

# Sinfo

Stories from Slovenia



**IN FOCUS**

A Boutique Choice For Travellers

I FEEL  
SLOVENIA



**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**

# Sinfo

SLOVENIAN INFORMATION

[www.slovenia.si](http://www.slovenia.si)  
[www.ukom.gov.si](http://www.ukom.gov.si)

Published by  
 Government Communication Office

Editor-in-Chief  
 Nataša Bušljeta, M.Sc.

Executive Editor  
 Vesna Žarkovič

Editorial Board  
 Danila Golob, Brigita Juhart, Irena Kogoj,  
 Uroš Mahkovec, Danila Mašič, Polona  
 Prešeren, Livija Kovač Kostantinovič

Design  
 Irena Kogoj

Photo Editor  
 Bojan Pernek

Photo on the front page  
 Tourist Board Portorož, Julia Wesely

Translation  
 Secretariat-General of the Government of  
 the Republic of Slovenia, Translation and  
 Interpretation Division, PSD d.o.o.

Language editing  
 Amidas

Copy writer editing  
 Marcus Ferrar

Print  
 Collegium Graphicum d.o.o., Slovenia

Number of copies  
 3000

ISSN  
 1854-0805



Photo: Mateja Jordovič Potočnik

## “THE BEST OF EUROPE IN ONE SMALL CONVENIENT PACKAGE”

What impresses tourists most about Slovenia? “It might sound a bit of a cliché, but Slovenia really does offer the best of Europe in one small convenient package,” claim a lot of them. “Within an hour’s drive from the picturesque but increasingly cosmopolitan capital of Ljubljana, you have the Mediterranean coast, the Alps, wine regions, countless cultural and historical sites, ski resorts, thermal spas and lots, lots more. And all brought together in a country with progressive policies such as state-funded education and healthcare, workers’ rights, and a high-quality infrastructure maintained by a sustainable tax scheme.”

Our visitors are mostly enchanted by Ljubljana, Bled, Portorož and Piran and the larger spa resorts. However, a growing number of niche areas, such as wine holidays, adrenaline sports, eco-friendly activities, casinos and rural tourism will probably become increasingly important in the future, as Slovenia continues to differentiate itself from neighbouring countries.

“After days spent in the calm Slovenian countryside, it’s a shock to the system to return to busy, bustling Venice for our journey home. It may be the jewel of northern Italy, but for us, Slovenia was the real crowning glory of our trip,” said an American tourist after visiting Slovenia.

It was even written on the Hostelling International blog, which combines over 4,000 hostels in 90 countries around the world, that no other place conjures up a fairy-tale like Lake Bled in Slovenia with its spectacular church and belfry on the little island situated on an emerald green glacial lake surrounded by the highest peaks of the Julian Alps. In their opinion, Bled with its Bledec Youth Hostel has been recognised as the most attractive fairy-tale destination in the world for almost four months. Bled is followed by destinations in England, Turkey, Bolivia and South African Republic.

What more can I say?

Vesna Žarkovič, Executive Editor



- 8** WHY SLOVENIA?  
A Boutique Country in Central Europe
- 14** LJUBLJANA – A BELOVED CITY  
At the centre of Slovenia - European Green Capital 2016
- 16** SLOVENIAN HIGHLIGHTS  
Favourite destinations
- 20** THE BEST OF EUROPE IN ONE SMALL CONVENIENT PACKAGE  
Slovenia as seen through foreign eyes
- 34** SPAS AND HEALTH RESORTS  
The choice of royalty
- 38** SLOVENIA'S TEN MOST VISITED CASTLES  
Old legends reveal their day-to-day life
- 44** AGROTOURISM  
Feel the rhythm of life in the Slovenian countryside
- 62** MUSICAL AND CULTURAL FESTIVALS  
A summer of music
- 66** TEN MUST-HAVE SOUVENIRS FROM SLOVENIA  
Forget me not
- 72** GOLF COURSES  
Integrated into beautiful nature
- 84** SLOVENIAN DAY AT EXPO 2015  
Green, active, healthy
- 88** ALAIN BRIAN BERGANT  
"Not the globalisation of Bled, but the *bledalisation* of the globe"







*New focus.*

*New look.*

*Enjoy it.*

**SinfO**

in your hands, on your computers and tablets.

Share with us: [sinfomagazine.ukom@gov.si](mailto:sinfomagazine.ukom@gov.si)





### A BOUTIQUE CHOICE FOR TRAVELLERS

What is there to love about Slovenia? What can the country offer visitors that they can't find in neighbouring countries with more established tourism industries, such as Italy and Croatia? The answer is: Slovenia is diverse and all the important sights are close to each other. We can't compete with Italy or Croatia in terms of volume (and actually don't want to), but we can compete as a boutique destination where the emphasis is on quality and individuality.





WHY SLOVENIA?

# A Boutique Country in Central Europe

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ



Don't let its diminutive size fool you. Slovenia's location at one of Europe's true geographical, cultural and historical crossroads has blessed the country with a wealth of sights and attractions.

Why Slovenia? What is there to love about Slovenia?

**The answer is short: Diversity and close proximity to all the important sights.**

Visitors can ski at the Kanin ski resort in the morning and after only an hour and a half's drive to the south enjoy sunbathing on the coast. Which other country can offer this much on a such a small scale? The second advantage is that there is no mass tourism; if someone wants to spend their holiday in peace and quiet, there are plenty of opportunities for doing so.

**There are many reasons to choose Slovenia.**

The country is clearly a green and diverse "boutique" tourist destination of well-being in Central Europe, located at the crossroads of the Mediterranean, the Alps and the Pannonian Plain.

All main tourism products of Slovenia are closely connected with nature. It is the third most forested country in Europe, after Finland and Sweden, with a vibrant and unspoilt landscape. It is the landscape that makes Slovenia a perfect destination for hiking, Nordic walking, cycling, golf, all kinds of water activities, winter sports and farm tourism. Not to mention Slovenian gastronomy, which is a heavenly mixture of the wide variety of local and regional food. Slovenia's main competitive advantage in tourism is what it can offer visitors in terms of a green, active and healthy vacation. According to findings of numerous studies and responses from foreign tourists, Slovenia surprises visitors above all with its beautiful, pristine nature, which is distinguished by abundant diversity.

### **BEAUTIFUL, ATTRACTIVE**

The first thoughts that come to mind when people hear the word Slovenia are beautiful, attractive, safe, welcoming, health resorts, Ljubljana, vignette, Bled, nature, Croatia, skiing, holidays, sports, basketball, castles, love, weather, Bohinj, the Soča River, Portorož, Postojna Cave, the Alps. These terms are also the ones most frequently used by Internet users when writing about Slovenia. The capital of Ljubljana is most often mentioned in connection with sports events and its castle. Internet users also frequently mention Postojna Cave and the country's numerous castles. Visitors to Slovenia also frequently associate the country with its beautiful nature and rich history due to its location at one of the most important historical crossroads in Europe, where the Romance, Germanic and Balkan worlds meet to form a unique culture.

Ljubljana.  
Photo: Dunja Wedam

**ADVICE FOR VISITORS**

**Although Slovenia is a small country in geographic terms, it has a lot to offer.**

People are very friendly and always prepared to help. In short, visitors will get much more than they expect. If visitors prefer active holidays, a combination of adrenaline-inspiring activities is a good idea: rafting or canyoning on the Soča River, hot-air ballooning with an outdoor breakfast picnic on a meadow after landing, “must-see” sightseeing locations, and a bit of pampering the taste buds at local restaurants. And for foodies, a weekend in Goriška Brda, staying at a winery, visiting world-class winemakers, sampling their wines and attending a cooking course at a renowned restaurant, where they can make their own tasting menu under the supervision of a master chef.

The Logar Valley is another very good choice for an incredible vacation, since it offers numerous activities for everyone: trekking, hiking or mountaineering in the Kamnik- Savinja Alps, mountain biking on the panoramic road, natural beauties such as the Rinka Waterfall or the ice cave under Mt Raduha, including the warm and hospitable local people. Not to mention the fantastic local food, which you just have to love, even if you’re not a foodie at all.

**GREEN SLOVENIA TOUR**

**Green or Eco tourism is gaining in popularity every year.**

Sustainable tourism appears more and more frequently on travelers’ wish lists, especially those of demanding clients who prefer to travel green. Slovenia does not have enough eco hotels yet, but the entire strategy of the tourism industry is slowly acknowledging this important trend. There is quite a lot of interest in special gourmet tours among tourists who are interested in local traditional food and wines which are made completely naturally. They want to see how raw milk cheese is made, as well as how honey is produced

and what natural products are made from it. And of course they want to taste different kinds of local specialities from every corner of the country.

How has the tourism sector in Slovenia changed in the past 10 to 20 years?

It has developed from the traditional mass “bed & sea” offer to more targeted and niche tourism. We can’t compete with Italy or Croatia on a mass level (and don’t want to), but we are a boutique destination, where quality and individuality are emphasised.

Over the next 10 to 20 years, Slovenian tourism will become a highly developed niche market for everyone from budget to high-end guests, since we can provide services for any of these categories. People will need to understand that FIT guests are demanding in terms of what they expect, and this is the charm of custom-made products. If you create them with passion, then the sky is the limit as far as creativity and budget are concerned.

**WHY AN AMERICAN WOULD CHOOSE TO LIVE IN SLOVENIA?**

*We sought an answer from two foreign editors William Dunn and Yuri Barron:*

“When a Slovene meets a foreigner the first question they usually ask is the standard, “Where are you from?” - which is understandable. But if you answer back “the States”, nine times out of ten the follow-up question is “Why are you living in Slovenia?” I’ve always found this strange, not the question itself but the surprise with which people ask it - especially given the fact that most Slovenes are (rightfully) proud of their country and more or less live here by choice as well. Therefore I thought that it might be a good idea to provide some answers, and hopefully help solve this profound mystery once and for all.

For the sake of brevity as well as entertainment I’m going to skip all of the boring usual suspects (i.e. the people are lovely, the city is beautiful, Turbo-folk is awesome, etc.). Anyway, in no particular order here are some of the reasons why an American would choose to live in Slovenia.

In 2014, tourism generated 2.2 billion in foreign currency income in Slovenia, i.e. 12.7 per cent of GDP. Some 31,000 people were engaged indirectly in tourism, while 104,500 Slovenians are directly employed in the tourism industry. Since tourism is one of the biggest and fastest-growing global service industries, employing as much as eight per cent of the global workforce, it also has a great impact on the natural, cultural and social environment.









Ljubljana.  
Photo: Dunja Wedam



**Cobblestone:** Probably the single biggest reason why I live in Europe. I love the stuff. I love the way it looks on narrow windy roads that lead up to castles and churches. And I especially love the way it sounds when expensive German-engineered cars drive over it. In the States we barely have any of the stuff.

**Socialism** - or at least social democracy: In America most of your right-wing Slovene politicians would be considered dirty leftist commie heathens for supporting such treacherous things as universal healthcare, affordable higher education, and other basic social benefits.

**Advertising:** That 5-meter large billboard on Kongresni Trg with nothing but a pair of large soapy breasts on it would sadly never be allowed in the US, which pretty much tells you everything you need to know about American advertising, as well as our views on nudity and sex in general.

**Rog's old-school Pony bicycles:** These things could never exist commercially in the States due to their comically inefficient design, but they're so cute I can't help but smile every time I see one - especially if it's being ridden by a man in a business suit or anyone over the age of 60.

**Electrical plugs:** These probably get overlooked as unnoticeable features of everyday life, but if you grow up in the States you don't realise how flimsy and cheap looking American-style electrical plugs are until you experience the European variety. Of course ours are less than half the voltage (which I assume is somehow more efficient), but on purely aesthetic grounds European plugs can't be beat. Although while we're on the subject I have to say that those British 3-prong monsters are absolutely ridiculous looking.

**Accents:** Other than the regional accents of some native-speakers (see anywhere in rural America or northern Britain for evidence) and speakers of most Asian languages, virtually every accent in English automatically makes a person more attractive and interesting - good for at least half a point on the 10-point attractiveness scale. While the Slovene English accent isn't necessarily at the top of the list, it's a definite plus.

**Slippers:** Since your average tourist or business traveller is about as likely to see the inside of a local's house as they are to see a real dragon, most visitors unfortunately miss out on one of Slovenia's most charming traditions: slippers, or more specifically, the pile of slippers that all Slovenes have next to their doors for guests to use. Cozy and

comfortable, they make you feel at home. I still vividly remember my first slipper experience when I came to visit distant relatives in 2002.

**Wedding convoys:** For the record, I'm personally opposed to weddings and sincerely hope that I never get forced into having to endure my own. But that being said, I always enjoy the incessant honking coming from convoys of flower and ribbon-adorned cars I hear every Saturday morning (except of course for when I'm trying to sleep off a hangover).

After my first two columns people generally seemed surprised that I'd been able to come up with so many reasons why an American would want to live in Slovenia, but I assure you that we've barely scratched the surface. Here are a few more things about Slovenia that shouldn't be taken for granted:

**Trains:** Believe it or not, that "clickety-clack" noise a train makes is about the most romantic transport-related sound there is. But much like cobblestone and slippers, in America there's a noticeable dearth of passenger trains - at least in the West, where I'm from. Why? The distances are huge, petrol and flying are cheap (during Clinton's last year in office petrol cost around €0.16 per litre, and even now it's only €0.45), and the independence afforded by cars is pretty much a god-given right. Add it all up and passenger trains are more or less just props you see in movies.

**Vacation days:** OK, so the economy is crap and since everyone goes to university there are way too many qualified people for the jobs available, but for those that manage to find gainful employment the benefits are pretty sweet. Foremost among them is the number of vacation days you get: a legal minimum of 21, which is over twice (yes, twice) the standard amount given in the States. Throw in the (theoretically) infinite number of sick days and excess of public holidays and you have close to two completely work-free months per year. Good times.

**Active people:** Most Americans are fat and/or lazy - it's a fact, look it up. For instance, I haven't ran more than 100 metres or regularly ridden a bike since the mid-1990s. But I still like living in a city full of active people. Every weekend it seems like half the country is out climbing a mountain, cycling through the countryside or rummaging around in the forest for mushrooms. I even like those people on their ridiculous-looking rollerblades. Why? I guess mere proximity to active people makes me feel healthier by some kind of social osmosis, which I suppose is better than nothing."



LJUBLJANA – A BELOVED CITY

**At the centre of Slovenia - European  
Green Capital 2016**

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ



Slovenia is the only country in the world that bears love in its name – “ljuba”. An old folk tale says love has a special power here: it brings together what is diverse.

Ljubljana is beloved (*ljubljena*). The words in Slovenian almost sound the same. And for those who really know Ljubljana, these words are, in fact, synonymous. The capital of the country with the word love in its name lies at the junction of Slovenia’s diversity. It connects the prehistoric times of the pile dwellers with the times of the Roman Emona, Baroque features with the beauties of Secessionism, the Slavonic soul with the creations of Jože Plečnik, the distinguished architect and urban planning engineer. Museums and galleries, pubs along the river and city squares, theatres and concert halls, festivals organised in the streets during the summer - all this and more is lined up near the Plečnik’s Triple Bridge. The heart of the city, Plečnik’s market, is protected by dragons on a 19th-century bridge, and bridge with modern sculptures characterised by love-locks.

### Nature is easily accessible from the centre of Ljubljana, a city that proudly carries the title of European Green Capital 2016.

The park and the forest extend right into the city - a short trail leads to the Ljubljana Marshes, which are full of stories about life thousands of years ago.

The oldest wooden wheel with an axle in the world, which is 5200 years old, was found among the remains of one of Ljubljana’s pile dwellings. Who knows: maybe this wheel made the road to Ljubljana easier? And today, Ljubljana is full of bike wheels.

Despite celebrating its 2000th birthday in 2014, Ljubljana has only been the capital of an independent nation since 1991. It is this curious mix of two thousand years of evolution combined with the understandable youthful enthusiasm that has created the city we know and love today.

It might not be the biggest city in the world (in fact, with only 280,000 inhabitants it is one of Europe’s smallest capitals and slightly smaller than Coventry), but Ljubljana uses this to its advantage and has a genuine cosmopolitan feel with all the comfort and friendliness of the smallest village. Take its geographical position that is the very definition of “Central Europe”, a long and proud tradition of culture and the arts and a high quality of life, drop it in the middle of the Alps, and you are on the right path to getting a feel for Ljubljana.

Ljubljanica river.  
Photo: Dunja Wedam





# SLOVENIAN HIGHLIGHTS

## Favourite destinations

DANILO GOLOB

Alpine peaks, steep rock faces, hills, vast plains, green forests, magnificent underground galleries, emerald lakes, murmuring streams, rivers, waterfalls and sparkling sea. Slovenia has it all.



## TRIGLAV NATIONAL PARK

Triglav National Park is situated in the north-western corner of Slovenia. It encompasses almost the entire Julian Alps amounting to four per cent of the entire Slovenian territory. It is the only national park in the country and one of the oldest parks in Europe. The park was named after the highest Slovenian mountain, Triglav (2,864 m), which is situated at its heart. Deep, steep valleys covered by green forests and pastures surround Triglav in all directions, and high mountain peaks rise above them. Crystal clear mountain streams and small rivers flow along numerous ravines and beautiful gorges (Vintgar, Mlinarica and Mostnica), which merge into two larger rivers, the Sava and the Soča. Hidden high in the mountains nestle Triglav and Križ lakes, while Lake Bohinj, the largest permanent natural lake in Slovenia, lies in Bohinj. The diverse landscape is enriched by exceptional and diverse flora together with numerous examples of protected wildlife. Old farms and homesteads typical of the locale can be found in remote corners of the park. Livestock still grazes on many Alpine pastures and farmers continue to make cheese in the traditional manner. Special places of interest in the park are accessible and conveniently arranged for visitors. Trails and paths are well-marked and there are many mountain huts where mountaineers, wishing to visit higher parts of the park, can stay overnight.

## SYMBOL OF SLOVENIA

Triglav, the highest Slovenian mountain, is the symbol of Slovenian nationhood. The origin of its name (Tri-glav meaning three heads) is not completely clear. It most likely refers to the shape of the mountain as seen from Bohinj, or perhaps the mountain was named after the ancient Slavic deity, Triglav.

**It is possible to see all the way to the Adriatic Sea from the top of Mt Triglav, to the Dolomites in Italy, Hohe Tauern in Aus-**

The Logar Valley is one of the most beautiful Alpine glacial valleys in Europe.

**tria, the Karavanke, the Kamnik-Savinja Alps and Pohorje hills, practically over the whole of Slovenia and as far as the peaks of the Julian Alps.**

The Aljaž Tower, a mountain refuge and a cultural monument of national importance, is located at the peak of Triglav. It was built in 1895 by Jakob Aljaž, then priest in Dovje. This year marks the 120th anniversary of the construction of the Aljaž Tower. To mark this occasion, the National Museum of Slovenia prepared a travelling exhibition and a film, "Aljaž Tower: This metal has soul!" with which they wish to raise awareness among people to behave respectfully and not to climb on the tower or write their names on it. The central piece of the exhibition is the replica of the tower made by the specialist conservation and restoration team of the National Museum of Slovenia and consists of the same sheet metal plates as were used by Jakob Aljaž.

The Aljaž Tower has been protected as a cultural monument of national importance since 1999. The tower is in good condition due to the constant care of mountaineers and still serves as a "baptistery" for all who climb to the top of Slovenia for the first time.

