural holiday. Dedicated to the memory of the greatest Slovenian poet, France Prešeren, it is an occasion to reflect on the significance of culture and art, which contributed to ensuring that Slovenians as a small nation managed to preserve their language and identity over the centuries.

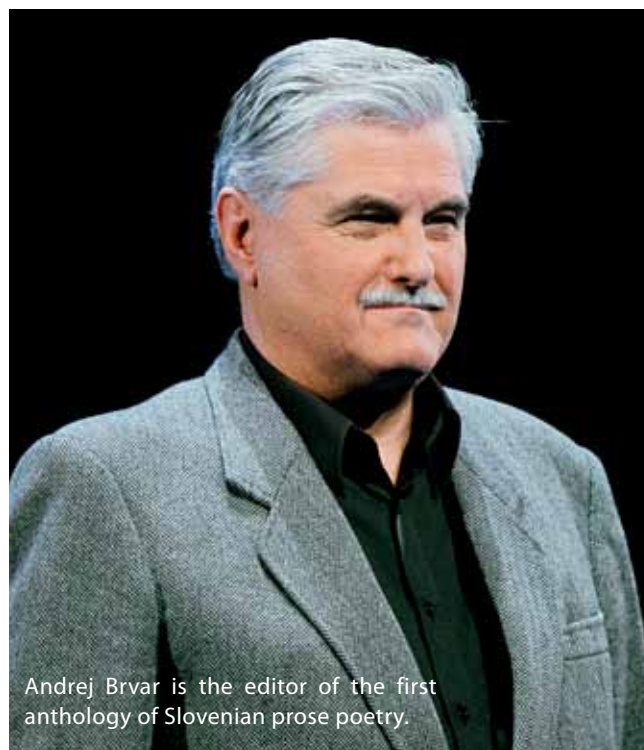
The Prešeren Awards were presented in Cankarjev dom on the eve of the Slovenian cultural holiday. This year's ceremony was entitled The Scattering of Light. The event was a journey on the bright paths of culture and art through the words of great Slovenian and world-renowned artists.

CREATIVITY IS A PREREQUISITE OF PROGRESS

This year's Prešeren laureates for lifetime achievements are the pioneer of Slovenian comic books, Miki Muster, and the poet Andrej Brvar. They come from a sunny region of Slovenia and share the inspiration which advocates endurance and contagious hope.

It is for his over forty stories about Zvitorepec, Trdonja and Lakotnik, that **Miki Muster**, an academic sculptor, has become the central representative of Slovenian comic books. He has also illustrated many picture books.

Muster spent 17 years in Germany, where he focused on cartoons. One of the first clients of his animated films was the Slovenian film company Viba Film, for which he animated cartoons such as Puščica (An Arrow), Kurir Nejček (Courier Nejček) and Zimska zgodba (Winter Tale) at the beginning of the 1960s. He created some 380 animated advertisements between 1967 and 1990. After 1990, he also started drawing political caricatures.



Andrej Brvar is the editor of the first anthology of Slovenian prose poetry.



The 89-year-old Miki Muster is one of the most recognised persons in Slovenian fine arts culture in the broadest sense of the word.

The Prešeren Award for Lifetime Achievement was also conferred on **Andrej Brvar** for his poetry. He has published ten poetry collections in his 45 years of writing. Brvar is considered a vitalist, since "the experience of his life is manifested in his poetry as an active, physical and as concrete as possible grasping of the miracle of everything that is alive".

THIS YEAR'S PREŠEREN LAUREATES: MIKI MUSTER AND ANDREJ BRVAR

At the event, Dr Janez Bogataj, President of the Prešeren Fund's Management Board, pointed out that the Slovenian nation, although small in numbers, was a great nation.

Culture in Slovenia is a driving force which still produces, and not merely trades and also comprises everything that is globally considered the greatest value and skill of the 21st century.

The recipients of the Prešeren Fund Awards: two musicians, a translator, an actress, a painter and a dance pair



Translator **Marjan Strojan** received the Prešeren Fund Award for his translation of the Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer. Strojan is an excellent, and the most productive, translator of the English poetic canon into Slovenian and the recipient of two Sovre Awards for literary translators. "Due to Strojan, one of the most important works of English literature has been introduced to the Slovenian public in a translation which is artistic, elaborate and linguistically rich, while also smoothly readable and easily accessible to today's readers", reads the citation.

Two musicians received the Prešeren Fund Awards: composer and saxophonist **Jure Pukl** for creating jazz music in the last two years, and numerous performances and cooperation with internationally acclaimed artists. According to the jury, "as a performer and composer, Pukl is an ambassador of Slovenian culture: his creative work includes progressive, avant-garde jazz, partly free jazz, and also characteristics of impressionist contemporary music. His saxophone technique, exceptional talent and appetite for new musical discoveries have led him to the top of the world jazz elite."



A representative of the younger generation of Slovenian composers, **Vito Žuraj** convinced the jury with the quality of his work in the last two years, which has received a huge response. "With talent, great commitment, a passionate spirit for exploration and enthusiastic search for new musical worlds, Žuraj has created a unique but already distinctive musical expressivity which is a synthesis of compositional knowledge and music informatics. This uniquely personal expressivity initiated his swift ascent to the contemporary peaks of composing, not only in Slovenia, but also globally," reads the citation.



Academic painter **Marko Jakše** received the Prešeren Fund Award for his exhibitions in the last two years. Jakše graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana in 1987 and soon attracted attention with his astonishing metaphors of European civilisation remnants which he collected from the human sub-consciousness. "His artistic interpretation of a motif, ballad-like or melancholic to some, and provocative to others, also excites the unprepared observer", according to the jury, adding that Jakše "is one of the most individual Slovenian artists of recent times and one of the few who fulfils two fundamental conditions of a persuasive artistic mission: he knows how, and has something, to express."

Dancers **Rosana Hribar** and **Gregor Luštek** received the awards for their original dance creation Duet 014 and for the creative design and realisation of the dance project, Pas de Deux after Pia and Pino. Hribar and Luštek are known for their numerous joint projects. The citation for Duet 014 says, "The artistic project can be said to express and represent the fireworks of endless wealth and diversity of a genuine and natural relationship between a man and a woman, Luštek and Hribar."



Theatre and film actress **Pia Zemljič** received the award for her performances as Pia in Clôture de l'amour, Manager in Contractions, Nathalie Oppenheim in Comment vous racontez la partie and Jasna in the feature film, Panic. Zemljič has shone with fascinating energy, which has been attracting the attention of audiences and critics for two decades. "Her acting range is extremely broad; she has presented herself as an authentic heroine of the classical repertoire and also perfectly interprets roles of contemporary young women. With ease and virtuosity, she gets under the skin of a fatal seductress, a romantic woman or a destabilised person with the neurosis of modern society," reads the citation.



CARMINA SLOVENICA IN NEW YORK
Slovenian Vocal Theatre acclaimed

BRIGITA JUHART, Photo: CARMINA SLOVENICA ARCHIVES



The Vocal Theatre Carmina Slovenica from Maribor successfully performed at Prototype, the festival of experimental opera in New York. Their performance entitled 'Toxic Psalms' received good reviews from critics and attracted sizeable audiences.

Carmina Slovenica performed five times at St Ann's Warehouse, which has been presenting innovative theatre works and concerts for 34 years and is today one of the most important New York venues for live performances. The invitation to the Prototype Festival indicates that the performance convinced very demanding hosts. "What Carmina Slovenica does is incredibly exciting and deep. That's why we invited them to New York and we are thrilled," said Kim Whitener, one of the three artistic directors of the Prototype Festival.


