

Sinfo

November-December

The Best from Slovenia

IN FOCUS

From yesterday till
today and tomorrow

I FEEL
SLOVENIA



**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**

Sinfo

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Editor-in-Chief
Petra Ložar

Executive Editor
Tanja Glogovčan

Editorial Board
Danila Golob, Polona Prešeren, Vesna
Žarkovič, Irena Kogoj, Livija Kovač
Kostantinovič, Uroš Mahkovec, Janja Klasinc

Design
Irena Kogoj

Photo Editor
Foto format d.o.o.

Photo on the front page
Tamino Petelinšek/STA

Translation
Secretariat-General of the Government of
the Republic of Slovenia, Translation and
Interpretation Division, DZTPS

Language editing
Amidas

Copy writer editing
Paul Steed

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FROM YESTERDAY TILL TODAY AND TOMORROW

In this last issue of *Sinfo* for 2017 we end with a final flourish on content we have shared with you over the year.

We conclude the story of Jože Plečnik, whose architecture is eternal. We have also been reporting on Slovenia's successes in tourism in all four seasons. The Slovenian Tourist Board (STB) is the recipient of a prestigious prize in the field of sustainable tourism, the World Legacy Award, which is awarded by National Geographic. The prize was awarded in the category of sustainable destination management. The fact that Slovenia is truly innovative in tourism is demonstrated by the two recipients of Sejalec prizes, awards given by STB for creative and innovative tourism achievements that contribute to greater recognition of Slovenian tourism and our country. This year the recipients are the Green Gold Beer Fountain and EXPO Postojna Cave Karst.

We also focused a great deal of attention on success stories in the business sphere. We even devoted an issue to Slovenian science, and also to literature. Ana Roš of Hiša Franko was named The World's Best Female Chef of this year by The World's 50 Best Restaurants organisation. Meanwhile, sport has been another run of successes, and not just in winter sports. This year Slovenia is the European basketball champion, and we are shining in chess, sports climbing and many other disciplines.

Next year we will be focusing on cultural tourism, and 2018 is the European Year of Cultural Heritage. The coming year will also be dedicated to the memory of the great writer Ivan Cankar, who died in 1918.

And of course, all of us who are working to make *Sinfo* an interesting and visually attractive magazine wish you the very best for 2018. We hope you enjoy the warmth of Christmas and the New Year together with those you love.

Tanja Glogovčan, Executive Editor

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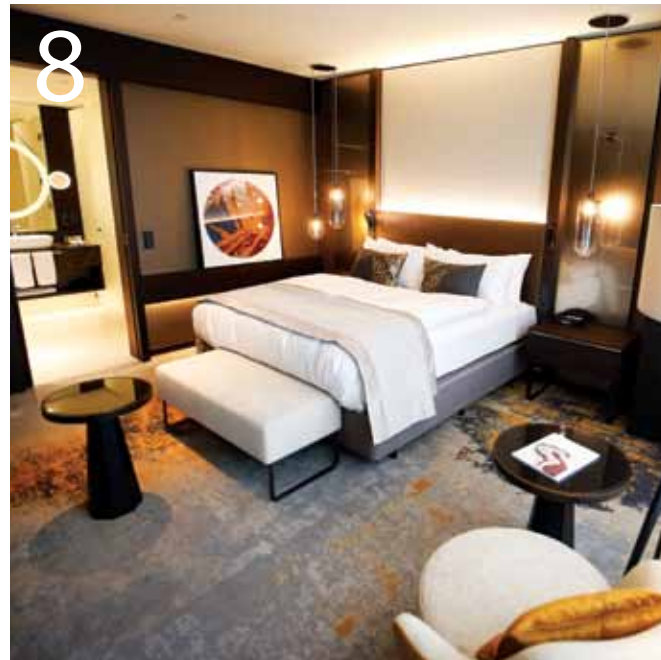
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May cultural heritage inspire and enrich you, and enliven your daily life.

Enjoy in green colours!