## THE SOČA RIVER VALLEY

The Soča River Valley is situated in the Julian Alps in north-western Slovenia, where three municipalities meet, i.e. Bovec, Kobarid and Tolmin. The landscape which is distinguished by snow-capped mountain peaks and blooming valleys was formed by the Soča River. The 136-kilometre long emerald beauty which springs in the Trenta Valley quickly descends south and has over the centuries broken through the rocky barriers in its path and created this diverse landscape. The Soča Trail takes us to the magnificent gorge of the Soča River, the Tolminka Gorge and the waterfalls of the Kozjak Stream.

The Soča River Valley with its pristine nature allows visitors to spend active but also relaxing holidays, while engaging in water sports on the Soča River, hiking, cycling, fishing, mountaineering, Alpine skiing and so on. Or, you can enjoy the peace and quiet and the soft murmuring of the emerald Soča.

## THE LOGAR VALLEY

The Logar Valley is one of the most beautiful Alpine glacial valleys in Europe. The road winds past meadows and the mighty Logar lime tree and offers views over the steep rock walls of the Kamnik-Savinja Alps. The valley is 7 kilometres long and on average 250 metres wide; it is divided into three sections: grassy meadows are typical of the lower Log and Plest in the central section, while Kot in the upper part is overgrown with forest. The charming Logar Valley also has its *pièce de résistance* – the Rinka Waterfall, which is considered one of the most beautiful and frequently visited waterfalls in Slovenia. The waterfall is a popular site for tourists and hikers in summer, and ice climbers test their skills on the frozen waterfall in winter.

Homesteads, which through the centuries contributed to the cultural landscape of the Logar Valley, also left their special mark. The authentic environment, natural sights and harmony between man and nature are features for which the Logar Valley was declared a landscape park in 1987. Due to its position, the valley serves as the perfect starting point for numerous hiking trips and family outings, including more active holidays in pristine nature.

## ŠKOCJAN CAVES

Among over 8,000 caves in Slovenia, Škocjan Caves are also something special. They entered the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1986 and became the first underground wetland in the world to be protected under the Ramsar Convention in 1999.

**The caves include the largest known underground canyon in the world, and consist of eleven caves with spatial halls.**

Škocjan Caves have about six kilometres of natural bridges, lakes and waterfalls. The caves are a true spectacle with numerous colourful and giant stalagmites and stalactites of various shapes, organ-like formations and water-filled hollows. The Reka River flows through Škocjan Caves and has formed this unique natural world, which is open for visitors all year round.

## BIRTH PLACE OF LIPIZZANER HORSES

Lipica is the oldest European stud farm whose tradition dates back to 1580. Its history is closely linked to the Habsburgs and the times

when a horse symbolised a key strategic asset. Due to its continued breeding of the Lipizzaner, one of the oldest breeds of horses, the Lipica Stud Farm carries an exceptional cultural, historical and natural heritage for the Slovenian and broader European environment. A visitor to the Lipica estate may experience the grace and elegance of Lipizzaner horses while viewing the performance by the most talented studs, observing horses during their training, riding on their backs or enjoying a ride in a carriage through the picturesque surroundings.

## MEDITERRANEAN PEARL

Piran is the most beautiful town on the Slovenian coast. It is situated at the cape of the Piran peninsula. Narrow medieval streets, hidden gardens, small squares, churches and town walls reflect its rich history. Two of the most notable sights of this Venetian-style town are the Cathedral of St George and Tartini Square named after the famous Italian composer and violinist and a renowned resident of Piran, Giuseppe Tartini. The square is surrounded by the Municipal Palace, the *Venecian*, the oldest preserved house in the town, and the Church of St Peter. A walk along the Piran promenade adjoining the sea, where many fish restaurants can be found, is quite an experience. For centuries Piran was dependent upon fishing, maritime trade and salt production. Today it is an administrative, cultural and tourist centre attracting many local and foreign visitors.

## TOWN OF SITULAE

Novo Mesto, the capital of the Dolenjska region, was established in 1365 when this town on the bend of the Krka River was granted town status and privileges by Austrian Archduke Rudolph IV. This stunning town embraced by the grey-green Krka River is located in the centre of the hilly Dolenjska landscape. One of the town's symbols is the Cathedral of St Nicholas which stands out against the silhouette of the Novo Mesto townscape. Many cultural remnants and sights may be found in the town and the Museum of Dolenjska houses its exceptional archaeological heritage. Novo Mesto is the only town in Europe where such a large number of prehistoric situlae were discovered at burial grounds dating from the early Iron Age. Due to the absence of any written tradition, the situlae represent a valuable and rare witness of the past times and customs.

Novo Mesto is the place to visit particularly this year on the occasion of its 650 years of establishment since numerous cultural events will be organised throughout the year. Through these events the citizens of Novo Mesto wish to show their visitors how proud they are of their hometown.





## POSTOJNA CAVE

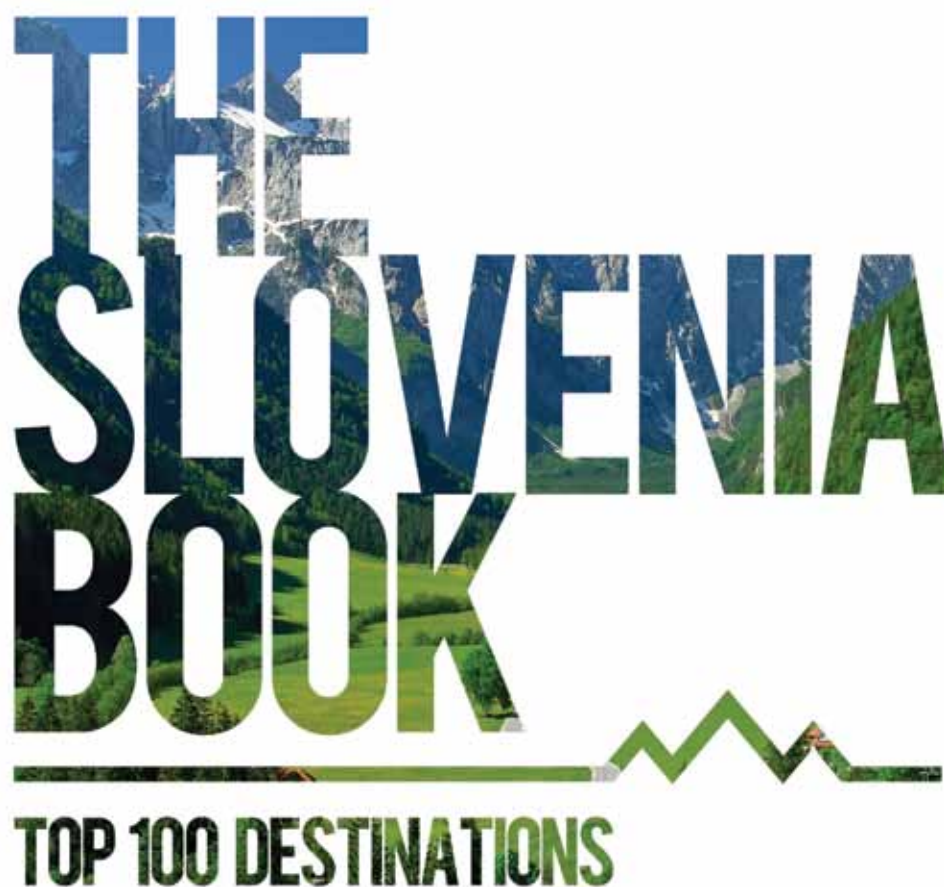
Postojna Cave can easily be considered the greatest sight in Slovenia and a majestic creation of nature, which is known around the world. The largest karst cave in Slovenia with 21 kilometres of underground tunnels has been created and formed by the Pivka River over the course of two million years. The water levels have changed through time and a several-storey cave was formed full of stalactites, stalagmites, columns, curtains and other interesting shapes, which slowly emerged through water depositing limestone.

The mysterious combination of tunnels, galleries and halls and the diversity of karst phenomena are the primary reasons for the exceptional popularity of Postojna Cave, which has been visited by 36 million visitors in 200 years. A special underground train, running over 140 years, takes tourists into the cave, which they can then further explore on foot. No Hollywood screenwriter could have had the imagination to create what nature created in this cave. The shining white stalagmite, Brilliant, has been the symbol of Postojna Cave for decades, including the special resident of the cave, *proteus*.



# THE BEST OF EUROPE IN ONE SMALL CONVENIENT PACKAGE **Slovenia as seen through foreign eyes**

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ



Having explored Slovenia for some seven years, four foreign journalists have gathered their thoughts and observations in a new travel guide – *The Slovenia Book*. Yuri Barron from the US, John Bills and Will Dunn from the UK, and James Cosier from Australia, have all lived in Slovenia for several years. Over the seven-year period, they visited, photographed and selected their 100 favourite places in Slovenia. The result is *The Slovenia Book – Top 100 destinations*.



Besides these 100 top destinations, the book is enriched by interviews with Slovene celebrities, top 10 lists, descriptions of over 1,000 tourist attractions, photographs and up-to-date practical information.

**The book lists numerous interesting spots in Slovenia and describes the best ways to reach them. It also lists the ten greatest attractions, the ten most typical dishes, the ten best known castles and ten skiing destinations.**

Love. Work. Family roots. These are but a few of the things connecting the four English-speaking journalists to Slovenia. They wrote the guide in the hope that their seven-year observations will help tourists who want to explore Slovenia's towns and countryside with a slightly different guidebook.

#### OVERLOOKED ATTRACTIONS

"I first came into Slovenia while travelling. I fell in love with the country immediately; a year later, when I returned, I fell in love with my girlfriend and stayed. It's been six years since," explains Will Dunn in fluent Slovene. Since he chose Slovenia to be his new home, he has viewed the local life and people differently than when he was still a tourist.

Yuri Barron, who was also the managing editor of the book, agrees: "Foreigners' view of Slovenia is different than that of Slovenes. When, for example, I visited Krško and talked with the locals, nobody suggested that I should see the nuclear plant. But this was what I found most interesting, as the plant was my first thought related to Krško. And tourists can actually visit it. Or the Kranj underground tunnels. A bomb shelter can be very informative for someone who cannot see World War II-related history at home, but hardly any locals recommended it," he comments in explanation of what kind of sights and attractions were sought out and found their place in the book. The souvenir list thus includes the well-known beehive panels, Idrija lace and Piran salt, as well as slippers made of Solčava wool and decorative and practical forged iron products from Kropa.

And what impressed them most about Slovenia? "It may sound a bit of a cliché, but it really is the best of Europe in one small convenient



Soča river.  
Photo: Žiga Čamernik/Mostphotos

package! Within an hour's drive from the quaint and increasingly cosmopolitan capital of Ljubljana, you have the Mediterranean coast, the Alps, wine regions, countless cultural and historical sites, ski resorts, thermal spas and lots more," says Yuri. Although the differences between the USA and Slovenia are surprisingly small, he notes, "However, aside from the usual differences between the USA and Europe – such as progressive socialist policies like state-funded education and healthcare, workers' rights, and high-quality infrastructure maintained by a sustainable tax scheme –, one of the more trivial things that still surprises me is the limited business hours, especially on Saturdays and Sundays. In US cities you can more or less buy anything you need 24 hours a day, while in Slovenia this is not so much the case."

### **DELIGHTED BY RURAL TOURISM**

The authors say they really love visiting tourist farms, so-called open-door farms, ethnological museums and everything else that makes up rural tourism, or agritourism as it is usually known: "I think most Slovenes don't really associate farms and rural culture with tourism, and many may even take it for granted since even those who live in urban areas often have grandparents or other relatives in the countryside whom they regularly visit. However, for many foreign visitors, especially those from the US, visiting the Slovene countryside is a truly unique and memorable experience – in no small part due to the friendliness of the people, as well as the food, drinks and overall atmosphere," Yuri enthuses.



Bohinj Lake.  
Photo: Jakše-Jeršič



**The authors were particularly thrilled by Ljubljana, Bled, Portorož and Piran and several of the larger spa resorts.**

However, a growing number of niche areas (such as wine holidays, adrenaline sports, eco-friendly activities, casinos and the aforementioned rural tourism) will likely become increasingly important in the future, as Slovenia continues to differentiate itself from neighbouring countries. They were all extremely impressed by the Solčava region, as being a first among many equals, while attention is also given in the book to many amazing individual sites, such as the Božidar Jakac Gallery, the Eco-Museum of Hops in Žalec, Žiče Monastery, Lake Bohinj and the entire coast: “As for what I like the least, really one of the only bad things about being a tourist in Slovenia is the unpredictable weather, especially in recent years! Not

knowing if it’s going to be rainy or sunny (or even snowing) from week to week can make it difficult to plan an itinerary in advance!”

**INCREDIBLE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE COUNTRY**

Another of the authors, James Cosier, shares his enthusiasm for Slovenia thus: “I think Slovenes have long known about and been very proud of the incredible natural beauty of their country, though apart from a few major attractions, foreigners weren’t ever really aware of just how much Slovenia has to offer. And it’s not just the spectacular and diverse natural wonders: there are also interesting historical and cultural sights almost everywhere you go. Thankfully the local tourism sector is definitely getting better at selling itself and showing visitors just how amazing Slovenia is – and hopefully the book will do that too. Coming from Australia, Slovenia’s size was one of the biggest shocks for me. Everything is a couple of



Izola.  
Photo: Jaka Jeraša

hours drive away – you can ski in the morning and have dinner beside the Adriatic all in the same day. Also, I love experiencing Slovenia's seasonal changes, especially all the excellent seasonal foods."

James was particularly enthralled by the River Kolpa: "It's a prime example of one of the many amazingly beautiful sights in Slovenia which foreigners don't even know exist, and there are countless other incredible attractions right across the country. Travelling around Slovenia, I love to see the incredible regional differences both geographically and culturally, not least in the delicious regional delicacies from Belokranjska pogača to Prekmurska gibanica. The most frustrating thing about travelling in Slovenia is the poor public transport network, which means a car is basically a must if you want to see even a fraction of what the country has to offer."

The third author of the guide, John Bills from Wales, described Slovenia as an aesthetically special country. What surprised him most was the large number of casinos, although he is not a visitor of those himself.

As pointed out by executive editor Niko Slavnič, the book would make an interesting present for foreigners and is a great guide for families looking for ideas for trips. As it is written in English, it could even be used to help children learning that language!

Over half of the 3,000 copies of the first edition have already been sold, and the authors hope the rest will soon be snapped up. "And a new project is already underway: The Ljubljana Book, a similar guide focusing on the capital, is expected to be published next year. The content is all already in, but there's so much information that it does still need some sorting out," Niko notes.







The Slovenian health resorts offer much more than mere alleviation of medical problems and preventive treatments; they also provide a supreme selection of sports and recreational activities: tennis, golf and mini-golf, boules, jogging along trim trails, cycling and horse riding.  
Photo: Terme Olimia archive

# TOURISM IN SLOVENIA

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ

In ten years, the number of beds in Slovenia increased by 52% and the number of overnight stays by 30%.

The highest share of overnight accommodation (63%) was recorded in hotels, followed by camps with 13%.

High growth was also noted in tourists from Korea (by 147% more) and other Asian countries (by 55% more).

Half of all overnight stays were generated by foreign tourists from five countries: Italy, Austria, Germany, the Russian Federation and the Netherlands.

The highest share of overnight accommodation (31.9%) in 2014 was generated by municipalities with spa facilities; although, they recorded a 0.6% drop in overnight stays in comparison to 2013.







**37,1 %** Contribution of tourism to export

**13 %** Proportion of employees in tourism

**39,8 %** Occupancy of hotels

**13 %** Share of tourism in entire GDP

**68 %** Share of foreign tourists

**3,438,279** Number of tourist arrivals

**9,343,574** Number of overnight stays

**2,7 days** Average length of stay in Slovenia





SWIMMING GALORE IN SLOVENIA  
**By the sea, lakes and rivers**

DANILO GOLOB





One of the beaches at Lake Bled.

Slovenia is a country rich with water, and in the summer months swimmers and bathers flock to the shores of its sea, rivers and lakes. Nature, a pleasant climate and clean water are the chief attractions of Slovenia's natural bathing sites.

Slovenia has 47 registered bathing sites; 21 of these are found on the coast, which is quite a lot considering that the Slovenian coast measures mere 46.6 kilometres. There are 26 bathing sites on rivers (the Krka, Kolpa, Soča, Idrijca and Nadiža rivers) and lakes (Lake Bohinj, Lake Bled and the Šobec Pond). The microbiological quality of water at these sites is monitored and assessed according to the European Bathing Water Directive and national regulations. Results show that Slovenian waters are very clean.

#### **SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF BATHING SITES AND MARINAS**

**The international committee of the Blue Flag Programme (internationally recognised environmental trademark for sustainable management of beaches and marinas which are ecologically pristine and have pristine water quality) awarded 16 Blue Flags to Slovenia in 2015.**

The Blue Flag is intended to increase environmental awareness at bathing sites, for co-formation of environmental ethics and the promotion of environmentally responsible behaviour.

#### **ON THE SLOVENIAN COAST**

You can bathe in the sea at maintained beaches with facilities in Debeli Rtič, Ankaran, Sveta Katarina, Koper, Žusterna, Izola, Simonov zaliv, Strunjan, Fiesa, Piran and Portorož.

One of the nicest bathing sites, which is also the recipient of a Blue Flag, is the natural bathing site in Simonov zaliv in Izola. The San Simon Resort – Simonov zaliv hotel complex is surrounded by lush Mediterranean greenery and offers a glorious view of Izola with charming cobbled stone streets in the old town centre. During high tide, the remains of the pier, which are usually hidden beneath the sea surface, can still be seen today at the bathing site where the port of Haliaetum was situated at the time of the Roman Empire. Simonov zaliv is very popular because of its sand and convenient access to the sea. It

has even more to offer since it boasts a pier, a waterslide, beach volleyball courts, children's playgrounds and catering facilities.

The central beach in Portorož is also marked with the Blue Flag which guarantees that you will be able to enjoy a clean and safe natural bathing site. This is the largest bathing site in Slovenia stretching over 25,000 square metres of beach surfaces divided into sandy and grassy sections and 24,000 square metres of water surface. The central beach in Portorož is one of the most popular destinations in Slovenian Istria. Entry to the beach is free of charge and the list of additional offerings is growing every year. The playgrounds and entertainment delight the children, while sports enthusiasts can play tennis and mini golf or engage in one of the water sports on offer. The gastronomic offer on the beach is diverse since there are many bars and restaurants along the promenade by the sea.

#### BY THE LAKES

### The lakes in Bohinj and Bled are some of the largest natural lakes in Slovenia with certain sections intended for swimming.

A special bathing area worth visiting is the castle bathing site situated at a marvellous location under the high cliff of Bled Castle. The bathing site has 260 metres of maintained beach, is fenced and has been awarded the Blue Flag several times. In addition to bathing

in clean water, visitors can also enjoy a waterslide, a diving board, floating rafts, fenced pools, a swing, children's playground and a sandpit, kayaks, massages, table tennis, social games, deckchairs, sunshades, showers and a diverse culinary offer.

Bohinj is a popular tourist destination and a true paradise for hikers, climbers, cyclists and also swimmers in warmer months. The most popular bathing area at Lake Bohinj, the deepest and largest natural lake in Slovenia, is situated next to the bay on the southern side of the lake along the Ribičev Laz–Ukanc main road. The water is somewhat warmer here since the lake is flow-through and is otherwise quite cold also in the summer.