TOXIC PSALMS

The Carmina Slovenica ensemble performed their 'Toxic Psalms' with the subtitle 'Ultimate Collective Experience', which deals with the question of an individual's or collective response to authority. The idea comes partly from the meditations of philosopher Hannah Arendt when she was following the trial of the Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, who sought to avoid taking responsibility for his crimes by saying he was carrying out the orders of his superiors. "Toxic Psalms is a reflection of my questions about social groups and the phenomenon of following authority, particularly the blind following authorities' instructions, either political or religious, which can be disastrously dangerous.

People are willing to kill for their 'psalms' and it seems that this is a central conflict of modern wars.

Which is why the project deals with the banality of evil, which is not caused by people who would choose to do evil, but little people who have been torn from their human nature and stopped thinking and only blindly followed the instructions of authority," said Karmina Šilec, the artistic director of the choir and performance director.





Karmina Šilec is an internationally acclaimed musician who for fifteen years has been developing the concept of choregie (combining various artistic genres from vocal to instrumental music, drama elements and motion to visual effects) into opulent musical theatre.

This artistic concept is unique as it focuses on the group and not so much on individual performers, which is the usual practice in other music and theatre projects and has become a field of study by various music theoreticians.

BREATH TAKING PERFORMANCE

The New York media and renowned critics paid a lot of attention to the performance of Carmina Slovenica. The New York Times wrote, "Toxic Psalms' adds a savage yet polished theatricality as well as an ambiguity all too rare in American performance." According to Kim Whitener, the artistic director of the Festival, the audiences responded well to the performance: "I think that the reception here is really a genuine one - surprise and astonishment. They walked out of the performance with stunned looks on their faces, saying 'That's amazing. I've never seen anything like it.'"

Campbell Tibo said, "This element of innocence, of virginity which of course was twice as moving due to 30 young women. The colour yellow was emanated by lemon contrasting with the purity of voices. Like the juice, the blood of this lemon was coming out." Niham Tastabasi was most impressed by the scene with mirrors: "How the performers were interacting with the audience like pushing them into the world they were trying to create on the stage."

Very few Slovenian artistic creations receive such commendations in demanding New York as Carmina Slovenica has, for which reason many hope it becomes a regular guest on their stages.

A portrait of Uršula Cetinski, the Director General of Cankarjev dom. She is a woman with short, dark brown hair, wearing a dark green blazer over a black top. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. Her right hand is resting on a vertical wooden slat of a staircase railing. The background is a brightly lit interior space with a staircase and wooden slats.

DIRECTOR GENERAL OF CANKARJEV DOM URŠULA CETINSKI

Cankarjev dom will open up Slovenia to the world

TANJA GLOGOVČAN, Photo: CANKARJEV DOM ARCHIVES

After more than three decades, the main Slovenian house of culture, located in central Ljubljana, acquired new leadership in October 2014. Uršula Cetinski became Director General for a period of five years.

“The structure of such a large cultural centre as Cankarjev dom is very complicated,” admits Uršula Cetinski. “This is why the decision to apply for the directorship was not made in haste, but after a careful consideration.”

Congratulations on your appointment. What are your first impressions, and what difficulties and challenges do you expect?

I consider the appointment as recognition of my current work in culture, which gives me a lot of motivation for future challenges. My first impressions were in a way expected, since I worked at Cankarjev dom until 2006, when I became the director of Mladinsko Theatre. Several years ago, I was also the theatre and contemporary dance programme manager in Cankarjev dom.

There have been many changes in the field of culture in Slovenia between 2006 and now. Many new institutions and cultural centres, such as Kino Šiška and Španski borci cultural centre, were established in Ljubljana alone, which brings new challenges into the broader environment for me personally and for the institution. With the change in the cultural environment in Slovenia, Cankarjev dom also lost its monopoly in a way, but it still has many advantages over other cultural centres. It combines various branches of art under one roof: music, film, fine arts, theatre, humanist arts and cultural education.

Cankarjev dom also has many possibilities for international cooperation, and undoubtedly opens Slovenia to the world.

The people who designed it in the last century were visionaries. We will be celebrating its 40th anniversary soon, and it is right that the vision for such a cultural centre remains ambitious.

What can be enjoyed at Cankarjev dom?

In terms of number of events, music is the most widely represented in Cankarjev dom. Theatre and dance programmes focus on the work of Slovenian artists who realise their ideas in co-production with Cankarjev dom. The film programme has opened its doors widely to the greatest modern film directors.

Exhibitions in the gallery have featured great names such as Picasso, Rembrandt, Schiele and others.

Art programmes are upgraded by humanist art and events discussing various philosophical, anthropological, ethnological, linguistic

and other issues. The numerous round tables and discussions always receive a great response and provoke vibrant exchanges of opinion. Cankarjev dom also provides cultural education for young generations. Annual festivals play an important role in the programme of Cankarjev dom (LIFFe, Documentary Film Festival, Druga Godba, City of Women Festival, Exodus International Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts, Gibanica (Moving Cake) Festival of Slovenian Dance and Transgenerations Festival of Youth Creativity). The Slovenian Book Fair is also one of the regular projects.

Mitja Rotovnik was the director of Cankarjev dom for many years. How does your vision differ from his?

The guidelines remain similar, since the mission of the institution, which remains the same in principle, must be followed. My predecessor led Cankarjev dom for 30 years in two different social systems and two different countries. I will make changes in the way things are managed and in certain specific aspects. For example, I would like to enhance the programme of the Ljubljana Jazz Festival. Then I see many opportunities for improving the Documentary Film Festival. There are also many challenges in the field of classical music. We also have many plans for fine arts, whereas the programmes of theatre and particularly contemporary dance have to be established anew.

I understand that you have very ambitious projects in mind.

That's true.

Cankarjev dom has a great symbolic significance for Slovenia. It has always been a place for key events related to the culture and life of Slovenian society.

I have great trust in my colleagues and I believe that, thanks to their professionalism, we can be ambitious. Great steps forward will undoubtedly be made in the field of performing arts. We are planning to host the National Beijing Opera Company with the Monkey King opera. We are also planning a visit by a theatre group from Versailles which features horses in its performances. These are both very attractive performances, and we expect that not only citizens of Ljubljana or Slovenians but also foreigners will be in the audience.



So you are looking for spectacular performances and great projects with a wide response?

To sum up, I want Cankarjev dom to become a centre for performances and events which cannot be offered or organised anywhere else.

We are looking for original and innovative options. We will also continue with Slovenian co-productions between theatres and others.

Is congress activity also important?

Of course, we are one of the largest institutions in Europe, with beautiful facilities extending over 36,000 m². Cankarjev dom has

been splendidly renovated recently. Our moving stages, acoustics, organ, equipment and culinary offer are competitive. Our premises are frequently leased by many embassies and companies for various events.

How will you attract more Slovenian and foreign visitors?

We can be pleased that our visitors are not only Slovenians. I think it is important that an institution is a pleasant place for visitors. Cankarjev dom also has to try to become a social place, and we will also focus on our culinary offer. We would like to be involved even more in the surrounding architecture and the environment, i.e. Republic Square and the Council of Europe Park. We are also planning to revive the terrace on the roof. Our goal is to maintain the symbolic and historical roles of Cankarjev dom for Slovenia.





Uršula Cetinski graduated in comparative literature and German language. She completed her post-graduate studies in cultural management at the University of Linz in Austria. She has always been closely connected to theatre in her professional career.