#### ON RIVER EMBANKMENTS

The confluence of the Tolminka and Soča rivers lies near Tolmin. With its cleanliness and beauty, the emerald Soča river attracts many visitors who wish to enjoy nature, cool off in the cold water or attend any of the many summer festivals and concerts organised in this part of the country.

Lajšt or Idrijska Bela is another popular bathing site located at the confluence of the Idrijca and Belca rivers, some 7 kilometres from the turning of the Ljubljana–Idrija main road. Bathing in the crystal clean water, beach volleyball, table tennis, basketball, and picnic areas are only a few of the many things on offer. The park is the perfect destination for mountain biking, hiking and pleasant strolls where it is possible to encounter many botanical and geological attractions testifying to the rich natural heritage of the area.

#### SLOVENIAN RECIPIENTS OF BLUE FLAGS IN 2015

1. Javno podjetje Okolje Piran, Okolje Portorož central beach (18th Blue Flag)
2. Terme Krka d.o.o., PE Talaso Strunjan, Terme Krka Strunjan natural bathing site (18th Blue Flag)
3. Istrabenz turizem d.d. – Hoteli LifeClass, Meduza Portorož natural bathing site (7th Blue Flag)
4. Hoteli Bernardin d.d., Salinera Strunjan natural bathing site (7th Blue Flag)
5. Hoteli Metropol d.o.o., natural bathing site of Metropol hotels (3rd Blue Flag)
6. Hoteli Bernardin d.d., St. Bernardin natural bathing site (3rd Blue Flag)
7. Hoteli Bernardin d.d., natural bathing site of Vila Park Bernardin (3rd Blue Flag)
8. Hoteli Bernardin d.d., natural bathing site of Camp Lucija (2nd Blue Flag)
9. Hoteli Bernardin d.d., Simonov zaliv Izola natural bathing site (15th Blue Flag)
10. Red Cross Slovenia, Debeli Rtič Youth Health and Summer Resort (10th Blue Flag)
11. Komunala Koper d.o.o., Mokra Mačka natural bathing site (5th Blue Flag)
12. ŠOBEC - turistično in trgovsko podjetje, d.o.o., Lesce, Šobec Pond natural bathing site (15th Blue Flag)
13. Infrastruktura Bled d.o.o., Bled castle bathing site (14th Blue Flag)

#### THE WINNERS OF BLUE FLAGS FOR MARINAS FOR 2015/2016 ARE:

14. Marina Portorož d.d. (21st Blue Flag)
15. Porting d.o.o., Marina in Izola (16th Blue Flag), and
16. Marina Bernardin, Hoteli Bernardin d.d. (3rd Blue Flag).





Lajšt or Idrijska Bela is popular bathing site at the confluence of the Idrijca and Belca rivers. Photo: Dunja Wedam



IZTOK ALTBAUER,  
THE DIRECTOR OF THE SLOVENIAN SPAS ASSOCIATION

**“Water, mud, brine, peat –  
and a healthy climate”**

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ, Photo: PERSONAL ARCHIVES





Why do foreign tourists come to our health resorts? What attracts them the most? We talked to Iztok Altbauer, the Director of the Slovenian Spas Association.

### **Why Slovenian health resorts?**

Primarily because of their exceptional natural features and medicinal effects. In addition to thermal and mineral water, there is also the exquisite salt-pan mud, brine (the so-called aquamadre), peat, peloids and the climate. All of the above serve as the basis for health resort treatment programmes. Preventive medicinal programmes and medical wellness programmes are also popular at the moment. These are carried out by experienced therapists. There's an increase in the demand for detox and weight loss programmes. New programmes for achieving body balance are also popular. Many guests come for the delights of the water and other entertainment. They are particularly excited about outdoor thermal swimming pools and the so-called "aqua-fun" programmes. The guests also appreciate the safety, professionalism and friendliness of the staff, the well-maintained and preserved natural surroundings as well as the diverse local cuisine.

### **There are some 20 spas and natural resorts in Slovenia. How do they differ?**

They differ according to their certified natural healing properties. We classify them according to nine types of standard diseases. There are special spas for patients with cardio-vascular and gynaecological diseases, gastroenterological disorders, problems with locomotive system and spas for other conditions.

**We can also pride ourselves in our unique conditions in Central Europe for thalassotherapy which utilises seawater, brine and salt-pan mud.**

### **Which programmes are the most popular and in the greatest demand?**

It is difficult to name the most frequently used programmes due to significant differences across the range of offers and services of Slovenian health resorts. At some places, health resort treatments are first and foremost, and here the share of guests coming for rehabilitation is almost half. In other resorts, the pampering, wellness of body and soul balance programmes are the most popular and

elsewhere water experience programmes are number one. There is also a difference in terms of nationality of guests; domestic visitors still prevail and generate 54 per cent of all overnight stays. The demand as per programmes also greatly varies for example between Austrian and Italian guests or guests from Russia. The latter mainly come for medical programmes and they thus also stay longer, on average more than 10 days. Guests from the Netherlands mainly stay at health resorts which have camps and mobile homes or live in their own camper vans and most frequently select water experience programmes.

### **How will the health resorts develop in the future?**

**Slovenian health resorts will further emphasise their fundamental, core offerings: health programmes, and also intensify their diverse preventive programmes.**

If investments focused on new accommodation and wellness services in recent years, we are now focusing on intensive selling of capacities and fine tuning of programmes for our ever more demanding guests. We are already successfully adjusting to new trends in last-minute or even ultra last-minute reservations and on-line reservation systems, where part of reservations is being transferred. An increased interest from new markets has also been noted, particularly from the Gulf States, where the first charter connections are underway.

### **Why should foreign guests visit Slovenian health resorts?**

Mainly because of our good organisation and unique offerings, certified thermal springs and other natural healing features, accommodation facilities, and staff – all of the above are encompassed in a comprehensive offer of a health resort. Swimming facilities in Germany, Austria and Hungary function differently. Thermal health resorts are mainly owned by municipalities and accommodation facilities have private owners. In comparison with continental Central European countries, we have natural resorts also on the coast, which enables us to practise thalassotherapy. Foreign guests in particular appreciate the value balance between quality and price. We like to stress that we are not the cheapest, but we dedicate that much more attention to quality and try to provide guests with that unique experience which will make them return to us time and again.



## SLOVENIA'S SPAS AND HEALTH RESORTS

# The choice of royalty

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ

Slovenia offers a diverse array of natural health resorts. based on thermal springs already enjoyed by the ancient Romans and the royal courts of Europe. The healing properties of thermal and mineral waters have been scientifically proven, and Slovenia's 15 natural health resorts offer comprehensive treatments for healing and safeguarding health. In addition to medical services, they are innovators in preventive and alternative programmes for health and beauty.



The success of medical tourism is also confirmed by the numbers since this tourism sector attracts the highest number of guests to Slovenia. The majority of Slovenian natural health resorts are situated in the eastern part of the country and two can be found on the coast.

### THE GREAT THREE OF PREKMURJE

Three supreme natural health resorts, Radenci, Moravske Toplice and Lendava, are located in the far north-east corner of Slovenia in the flat region along the Mura River. Radenci Health Resort is known for its mineral water, Radenska, and the health resort is famous for its programmes of effective treatment of cardiac and vascular diseases. Terme 3000 has a unique black thermal mineral water with specific healing properties and include a hotel of the highest category. The greatest peculiarity of Terme Lendava is the special paraffin thermal and mineral water, which serves as the basis for balneotherapy.

### THE ŠTAJERSKA SEVEN

Seven natural health resorts can be found in the surrounding area of the Pohorje hills, the Kozjansko Regional Park, the oldest Slovenian town of Ptuj, and Laško, a town known for the largest brewery in Slovenia. The oldest Slovenian natural health resort, Terme Dobrna, is situated on the edge of the green Pohorje hills and is famous for its marble bathtubs in the Spa Centre. Terme Topolšica is the ideal place for relaxation in nature and the treatment of respiratory organs, while Terme Zreče is renowned for its warm acratothermal water and unique natural remedy, the Pohorje peat. Rogaška Medical Centre is home of the famous Donat Mg healing natural mineral water. A section of the Thermana Laško health resort complex was constructed right above the Savinja River. Terme Olimia offer bathing in silicon-rich water. The thermal and mineral water of Terme Ptuj is beneficial for rheumatic diseases.

### THE GREAT THREE OF DOLENJSKA

You can be pampered in three health resorts along the Krka River, the most beautiful river in the south-east region of Slovenia known as Dolenjska. The Thermal Riviera of Terme Čatež provides entertainment for all generations. Dolenjske Toplice Spa offers a modern wellness centre in the picturesque surroundings. In Šmarješke Toplice Spa, you can swim in a wooden pool constructed right above a thermal water spring.

### THE COASTAL PAIR

On Slovenia's coast, a guest can experience the healing effects of salt-pan mud and brine in Talaso Strunjan, which is a renowned thalassotherapy centre, and in LifeClass Hotels & Spa in Portorož where the ancient Far East knowledge is combined with the latest medical achievements.

### SEVERAL HUNDRED YEAR OLD TRADITION OF EXPLOITING THERMAL SPRINGS

All Slovenian natural health resorts have several hundred years of tradition of thermal activities and experience in the fields of balneology, climatology and thalassotherapy. Each health resort has specialised in the treatment of four to nine types of diseases. Two Slovenian mineral drinking waters with healing properties have been known almost everywhere in the world for many years. Radenska, discovered in a spring in Radenci, has been bottled and sold for more than 140 years. Some hundred years ago, water rich in magnesium was discovered in Rogaška Slatina. Donat Mg helps alleviate many health problems. These waters are plentiful at both health resorts, which also feature thermal and mineral water springs, aerosols for inhalation, healing mud, mineral peloids and peat.

**The Slovenian health resorts offer much more than mere alleviation of medical problems and preventive treatments; they also provide a supreme selection of sports and recreational activities: tennis, golf and mini golf, boules, jogging along trim trails, cycling and horse riding.**

The health resorts may also serve as the starting point for hiking, hunting, fishing and exploration of wine roads. The guests at health resorts and spas also have the opportunity to learn about other Slovenian peculiarities. Each Slovenian spa destination has its specific qualities. It is possible to enjoy the delights of different culinary regions of Slovenia and savour the tasting of noble Slovenian wines, visit Slovenian castles, churches, museums, and experience traditional village life and the liveliness of urban centres, and take to the sky in sports planes and hot-air balloons. Once kings and nobility frequented these health resorts, but today they are a popular destination of many tourists.






SLOVENIA'S TEN MOST VISITED CASTLES

# Old legends reveal their day-to-day life

BRIGITA JUHART

Mokrice Castle.





Castles have always been regarded as awe-inspiring places, and have stirred people's imagination because of their unusual pasts. All manner of stories evolved about the castles and the people who dwelled in them, stories which were later embellished, transformed and shared with descendants. Thanks to these tales and legends preserved in the folk tradition, we can to this day relive the events which took place in their grand chambers and halls.

#### **BLED CASTLE**

**According to written sources, Bled Castle is the oldest Slovenian castle and was first mentioned as early as in 1011.**

The castle is situated on a steep cliff rising 130 metres above Lake Bled. Associated with the castle is the legend of Poliksena who was married to Hartman Kreigh, lord of Bled Castle. Kreigh was not a kind master and farmers resisted and complained about him to the bishop and the emperor. And one day, he mysteriously disappeared. The mourning widow collected all her gold and silver and ordered that a bell be cast from the gold in memory of her husband for the chapel on Bled Island. When the bell was being transported to the island, a storm broke out and the boat sank together with the boatmen and its precious cargo. The bell sank into the muddy depths but its peals can still be heard on stormy nights ringing from deep within the lake. Poliksena left the castle and went to a convent in Rome. When the Pope heard about her sad story, he had a new bell cast and had it sent to the island.

Today the castle is associated with much nicer tales and events since it is one of the most popular wedding locations in Slovenia. Remnants of the castle's distant past are evident only in the castle's printing works where the reconstruction of Gutenberg's wooden printing press is on display. The printer demonstrates printing on hand-made paper with historical blocks and lead metal letterpresses.

#### **CELJE CASTLE**

Celje Castle is the largest medieval castle in Slovenia and was once home to the renowned Counts of Celje.

**The Counts of Celje were the most important noble family that ruled over, lived and owned their own land on the territory of what is present-day Slovenia.**

Its last residents left the castle in 1400 and moved to the Prince's Mansion (Knežji dvorec) in the town of Celje.

The most famous story connected with Celje Castle concerns the forbidden love between Frederick II of Celje and Veronika of Desenice, a lady of minor nobility. Frederick's father, Herman II of Celje was particularly opposed to their love affair and had his son Frederick locked in a narrow, 23-metre high tower where he was incarcerated for more than four years. Since then the tower has been known as Frederick's Tower. Veronika was accused of witchcraft on the grounds that she had seduced and enticed Frederick to the point of obsession. This was the first known witch trial in the territory of the present-day Slovenia. The court pardoned Veronika but her life nevertheless was not spared. Herman II ignored the ruling of the court, and incarcerated her in Ojstrica Castle where she was drowned in a bathtub in 1425.

#### **IDRIJA CASTLE – GEWERKENEGG**

Idrija is known for its mercury mine, the second largest of its kind in the world. Due to its rich mining heritage that has been preserved, the town was entered on the UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2012. Part of this heritage is also Gewerkenegg Castle whose construction began some 30 years after the discovery of mercury at the end of the 15th century.

**This is the only castle in Slovenia which was not intended for feudal nobility but it served as the residence and work place of the director of the mine and its entire administration.**

It also had a defensive function and was used for storing large quantities of mercury. The castle's towers were used as dungeons. A large smuggling operation was discovered at the beginning of the 18th century. Along with other smugglers, the cunning Melhiorca, also found herself in the castle's dungeon. During the trial, she taunted and confused the officials, managed to escape from her confinement but later returned to the castle of her own accord.

Today the castle houses the Idrija Municipal Museum which was pronounced the best European museum of industrial and technical heritage in 1997. The museum presents the 500-year-old history of Idrija's mercury mine and the town of Idrija itself.

On display in the castle is an exhibition of Idrija lace featuring the history of 300 years of lace-making in Idrija and Slovenia. The Treasure Chest of Lace exhibition includes the largest, the smallest and the oldest examples of lace, including contemporary and currently fashionable pieces.

#### **LJUBLJANA CASTLE**

Ljubljana Castle is the most identifiable feature of Ljubljana. The fastest way to reach it is by a short ride on the funicular, and by expending a little effort the castle can also be reached along four footpaths. The Viewing Tower offers a 360-degree panorama of the city. Within the grounds of the castle can be found numerous presentations and exhibitions, including the Permanent Exhibition of Slovenian History, the Prison, Virtual Castle and iLjubljana.

**The "Time Machine" provides the broadest insight into life and events at the castle, taking visitors through six crucial periods which defined the history of Ljubljana Castle and the development of the city.**

At each of the "time stations", visitors meet a character who presents his or her period. The journey starts in the Roman Emona and continues to the period when St George becomes involved in the fights between pagans and Christians and defeats the terrifying dragon. In the Middle Ages Ljubljana Castle sees the arrival of Emperor Frederick III of Habsburg accompanied by ladies-in-waiting. The representative of Napoleon's Illyrian Provinces is of course a soldier. The 19th century was a dark period for Ljubljana Castle, with its jail and prisoners, while the 20th century is marked by some of the great names among whom the former Ljubljana mayor, Ivan Hribar, stands out in particular. In costume, representatives of each of the aforementioned periods create a special atmosphere, which



---

is both instructive and entertaining.

### **MOKRICE CASTLE**

Mokrice Castle was first mentioned in 1444. It obtained its basic Renaissance features in the 16th century. The history of the castle is denoted by the findings from the period of the Roman Empire when the road towards Byzantium led past the castle and from the period of the Turkish invasions. Later owners of the castle, who were usually noble families, rearranged the castle, introducing parks and gardens.

**The Von Gagern brothers even painted and wrote novels here.**

Several mysterious legends evolved around Mokrice Castle which is situated almost on the border between Slovenia and Croatia. The most famous of these tells of the unfortunate Countess Barbara who was unlucky in love. She became a widow at an early age and then fell in love again with a nobleman who travelled far and wide only one day to never return again. The countess waited for him for many a year, then one spring morning she gave in to her despair and heart-broken climbed to top of the tower and threw herself to the ground below. Although she died, her heart remained alive and can still be found at Mokrice. The story goes that on every 4 December, the feast day of St Barbara, an old cannonball, pushed by the spirit of the unfortunate countess, would roll three times around the castle courtyard.

Today Mokrice Castle is a high-category hotel and the site of protocol events, conferences, meetings and other official receptions.

### **PTUJ CASTLE**

Ptuj, the oldest Slovenian town, also prides itself on its castle whose origins date back to the 12th century. It had an important role back in the Middle Ages since it was the hub of feudal property of the Archbishops of Salzburg in the Podravje region and enjoyed an exceptional strategic position. The Archbishops lent the castle to the Lords of Ptuj who during their 300-years' residence in Ptuj founded the Dominican and Minorite monasteries and construct-



Ljubljana Castle.  
Photo: Arne Hodalič





Predjama Castle.  
Photo: Mostphotos

ed the pilgrim's church on Ptujška Gora mountain. Between 1656 and 1802, the Leslie Counts resided in Ptuj Castle. Its last owners, the Counts of Herberstein, lived in the castle from 1873 to 1945, when the castle was nationalised and became, together with its rich furnishings, part of Ptuj Museum.

The latter houses exhibitions on the collection of arms, feudal dwellings, the castle gallery, the largest collection of musical instruments in Slovenia, which includes a very rare Roman tibia flute, and a collection of traditional carnival masks among which the kurenti stand out. Europe's largest series of paintings with Turkish motifs, the "Turqueries", from the 17th century documenting the early interest of European intellectuals in foreign cultures is also exhibited at Ptuj Castle.

#### **PREDJAMA CASTLE**

Predjama Castle is the largest cave castle in the world and is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records on account of this unique feature.

**Just 9 kilometres away from the famous Postojna Cave, the castle sits like an eagle's nest amid the 123-metre sheer rock face and enthralls its visitors through its impressive location, even before they set foot into what was once an impenetrable fortress.**

Walking around the castle offers in insight into what it was like to live in the medieval period. It presents the life of a family associated with the castle who sought refuge in the cave and thus had to sacrifice comfort beyond measure.

The legend about the robber baron, Erazem of Predjama, says that he was able to defy the emperor's army for more than a year. The soldiers besieged his fortress, but he had a secret tunnel in a cave through which he was able to receive supplies. To display his power and ingenuity, he sent his servant with food to the military camp. When he sent ripe cherries into the camp at a time when



these were still green in the neighbouring trees, soldiers thought that dark demonic forces were on his side. Erazem later succumbed only due to a trick by his adversaries and his corruptible servant.

### **SNEŽNIK CASTLE**

**Snežnik Castle is one of the few Slovenian castles which can pride itself on the original interior and furnishings of its last owners.**

The charm of visiting the castle is in the experience of reliving the presence of the former noble family and of the simple people of those parts who lived on the property.

While walking through castle rooms, you are taken back to the time and stories when princes and princesses from Saxony visited the castle. The interior includes authentically decorated drawing rooms, the bedrooms of family members, guest bedrooms, two dining rooms, a theatre room, an evening salon, a library, servants' quarters, the castle cellar and an Egyptian room which is considered particularly special because of its ambience. In addition to original furniture, paintings, books, ornamental stoves, chandeliers, carpets, numerous useful and decorative items, the castle also houses a wonderful collection of hunting trophies from the period of the last owners.

It is thanks to Count Jurij, who was a military officer, that the castle remains arranged as it was at the time of its last owners; his strict military upbringing was reflected in the accuracy of his records which were learned and unambiguous, so much that he also introduced them into his family life. The inventory brought to the castle after 1900 was thus labelled with room numbers and on this basis a reconstruction of the arrangement of internal fittings in individual rooms was conducted. This is also a unique example of such labelling in Slovenia.

### **VELENJE CASTLE**

Velenje Castle is situated on a steep rock hill some 60 metres above the town and offers its visitors a view of Velenje in its entirety. Some

233 steps lead up to the 700-year-old castle, which is a typical military and residential fortress whose ground plan was adjusted to the terrain on which it was constructed.

Today the castle houses Velenje Museum with eleven permanent museum and gallery exhibitions.

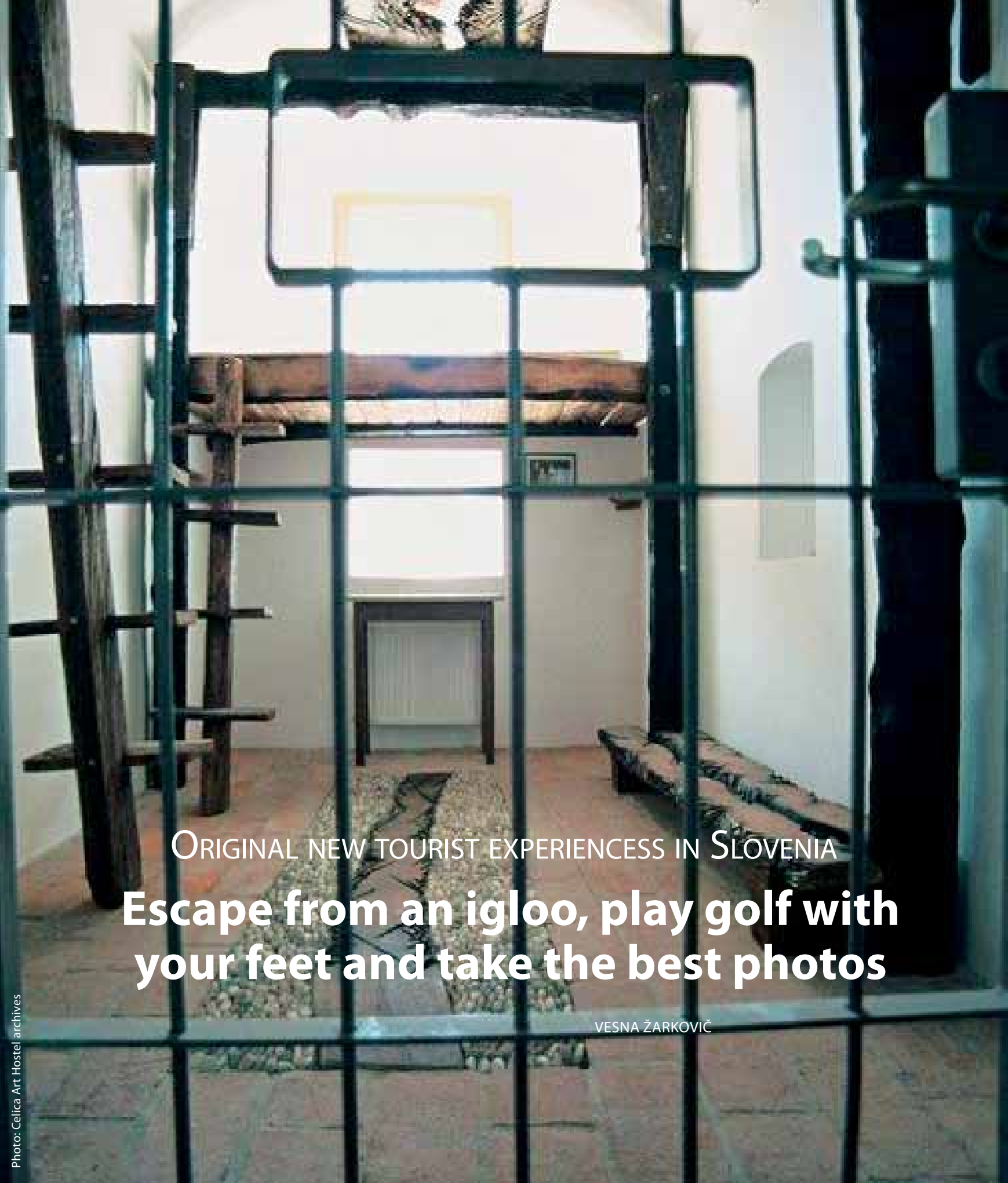
**The legend about the beautiful castle chambermaid Kunigunda, who lived at the castle and was able to heal people, predict the weather and so forth with the help of a magic ball, contributes to the mystery of the castle.**

The lord of the castle accused her of witchcraft and threw her into the well in the atrium of Velenje Castle. Since then she is said to haunt the castle chambers from time to time.

The castle witch from Velenje Castle is brought to life every last week of August in the form of a summer festival of youth cultures which takes place on the streets of Velenje with concerts, theatre and street performances and sports events.

### **GRAD CASTLE AT GRAD**

Grad Castle, the largest Baroque castle in Slovenia with 365 rooms, is located in the village bearing the same name (grad means castle in Slovenian) and is situated on a steep hill in the Goričko Landscape Park in the Prekmurje region. The castle reached its present size in the 16th and 17th centuries, and it was further extended and renovated in the 18th and 19th centuries. It has been under renovation since 1995. The idea of combining border regions into an area of protected nature and into a park encompassing three countries resulted in seeking state and European funds for the renovation of the castle. The vision in terms of the development of the castle is for it to become a place of relaxation and appreciation of the highest existential values as well as a place to enjoy its magnificent past. The castle is surrounded by a large English-style park. Large tulip trees, plane trees, honey locusts, copper beeches, hornbeams and oaks give a sense of grandeur and enduring longevity.



ORIGINAL NEW TOURIST EXPERIENCES IN SLOVENIA

**Escape from an igloo, play golf with  
your feet and take the best photos**

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ



Slovenia will offer three exciting new tourist products by the end of the year: footgolf in Bovec, a web application for photographers called SNAPP Guides, and the Escape from an Igloo experience. These are the three winners of the Snovalec 2015 Award presented by the Tourism Division of the SPIRIT Slovenia Public Agency.

The first winner brought to Slovenia a game which attractively combines two sports, football and golf, and is known in English as footgolf. This is a novelty which is already very popular abroad, and it is being thoughtfully launched in Slovenia as a new tourist product by the company EN HEC. Players hit the football according to the golf rules with as few kicks as possible into specially arranged holes on the golf course. This new game has been added to the tourist offer of Bovec already in June and is to spread all over the country in the near future.

The second novelty is the application, SNAPP Guides, which is intended for professional and amateur photographers, who on their travels seek different information than regular travellers, since they are mainly looking for stunning locations to take their shots. The SNAPP Company is developing a useful and cost-efficient solution for this broad target group: multi-layered photo guides adjusted for smart phones. The goal of the company, which will offer guides for certain selected Slovenian destinations on the occasion of its launch on the market, is to become a "Lonely Planet for photographers".

**The international game for which you have one hour to escape from a locked room with the help of clues and riddles is already a hit in Slovenia.**

The Seialec recipients include also the Celica Art Hostel in Ljubljana.

The company Enigmarium has taken the game to another level and upgraded it innovatively to take place in an igloo in winter tourist destinations. The Escape from an Igloo attraction was already included in the offer of Kranjska Gora ski resorts this past winter. With the support of the Snovalec Award, the game will be further improved for next winter and will also be suitable to break into foreign markets.

In 2014, the Snovalec Award was conferred to the Taste Kamnik project, the organic complex, Garden Village Bled, and Forest Selfness, which successfully evolved from conceptual designs into innovative Slovenian tourist products and were already presented in Sinfo magazine.

The Tourism Division of the SPIRIT Slovenia Public Agency has been promoting innovations in Slovenian tourism for more than ten years. While it confers the Seialec Award to already realised innovative products, it also selects ideas with the greatest potential which it then supports financially and promotionally based on the Snovalec tender. Innovations which contribute to greater recognisability of the Slovenian tourist offer are awarded the Seialec Award. The Seialec recipients include the Celica Art Hostel in Ljubljana, the Thermal Riviera of Terme Čatež, the Cycling to Pannonian Spas package, the Kekec Homestead, Sloveniabike.com portal, Koper passenger terminal, Eskimo Village on Krvavec, Taste Slovenia Culinary Centre, Bohinj Park EKO Hotel, Gastronomic treasures of Istria, GoOpti, VitaGen and Raduha Pension.




AGROTOURISM

# Feel the rhythm of life in the Slovenian countryside

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ

Photo: THE ASSOCIATION OF TOURIST FARMS OF SLOVENIA ARCHIVES





“After days spent in the calm Slovenian countryside, it’s a shock to the system to return to busy, bustling Venice for our journey home. It may be the jewel of northern Italy, but for us, Slovenia was the real crowning glory of our trip,” said an American tourist after visiting Slovenia.

She spent a few days at one of the many tourist farms in Slovenia, and loved it. Years ago, certain Slovenian farmers decided to supplement their farming with tourism. They achieved their dreams – ambitions which at the time perhaps seemed almost too daring. Many other farmers followed their lead after witnessing how tourism could be successfully incorporated into the Slovenian countryside. More than 800 tourist farms can be found in Slovenia today, and although they differ from each other, they all have the same goal: to offer an environment in which people and nature coexist harmoniously.

In close contact with nature, and surrounded by rural people, their culture, wisdom, rituals and customs, guests can find themselves again. At least that is what they answer when asked why they are going to the countryside.

**Unlike farms elsewhere, which usually offer only accommodation, guests to Slovenian farms are treated to a wide range of food and time spent with their hosts. The guests should feel they have come among people who welcome and care for them, emphasise the hosts.**

#### **SEEKING A WARM, FRIENDLY EXPERIENCE**

The intention is that the guests experience and feel the everyday life of local people, which is particularly interesting for city dwellers, who represent the majority of visitors spending their holidays on tourist farms in Slovenia. They do not only come for natural beauty but also and particularly for the personal touch, and the warm, friendly experience. “Here they experience a completely different world to the one they are used to at home,” says proudly Venčeslav Tušar, the President of the Association of Tourist Farms of Slovenia. Their number grows every year and the tourists are especially excited and pleasantly surprised at the natural and cultural heritage sights which are so diverse in Slovenia. Heritage, friendliness of the hosts and good food are qualities for which visitors return time and again. The peace and quiet of the countryside, the singing of the birds and greenery as far as the eye can see always draw them back. The most surprising fact is that it is possible to visit mountains and the sea in one day, which is a real rarity in the world.

“The guests seldom rest. They are constantly on the go throughout the day visiting different places in the country. In the evening, they sit down and share their experience with the locals,” says Tušar. Sometimes they plan together and come up with even better solutions for spending their vacation on farms.

But not all farms are the same. In addition to other things, the major factor is the presence of young people on farms who participate in the work and offer or are preparing to get involved in the work. "The young are more educated today. They have more knowledge than older people, which is good for the future and development of farms. The fact is that farms which are managed by older people have fewer guests because they have limited experience with the Internet and foreign languages. It is encouraging news that young people are becoming increasingly more interested in tourism on farms, and have plenty of motivation to renovate dilapidated farms. A good example is the Smrekar Homestead in Prestranek, which was renovated on the basis of a significant loan and is now focusing on tourism. The young highlight that a farm offers more freedom than an ordinary job, but one must be constantly creative."

### CULINARY TOURISM

An important part of spending holidays on tourist farms is the food or culinary experience. Learning about local food and beverages is the primary goal of travelling for some people. Home-made delicacies are a must. On Slovenian farms, the guests are offered food which the farmers eat and prepare themselves in accordance with natural conditions and seasons of the year. Dishes based on flour and meat, roasts, sea and freshwater fish, vegetables and legumes, excellent stews and soups.

You can find prosciutto in the Karst which is something special among European prosciuttos. The most famous desert in Slovenia is potica which can have different fillings (tarragon, poppy seed, honey, raisins, walnuts). Excellent sweet and savoury pastries and flat cakes can be found in the north-east part of Slovenia. The abundance of flavours and enticing smells accompany supreme wines from three wine-producing regions: white wines in the north-east, light and refreshing Dolenjska Cviček in the south-east and Karst Teran, Istrian Refosco or Primorska Rebula in the south-west. The farmers also like to serve home-made spirits or sweet mead.

**There is much more to this than just enjoying the food and drinks. It is about an in-depth knowledge of the landscape, its characteristics, culture, the manner of production, tradition and customs connected with the consumption of food and drinks.**

In culinary tourism, flavours, aromas and smells present the main theme which intertwines the experience of natural and cultural

heritage, the encounters with the local people, stories and gastronomic pleasures. These sensual experiences can be added to and explained: where does the unique flavour of the zgornejesavinjski želodec (type of salami) come from; why are roasted turkey hens typical of Zagorje; what is the symbolic meaning behind Slovenian potica; what dishes used to be prepared at smoke kitchens, i.e. open fireplaces; what is the story behind the native variety of vine which only grows in a few Zagorje vineyards?

It is magical to wake up to the sound of cowbells, the song of birds and the smell of freshly-baked bread, emphasise the guests. And to engage in a range of activities through the day in the countryside – riding horses, cycling and walking along forest paths, and playing board games in the evening. Some start their day actively at first dawn by mowing grass, milking cows and doing other chores in the stable, or they help the locals work in the field. They thus experience the authenticity of rural life first hand. They can also indulge in the festivities taking place in the countryside on special occasions. The guests socialise with the friendly locals while picking grapes, slaughtering pigs and making sausages. They learn about old folk dances and the geographic diversity of the country.

Vast olive groves and vineyards stretch beside the coast and in the Karst, while some of the most beautiful treasures of our planet, karst caves, lie hidden beneath the surface. Among the mountains of the Gorenjska region are hidden deep river gorges with crystal clean water. The characteristics of this landscape dictate the preservation of mountaineering and Alpine dairy farming. The Dolenjska region is the land of Cviček wine, thermal springs and extensive forests. Its countryside remains involved in the traditional craft of woodenware. The Štajerska region is famous for its treasure of supreme wines and numerous recreational possibilities. The Koroška region is the birthplace of Slovenian nationhood and also provides plenty of options for mountaineering and hiking. The central area of the Prekmurje region presents the Mura River and its tradition of milling and rafting.

- 800 tourist farms
- 36% of Slovenia include protected NATURA 2000 sites
- 2,067 farms are involved in organic farming
- 140,000 bee colonies
- 80 – 90 million litres of wine is produced
- 8,936 hectares of orchards
- 400 tonnes of olive oil is produced on 1,600 hectares of olive groves
- 170 distinct and characteristic dishes
- 7,000 kilometres of maintained mountain trails





It is encouraging news that young people are becoming increasingly more interested in tourism on farms, and have plenty of motivation to renovate dilapidated farms.





GORIČKI RAJ

A FIRST TRADITIONAL CHEESE DAIRY IN THE GORIČKO REGION

# Protecting mountain meadows and ensuring food self-sufficiency

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ



Farmers, bee keepers, stock farmers, wine makers and many others producers of food and beverages all help ensure that Slovenia has a good supply of local and naturally-grown food. Among them is the Gorički raj cheese dairy from Ratkovci in the Goričko region.

The dairy started operating on the premises of the fire station in July 2010. The purpose of the dairy was to promote and encourage livestock farms to maintain the tradition of feeding hay to their animals and pasturing in the Goričko Landscape Park. Farms participating in the Landscape in Harmony project maintain meadows as a habitat for butterflies and other pollinators which are important for the production of food without the application of chemical substances and mineral fertilisers. Sheep's, goat's and cow's milk is processed into cheese with the equipment owned by the Goričko Landscape Park public institution.

**Cheese is a welcome addition to the culinary offerings of Goričko and the broader region.**

By purchasing cheese, consumers support the conservation of the landscape and the development of non-traditional products in Goričko.

The dairy is managed by Valentina Šeruga Lazarovski, a veterinary practitioner by profession, and her husband, Vanče Lazarovski. They have about 40 goats and sheep, and purchase cow's milk from village stock farmers who graze their cows on pastures alone and do not feed them silage and supplements. "Not far from the dairy in Ratkovci, my husband and I rented 23 hectares of overgrown land. We moved the goats and sheep there and substantially increased the flock," says Šeruga Lazarovski. Because it was possible to obtain funds for the purchase of a modern tractor or lawn mowing equipment, but not for a live lawn mower – a goat or a sheep, they came up with an innovative project, Adopt a goat.

**"Anybody who wants to can contribute funds for the purchase of a goat or sheep**

**or for the upkeep of the animals, and in return, they will receive goat or sheep dairy products for three years."**

They have no shortage of plans for the future as well – including the expansion of the cheese dairy. In a few years when the animals have cleared the overgrowth on the 23 hectares, the couple will find new overgrown land and move their flock there, while the owners will be able to use the cleared areas for farming.

#### **NATURAL DAIRY PRODUCTS WITH NATURAL ADDITIONS**

The Šeruga Lazarovski family sell cheese, yoghurt, cottage cheese, sour cream and whey in their shop at the cheese dairy and at the marketplace in Murska Sobota. They sell yoghurt and cheese from cow's milk also to the Slovenian supermarket chain Tuš and are part of the Tuš trademark Slovenske dobrote (Slovenian delicacies). "We supply more than one thousand thick yoghurts for Tuš a week and between 500 and 600 drinkable yoghurts, and the scope of orders is growing," explains Šeruga Lazarovski. She and her husband make yoghurts also from goat's and sheep's milk. They also offer soft and semi-soft cheeses from all three types of milk, sour cream, albumin and regular cottage cheese and whey.

"We make natural dairy products to which we add natural additions, which are not produced industrially," she emphasises.


**Instead of industrial bases, she and her husband add in their yoghurts jam which they make themselves.**

"We add elderflower, apples and other additions from local products in drinkable yoghurts; the only exception is ginger, which is import-



Anybody who wants to can contribute funds for the purchase of a goat or sheep or for the upkeep of the animals, and in return, they will receive goat or sheep dairy products for three years.  
Photo: Mostphotos





ed." Their sustainable production of agricultural products with high biological value is complemented by the sustainable rearing of animals which graze on pastures and their traditional processing methods. They produce goat's and sheep's milk themselves and purchase 300 to 350 litres of cow's milk per week from neighbouring farmers. Some 200 litres of milk a week is processed into cottage cheese and sour cream. The daily processing capacity is 700 litres of milk.

Their yoghurts topped with cream are in greatest demand, followed by cheeses and other dairy products. The couple invented the recipes themselves and with the help of relatives. "My husband is from Macedonia and he learnt how to make soft cheese in brine and yoghurts already at home. I've learnt the craft of cheese-making at my relatives in France. I upgrade my knowledge at courses and I constantly experiment," says Šeruga Lazarovski.

Their dairy products bear the CE marking which guarantees to consumers that they comply with the strictest standards in veterinary regulations in Slovenia and quality standards of the European Union.