Hana Stupica, folk tale The Mitten,
Published by Mladinska knjiga Publishing House, 2014



11TH SLOVENIAN BIENNIAL OF ILLUSTRATION

When illustrations speak to us

ALENKA IVANČIČ, Photo: CANKARJEV DOM ARCHIVES

Proof that Slovenians are not only a nation of poets, but also a nation of illustrators, particularly young ones, was the great number of artists presented at the 11th Slovenian Biennial of Illustration in the Cankarjev dom cultural centre in Ljubljana. The Hinko Smrekar Lifetime Achievement Award went to academic painter Jože Ciuha, whose illustrations have adorned over 100 books.



Tanja Komadina, All because of Dorothy,
The original dates from 2014

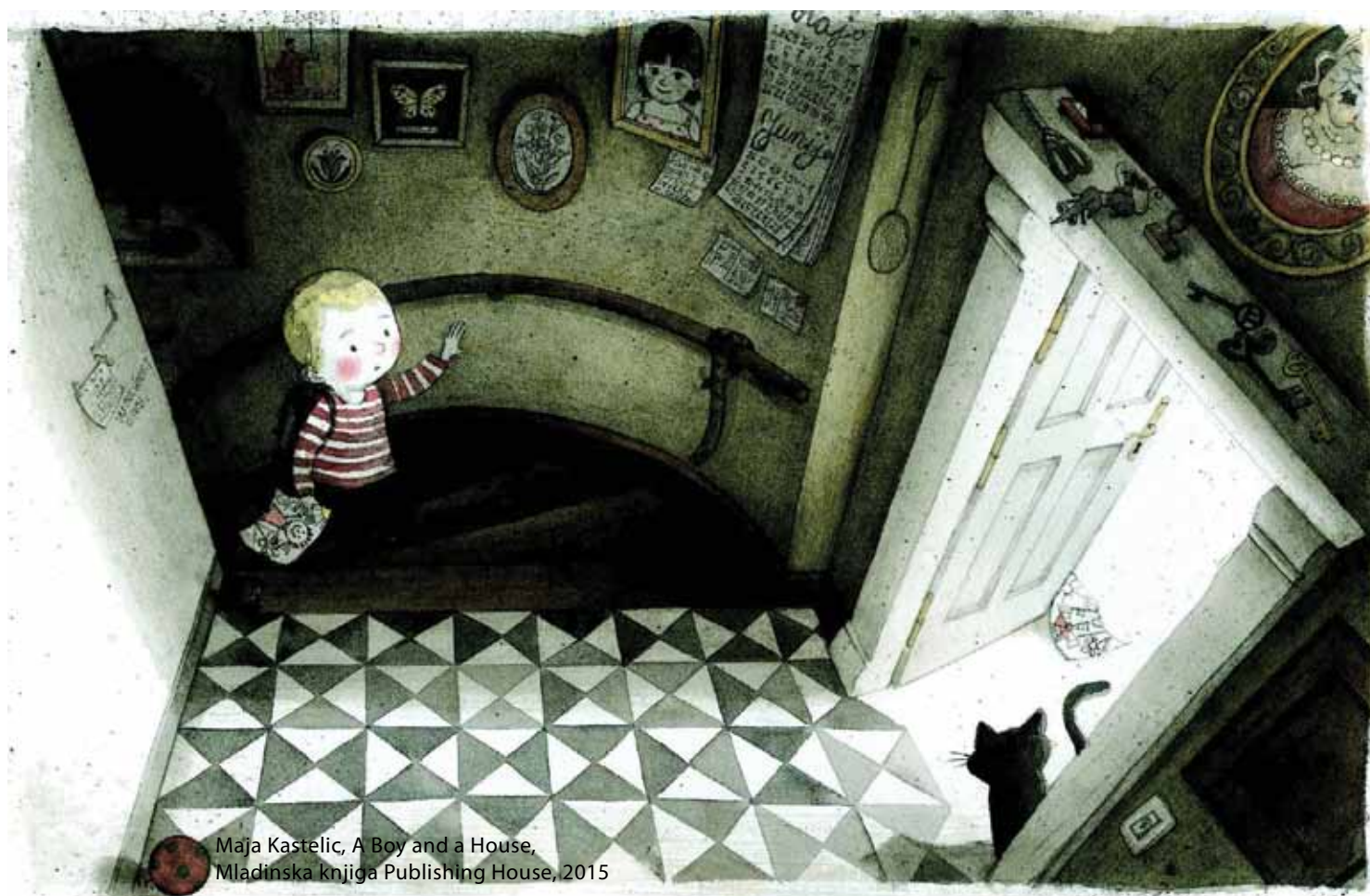
The jury selected 54 illustrators from 146 illustration projects, 26 of which under the age of 40, while 13 were born after 1980. This proves that not only acclaimed and renowned artists whose works have already been artistically established participate at the Biennial, but also younger artists and designers with new forms of expression, artistic solutions and techniques, with elements of film, comic books, animated film, electronic media and other modern technologies. The age difference between the youngest and oldest participants was 66 years.

After more than two decades, the Slovenian Biennial of Illustration still excels at preserving its creative power and presenting a selection of the last two years' production in this branch of fine arts,

while revealing the excellence of Slovenian illustration and combining younger and older generations of illustrators.

SLOVENIAN ILLUSTRATION IS IN GOOD CONDITION

According to Nina Pirnat Spahić at Cankarjev dom, who has been helping the Association of Fine Artists of Slovenia with the realisation of the Biennial since its beginnings and is also a permanent member of the jury and coordinator of the exhibition, "The purpose of the Slovenian Biennial of Illustration, which has been prepared since 1993 in cooperation with the Section of Illustrators of the Union of Slovenian Fine Arts Associations, is to give this somewhat overlooked artistic discipline a presentation and media recognition and also a professional evaluation, with a special emphasis on the essential role of children's and youth illustration in co-creating artistic perception of the worlds of children and youth."



Maja Kastelic, A Boy and a House,
Mladinska knjiga Publishing House, 2015

“As the largest overview of this artistic field in Slovenia, the Biennial provides an excellent exhibition and presentation of originals, if possible in parallel with their printed versions, and particularly the visibility of illustration in broader public.

Overall, it can be concluded that modern Slovenian illustration is in good creative condition,



Hana Stupica

since a strong and vital core of artistically recognisable artists appears in every new generation, many of whom test and affirm their artistic range by participating and gaining success in international selective exhibitions. The increasingly distinguishable intertwining of new means of expression derives from the fact that many artists do not deal with illustration exclusively, but successfully manoeuvre between various artistic experiences which, like it or not, mutually upgrade, supplement and enrich each other.”

WINTER FAIRYTALE ABOUT ANIMALS

The Biennial, where an award, accolades and distinctions named after the Slovenian painter, graphic artist, drawer, illustrator and

caricaturist Hinko Smrekar, are presented, this year particularly focused on classic illustration and young artists.

It is thus not surprising that the winner of the main award of the 11th Slovenian Biennial of Illustration is a representative of the young generation and a lover of classic illustration, *Hana Stupica*. She received the award for her debut work, a picture book entitled *The Mitten*, which was published by Mladinska knjiga publishing house in 2014. The young literary illustrator, who likes fairytales and who grew up with the beautiful illustrations of her grandmother Marlenka and her mother Marija Lucija, says, “People at Mladinska knjiga knew about my love for illustrating animals and their stories. The folk fairytale, *The Mitten*, includes illustrations of small and large animals dressed in my favourite historical costumes, with many details, which are looking for shelter from winter.” The book “created in a manner which has a strong tradition in Slovenian children’s illustration, expresses the illustrator’s maturity and explicit efforts to depict the feeling of winter in the 19th century and the impression of rural reality of the time, which the illustrator skilfully and consistently intertwines with thoughtful arrangements of colour textures,” read the jury’s citation.