### **SUSTAINABLE REARING**

Goats and sheep are kept outdoors on pastures also during winter where the family takes care of them. "It means a lot that our animals are grazing freely and enjoy natural conditions. We try to maintain sustainable rearing and traditional processing methods which serve as the basis for our sustainable production by which we ensure the high biological value of our end products." They maintain that demand for their dairy products, particularly cheeses, is already greater than they are able to produce from the available milk. Employees of the Goričko Landscape Park are thus striving to establish a network of five to ten farmers in Goričko who would feed animals with grass fodder in an extensive grazing and mowing system and thus contribute to the preservation of meadows. Transportable 100-litre cooling containers for milk collection and two milk tanks for transportation of milk to the cheese dairy will be available to future owners of dairy breeds of goats and sheep.

Although the rearing of sheep and goats has no tradition in the Prekmurje region, it may, given relatively little investment and the utilisation of overgrown land, provide a basic income for a farmer or a goat and sheep breeder. According to calculations, a flock of 30 animals of a dairy breed is enough for one person to survive with the profits from the processing of milk into various cheeses. Farmers are thus encouraged to start rearing goats and sheep and take advantage of the opportunity offered by the first traditional cheese dairy in the Goričko region.



TOP 10 DELICIOUS SLOVENIAN DISHES

# Slovenia invites you to a meal

DANILO GOLOB

Bela Krajina *pogača*.  
Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik



When hosting our guests, we put the best typical dishes of our town or region on the table. Taste them, and you will feel Slovenia.

Slovenia has 24 gastronomic or culinary regions represented by 170 distinct and typical dishes, which means that when travelling in Slovenia you can encounter a completely different dish every few kilometres. The diverse range of traditional and modern dishes combines the flavours of the Mediterranean, the Alps and the Pannonian Plain, including a touch of the Balkans.

**Among 170 dishes, it is difficult to select the ones you should taste during your stay in Slovenia. We propose the following ten delicious dishes; however, you can choose according to your inspiration or trust your hosts. Enjoy!**

#### **BELA KRAJINA POGAČA SERVED AS A WELCOME DISH**

This is a round originally unleavened flat bread (3-4 cm thick) brushed with a beaten egg and sprinkled with caraway seeds and salt. Before baking, a square net pattern is cut onto the surface of the *pogača* with a knife. Bela Krajina *pogača* is served warm and is not cut but individual squares are broken away by hand. Since 2001, it has been classified as a protected foodstuff of traditional reputation and it has been protected at EU level since 2010.

#### **HOT STEWS**

For those who want a hearty hot stew, we recommend *ričet*. This cooked barley porridge or pot barley is one of the most widely known stews and also the oldest dish. In some regions, beans are added to it and it is even more delicious if a sausage, smoked ribs or a piece of smoked pork is added to the stew while cooking.

You can also try *jota*, a dish typical of western Slovenia. Istrian jota is a thick stew made of sour cabbage and beans; the Karst and Vipava versions also contain potato. After the First World War, the dish also

spread to some other regions and Ljubljana, where carrots, celery, peas, pot barley and other ingredients were added to it.

When in Prekmurje, you will be served Prekmurje *bograč*. This thick stew was named after the dish or the large pot in which it is cooked. *Bograč* is a type of goulash with three different meats, spices, pepper, tomato, potato and also fresh mushrooms if these are in season.

#### **KRANJSKA SAUSAGE – THE ONE AND ONLY**

We can certainly say that the Kranjska sausage is the most distinctive culinary product of Slovenia. The sausage classified as Kranjska was first mentioned in 1896. Since 2008, it has been a protected product in Slovenia and this year the European Commission approved its entry into the register of protected geographical indications and thus added it to the list of over 1,200 protected agricultural products in the EU.

**It is the only sausage which the astronauts ate in space.**

The Kranjska sausage is based on the rich heritage of processing pork into meat products. The certified recipe for the sausage prescribes supreme pork, bacon fat, garlic, pepper, salt and pig's intestine.

#### **FISH DELICACY**

The emerald Soča River is the home of the native Soča trout which is a protected endangered species. The smallest specimen still permitted to be taken from the river must measure at least 40 cm. The Soča trout is an exceptional gastronomic delicacy. It can be prepared in a traditional way by rolling it in buckwheat or corn flour and then fried. It is also very delicious in a combination with prosciutto.



### **IDRIJA ŽLIKROFI**

These are small pasta pockets or dumplings cooked in water and stuffed with potato, onion, minced lard or smoked bacon, herbs and spices, which originated in the old mining town of Idrija at the end of the 18th or the beginning of the 19th century. *Žlikrofi* are accompanied with the typical meat sauce, *bakalca*, made from mutton or rabbit meat. They are also served as an independent dish with pork cracklings or butter, or as side dish with meat, meat sauces, roasts, sour turnip or sprinkled with crumbled Gorgonzola cheese. Idrija *žlikrofi* are protected as a Traditional Speciality Guaranteed. They were protected under the auspices of the EU in the beginning of 2010 and under Slovenian regulations in 2002.

### **ŠTRUKLJI**

*Štruklji* (dumplings) are one of the most typical and usually dishes for festive occasions known in all Slovenian gastronomic regions. They are made from different types of dough (filo pastry, leavened dough, puff pastry, noodle, buckwheat and potato dough) with different fillings, baked or cooked, sweet or savoury. *Štruklji* with tarragon filling are the most known Slovenian dumplings, which are a typical spring and summer dish. Cottage cheese or cheese, walnut, apple, poppy seed and other fillings are also quite popular.

### **TIME FOR A DESSERT**

Similarly to *štruklji*, *potica* is also one of the most typical Slovenian desserts. Some 80 different fillings are known for *potica*, which is a typical festive dessert made from different types of dough. *Potica* with tarragon takes the first place due to its special flavour provided by this noble herb in a sweet combination. Probably one of the oldest known *potica* varieties has a honey filling – an old sweetener used in a country with a long bee-keeping tradition. Other typical fillings include walnuts, poppy seeds, pork cracklings, chives, lovage, cheese and others.

If you have already eaten *potica*, you can now try the delicious Prekmurje *gibanica* (layer cake), a popular Slovenian traditional dessert, which has been a festive and ritual dish in Prekmurje for centuries. This is a sweet cake made of shortcrust pastry (bottom layer) and several layers of filo pastry laid between apple, walnut, cottage cheese (today also raisins) and poppy seed fillings. Prekmurje *gibanica* is a protected foodstuff with the label, Traditional Speciality Guaranteed.





*Štruklji* (dumplings) are one of the most typical and usually dishes for festive occasions known in all Slovenian gastronomic regions.  
Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik

DARREL JOSEPH, WINE EXPERT

# **“Slovenia is a niche wine country”**

POLONA PREŠEREN, Photo: PERSONAL ARCHIVES





It was the Celts who planted the first vines on Slovenian land, thereby laying the foundations for wine production. Today, wine culture has an important role in Slovenian identity. We talked about Slovenian wine with Darrel Joseph, a wine journalist, judge and presenter specialising in the regions of Central and Eastern Europe.

**Slovenians feel proud of the wines they produce and winemaking has a long tradition here. You know Slovenian wines very well, what inspires you most about them?**

The most inspiring thing is how Slovenian wine established its modern-day identity within a relatively short period of time since the country became independent in 1991. The freshness and quality of the dry white wines in regions such as Goriška Brda and Vipava Valley as well as Štajerska are most impressive. And of course there are the 'natural' and 'orange' wine movements, for which Slovenia has been highly active and has gained international recognition.

**What is your viewpoint on Slovenian wines from a global perspective? Which world markets have the most potential for wines from Slovenia?**

**Slovenian wines in general are surely good enough to compete on the international market in terms of quality. No doubt about it.**

And they are already in numerous countries abroad, such as the UK, Germany, the USA and of course, Slovenia's neighbouring countries. But the real issue is quantity. As Slovenia is a relatively small wine producing country, just around 22,000 hectares of vineyards, there is only so much wine that can be produced. On top of that, most of the wine is drunk domestically. That means export volumes are limited. But that is OK.

Darrel Joseph is a wine journalist, judge and presenter specialising in the regions of Central and Eastern Europe. Based in Vienna, Darrel contributes to publications including Decanter and Harpers Wine & Spirit in Great Britain, Meininger's Wine Business International in Germany. He has also contributed to Wine Spectator and Hugh Johnson's Pocket Wine Guide. He judges for the Decanter World Wine Awards in London, conducts wine tastings and seminars internationally, and translates a wide range of wine texts from German to English.

**Slovenia is a niche wine country, and that means the wines can be viewed as niche as well; special, individual, not 'commercial'!**

In terms of future markets to look out for, developing ones, like China for example, have positive potential.

**Is it important to know the story behind the wine? How do you see Slovenian story?**

This is a rather vague question, as I am not sure what the "Slovenian story" means. But in terms of its history, the wine culture in this area has existed since Celtic and Illyrian times - hundreds of years BC. The fact that it has survived all of these centuries is incredible - especially during the 20th century with the wars and the period when Slovenia was a part of Yugoslavia and wine was produced en masse and not for quality. Even better, it has entered a remarkable new era of identity via the talent, innovation and ambition of today's Slovenian winemakers, who have combined local tradition and know-how with learning from their more established (in terms of modern production) wine neighbours, Italy and Austria. The wines, especially the white wines, are lovely to drink on their own or also with food.

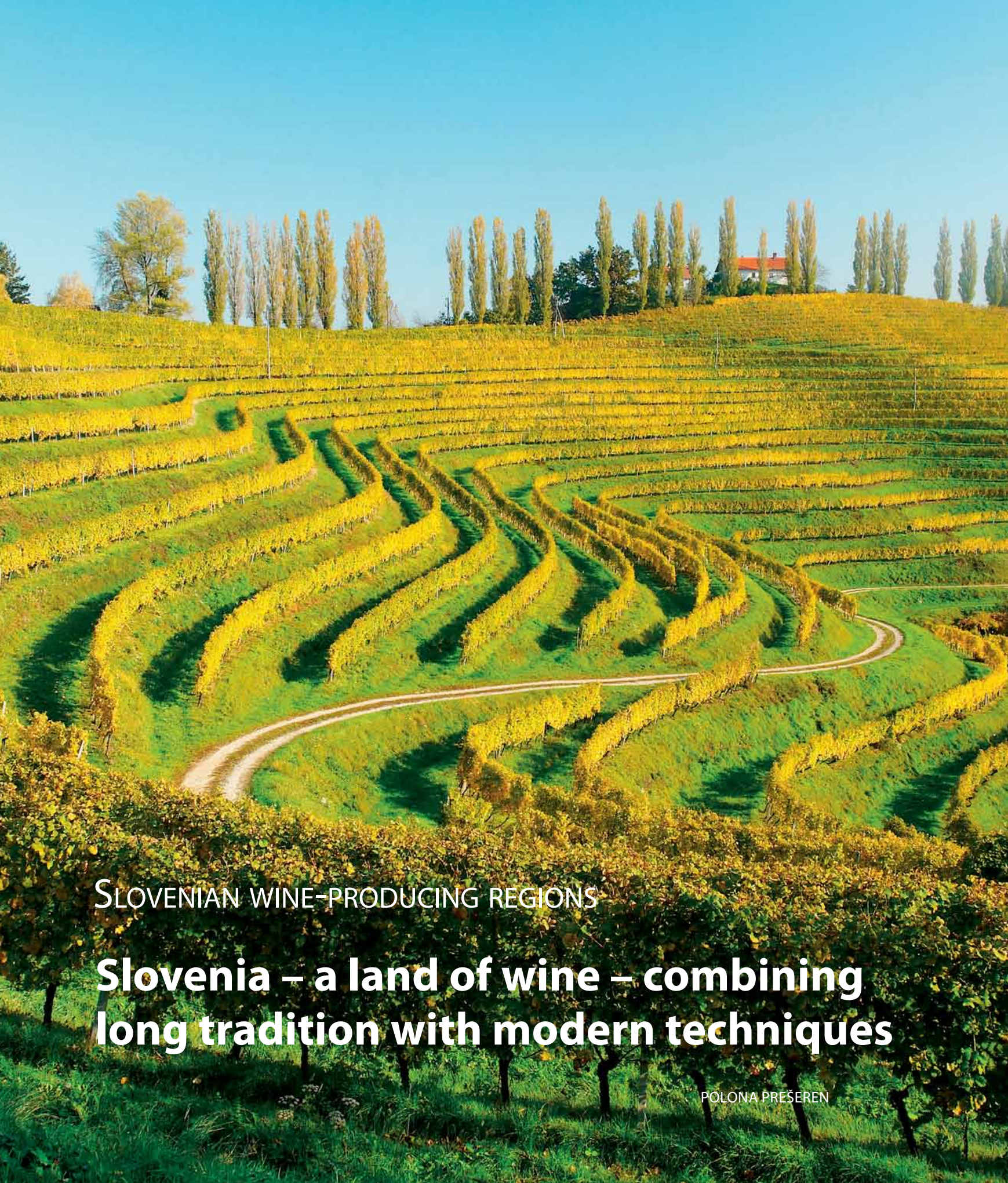
**What do you think about Cviček, Metliška črnina and Belokranjec (the protected wines)?**

These two easy-drinking blend wines - the red Metliška črnina, and the Cviček (white and red blend!) - are very traditional local wines that have been gaining in popularity. I am still getting to know them a bit - but I would say that, while they are not complex, they have a nice easy character for pleasurable drinking. I want to explore these wines more, and see what winemakers will be doing with them in the future.

**What is your choice of top 5 picks from Slovenia?**

It is hard for me to give my top five picks because that would leave out too many interesting and delicious wines. But I can say that some of my favourite producers include Batič, Kabaj, Edi Simčič, Marjan Simčič, Movia, Ščurek, Dveri-Pax, Ptujška Klet and Marof. It is also good to look out for not only the international grape varieties like Sauvignon Blanc from the Štajerska region, but also the indigenous grapes, like Pinela and Zelen in the Vipava Valley. And there is also Rebula, which is found in Brda and over the border, in Italy's Friuli.





SLOVENIAN WINE-PRODUCING REGIONS

**Slovenia – a land of wine – combining  
long tradition with modern techniques**

POLONA PREŠEREN





Jeruzalem.  
Photo: [www.slovenia.info](http://www.slovenia.info), Marco Coppo

Every wine kept carefully in a stylish bottle or stored in an oak barrel has its own story, which combines the idea of the wine-maker, the vine, soil, wood and other natural conditions which dictate its texture. And when we pour it in a glass, we have to enjoy it with all our senses.

Slovenia is a wine country with rich experience in wine production that keeps in step with the world wine production, modern technology and marketing trends. Wine production has a long tradition in Slovenia. In the country whose national anthem is "The Toast" (to all good people), a glass of exquisite wine has special significance. In addition to excellent professional wine-makers and wine cooperatives, there are also many amateur wine-makers. Many vineyard cottages can be found in wine-producing regions, where the family hobby is stored in a barrel or two. These vineyard cottages contribute to the diverse tourist offer of the Dolenjska and Bela Krajina regions.

The proof that wine was being produced in Slovenia many years ago is the Vače situla dating from the 6th century BC, which depicts revelry with wine. The Celts who lived here then produced their own wine. The Romans, known for *la dolce vita*, also enjoyed the intoxicating drink, and it is not surprising that wine production positively blossomed in the Roman period. The wine culture was somewhat halted with the arrival of the Slavic people from beyond the Carpathian Mountains since they brought different values and customs, but it blossomed again with the spread of Christianity and the arrival of monks. Since we are proud of our wine tradition, we are of course certain that Slovenian wines are among the best in the world.

**According to wine criteria, Slovenia belongs to the Old World wine regions with certain French, Italian and German influences in terms of vineyards and production. Its geographic position is perfect for growing vine with the impact from the Adriatic Sea, the Alps and the Pannonian plain. The production of wine is focused on the production of exquisite high-quality wine.**

Vineyards are usually situated on very steep slopes, enabling the optimum exposure to sunlight; however, this makes work in the vineyards much more demanding and requires more manual labour.

### THREE WINE-PRODUCING REGIONS

The Podravje, Posavje and Primorje regions each boast their own particularities and microclimates. Due to their many years of tradition, each of them can offer original native wines with specific local qualities. The Slovenian selection of wines comprises an assortment of red wines in the style of Bordeaux, aromatic wines typical of the Rhine Valley, dry Italian wines, sweet Hungarian wines and also sparkling wines. The





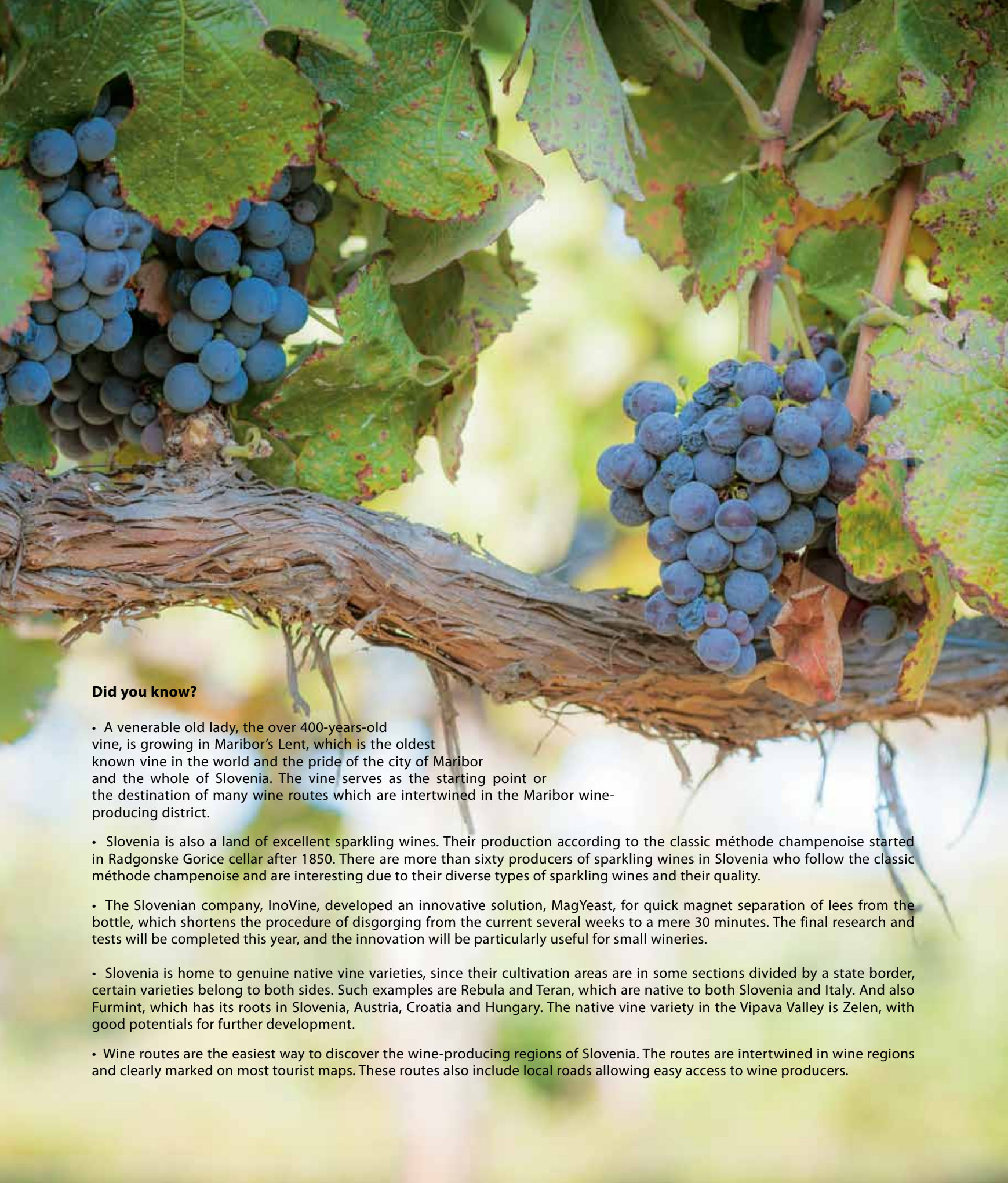
development of a diverse range of local wines, including modern and trendy orange and natural wines which have caused quite a stir among the expert wine public has been swift.

**Podravje** stretches over the north-east part of Slovenia. The region is characterised by typical sediments created by active geological movements, the remains of the Pannonian Sea and thermal and mineral springs. It is thus the soil which particularly characterises the wines of this region. The climate is typically continental, with plenty of sunny days, which sometimes cause drought, while winters are quite cold. The region is known for its prestigious wines and late grape harvest. A temperate climate and special soil are ideal for the production of strong and aromatic white wines, such as White Riesling, Italian Riesling, Sauvignon, Furmint, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, Traminer, Yellow Muscat and Radgona sparkling wine. These are certainly worth tasting.

**Posavje** is a region situated in the heart of Slovenia, and is known for its mixed wines but most of all for its great little wine – Cviček. With its eight and a half per cent of ethanol, Cviček is hardly a wine according to European criteria, but it nevertheless, or because of it, prides itself on the EU mark of Protected Geographical Indication. Cviček, first documented in books two hundred year ago, is a blend of three grape varieties, which provide it with lightness, its characteristic gentle colour and flavour, including acidity and freshness. Cviček is truly a very drinkable wine that can be found in almost every vineyard cottage in the region. Vineyard cottages are small private wineries, and wine producers who have stubbornly defied natural and social conditions in their small vineyards over the years are typical of this region. In the past, this region was mostly affected by the atrocities of the Second World War and the economic crisis which followed. In addition to Cviček, the region is also known for its quite sweet predicate wines.

**Primorska** carries such a name (pri-morje means by the sea) although only a small section of the region is actually next to the coast and the majority of vineyards are located in the hinterland but nevertheless enjoy a strong Mediterranean influence. Summers are quite hot here and winters temperate. The entire wine variety of Europe can also be found in this region. Red wines prevail due to the warmth and the sun. Wines of this region have their own particular traits; they are mostly dry, rich in minerals and also contain more pigment than wines in other regions. The Primorska region consist of the Goriška Brda district with the famous Rebula and Pinot Blanc, the Vipava district with excellent white and red wines, and particularly superb Cabernet Sauvignon, the Karst district with Teran, Refosco and Terra Rossa, which is a blend of Teran, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, and the Koper district with Refosco and Malvazija.





### **Did you know?**

- A venerable old lady, the over 400-years-old vine, is growing in Maribor's Lent, which is the oldest known vine in the world and the pride of the city of Maribor and the whole of Slovenia. The vine serves as the starting point or the destination of many wine routes which are intertwined in the Maribor wine-producing district.
- Slovenia is also a land of excellent sparkling wines. Their production according to the classic méthode champenoise started in Radgonske Gorice cellar after 1850. There are more than sixty producers of sparkling wines in Slovenia who follow the classic méthode champenoise and are interesting due to their diverse types of sparkling wines and their quality.
- The Slovenian company, InoVine, developed an innovative solution, MagYeast, for quick magnet separation of lees from the bottle, which shortens the procedure of disgorging from the current several weeks to a mere 30 minutes. The final research and tests will be completed this year, and the innovation will be particularly useful for small wineries.
- Slovenia is home to genuine native vine varieties, since their cultivation areas are in some sections divided by a state border, certain varieties belong to both sides. Such examples are Rebula and Teran, which are native to both Slovenia and Italy. And also Furmint, which has its roots in Slovenia, Austria, Croatia and Hungary. The native vine variety in the Vipava Valley is Zelen, with good potentials for further development.
- Wine routes are the easiest way to discover the wine-producing regions of Slovenia. The routes are intertwined in wine regions and clearly marked on most tourist maps. These routes also include local roads allowing easy access to wine producers.

SLOVENIA'S MUSICAL AND CULTURAL FESTIVALS

# A summer of music

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ





If you are spending your summer holiday in Slovenia, you have an immense choice of music festivals. Take your pick -- classical, ethno, jazz or pop – you can find whatever you like throughout the summer all over Slovenia. Let's start in the capital...

Every year, the Slovenian capital, Ljubljana, is host to a long, hot summer of varied culture. Ljubljana Festival, the oldest and one of the most important festivals in the wider region, will run for the 63rd time this year and will also be the longest in its entire history. Established Slovenian and foreign performers in the fields of music, opera, dance, musical, theatre and fine arts will be featured over a period of more than three months.

The Festival officially opened on 28 June at Congress Square with a music and visual performance by the Oscar- and Grammy-winning composer and conductor Tan Dun. Everyone can find an event suited for them in the diverse cultural offer of the Festival. Visitors can witness creations of the best Slovenian and foreign artists on a daily basis. The abundance of artistic entertainment and festival activities are certainly the merits of Ljubljana Festival which enriches the capital in terms of culture and art – and places it on the world map.

Today one could not possibly imagine the beauty of the Slovenian capital in summer evenings without its lively cultural activity and high-quality cultural and artistic repertoire, since the Festival has a long tradition and is renowned at home and abroad.

**With its colourful and cosmopolitan atmosphere, the Festival contributes to the vigour of the Slovenian capital which is considered one of the liveliest cities in Europe.**

Since its establishment, the objective of Ljubljana Festival has been to prepare a carefully selected programme with exceptional artists and artistic productions from around the world. Its guiding principles are excellence, creativity and the desire to provide the best artistic experience to its audience. Over time Ljubljana Festival also became an important reference for the performers; some are happy to return time and again.

Ljubljana Festival also received the Order of Freedom of the Republic of Slovenia, the highest recognition by the President of the Republic

of Slovenia, for its services in presenting national and international artistic activities. In its more than 60-year history, many internationally acclaimed names have performed at the Ljubljana Summer Festival.

For example: orchestras – opera houses: the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra from St. Petersburg, the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, the La Scala Philharmonic Orchestra from Milan, the State Academic Bolshoi Theatre of Russia, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra from London, the Orchestra of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, the Hangzhou Philharmonic Orchestra from China, and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. Ballet ensembles: Béjart Ballet from Lausanne, the St Petersburg State Academic Ballet Theatre of Boris Eifman, Teatro alla Scala Ballet Company, the Bolshoi Ballet Company, and the Vienna State Ballet. Conductors: Valery Gergiev, Sir Simon Rattle, Lorin Maazel, Daniel Harding, Zubin Mehta, Ennio Morricone, Riccardo Muti, Mstislav Rostropovich, En Shao, Krzysztof Penderecki, Fuat Mansurov, Michael Nyman, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Ivan Repušić, and Riccardo Chailly. Soloists (musicians): Yuri Bashmet, Denis Matsuev, Yehudi Menuhin, Julian Rachlin, Vadim Repin, Alexander Rudin, Ramin Bahrami, Ning Feng, Mischa Maisky, Gautier Capuçon, Stefan Milenković, Vinko Globokar, Dubravka Tomšič, Mojca Zlobko, Miloš Karadaglić, and 2Cellos.

Soloists (singers): Paata Burchuladze, José Cura, José Carreras, Dmitri Hvorostovsky, Inva Mula, Leo Nucci, Ramón Vargas, Joseph Calleja, José Alberto, Bernarda Fink, and Marjana Lipovšek.

#### **WHAT ARE OR WILL BE THE BIGGEST HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS YEAR'S FESTIVAL?**

One of the most important ones is the concert conducted by the 81-year old Krzysztof Penderecki, composer, conductor, academician, the recipient of numerous awards, and a three-time Grammy winner. He is a pioneer of modern music and a researcher of new

instrumental expression and the human voice. The Guardian newspaper named him the greatest living Polish composer. In Ljubljana, he presented his Polish Requiem, one of his most important works. This year's Ljubljana Festival is the only festival in the world hosting three world-renowned composers in one summer. In addition to the opening ceremony with conductor Tan Dun and then Penderecki, the Young German Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Jonathan Nott and accompanied by supreme violist Antoine Tamestit will perform at the closing of the Festival on 28 September. Another two significant events should also be mentioned, namely Romeo and Juliet, the finest ballet performance of the Mariinsky Theatre from St. Petersburg and two evenings of opera arias.

### **SUMMER IN THE OLD TOWN OF LJUBLJANA**

In cooperation with the Imago Sloveniae Institution, the Society for the Revitalisation of the Cultural Image of the Old City Centre has prepared the 23rd International Summer in the Old Town of Ljubljana Festival which attracts visitors to enjoy music amid the ambience of the old town centre. Some 27 concerts featuring 315 musicians from ten countries will be held until the end of August. The Festival takes place at some of the most beautiful locations of architectural and cultural heritage and plays an important role in reviving the old centre of Ljubljana. The Festival particularly focuses on classical music from different periods, and in recent years a section of the programme has also been dedicated to jazz.

### **LENT FESTIVAL IN MARIBOR**

The Lent Festival is the largest outdoor festival in Slovenia and one of the largest in Europe, which in the beginning of summer transforms Maribor, the second largest city of Slovenia, into a city of youth, relaxation, playfulness, creativity and sociability. This year's 23rd Lent Festival saw many concerts and offered many musical delights at some 40 venues. During the Festival, Maribor again pulsated in the spirit of music and enjoyed dancing, street theatre, comedy and creative gatherings. What could be more pleasurable than a concert under the starry summer sky, classical music in the medieval synagogue or the luscious rhythms of jazz? The Lent Festival has been visited by one in four citizens of Slovenia at least once. The festival activities, which include everything from music, theatre and dance, provided many diverse events on the stages along the embankments of the Drava River.

### **NATIONAL COSTUMES**

In the green embrace of the Kamnik-Savinja Alps, the town of Kam-

nik combines tradition with ethnography, culture and entertainment every second weekend in September. A traditional parade of national costumes in the colours of the rich clothing heritage takes place on the streets of the old town. More than two thousand enthusiasts and experts in the strict etiquette of classifying folk costumes participate at the central event. "The Costumes," as the locals like to refer to the event, is the most frequented event in this part of Slovenia and has been the pride of the town for more than four decades. With its diverse programme, it attracts over 30,000 visitors and many local and foreign media. Every year numerous visiting folklore groups from abroad supplement the rich programme of local groups, since the Festival, as a recognised international folklore festival, is also included in the network of the CIOFF folklore festivals.

### **IDRIJA LACE FESTIVAL**

This is the largest internationally acclaimed event in Idrija dedicated to the traditional craft of lace-making. With several breaks, the Festival has been held in Idrija since 1952. This year saw the 34th running of the Festival, which was held between 19 and 21 June. Due to its popularity and recognisability, the Festival is the main promoter of Idrija lace. The event preserves the tradition of lace-making in Idrija and prompts innovation in lace-making and its use. In recent years, the objective of the Festival has been to follow the tradition embodied in Idrija lace and its contemporary features built on accuracy, skill, resourcefulness, ingenuity and creativity.

### **TWO FESTIVALS OF EARLY MUSIC**

The Seviqc Brežice Festival is synonymous with early music in Slovenia. The most renowned artists performing supreme programmes of the highest quality are invited to attend the Festival annually. European and world music heritage is presented through different complex programme sets, whereby special attention is dedicated to the presentation of music originating in Slovenia.

This year's Radovljica Festival is taking place between 8 and 25 August and features ten international concerts with music ranging from the Middle Ages to contemporary music, including two workshops for singers and a recorder master class. The famous Argentine soprano, María Cristina Kiehr, will be one of the guests and will also hold a workshop for singers. Both festivals of early music offer original concerts of historical performance practices. The programme of Radovljica Festival consists of ten concerts which will be held in Radovljica and Velesovo.



### THIS YEAR'S BLEED FESTIVAL WITH AN EXTENDED PROGRAMME

The Bled Culture Institute has again for this year's Festival planned a diverse range of festival activities. The Bled International Music Festival and Okarina Ethno Festival were particularly interesting this year on the occasion of their 20th and 25th anniversaries respectively. The Bled International Music Festival took place between 1 and 18 July and focused on classical music, jazz and crossover. Immediately after the closing of the Music Festival, the 25th Okarina Ethno Festival opened on 17 July, which according to Leo Ličof, the Programme Director of the Festival, is taking a step further from its set direction of ethno music and is adding new musical elements. The guiding principle when selecting performers was their quality. Female vocalists particularly dominated in the second half of the Festival.

### VELENJE FESTIVAL

A diverse cultural programme featuring some 50 events took place in Velenje at its 29th Festival. In addition to regular weekly events, Summer in the Meadow, for children and summer cinema, Stars under the Stars, the Festival offered a diverse music programme which featured orchestra and choir, American Music Abroad, from the East Coast of the United States of America, Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra from England, which performs classi-

cal music, and many other Slovenian and foreign ethno ensembles, including the internationally acclaimed Jewish klezmer ensemble, The Klezmatics (Grammy winner), and the new ABBA repertoire performed by Perpetuum Jazzile.

### THE STARS UNDER THE STARS SUMMER THEATRE FESTIVAL IN PTUJ

The Stars Under the Stars Summer Theatre Festival was added to the already varied summer music programme in Ptuj. The Festival, featuring 14 performances and taking place at different locations, was organised by Ptuj City Theatre between 19 June and 5 July. The Festival opened with the première of a romantic comedy, iLutka, at Turnišče Castle.

### THE CONFLUENCE IN TOLMIN AGAIN INVITES YOU TO ITS SUMMER FESTIVALS

The confluence in Tolmin has been attracting a diverse crowd of visitors from around the world for over a decade. The atmosphere was lively this year as well when the Soča Outdoor Festival opened the festival season at the end of June. This year marks the 12th running of the MetalDays event and the 16th running of Sajeta Creative Camp. In mid-August, the festival season in Tolmin will end with the Overjam International Reggae Festival.





TEN MUST-HAVE SOUVENIRS FROM SLOVENIA  
**Forget me not**

NATAŠA BUŠLJETA





It is always a nice gesture to bring something back from your trip for someone special or just to remember the good time one had. The offer is always substantial, and varies so much it can be hard to recognise what's local in a foreign place. So we take this hard choice off your shoulders and pick ten best Slovenian souvenirs.

Slovenia takes great care to maintain the highest possible quality of souvenirs. There are two brand labels that help visitors to recognise truly creative souvenirs.

Top-quality handicrafts carry the distinctive mark 'Rokodelstvo-Art&Craft-Slovenija'. This means that the products are still made by many handcrafters working to keep the various old local and regional traditions alive.

The other group are souvenir-themed products of the national brand I feel Slovenia. These souvenirs are detached from the cultural heritage and represent modern tokens of economic, social and spiritual aspirations of modern-day Slovenia.

**TUCK THESE ITEMS IN YOUR SUITCASE AND FEEL SLOVENIA AT HOME**

## 1. PAINTED PANELS FROM BEE HIVES

**The most original Slovenian tourist souvenir is a wooden panel of bee hive with traditional folklore images.**

The smooth wooden panels on the front of bee houses posed a challenge for numerous folk artists, and this gave rise to fascinating images that turned simple bee houses into veritable open-air art galleries. It is fascinating and reflects the priorities, beliefs and prejudices of the community in which the panels were painted, as well as some historical events. Slovenia's museums have preserved a good number of original paintings from which countless replicas have been made.

## 2. SLOVENIAN HONEY

Slovenia is home to a number of excellent beekeepers, whose honey, mead and other apiary products are a significant part of Slovenia's all-natural delicacies. From the middle of September 2009 it is possible to buy Slovenian honey as a product of protected geographical indication, ensuring the highest quality of our honey. Slovenian beekeepers fill honey in the traditional jar that has the original form and volume of 720 ml.





### 3. PREŠEREN FIGS

The life of the greatest Slovenia poet Dr. France Prešeren (1800 – 1849) inspired the top-quality confectionery product 'Prešeren Figs'. It is said that the poet would often carry dried figs in his coat pocket and children, knowing this, would call after him 'Doctor, figs, figs!' Today you can relive the story with dried figs dipped in dark and white chocolate. They are very tasteful souvenir which is difficult to bring home intact.

### 4. ROGAŠKA CRYSTAL

**Designing and making crystal ware has almost 350 years of tradition in Slovenia.**

In the area of Trebuša, Pohorje and Kozjansko you can still find the so-called forest glass huts. So crystal, of a high quality, made into goblets, plates, beads and household décor can be perfect souvenirs for reasonable prices. And trust me, the Rogaska Crystal glass makes all wine taste better.

### 5. IDRIJA LACE

Located some 50 km west of Ljubljana, the town of Idrija is largely known for two things: mercury and lace. Although both undoubtedly make fine gifts for friends and family back home, the lace industry has apparently done a much better job promoting itself and is widely recognised as producing some of the highest quality lace in the world. There is a surprising variety of lace goods - from simple cloths and handkerchiefs to gloves, necklaces and even earrings.

### 6. SEČOVLJE SALT FLOWER

**When discussing which souvenirs are most typical of Slovenia, one of mentioned item is salt.**

More specifically, salt from the centuries old Sečovlje salt pans on the coast south of Portorož. While it's technically the same stuff you find on every dinner table in the world, the location and traditional production methods give it a recognisably unique flavour. It's well-known among gourmands worldwide, and as far away as Japan some high-end sushi restaurants use it exclusively.







### 7. WISHING BELL FROM BLED

Touristic town Bled in Gorenjska region was among the first to further the development of tourism. The very first graphic depiction of Lake Bled with the church on the island and the castle perched above the lake was made as early as 1851 and those counts as one of the earliest souvenirs. The modern souvenir of Bled is the wishing bell. It is a miniature copy of the bell hanging in the church tower on the island of Lake Bled, which visitors ring so that their wishes come true.

### 8. PLEČNIK CANDLEHOLDER

In Kropa, the old centre of nail making and blacksmithing, skilled hands forge lovely handheld candleholders to the design of the world-famous Slovenian architect Jože Plečnik (1872 – 1957).

### 9. FELT SLIPPERS

Felt is the material that comes from the indigenous Jezersko-Solčava sheep breed. Among functional and decorative felt products slippers are among the most Slovenian. Everyone who enters a Slovenian home must change his shoes for slippers not to bring in dirt from outside.

### 10. I FEEL SLOVENIA EXCLUSIVE ITEMS

The line of 'I feel Slovenia' products is representing the modern offer of quality souvenirs.

Visitors can choose among a variety of collectable items like souvenir spoon, cup, wooden magnet or small glass or decide for all time favourite T-shirt.



## BORIS KOŠUTA, THE PRESIDENT OF THE PROFESSIONAL GOLFERS' ASSOCIATION OF SLOVENIA

# **“Slovenia has great potential with its golf courses and in teaching golf”**

DANILO MAŠIČ, Photo: PERSONAL ARCHIVES



In mere seven days, visitors can see the most beautiful corners of Slovenia and play golf at a different location every day. And upon their return, they can write on Facebook that they know Slovenia very well,” says jokingly Boris Košuta, the President of the Professional Golfers' Association of Slovenia, during the interview.



**What kind of organisation is PGA Slovenia?**

The PGAS is an association of professional teachers and players of golf. It is organised in sections which are responsible for education, junior golf, competitions, clubs and courses, fitness and health, women's golf, senior golf and equipment. All members of the governing board, the supervisory board, disciplinary board and sections work for the PGAS on a voluntary basis.