AMONG THE BEST

The recipient of *the Hinko Smrekar Lifetime Achievement Award* was the painter *Jože Ciuha*, an all-round artist with a unique style, who in his almost seventy years of creating, has adorned with illustrations and drawings more than one hundred books, including his own travel books.

The winners of the Hinko Smrekar Accolades were *Maja Kastelic* for her illustrations of the book *Deček in hiša* (*A Boy and a House*), which in spite of its severely limited colour range manages the space and creates an illusion of reality, and *Matija Medved* for his illustrations entitled *Tribuna: Zmaji v Banji* (*Tribuna: Dragons in a Bathtub*), who boldly tackled a large format in pencil.

The winners of the Hinko Smrekar *Distinctions* were *Ana Maraž* for independent illustrations, *Kosmatuhi – Lisica, Miš, Krt ali Medved* (*Furry Creatures - Fox, Mouse, Mole or Bear*), and *Ana Zavadlav* for illustrations of the book *Tinček in tri zlate ribice* (*Tinček and Three Goldfish*), by Dim Zupan.

The winners of *Special Commendation* which the jury awards only occasionally were *Luka Seme* and *Matej Stupica* for illustrations on the covers of Saturday supplement *Objektiv* of *Dnevnik newspaper* which maintains the tradition of newspaper illustration in Slovenia.



Luka Seme, Cover of the Objektiv Saturday Supplement,
Published by Dnevnik d.d. 2013/2014

ELAN INVENTA – A MAJOR SPORTS PROJECT

Slovenian company co-equips world handball facilities in Qatar

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ, Photo: ELAN ARCHIVES



Elan Inventa of Begunje, Slovenia, co-equipped three sports halls which recently hosted the world handball championship in Doha, Qatar. The total investment was nearly EUR 5 million. This is the largest sports-related project in the history of independent Slovenia.

Elan equipped the Lusail, Duhail and Al Sadd sports halls with seats in the stands, goalposts, goal nets and partly also with telescopic stands, divider curtains, large screens, benches for players and tables for judges and journalists, "ring" barriers in the halls and other sports equipment.

"We sent over 60 containers of equipment to Qatar," says Matjaž Žargi, the Project Manager in Qatar, and Slovenian workers installed the equipment there between March and December last year. Miha Šter, Director of Elan Investa, who disclosed the value of works, says that it was an important project which has opened the door to Elan to other markets in the Arab world. "It was not easy to get involved in the project and it took us two years to do that. We also had to convince the local Olympic Committee. They have been satisfied with our work and we are now negotiating our involvement in equipping two stadiums for the football World Cup 2022. We also hope to be the selected bidder for equipping the sports hall in Dubai," added Šter on the forthcoming possibilities.

THE FIRST VICTORY

The Qatar project started in 2012 with gathering information and acquiring contacts for the three sports halls in Doha. With major challenges and despite complications with visas, we managed to bring to Slovenia the chief architect of the Lebanese company which employs more than 2,000 architects and designers all over the world. The ice was broken. The Qatar Olympic Committee short-listed Elan among the final potential suppliers. This was the first victory, followed by negotiations. The next step was a visit by the sports hall construction project manager of the Qatar Handball Association.

"We were aware that we were competing against the major players in the construction of sports facilities. The Americans, Italians, Koreans and Chinese held strong cards, including political ones. We knew that these were projects crucial for the construction of the facilities for the World Cup 2022 and that no mistakes would be allowed," said Šter. In the process of preparatory works, two check-up visits were made to the works being conducted in Slovenia. The fitters worked in Qatar for more than 500 days in extremely difficult climatic conditions.

NEW PROJECTS IN THE GULF COUNTRIES

These projects have opened new doors for Elan in the Gulf countries. Elan is involved in the preparation of bids for two new football stadiums, a sports hall in Dubai and several smaller sports halls in Abu Dhabi.

In these markets, they are interested only in a handshake and a commitment of the management to timely delivery of superior quality and quick responses. For superbly done work, the leading Qatari construction company Redco construction – Almana awarded Elan special recognition for outstanding work in the sports complex of the Qatar Handball Association in Doha.

The Qatar project is definitely the biggest and most risk-prone project in the field of sport in the history of independent Slovenia. At Elan, they believe and hope that in the future, such achievements of Slovenian companies will considerably diminish the bureaucratic obstacles. "If at least the procedure for obtaining visas for Qatar was simplified, this would be another step forward," adds Šter.

Elan is a well-known equipper of sports facilities with a strong presence particularly in the Scandinavian market. Elan has been active in more than 30 countries, was involved in providing equipment for the Winter Olympics in Sochi and has several projects open in Russia, which, however, have slowed down owing to the crisis.


 The logo for Elan, featuring the word "elan" in a stylized, lowercase, italicized font with a grey-to-white gradient.

WWW.ELAN-INVENTA.COM



ALPINA, ELAN

Joint work and audacity

NATAŠA BUŠLJETA

Model: Prisha JA,
Make up: Vanja Djura

Two successful Slovenian brand names, particularly well-established in the field of winter sports, are open to various forms of cooperation, which has resulted in the creation of really interesting products. This article puts the spotlight on two companies: Elan, especially known for making premium skis, and Alpina, the manufacturer of sports and other footwear.

We present two cases of fruitful collaboration which led to the design of two products. Draž knitwear and Alpina knitted sneakers together. Elan and Alpina designed the JUNIOR collection of ski equipment. In addition to having Alpina as their common protagonist, both products have received professional awards.

KNIT SNEAKERS ALPINA FASHION-DRAŽ

Recognised knitwear fashion designers Urška and Tomaž Draž were on the lookout for new challenges. Their inspiration for the spring/summer 2014 knitwear collection was purely nature, more precisely the bottom of the Ljubljanica River, inhabited by diatoms - reputed as the beauties of the microscopic algae. The brittle exoskeletons that remain after the organisms die are true miniature artworks of nature. In partnership with non-profit organisations Lutra – the Institute for Conservation of Natural Heritage and the National Institute of Biology, the two designers thoughtfully interweaved these little skeletons into the patterns and cuts of their collection named "Diatomeja". Then they challenged Alpina with the idea of how to apply these delicate structures and tiny patterns to shoes.

Although Alpina is a name long associated with sports footwear and top-quality cross-country ski boots, the company was happy to join efforts with the Draž knitwear designers and to put the product under the spotlight of the fashion runway. Alpina's experts transferred the designers' creative ideas and a tiny pattern of knitwear to high- and low-heel leather shoes. At the Ljubljana Fashion Week show, the knitted sneakers in a vibrant red and green pattern received the most attention, also because they were worn by fashion models in evening dresses.

The audacious collaboration did not receive applause only from the guests at the fashion show, but Alpina and Draž knitwear also won the award for fashion cooperation at the 2014 Elle Style Awards.

Alpina in particular, used to receiving awards for innovation and medals, conquered by cross-country skiers wearing their boots, was very proud of their successful step into the fashion world. These useful products of premium quality, created in a unique way, made their way into the market as "boutique" brands.

A PERFECT TANDEM

This year, Elan will celebrate its 70th anniversary. In its long history, Elan's ski development department has created numerous innovations. This time, however, our attention will be focused on cooperation with Alpina.

The two companies have found and created synergies for the development of the JUNIOR collection of ski equipment. A notable and significant feature in the junior ski equipment is that a junior ski boot, together with bindings, covers a large part of the length of the ski. The skis do not bend enough on the slopes, which reduces the enjoyment and first experiences on the snow. Elan approached the challenge comprehensively and considered the options of boots and skis being a perfect tandem. With this in mind, they got in touch with Alpina.

Elan and Alpina product – entirely changing children's first experience on the snow.

Despite the importance of the skis' flexibility, it was the ski boot which was revolutionary.

The U-flex technology, as they call it, convinced members of the expert jury and won Elan Ispo Gold Winner 2014 and Plus X Award as the best product of 2014.

What is more, the new product also convinced children and their parents. They are especially enthusiastic about the product's volume control plate, with which one ski boot size covers 3 foot sizes.




Photo: Alpina archives

AND BY ANDRAŽ

Stylish sports clothes made of superb materials

DANILO GOLOB, Photo: NATAŠA MÜLLER



A person's hand in a blue jacket is visible on the left side of the frame, reaching out. The background is a bright blue sky with many white snowflakes falling. The bottom of the image shows a snowy surface.

Filip Flisar, Slovenian free-style ski cross competitor and the owner of the most beautiful moustache at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, wrote on his Facebook profile that he has designed his own clothes for this winter season. He is competing in a green-grey combination.

And who made his ski clothes? The lively and playful collection, suited to his character, is made of technologically perfected materials. "Ski cross prescribes special clothes which must be loose in certain areas to allow better aerodynamic drag. According to his body, we designed a model which in certain places is a close fit and in others loose and which meets the international sports requirements," explains Nataša Berginc, owner and director of the company AND by Andraž, which has been present in the Slovenian market since 1989. They have been cooperating with the handsome skier for eight years and making his clothes since the beginning of his sports career. Director Berginc says enthusiastically that working with him is a real pleasure.

UNIQUE CLOTHES

All the clothes with the AND by Andraž trademark are made in Slovenia, from the first drawing to the final stitch.

There is a boutique offer which provides small collections designed to allow for combinations of individual clothing items. An own development and design team ensure the technical and functional perfection of their products. Materials made in Europe are used which have quality certificates (Oeko-Tex Standard 100). Their products are not intended only for active sportspeople, but also for people who wish to wear high-quality clothes in their free time. "Fashion trends dictate a combination of sports wear with casual wear. We use combinations of different technical and fashionable materials for free time. The clothes are suitable for sports activities, for free time and also as comfortable fashionable clothes for work," says Berginc.

AND by Andraž clothes are particularly suitable for all who are actively involved in winter sports and for whom material quality, functionality and comfort are vital.

There is also a high demand for original sports products. The company makes custom-made clothes for individuals according to their desired design. Clients express their wishes and select colour combinations on the basis of which the company prepares a few drawings from which the clients select their favourites. The selected design is then adjusted to fit the client. They also design collections for companies and create designs which highlight the company's trademark.

FOR TOP SPORTSPEOPLE

In addition to Filip Flisar, the quality of their products has also been recognised by other top national and international sportspeople.

The company cooperates with the young and promising Slovenian snowboarder Tim Mastnak, who wrote on his social network profile that AND by Andraž would ensure he was recognisable on the ski

slopes this year. He looks excellent in a blue technical down jacket and ski pants with unique embroidery on the right leg.

They have also made clothes for the Serbian skier Nevena Ignjatović and her team for the second time. "We have been present in foreign markets for over twenty years through various ski clubs. And that's how we also met Nevena Ignjatović," says Berginc, explaining how designing for the Serbian skier began - this year her clothes will be combined with pink. Ignjatović is also excited about the co-operation and thanked the company through her Facebook profile. "Thank you for your trust. The day spent at AND by Andraž was very pleasant."

"It's important that top sportspeople feel comfortable in their clothes. It makes them more confident and relaxed. And these people are the most important part of our development team, since they give us their first feedback on how the novelties work in practice. Active sportspeople need clothes which resist all environmental impacts, and they must be functional and visually attractive," stresses Berginc.



AND by Andraž: high-quality products, materials and production and exceptional adjustability to clients' wishes.



In the future, the company AND by Andraž wishes to remain a client-friendly company which uses skin-friendly materials. "Our slogan is to make high-quality functional clothes that look good," says Berginc, and she stresses that they wish to be further connected with their clients and comply with their suggestions and comments.



EBER FURRIERY

**A noble and inspiring material in the
hands of the true craftsman**

TANJA GLOGOVČAN, Photo: KRZJARSTVO EBER ARCHIVES

Eber Furriery is a small boutique shop located on Wolfova Street in Ljubljana near the famous Triple Bridge and Prešeren Square. The shop offers various types of luxurious coats with hoods, jackets, vests or shawls.

The Eber Furriery is a family-owned company with almost a one-hundred-year-old tradition. The business was established by a man, but the shop is now in the hands of women, Milena Eber Štimac and her daughter Mateja. When they speak about their work, the pride they take in their family tradition and personal success can be seen in their eyes.

YOUNG FURRIER DEVELOPS SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS

After the World War I, at the time of the rising middle class in Slovenia, fur became a status symbol of the rich. Gentlemen adorned their ladies with precious fur, and the ladies were happy to wear it on their walks, in church or when going to the theatre. Fur coats, stoles and hems became mandatory items of women's clothing. Twenty-seven-year-old Eligij Eber, a young furrier from Ljubljana, opened his furriers in 1919 in Gradišče in Ljubljana. The business was successful and he was considered one of the largest Slovenian furriers before the World War II. He bought furs at the largest international fur exchanges and employed thirty furriers and dressmakers. He also made a reputation by making hats for various uniforms.



The first Eligij Eber boutique.

In the spring of 1941, when he moved his flourishing business to Congress Square in Ljubljana, the World War II brought a sudden change. The years during and after the war were particularly difficult for craftsmen, and Eligij and his wife Jožica had great difficulty making ends meet. In 1952, the then authorities moved the Eber Furriery to a small shop at 6 Wolfova Street. They made their living mostly by making and repairing men's hats – the linen ones in the summer and fur hats in the winter. Material for new products was very scarce. Every now and then, hunters would bring fur from their catches and order a collar or a hat for their wives. Otherwise, the ladies would bring their old coats to be repaired or renovated three or four times. But gradually conditions in the market improved, and Hollywood fashion and glamour soon stimulated people's interest in fur. Better times were ahead for the Ebers.

LADIES CHIC

After her husband's death in 1969, the business was taken over by Jožica Eber, who brought fresh ideas into the family business.

With her keen sense of ladies' fashion, she created the company trademark, which is a synonym for elegance, quality and tradition.

When she retired in 1991, Jožica entrusted the business to her niece, Milena Eber Štimac. The dynamic Milena enriched the concept of eternal and indispensable classic items with trendy fashions. She is a true artist of her craft, which she knows in detail, "Each skin is wetted and then stretched over a model or a head. The drying takes two to three days, depending on the length of the hair.