**How does the Golf Association of Slovenia function?**

The Golf Association of Slovenia is an umbrella golf organisation and is a member of the European Golf Association. The GAS brings together clubs, while the PGAS brings together referees and golf course greenkeepers. It is a branch association which, with our help, conducts and manages the realisation of the strategy of development of golf in Slovenia.

**Your role model is the PGA of Sweden. How do you cooperate with them?**

That's true, the Professional Golfers' Association of Sweden is one of the best organised professional golf associations in the world. Our mentor is Mikael Sorling, the Chief Executive Officer of the PGA of Sweden, who visits us once a year. He greatly contributes to the development of our association with his experience. Sweden has 700,000 active golfers, who like to play golf outside Sweden since their golf season is short. They mostly play in traditional golf destinations, such as Spain, Portugal, Italy and Turkey. In future, we would like to attract a larger number of Swedish golfers to Slovenia, since in addition to playing golf at excellent courses, they can also visit attractive tourist destinations, such as Portorož, Goriška Brda, Terme Čatež and Bled. The air carrier, Adria Airways, is also working in our favour by opening a regular service between Ljubljana and Stockholm.

**Slovenia is otherwise very successful in golf; is there a future Tiger Woods to look out for?**

The PGAS is very proud of our member, Tim Gornik, who became a permanent participant at prestigious European competitions this year. However, the PGAS is primarily an organisation for golf teachers. If you wish to become a teacher and a PGA member, you have to undergo training and sit for exams. But you don't need to do this if you just want to be a golfer. Talent is required and above all a lot of practice. Tiger Woods can just play golf according to the PGA rules. But he could teach it only if he underwent suitable training. So, a licence is required for teaching golf, but for playing in tournaments, good results are required. The competitions are ranked and good results in a certain rank enable progression to a higher rank.

**Golf is said to be a gentleman's game. Why do you need a disciplinary board for?**

This is stipulated in the Societies Act. The PGA is here to educate new golfers about the techniques of playing together with the rules and etiquette on the course. A training package, which includes eight hours of training with a golf teacher, four hours with a referee and playing nine holes, was prepared by the Golf Association of Slovenia. Playing with a professional teacher after the completed training course is much more pleasurable because you are guided and can progress faster.

**What attracts foreigners to Slovenian golf courses the most?**

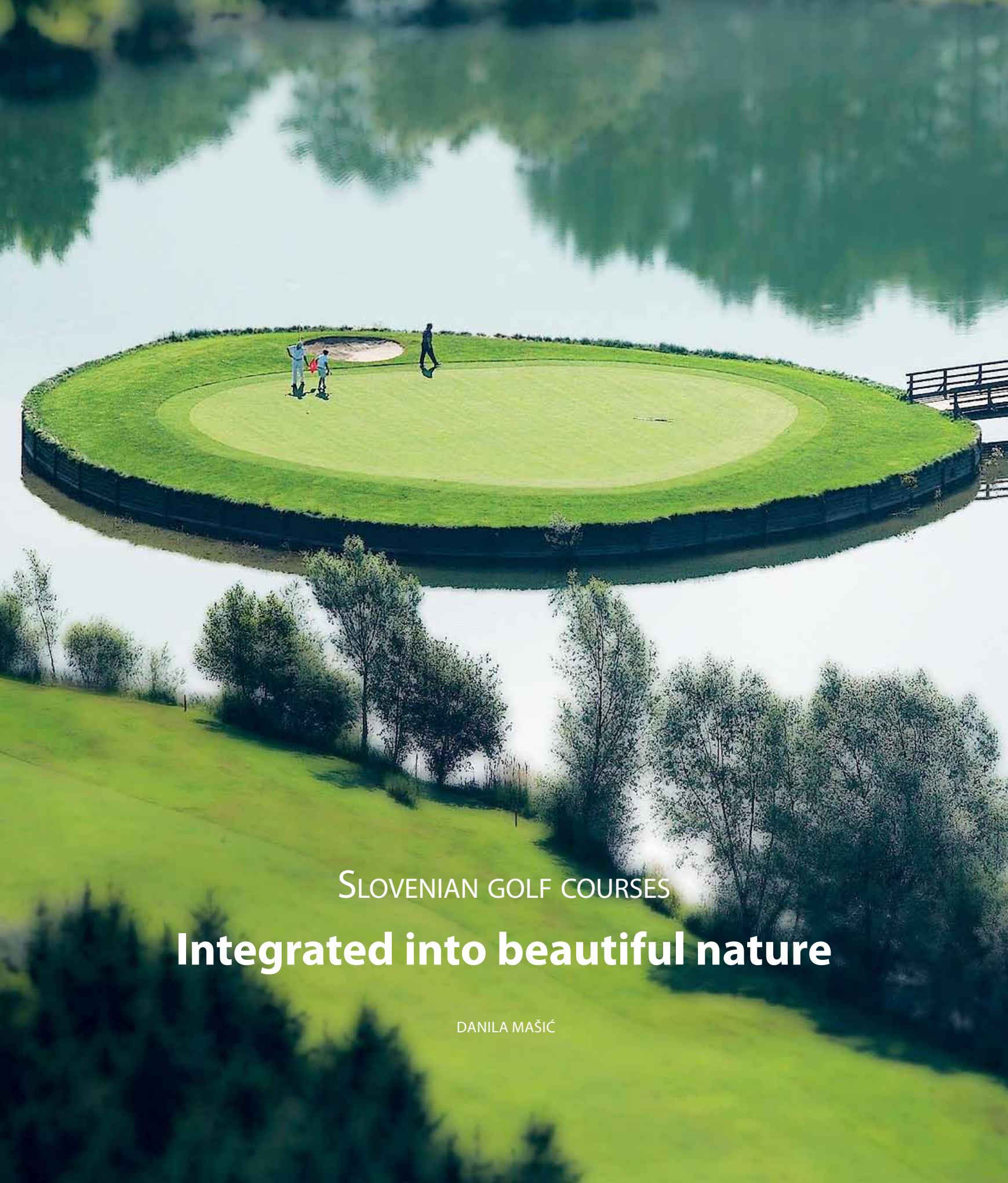
In addition to our beautiful courses, it's the fact that several different things can be combined with golf. I think Slovenia is perfect since it has many additional options for spending free time. Everything is within reach, which makes it a real paradise for golfers. I've just returned from South Africa where distances are great. When you arrive at your destination, you're already tired from travelling. It's similar in Iceland. Short distances are a great advantage in our case.

**In your opinion, what grabs the attention of a foreign golfer in Slovenia?**

Slovenia has wonderful golf courses and natural sights. Upon arrival, a guest can spend the night at Bled and play golf there. The next day, he can visit Ljubljana and the famous Jože Plečnik's Central Market. He can play golf on two nearby courses in Arboretum Volčji Potok or Smlednik. The next destination is the Primorska region with Postojna Cave and Lipica which has a golf course next to the stud farm. The guest then goes to Portorož and plays golf at the Adriatic golf course. The experience is topped with the delicious Primorska culinary offer and supreme wines. The Padriče golf course is near Trieste and Goriška Brda with exceptional tourist offerings are also in the vicinity. Then there is also Otočec, Ptuj and Moravske Toplice. All golf courses are surrounded by beautiful nature and many other tourist attractions.

**Is there any well-known professional athlete who plays golf?**

The most known professional sportsman who also plays golf and is our honorary member is the ice hockey player Anže Kopitar, who organises a charity golf tournament every year. Other known Slovenian top sportspeople who also play golf are Jure Košir, Primož Ulaga and Tone Vogrinec. The greatest promoter of golf in Sweden was Sven Tumba Johansson, the legend of Swedish ice hockey, who completely committed himself to golf after retiring from professional ice hockey. He wasn't active only in Sweden, but also in Estonia and other Baltic countries and Russia. He organised charity tournaments for children from socially deprived families and also some competitions which are still part of the European Tour. A good man, good organiser, good golfer and a popular Swede known round the world thus attracted to golf almost one million of his fellow countrymen.




SLOVENIAN GOLF COURSES

**Integrated into beautiful nature**

DANILO MAŠIĆ





There are two ways of creating a golf course in nature; the first one involves investing several million Euros, moving around many cubic metres of soil and creating a miracle. The second way is to incorporate the course into the natural terrain. Such a course has its distinctive character and is not imposed upon the landscape by force. You barely notice that it's a golf course. Slovenian golf courses are like that. We can call them supreme creations of nature. They are not the works of famous landscape designers, but parts of the natural environment.

All Slovenian golf courses sit in a natural environment. The course with the oldest golfing tradition in Slovenia is in Bled, where the concept was first developed in 1936 according to the design of Hungarian Desider Lauber. Two years later, the course was completed and brought joy to its visitors until the start of the Second World War when golf came to a halt. Bled opened again in 1973, with a total of 27 holes. You need a lot of energy and enthusiasm to go around it.

Like the course in Ptuj, the golf course at Mokrice Castle also has 18 holes. The golf courses in Lipica, Arboretum Volčji Potok, Zlati grič near Slovenske Konjice and Olimlje have nine holes and are less demanding; however, the extra time at your disposal can be used for engaging in other activities on offer in these places. Golf also connects players, since there is plenty of time to easily form business connections while golfing in the fresh air.

**Slovenia is the destination of more and more foreigners who, in addition to playing golf, also explore the country. Foreign visitors, who are golfers, visit Slovenia primarily on the basis of recommendations of their friends.**

All Slovenian golf courses sit in a natural environment, the same as this one in Ptuj.  
Photo: Barbara Jakše-Jeršič





## NEW UNDISCOVERED GOLF DESTINATION OF 2015

At the 2014 International Golf Travel Market (IGTM) at Lake Como in Italy, Slovenia received the award for the Undiscovered Golf Destination of 2015 conferred by the International Association of Golf Tour Operators (IAGTO). The award can be compared to the Oscars in the film industry. This was big news in Slovenia and it received even more attention abroad – which was also the set objective of the MM Turist travel agency in cooperation with Slovenian golf courses. The next goal is to bring the IGTM to Slovenia. The submission of the candidacy poses an opportunity to host the IGTM in Slovenia in 2017 and thus welcome the global golf travel industry. After several strenuous years, the MM Turist travel agency in cooperation with Slovenian golf courses managed to obtain this award, whereby the “I feel Slovenia” national brand is being proudly included in all presentations. In 2006, the MM Turist travel agency specialised in golf, and since then it has been organising trips abroad for Slovenians under the PAR3 brand and welcoming guests from abroad to Slovenia under the GolfSlovenia brand. Their website, [golf-slovenia.net](http://golf-slovenia.net), is the best ranked Slovenian website for golf on the Google browser.



Since 2006, the travel agency has also been a member of the International Association of Golf Tour Operators (IAGTO), within which it represents Slovenia. The golf tour operators who are members of the IAGTO sell over 85 per cent of global golf tourism packages. All major world destinations which are renowned in the world of golf are featured at the annual International Golf Travel Market (IGTM) within the IAGTO. Some 1,400 major players in golf tourism participate annually at the International Golf Travel Market.

### **Žiga Osterc, Director of the Golf Department at MM Turist travel agency:**

“For some years, the MM Turist travel agency has been following golfers who come to Slovenia by their own private means of transport and also those who arrive by plane. Italians and Austrians arrive by vehicle, while golfers from Finland mostly arrive by plane, and to a minor extent also guests from the UK, Sweden and Denmark. We’ve had golfers from Singapore and Korea. I’m happy to say that they get excited about everything in Slovenia. Particularly because guests receive more than they expect. Slovenian golf courses are not the works of famous landscape designers, but parts of the natural environment. Golf can be played at tourist destinations abroad where the courses are frequently artificially sited in the environment, whereas our high-quality golf courses are above all natural – and in keeping with nature since here in Slovenia nature offers everything you need for a golf course.”

### **Slobodan Sibinčič, President of the PGA Supervisory Board and Honorary Consul General at the Consulate General of Sweden:**

“Danolf, the owner of a Belgium media house, and our partner at City Magazine, visited me a few times. I took them to Lipica and Postojna Cave. They were stunned by the fact that so many things could be seen in such a small area. After visiting Goriška Brda, I was asked to organise a meeting in Slovenia for their key clients to whom they wanted to introduce new products. They picked Slovenia because they would be able to really enjoy themselves during a short stay. Furthermore, almost every town in Slovenia can be reached within one hour’s drive. We have a mix of everything: good golf courses, beautiful natural sights and a good range of gastronomic offerings which is continuously improving.”


A kayaker wearing a red helmet and an orange jacket is navigating through white-water rapids. The kayaker is holding a black paddle and is surrounded by splashing water. The background shows a rocky riverbank and a clear blue sky.

ROCKS, RAPIDS AND RAVINES -  
MORE THAN AN ACTIVE HOLIDAY

**Kick start your adrenalin in Europe's  
outdoor adventure playground**

POLONA PREŠEREN





Can you imagine a summer holiday where instead of lying idly on the beach, you boldly take on a series of adrenalin-filled adventures? In Slovenia, more and more people are choosing action holidays – and there is an enormous choice.. Contact with nature: good. Level of adventure: high!

Slovenians are known for going beyond the boundaries. With numerous extreme adventures, we have moved the boundaries of what is possible. We climb places where no one has ever climbed before. We ski from where no one has ever skied before. We swim distances which have not been swum before. We cycle distances which others do not. We do not overcome basic natural laws and limitations of nature but we discover them. It is in our nature to explore extreme limits and we achieve top results at important competitions. Of course we are referring here to supreme sportspeople, but recreational enthusiasts can also experience many adrenalin-packed adventures.

In spring, the Lonely Planet Guide referred to Slovenia as the “Europe’s outdoor adventure playground”. “The Central European country of Slovenia packs an adventure-sports punch much greater than its diminutive size would suggest”, writes Steve Fallon, the author of the piece. He also describes the Alpine rivers and their rapids which are ideal for rafting and canyoning, and also mentions the excellent conditions for mountain bikers. “If you love the outdoors, it’s time you got acquainted with Europe’s adventure playground”, adds Fallon.

#### **WHAT GETS YOUR HEART PUMPING?**

An extreme sport is a general term for activities involving great speed, height, danger or any other acrobatics or adventure experience. Since a large quantity of the adrenalin hormone is generated while engaging in these sports, we also call them “adrenalin bombs”. Enthusiasts who engage in these activities can even become adrenalin junkies.

Kayaking on the Soča.  
Photo: [www.slovenia.info](http://www.slovenia.info), Aleš Fevžer

**Adrenalin sports are a significant part of Slovenia's tourist offer – an offer which is attracting adventurers from around the world. The natural features of the Slovenian landscape namely enable various adrenalin adventures.**

The best choice is to find a specialised agency or an outdoor centre which will provide for the safety aspect. Suitable equipment and expert guidance must be observed for ensuring the safety of activities. Many outdoor centres are located in the Gorenjska and Primorska regions, and elsewhere as well. The most diverse offering can be found in the area of Bovec, near Bled and Bohinj, in Kranjska Gora, the Koroška, Štajerska and Dolenjska regions, and in the area of Celje. Climbing areas are located on the edge of the Karst and in the Logar Valley.

So, are you up for the adventure? Let's see what adrenalin adventures can be experienced in Slovenia.

#### **WATER ADVENTURES**

*Rafting, kayaking* and *river-boarding* on the rapids of the Soča, Savinja and Krka rivers are very popular. Guided tours provide unforgettable adrenalin adventures with a great level of safety since the guides in the majority of sports centres have a lot of experience and use the best equipment.

*Canyoning* is somewhat more adventurous and involves discovering different stretches of a river, including underground sections which can be as deep as 40 metres. The tributaries of the Soča and Sava rivers, i.e. in the regions of Bovec and Bohinj respectively are perfect for canyoning.

#### **WITH OR WITHOUT A PARACHUTE**

*Parachuting* is no longer a sport for the special few and does not require any special skills as several companies offer tandem jumps with an experienced parachutist. The key to adrenalin pleasures is to overcome one's fear, since the adrenalin rush is proportionate to the amount of fear. One of the sports with the highest adrenalin rate is *base jumping*, which is relatively popular in Slovenia. The most dangerous and, consequently, the most appealing jump 'exit' in Slovenia is believed to be the "Triglav Sphinx" rock wall. Due to safety considerations think twice before doing this.

#### **CLIMBING**

Rock climbing provides a particular adrenalin rush, and many have become so hooked on the sport after their first climb that this is all they want to do in terms of sports. Since there is large number of climbing enthusiasts in Slovenia, it's easiest to make arrangements with one of the climbing organisations or agencies.

In winter time, it is possible to go *ice climbing* on frozen waterfalls and iced sections of ravines, where climbers make use of only a few ice climbing accessories or tools, and crampons attached to their boots. The difficulty of individual climbs depends on the incline of the icy surface, its shape and other conditions affecting the frozen waterfall.

#### **ADRENALIN AND ADVENTURE PARKS**

Adrenalin parks are becoming increasingly popular in Slovenia. You can find them in all regions. The most popular ones are in Kranjska Gora, near Tržič and Ljubljana, at the confluence of the Tolminka River, in Vače etc. From a purely technical point of view, an adrenalin park is a polygon course raised between eight to fourteen metres above the ground, consisting of various challenges for either individuals or groups (in North America, adrenalin parks are referred to as challenge courses). They proved to be extremely valuable in terms of experience and active learning, where each individual and their team(s) solve tasks in a way that suits them best.

#### **MOUNTAIN BIKING**

Another very popular activity is mountain biking. The ultimate experience is of course the downhill. It requires a lot of physical strength and courage. Downhill bike parks, which in addition to good fitness require the use of protective equipment and where a great deal of experience is a must, can be found at the famous ski resorts in Kranjska Gora, Krvavec, Maribor and Kope.

#### **ZIPLINE**

Ziplining is all about a steel cable. This is in essence a thrilling outdoor activity during which a person glides along a cable from one embankment to another. The longest zipline and probably the most picturesque one is in Bovec, which stretches over the unspoilt Učja Canyon. Eight steel cables between 250 and 400 metres long are suspended over a vertical incline of 150 metres above the Učja River.





Rock climbing provides a particular adrenalin rush, and many have become so hooked on the sport after their first climb that this is all they want to do in terms of sports.  
Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik



# CYCLING ROUTES THROUGH THE PREKMURJE REGION

## New trails over picturesque plains

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ

Slovenia is evolving into one of the most cyclist-friendly countries in Europe.  
Photo: [www.slovenia.info](http://www.slovenia.info), Bobo



A large number of new cycling routes extending over 530 kilometres have transformed Prekmurje in the east of Slovenia into a popular tourist cycling destination. Cycling along these trails is the best way of discovering this flat yet mysterious part of Slovenia. The construction of the routes in Prekmurje was the result of the European project for constructing cycling paths and routes, whose aim was to improve safety and respect of cyclists.

On the new routes, cycling enthusiasts travel separate from other traffic where this is possible, and above all can cover distances between different towns faster. This increases the attractiveness of the region for cyclists, and enhances sports and recreation facilities in this area which borders on Austria, Hungary and Croatia. It improves town and suburban connections and reduces the negative impact on the environment. Recreational cyclists agree that Slovenia is evolving into one of the most cyclist-friendly countries in Europe.