Vlado Štimac, Milena Eber Štimac, Jožica Eber and Mateja Štimac

This is followed by tailoring, measuring and adjusting. Our products really are unique, because we always try to additionally adjust the finished coat to the client. When I asked her who her clients were, she said that they had many permanent clients and also a growing number of new ones who later become regulars. "Many young people come as well. Fur vests are particularly fashionable this year, which the young can afford. They are also warm enough and enable a huge variety of fashionable combinations. We offer them in natural colours, but also in trendy colours, such as blue." And that is true. While I was talking with both furriers, women of different ages came in to the boutique. Most were already wearing fur; they come to have a look, seek advice or collect a product. Mateja explains, "We offer new products and we also repair and store already made products. Many people inherit fur coats and jackets from their grandmothers. We adjust them to new standards and refresh the quality of fur."

When I ask them if they have certain clients who are particularly passionate collectors of fur products, they reply, "Women who wear our products usually also bring their partners and buy our products for home and the gift programme. One of our clients is a wealthy Russian woman who buys dozens of products at once. Initially, we didn't know who she was. We know that now, but it's a trade secret." Just then, a young woman in a nice jacket in a grey leather and fur combination entered the shop. "I came for the overalls for our youngest one." Milena brings out lovely overalls for a baby in brown leather and rabbit fur. "How cute," I thought.

CONTINUATION OF TRADITION

Although Milena Eber Štimac is still firmly in control of the Eber Furriery, it is obvious that her daughter Mateja is passionately involved in the family business. "I like this business and I am very glad to have the opportunity to continue it. I will be going abroad soon, where

I will be able to further study trends in furs." Her mother Milena is also proud of her. "It's true. I dressed Mateja and her brother in rabbit fur when they were little. They grew up with it. It wasn't always easy to harmonise family and work; my maternity leave was always short and I almost never took sick leave. But I am not sorry - it's nice to have one's own business and rejoice in the success you achieve with honest work and sacrifice."

SERIOUS FURRIERS ARE ALSO ETHICAL

We cannot completely avoid the issue of whether wearing fur and making furs is ethical or morally questionable. When I ask about the experience of the company, Milena says, "People are different. We respect different opinions. But we also want people with different opinions to leave us to work in peace and not put pressure on us or our clients."

The entire cycle of fur processing is conducted according to strict rules determined by the legislation and the Washington Convention on the international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora.

All the skins we import have a label which includes a code and a number which enables the traceability of every animal. There are severe penalties if the label is missing, and believe me, no furriers would have furs in their processing facilities or shops without these labels, including us." "We furriers also regularly educate ourselves," adds Milena. "The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia provides good education, and we also go abroad. London is a particularly important educational centre for furriers."



Fashion show 2014.

DR MATJAŽ BUNC

Among the top five European countries

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ, Photo: UMC ARCHIVES, MOSTPHOTOS

Slovenia ranks among the top five European countries according to the number of heart valve replacements per capita. With over six hundred procedures per year, Dr Matjaž Bunc is one of the most experienced interventional cardiologists in Slovenia and beyond. Thanks to his expertise, Slovenia is one of the top five countries in the world in this medical field.



"In the USA, which is always mentioned as an example of efficiency, an average interventional cardiologist performs one hundred and twenty procedures per year. In Slovenia, I sometimes perform as many as thirty procedures over a weekend," says Dr Bunc. His success rate in treating patients is almost one hundred per cent.

AORTIC VALVE REPLACEMENT WITHOUT ACTUAL SURGERY

Dr Bunc began performing percutaneous aortic valve replacements, i.e. without actual surgery, through the femoral artery in 2009 in Slovenia. Since then, he has inserted 165 heart valves in this manner.

According to the number of heart valve replacements per capita, Slovenia is among the most successful countries in Europe, after Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and France.

"Patients who were completely exhausted can now take care of themselves again, and take walks and trips."

Such interventions are more and more frequently replacing classic open heart surgery. The cardiologist enters the main aorta through the femoral artery with a tube which travels all the way to the heart. At the site of the old, worn-out valve, a new one is placed (made of a special medical material called nitinol and porcine pericardium). The vein guide is removed from the artery in the leg and the procedure is finished. Dr Bunc introduced three additional methods at Ljubljana University Medical Centre after 2009. All three procedures are implemented as described above through the femoral artery or exceptionally through the chest. "The retrograde technique for eliminating long-term closures of coronary veins is the most difficult. Not even centres such as in Hamburg, where I learned new techniques, perform such procedures, and we have used them thir-



ty times in Ljubljana this year alone," he says. He passes on these techniques to his colleagues, also in Hamburg. In spring, Dr Bunc will participate in another completely new programme for replacing the mitral valve in the heart.

In addition to Ljubljana University Medical Centre, only selected hospitals in Zürich, and three in Germany and the Netherlands will be performing this procedure.

IT SEEMS A MIRACLE TODAY THAT WE SUCCEEDED

"People used to say the man is old, so he can't be helped. But he can be helped today," says Dr Bunc. Percutaneous procedures at the cardiology department save or improve the lives of as many as five thousand patients a year. Dr Bunc himself has performed 650 arterial or coronary procedures.

"It seemed like an impossible mission. On the one hand, the procedure was implemented by surgeons who were used to open heart surgery, which is why they were not really inclined to use the new method. On the other hand, the Edwards Company which produces biological valves carried out a selective procedure and it was difficult to get on their shortlist. At the time, we were the 38th centre in the world to start using the method, which is not bad, given the number of hospitals in the world. Today, almost one thousand medical centres implant valves. It seems a miracle today that we succeeded."



ŠKOROMATI – HARBINGERS OF SPRING AND A FERTILE YEAR

The oldest masks in Slovenia

DANILA GOLOB, Photo: HELENA RACE

Preparations for the Shrovetide carnival start in the village of Hrušica in the Brkini Hills immediately after St Stephen's Day on 26 December. The *kápoti*, the leaders of the carnival, have the most work, while other participants in the *škoromatija* set to work preparing masks and equipment to be ready a week before the Carnival starts. When they put on their *škoromati* costumes and ring their cowbells, the actual carnival begins.

Škoromatija dates back at least 700 years; it denotes the name of the mask and the carnival ritual in the Brkini Hills. In the archives of Cividale del Friuli and Udine in Italy, records from the 14th and 15th century can be found of people wearing masks called *scaramatte* and *sgaravatte*. The words supposedly meant a company guard, who was the main character of *škoromati* – a fearsome *škopiti* dressed in a wide black coat with a little bell on his belt, with a bird, animal skins or even other carrion and a lamp to denote his mission. Relating to these records,

it may be assumed that *škoromati* were the first and the oldest Slovenian masks mentioned in written records.

Škopiti today is the central figure of *škoromati* and the only direct descendant of the medieval *scaramatte*. Gradually the term *škoromat* denoted all carnival characters in the Brkini Hills. Most visual characteristics were preserved in the character of *škopiti*, which is known in some places as *kleščar* (man with clamps; *škopiti* also means to castrate). *Škopiti* wears a broad hat covered with rabbit skin, while bird feathers are attached to the brim. To be even more frightening, he can hang a vulture or a crow on his hat. His face and hands are smeared with soot and he carries large and heavy wooden clamps in his hands with which he makes a clattering noise. Sometimes two *škopiti* form a group of *škoromati*, but usually there is only one – he should be the biggest and the strongest boy in the village. The carnival character of *škopiti* is quite wild and scares children, chases young girls and smears their faces with soot with the help of other *škoromati*. Soot represents a man's vital power, so by smearing girls' faces the *škoromati* symbolically secure fertility and thus the survival of the entire community.

COLOURFUL COMPANY

Most of the *škoromati* in the group carry cowbells and they are the loudest. Their carnival costume is colourful and very beautiful.

They wear conical hats measuring up to 70 centimetres to which a hundred or more red, white and blue crepe flowers are attached, including long colourful paper ribbons which fall over their backs and almost touch the ground. They wear a sheepskin and bells around their waist. They have white trousers with a red line up the side and bright red socks. In addition to the hat, the most valuable piece of attire is their wooden mask, carved from a single piece of wood. In spite of their attractive carnival gear, the *škoromati* with bells are very naughty and belong to the 'ugly' group of *škoromati*.

They run around the village all day loudly ringing their bells and help *škopiti* to catch girls and smear them with soot.

To be a *škoromat* with bells is a great honour, although running all day is tiring because their equipment can weight up to 15 kilograms.

An honorary place among *škoromati* is kept for the polite and friendly *poberini*. These are the only carnival characters to enter houses to wish good harvest and collect gifts, so they have to be careful not to miss out any of the houses in the village as this would be considered an insult. They do not cover their faces, but dress in festive attire, and their only accessories are ribbons on their hats, a white apron and a bouquet on their chest. There are usually two *poberini* accompanied by a *škoromat* with bells who does not wear a mask, since the local people have to see whom they are welcoming into their home. The *škoromat* announces his arrival at the house by ringing his bells.

Another important character is *pepeljuhar*, which is one of the oldest masks.

Dressed in long, worn-out and torn black clothes, carrying a bag or a basket in which ashes are mixed with crushed hay, this character may represent an old man or a woman. He spreads ashes in courtyards and over thresholds, thus wishing for a good harvest and health. One of the most beautiful masks is '*ti zeleni*' (the green ones), decorated with juniper and pine branches, heather, ivy and moss. It symbolises the approaching spring, birth and life. The making of the green masks is demanding and time consuming, since the whole costume has to be covered with branches and moss. The costume weighs more than 15 kilograms. The other main carnival characters also include the Bride and Groom, the Turk, Marko the Bear, the Gypsy Couple, the Clothes Man, the Fat One and others. And we must not forget the band, which adds rhythm to the whole carnival procession with accordion and drums.



"Ti zeleni" (the green ones) symbolises the approaching spring, birth and life.

GIRLS BEWARE!

Škoromati in Hrušica perform their *poberija* (gathering) on Carnival Saturday, when they meet early in the morning in the middle of the village and visit all the houses in procession. *Poberini* collect gifts, while other *škoromati* wander about the village, stopping at village inns and in front of the houses, where the villagers await them with food and drink. They toast, sing, play music, dance with the residents and generally make merry.

The *škoromatija* tradition has been kept alive by the Hrušica Cultural Association - *Škoromati* Section, which was organised in 1995, although they were active in this field before that time. Their fore-runners were particularly active at the beginning of the 1960s, but not organised as a formal association until 1995.

And which mask will Marjan Poropat, the President of the Association, be wearing?

"Although I'm not among the youngest anymore, I will also be a *škoromat* with bells this year, running and jumping around the village. I hope I don't meet my death," says Poropat laughing.

The *Škoromati* of Hrušica make the masks themselves. Everyone has their own and keeps it at home. If they change character, they make new masks. The crepe flowers in the colours of the Slovenian flag which decorate their hats are mostly made by women, while two or three skilful carvers in the village make wooden masks.

"According to the old tradition, *škoromati* masks were only worn by unmarried boys. All *škoromati* groups now break this rule, since married men and even children dress as *škoromati*, as it is difficult to keep a custom alive if the youngest don't have access to it or grow up with it," explains Danijel Cek, a member of the Hrušica Cultural Association, who adds, "Two groups used to collect gifts, first the older boys and then kids aged 10 to 15. Now we collect contributions together. And there are also children under 10 or even less than 8 years old. However, the *škoromati* of Hrušica are the only ones who never allowed women to join them."

Carnival time is time of joy, dancing and fun, and *škoromatija* is an opportunity for Hrušica boys and men to have a laugh and play tricks which they would never dare play without a mask.

All sorts of mischief are allowed during carnival time so, young girls, beware of being caught by the wild *škoromati*.

The Škoromati of Hrušica have applied to have škoromatija entered in the Live Cultural Heritage Register, which now includes three groups (in addition to the group from Hrušica, there are groups from Ritomeče and Javorje); the group from Podgrad is waiting to be entered in the Register. When all the groups have been entered, the procedure of declaring the custom a living masterpiece of national importance will begin, which is the last stage before being added to the UNESCO world heritage list.



Škoromati with bells wearing high colourful hats with crepe flowers and paper ribbons are among the most important characters. A fearsome Škopiti is the central figure of Škoromati.

THE SNOW CASTLES OF KING MATJAŽ

A legendary King at the foot of the Peca Mountain

DANILA GOLOB, Photo: TOMO JESENIČNIK



Have you heard the legend of King Matjaž? No? Visit the snow castles of King Matjaž, see the magnificent snow sculptures in torchlight, and if you happen to meet His Majesty in person, he will certainly share his legend with you.

The revival of the legend of King Matjaž takes place at the foot of the Koroška Peca Mountain on the plain of Mitnek above Črna na Koroškem, where 1,250 snow castles and sculptures have been built since 1993. This year's event is the 23rd in a row and annually attracts many builders of snow castles which they hope will be the most impressive of the season. The event is a true magnet for visitors from all over Slovenia and neighbouring countries. They are attracted by its cultural and sports activities, Koroška traditional food and playful winter atmosphere.

Local residents and teams from all around Slovenia and abroad – for example Austria, Croatia, Great Britain and Italy – participate in building the snow castles.

“The residents of the Municipality of Črna na Koroškem are happy to receive builders and other visitors. Local caterers, societies and other residents of Črna na Koroškem are involved in the event,” say the organisers of the event at the Kralj Matjaž Park. Their aim: to ensure that the castles of King Matjaž offer an unforgettable experience every year.

WHEN CASTLES GLISTEN IN TORCHLIGHT

This year's event honouring King Matjaž took place between 30 January and 1 February 2015. The three-day event started at the ski slope in Črna na Koroškem, where a night slalom race with torches for the King Matjaž Cup took place. The central event was the Saturday team competition in building snow castles and sculptures with themes relating to King Matjaž. All-day construction is accompanied with a varied entertainment and cultural programme.

The honorary guest of the event is King Matjaž, who descends from a cliff among his subjects, greets them solemnly, strolls among the castles, finds his wife Alenčica among the visitors and selects a castle for his winter residence.

His awakening represents the onset of a golden era for Slovenia. The most magical experience of all is when the torches are lit in the evening and the castles glisten in all their beauty.

The last day is intended for children, for whom a diverse programme is always prepared - interesting entertainment, puppet shows, songs, treasure hunts, horse riding and many other things. This year, awards were also given for the best art and literary works on the topic of King Matjaž created by pupils of Slovenian primary schools and awards for best photographs by UNESCO school children on the topic of 'Snow and Ice'.

IN HONOUR OF KING MATJAŽ

Beautiful castles are built in honour of King Matjaž and as homage to the values the good king represented.

He still sleeps in his cave and is awakened every year by this winter event, and King Matjaž is among us yet again to bring better times.