### PANNONIAN VILLAGE

It is cyclists who are becoming the most frequent guests in the Pannonian Village, a new settlement of houses and apartments in the village of Tešanovci in the vicinity of Moravske Toplice. The village is situated on the edge of the Prekmurje plains, only a few steps away from the Livada golf course (Terme 3000). The settlement is composed of seven straw-roofed Prekmurje-style houses made of brick and plastered with clay. The interior features handmade solid furniture; the warmth of the brushed wood and a special decorative touch effectively complement the spirit of the authentic Prekmurje tradition. The sense of originality and peculiarity of the Pannonian Village are supplemented by the views over the vast Prekmurje fields.

Guests visiting the village are usually content with their stay, the proof of which are the following statements:

"It is always nice to stay in traditional houses made of wood and natural materials. Houses are clean, big enough, in very good loca-



Storks in Pomurje.  
Photo: [www.slovenia.info](http://www.slovenia.info), Aleš Fevžer

tion: 1.5 km from pools and all around are natural beauty spots and particularly good restaurants. I really recommend this warm and homely place."

"Newly built traditional Pannonian-style houses. Excellent finish and interior design. Located in a nice and flat agricultural area close to the biggest spa complex in the eastern part of Slovenia. A 5-minute walk to Oaza, a very nice restaurant, serving a variety of local and international dishes."

## SLOVENIAN WORKS OF ART FROM YUGOSLAV DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS

# Ambassadors of Art

URŠKA KRAMBERGER MENDEK,  
Photo: NATIONAL GALLERY ARCHIVES



France Mihelič: *Musicians*. Oil, canvas, from the residence of the former SFRY in Paris.



An exhibition “The Return of Ambassadors of Art – Works of Art from the Yugoslav Succession” has opened in the National Gallery of Slovenia in Ljubljana. It is the exhibition of important Slovenian works of art once displayed in diplomatic missions of the former Yugoslavia. Some 200 works of art have been gradually brought back to Slovenia since 2003.

#### LONG AND DIFFICULT JOURNEY

The journey to obtain these works of art was long and strenuous. Only ten years after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the Agreement on Succession Issues was signed, which among others determined the distribution of diplomatic and consular property of the former country abroad, including over 2,000 works of art housed in them.

#### The first 13 works of art from Washington and Paris were returned to Slovenia in 2003.

To this date, some 200 works by Slovenian artists have been returned, most of them came from neighbouring countries where works by Slovenian artists most frequently embellished the diplomatic premises.

The former Yugoslav consulate general in Trieste housed particularly the works of Slovenian artists living in the Trieste region, such as Lojze Spacal, Avgust Černigoj, Bogdan Grom, Jože Cesar and Avrelj Lukežič. At this point, the priceless works by the Impressionists, which were housed at the residence of the diplomatic mission in Paris, must be highlighted. The paintings by Matija Jama, Spring Birches, and Matej Sternen, Interior, are two of the most important pieces of Slovenian art at the diplomatic missions of the former state.

#### AMBASSADORS OF ART ON DISPLAY

The exceptional place and significance of fine arts arise from the simple fact that such pieces are permanently on display at the premises visited not only by citizens, but also by important personalities of the host country and other representatives of the diplomatic community.

Slovenia has been striving for a while to organise an exhibition which would display the results of several years' efforts for the return of this Slovenian part of cultural heritage.

#### The exhibition which will be open until 6 September features 68 works of art by 34 Slovenian artists.

The broader public can now view these beautiful masterpieces which once decorated the walls of buildings at prestigious locations around the world. The exhibition includes the selected works once displayed at diplomatic missions and consular posts of the former country in Berlin, Bern, Budapest, Vienna, Graz, The Hague, London, Madrid, Milan, Paris, Prague, Rome, Thessaloniki, Stockholm, Trieste, Warsaw and Zurich.

All the works of art returned to Slovenia so far will be later exhibited at diplomatic missions of Slovenia abroad. Ambassadors of art will be part of our cultural heritage, a part of the face we show the world again.

SLOVENIAN DAY AT EXPO 2015

**Green, active, healthy**

**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**

LIVIJA KOVAČ KOSTANTINVIČ, Photo: STA







On the 19th June, Slovenia celebrated 'Slovenian National Day' at EXPO 2015 in Milan.

The main topic of the world exhibition is food and the search by the world for solutions to global challenges and an answer to how to provide enough food of the right quality while maintaining sustainable usage of sources of production, of water and agricultural land, while still maintaining the environment.

Among 144 countries participating at Milan Expo 2015 from 1 May until 31 October 2015, Slovenia is presenting itself with an independent pavilion and the motto "I feel Slovenia: Green.Active.Healthy.". The exhibition site of 800 m<sup>2</sup> large Slovenian Pavilion designed by SoNo Architects and constructed by Lumar IG is well located and positioned in the centre of the Expo events. Approximately 4,000 visitors visit the Slovenian Pavilion on a daily basis, and as expected by the organizers, as many as 20 million people will visit the world exhibition.

**Slovenia presents its natural features and riches at this exhibition, particularly because awareness and a sustainable environment are urgently needed for the maintenance of Slovenia's greatest competitive advantage: Slovenia's "green credentials".**

Slovenia is presenting itself in its permanent exhibition via five themes: Salt production, bees, thermal waters and mineral waters, trekking and cycling, and carbon footprint measurement. The events in the pavilion are made more dynamic with an intensive six month programme organised by ten Slovenian regions.

#### **THE NATIONAL DAY**

It was an opportunity to outstand among the 144 participants. The programme included the visit of Slovenia's high political representatives, business delegations and our best sportswoman Tina Maze



who is also the Slovenian ambassador on EXPO. For the EXPO visitors a diverse cultural and artistic programme was organised and the highlight was the evening concert by Perpetuum Jazzile.

### **BUSINESS CENTRE OF THE WORLD**

Expo 2015 in Milan offers many opportunities to the Slovenian economy for presentation and international participation. Aiming at providing an efficient coordination and assistance to Slovenian companies, the Business Centre has been established in the Slovenian Pavilion by the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology and SPIRIT Slovenia. The operation of the Slovenia Business Centre has exceeded expectations and from the opening of

the world's exhibition until today, as many as 619 companies have been involved in various ways in the presentation of Slovenia at Expo 2015.

### **IMPORTANT GLOBAL CHALLENGES**

The Prime Minister and other politicians have been pleased with attendance at the exhibition. Great attention has been paid by the media, both at home and abroad, to the participation of Tina Maze, the famous Alpine skier, who together with footballer Samir Handanović has been given the role of Slovenian ambassador at Expo Milano 2015.



The programme in front of the Slovenian pavilion culminated in a concert by the world-renowned Slovenian a cappella choir Perpetuum Jazzile.  
Photo: STA





MILANO 2015

FEEDING THE PLANET  
ENERGY FOR LIFE**Dr Miro Celar, Prime Minister:**

"We are faced with numerous challenges, such as the growth of the world population, unhealthy diets, climate change, the lack of food and raw materials or their scarcity, and the decline in biodiversity to name just a few. All of these issues have a serious impact on the ability of the environment to renew itself and providing to mankind, health, food, and its very existence. The destruction of the environment and improper use of land have a negative impact on mankind and to the life of current and future generations and, of course, to the competitiveness of the economy. These are important global issues which individual countries should not address individually but our collective and coordinated action is needed, both at the regional and global level. And we must not forget that everybody, each of us, at any moment and in every location, may provide a contribution to the better world. Let EXPO Milano 2015 which presents the greatest world achievements in the fields of economy, science, culture, agriculture and sports provide an inspiration for various activities which may contribute to the respect for environmental sustainability and to the achievement of the sustainable development of the world - for our world of today and for future generations."

**Zdravko Počivalšek, Minister of Economic Development and Technology:**

"By attending the exhibition we wish to strengthen the recognition of our national brand "I feel SLOVEnia and increase the reputation of Slovenia. Our presence here increases the presence of Slovenian products and services on the Italian market and in the world and promotes Slovenia as a tourist destination. We are committed to sustainable development which is not an obstacle of greater competitiveness but its main pillar. Organised and healthy environment, modern logistics, business infrastructure, safety, excellent geographical and strategic position, excellent conditions for living and work and last but not least social services rendered at the highest level are the competitive advantages of our Slovenia." The Minister has also expressed a wish for Slovenian companies to take the advantage of the potentials provided by the Slovenian Pavilion and the EXPO Milan 2015 world exhibition as a whole in the direction of greater economic cooperation in the international arena.

**Jerneja Lampret, the General Commissioner of the Slovenia's presence at EXPO Milan 2015:**

"The EXPO world exhibition is a special format where the most recognised world leaders meet, the greatest celebrities, the most renowned scientists, daily visitors - EXPO is a world in one piece and Slovenia is very well seen in this world. For all of us who work in the pavilion on a daily basis it is a great honour to present our Slovenia with such an interesting facility. We are pleased to accept a very frequent comment given by co-participating countries at EXPO which are glad to say that the Slovenian Pavilion is the "loudest pavilion". The live events are co-designed together with Slovenian regions and the voice of Slovenia is constantly heard along the main street of EXPO 2015. It is an extraordinary experience."

**Gorazd Skrt, Slovenian Pavilion's Director:**

"The Slovenia's presentation at the EXPO has proved to be an excellent decision given the vicinity of the location and the significance of the Italian market for the Slovenian tourism and economy, in particular. The world exhibition provides us with a unique opportunity to present Slovenia as green, active and healthy destination not only to Italians but also to the visitors of the world and to invite them to visit us by driving only few hours. Approximately 80,000 visitors visit the EXPO on a daily basis, and Slovenia is presented to around four thousand daily visitors. Many of them have already visited Slovenia but there are also many that have heard of Slovenia for the first time."

A man in a dark suit and patterned tie is speaking at a podium. He is looking to his left. The background is a light blue screen with a large circular logo and the text "Bled Strategic Forum".

ALAIN BRIAN BERGANT,  
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE BLED STRATEGIC FORUM

**“Not the globalisation of Bled, but  
the bledalisation of the globe”**

UROŠ MAHKOVEC, Photo: STA



This year's Bled Strategic Forum (BSF) is marking its 10th anniversary. Over the years, the event has become one of the most visible international forums and has gained its reputation in the region and the world. The Forum has developed into a platform for in-depth strategic discussion among decision-makers in the public and private sectors about the major challenges facing Europe and the world in the 21st century.

**After ten years of activities, we can probably already speak about a certain tradition of the BSF. How can we define it?**

The BSF reflects the foreign policy priorities and the position of Slovenia in the world, since in terms of its topics it includes key fields in which Slovenia is most active. Due to topicality of contents, possibilities of bilateral meetings, discussions at the highest level and pleasant surroundings, more and more world leaders, businesspeople, representatives of the academic sphere, think tanks, media and young people attend the Forum, which is a joint project of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. This is a perfect opportunity for forming and enhancing not only political and business connections, but also the reinforcement of Slovenia's role in the international community. The BSF is a high-profile media event enabling all-round promotion of Slovenia and the "I feel Slovenia" brand.

**When describing the BSF contents and Bled two years ago, one of our presenters even said that we shouldn't speak about the globalisation of Bled but about the *bledalisation* of the globe.**

The Forum is an opportunity for making contacts between Slovenian and foreign businesspeople and it is also the place of searching successful solutions for a restart of the economy, formation of new jobs and the stabilisation of the financial system. We strive to further enhance our circle of cooperation with our existing partners and to expand this with new, domestic and foreign partners.

**What are the key highlights of this year's programme?**

**The topic of this year's Forum is the *Visions of New Partnerships*.**

The 10th BSF will take place in a year in which the international community marks many important anniversaries, including 70 years since signing the Charter of the United Nations, 40 years since signing the Helsinki Final Act on Security and Co-operation in Europe and 20 years since the atrocities in Srebrenica. In light of these anniversaries, the BSF will focus on the importance and role of partnerships as a means of efficient attainment of common objectives. It will discuss the topical issues of peace and security, business and economic cooperation, development and human rights. In addition to the central Forum, the Business Bled Strategic Forum and the Young Bled Strategic Forum will also take place.

**Discussion on the new global order will be at the centre of the Leaders' Panel held under the patronage of the President of the Republic of Slovenia.**

This will be an opportunity to critically assess the current political and security plus economic and financial conditions in the world. We will further discuss the effectiveness of international organisations in the changing security environment and the question of whether the current international security structure is still adequate.

The main panel will be followed by the panel, Ending Sexual Violence in Conflict, which will be based on the findings of the panel, the International Criminal Justice: Justice as a Precondition for a Propitious Future from 2013, and particularly the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict which took place in London in 2014, and stressed the need for the implementation of international law and the challenges of discussion at the national level.

We will also focus on the Mediterranean, which is again at the centre of attention and on the international political agenda since it is experiencing one of the most perilous and challenging periods of the last two decades. In this context, the intercultural dialogue based on joint values and mutual respect of citizens of Mediterranean coun-

tries remains an important tool for diminishing the gap between the countries on both sides of the Mediterranean. The discussion, *Bridges of the Mediterranean: The Power of Intercultural Dialogue*, will thus include current topics in the region, such as migrations, foreign fighters, and similar. The panel, *Development Is a Global Partnership*, will discuss key topics of the European Year for Development and events relating to the development agenda after 2015.

**The demographic changes are undoubtedly some of the greatest challenges of recent years.**

During the discussion, *Strengthening the Fight against Impunity through Partnerships and Cooperation*, the participants will focus on the rule of law, fight against impunity for executed atrocities and the promotion of the international criminal justice. In addition to political and security issues, social and business topics are also discussed within the Forum.

**Demographic changes are definitely among the greatest challenges in this field in recent years.**

The discussion, *The Ageing Society and Development: Is Progress without Change Possible*, will be a continuation of the last year's discussion in light of the European Year for Development and the preparation of the new development agenda directed towards the problem of ageing in reference to the development. The already traditional discussion on the topic of Western Balkans will provide new views since it will be discussed from the perspective of the geostrategic interest of global players.

As part of the accompanying events, a Night-Owl Session and a Morning Session will also be organised. The first one will be organised in cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and will discuss strategic forecasts, while in a similar manner to last year the other will focus on Arts and Sports: Building Partnerships beyond International Relations.

**Will this year's attendance be comparable to previous years?**

The number of participants is growing every year also because of the fact that the main political forum was supplemented by a forum

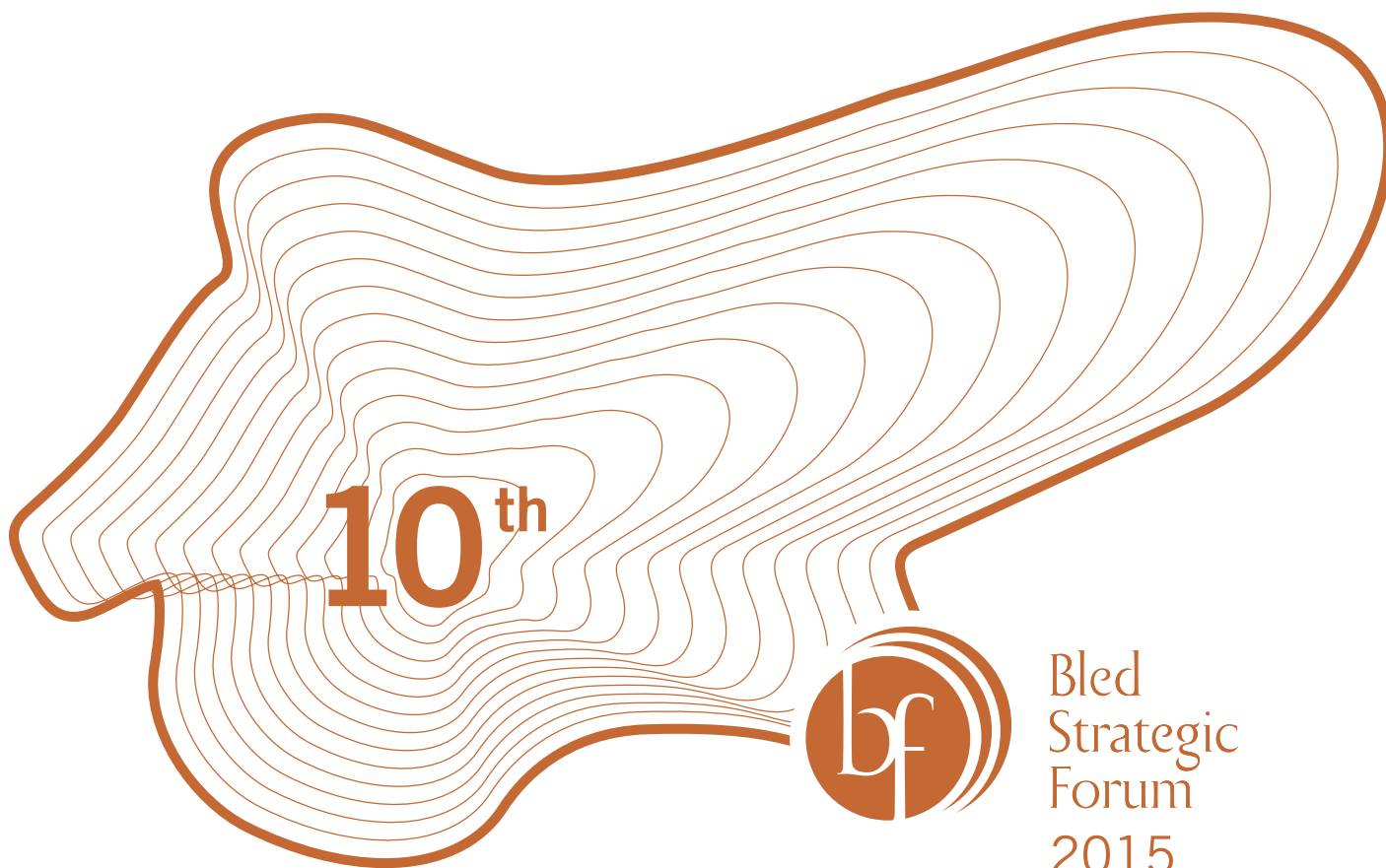
for the youth four years ago and a business forum three years ago. Some 500 guests from 65 countries came last year, and an increasing interest in the Forum has also been detected among the domestic and foreign press. The number of the latter depends particularly on the attendance of interesting and esteemed high-profile guests from abroad. Since this year's tenth BSF marks a small anniversary, we expect even more high guests the proof of which is the number of confirmations we've received so far.

**We expect state presidents and prime ministers, ministers of foreign affairs and others, general secretaries and high representatives of international organisations, esteemed businesspeople, representatives of non-governmental organisations and from the academic sphere and young future leaders.**

**The tenth edition of the Forum will also be an opportunity to think about a new vision.**

Our vision is that the BSF would further add to its quality, attendance of high-ranking guests from the political and business spheres and to attract more young leaders. When preparing new contents, we want to be bold and include in the agenda provocative topics as well to make the Forum even more interactive, attractive and recognisable in the long term. We also want to draw the BSF closer to the Slovenian public and connect with other respected forums. After all, this is also compliant with this year's topic of the Forum. In addition to the Forum, we will also conclude a memorandum on cooperation with the OECD Forum in Paris and the Globsec Global Security Forum in Bratislava. We already successfully cooperate as partners with numerous similar conferences, such as the Vienna Economic Forum, IBDE from London and the Marmara Group Foundation from Istanbul. We also cooperate with the IEDC-Bled School of Management and international organisations, including the EU, NATO, OECD, OSCE and the UN. When forming the contents of the Business Forum, we will further strive to enhance our partnership cooperation with Slovenian and foreign companies.





## Visions of New Partnerships

31 August - 1 September 2015