The legend of King Matjaž is about a man who ruled in Slovenian territory at the time of Carantania (7th century). Matjaž was a good king. The poor and the oppressed were able to come to him at any time and he would offer them help and protection. He ordered the minting of gold coins and the period when he reigned in Carinthia was known as a golden era. Because other rulers were jealous of his power, they mobilized their armies against him. With a hundred soldiers who survived the battle, King Matjaž had to hide in a cave under Peca Mountain which opened up and hid him from his enemies. Matjaž sat at a table in the cave and the others sat on the floor around him and fell asleep. The legend has it that when his beard has wound around the table nine times, Matjaž will wake up. When he does, a lime tree will grow in front of the cave in the middle of the winter. It will blossom between midnight and one o'clock in the morning and then dry. King Matjaž will emerge from the cave with his soldiers and defeat and suppress all his enemies. He will chase away injustice and rule the Slovenians once again. The golden era will thus return to Slovenia.



KRANJSKA SAUSAGE

Even the Emperor licked his fingers

TANJA GLOGOVČAN, Photo: STA

A story has it that the Habsburg Emperor Franz-Josef (1830-1916) stopped for a meal at the renowned carriage drivers' inn called Marinšek in Naklo near Kranj. The innkeeper told him that he could offer only ordinary house sausages. When the Emperor tasted one, he enthusiastically exclaimed that it was no ordinary sausage, but a Kranjska sausage. Indeed, it is now officially confirmed that Kranjska sausage is a Slovenian speciality.

The certified recipe requires high-quality pork, hard bacon, garlic, pepper, salt and pig's intestine.

Just as Emperor Franz-Josef confirmed how delicious it is, the European Commission has likewise acknowledged its authenticity. The European Commission approved its entry in the register of protected geographical indications and thus added it on the list with over 1,200 protected agricultural products in the EU.

This is the twenty-second Slovenian product registered by the European Commission.

Some experts say that skewered Kranjska sausage, first made in 1896 and also protected in Slovenia since 2008, is one of the most recognisable Slovenian culinary products.

SLOVENIAN TRADEMARK

The oldest recipes for Kranjska sausages can be found in two cookbooks, i.e. *Die Süddeutsche Küche* by Katharina Prato (1896) and the sixth edition of *Slovenska kuharica* by Felicita Kalinšek (1912). Over the years, the recipe gradually established itself as a trademark. In 2004, the first Slovenian competition for the best Kranjska sausage was held at the Jezeršek House of Culinary Arts in Sora near Medvode. The competition has become traditional, and the festival's particular feature is the assessments made by round tables comprised of butchers, caterers, journalists and lovers of Kranjska sausage.

The Kranjska sausage is a semi-durable, slightly smoked sausage which has to be cooked before consumption. It is usually eaten hot, together with sour or cooked cabbage or sour turnip. A white bun, mustard and grated horseradish are mandatory companions. Kranjska sausage can also be enjoyed with different beverages. Wine is preferred, but it also goes well with beer.

Supposedly, even angels would like its flavour.

RECORD HOLDER

A good butcher is important for a good sausage. One of the best in Slovenia is Arvaj. "I made my first skewered Kranjska sausage in 1956," master butcher Anton Arvaj recalls, and notes that their sausages have been the best in Slovenia for eight years running, with the exception of 2013. They have always dedicated much love to making the sausages, especially in recent years.

The largest one, at 520 kilos, made in 1999, was even listed in the Book of World Records.

OPEN TO ORIGINAL INTERPRETATIONS

An excellent product also allows for splendid interpretations. Janez Bogataj's monograph, *Kranjska Sausage Masterpieces from Slovenia*, published in 2012, received the Gourmand World Cookbook Award for the best book in the Single Subject category focusing only on one ingredient. As the competition is considered a gourmand version of the Oscars, there is no doubt that Kranjska sausage is a versatile ingredient. In addition to its history, the cookbook also includes an array of creative culinary masterpieces prepared by Slovenian chefs from 16 selected restaurants with innovative recipes made with Kranjska sausage, even desserts. The monograph is available in English.

So, include on your New Year's wish list: I want to taste Kranjska sausage. And you will sure want another one.



Carniolian sausage represents a typical geographical definition of the Slovene ethnic territory. Thus, this is also the reason why a Carniolian was actually the second name for a Slovenian.



TRNIČ, ROMANTIC CHEESE

**He was thinking of her beautiful face
and body during long evenings on the
Alpine dairy-farm**

TANJA GLOGOVČAN, Photo: TIC KAMNIK

Cheese making has a long tradition in Slovenia. It started first on the Alpine dairy-farms and later also in the valleys. The areas of Bovec, Tolmin, Bohinj and Velika Planina are particularly known for their cheeses. More and more Slovenian restaurants include traditional Slovenian cheeses on their innovative menus. This is particularly true of Trnič, which many consider the most romantic Slovenian cheese.

Dairy-farming families took up cheese making for purely practical reasons, so they would have enough food in the winter months. Milk had to be stored in this form to maintain its shelf life and to preserve important vitamins, minerals, proteins and fats.

FOR LONG-LASTING

Trnič is a pear-shaped hard cheese made in Velika, Mala and Gojška Planina in the Kamnik-Savinja Alps which resembles a female breast. It is made of cottage cheese, cream and salt and is embellished with special decorations.

According to tradition, the shepherds gave *Trnič* to their wives and girlfriends at the end of the pasturing season in autumn as a sign of love and faithfulness, and also as a promise of marriage.

Trnič was always presented in pairs - two were embellished with the same decorations. The shepherds kept one *Trnič* and gave the other one to their sweethearts, who kept them for several years. If the girl accepted the cheese, it meant that she consented to the shepherd's courting.

***Trnič* was thus an expression of a man's love, desire and admiration of a girl and also their commitment to be faithful to each other.**

INCLUSION IN SLOVENIAN CUISINE

Fresh *Trnič* may be grated and sprinkled onto risotto, porridge, pasta, soups and salads, added to meat and fish dishes or eaten on its own as a starter or dessert in the form of thin slices with honey or pepper, or drizzled with olive or pumpkin seed oil. Cheese slices may be baked with some butter.

As part of the Taste Kamnik project organised by TIC Kamnik, *Trnič* is already being included on the menu of many Slovenian restaurants. Gnocchi in spinach sauce with *Trnič* or Tuhinj trout, with herb polenta, and *Trnič* is on offer at the Majolka Inn in Kamnik, including chicken fillet with tomato, and *Trnič* and vegetable risotto for all lovers of chicken. Due to its special natural flavour, grated *Trnič*

is perfect for varying the flavours of different dishes, even desserts. The Mili vrh Inn in Kamnik uses *Trnič* instead of Parmesan as an addition to dishes, and the Domžalski dom will pleasantly surprise you with their wild garlic soup with sour cream and *Trnič*. The family-run Pri planinskem orlu Inn in Stahovica is participating in the project because their village is located on the way to Velika Planina and their ancestors were shepherds. Their culinary specialities are *stiskači* (homemade stuffed pasta) prepared with chamois meat, buckwheat groats and porcini mushrooms or smoked pork neck with the addition of *Trnič*. They say their guests enjoy dishes with *Trnič*, which are particularly interesting for guests who like to taste local specialities. And

***Trnič* cheese is undoubtedly a speciality because of its romantic story, symbolic shape and special flavour.**



Woman from Planina is decorating *Trnič* according to old tradition.



Nanos cheese was the first cheese in Slovenia to be granted EU Protected Designation of Origin. Bovec cheese, Tolminc and Mohant are also protected. Trnič cheese has not been protected yet.

I FEEL
SLOVENIA



MILANO 2015
FEEDING THE PLANET
ENERGY FOR LIFE

SLOVENIA

Green. Active. Healthy.





Kurent is one of the original carnival characters from Ptujsko polje that is supposed to chase winter away.