Enjoy with your dearest!

May the coming year see the realisation of all your plans and ideas.

Start doing what you thought you were not able to.

Make new memories!

Take some time for yourself and enjoy unspoilt nature.

Be creative, full of new ideas and confidence.

Spread good vibes!

It's not enough to be good, let's be original.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Sinfo Editorial Board

NEW REALITIES

The challenges of the collaborative economy in tourism

JASNA RADIČ



Backpackers like to visit Ljubljana as it is nice also for young people and offers a lot of great hostels.
Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

The world is changing rapidly owing to globalisation, digitalisation and inspired innovations that are influencing established consumer habits and ways of doing business. One of the sectors that is feeling most these changes most intensively is tourism, which is in turn adapting very quickly.

The far-reaching shifts in this sector are being spurred principally by the phenomena of the collaborative economy and digitalisation. Consumer behaviour today is marked by access to online networks and information. Their needs, wishes and motivations have thus changed distinctly, and consumers are no longer satisfied with the conventional tourism offer.

More than at any other time, global supply and demand are now linked and interdependent, while the modern technological platforms that connect them are taking on the roles of various stakeholders in tourism services, and are thus influencing consumer habits.

The platforms that connect supply and demand perform the roles of accommodation providers, travel agents, taxi services, guides and chefs (as seen with Airbnb, Couchsurfing, Uber, Blablacar, EatWith, ToursByLocals and so on).

We need to view these new challenges as an opportunity. We need to seek out methods of how to adapt to the new reality, without forgetting the foundations on which modern society was established.

SHARING, COOPERATION OR SIMPLY BUSINESS?

Tourism is a business with many stakeholders in Slovenia, and one that is basing its identity on the concept of sustainability. This country is attractive to tourists due to its natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. The issue of development and goals in tourism

is therefore a highly significant. On Thursday, 5 October 2017 the Slovenian Government adopted the Sustainable Development Strategy for Slovenian Tourism 2017-2021. This document proposes the vision of Slovenia as a global green boutique destination for perceptive guests who are seeking a diverse and active experience, along with peace and personal well-being.

Given the importance of this sector, tourism was an important part of the discussions at this year's Bled Strategic Forum (BSF), which has been organised for 12 years running by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Under the umbrella theme of "New realities," the discussions were focused on adapting to new realities and promoting innovation for an integrated and sustainable future. For the fourth year running there was a panel on tourism at BSF. In view of the challenges facing Slovenia, the region and the world in this area, the panel discussion bore the title "The collaborative economy: sharing, cooperation or simply business?"

At the session we asked the question when does this involve sharing or cooperation and when is it business, or can we speak of a "new economy" or "collaborative economy," or in all cases does it simply involve business and various forms of business operation in ways that allow multinationals to profit? All successful countries are aware that you need to adhere to the fair rules of the game for all stakeholders in the existing system, that it is important to establish effective cooperation in the process of seeking solutions and effective adaptation to new situations on the national and regional levels.

Those who took part in the discussion on the panel on tourism were also unanimous in the opinion that tourism will

need to adapt to this new reality and the process of digitalisation, and to accept new actors in the tourism market.

Something of vital importance here is establishing standard rules and frameworks for all business operators and providers of goods and services in the market.

Some well-known, distinguished experts from Slovenia and abroad took part in the discussion. The keynote address on the collaborative economy in tourism was provided by Manolis Psaros, CEO of the Toposophy, internationally acclaimed agency for destination management and marketing that is based in Greece, who highlighted some examples of best practices in organising this phenomenon in certain countries and cities. He emphasised that today this is the reality which we cannot deny or decide whether or not to accept. It is a fact that we must face, although it has both positive and negative sides. Christian de Barrin, the director of the European hotel association HOTREC (Hotels, Restaurants and Cafés in Europe), pointed out that hotels do not fear competition, but we need to prevent unfair competition and the grey market, which has flourished owing to these new platforms. He anticipates that countries will establish standard rules for all providers of tourist accommodation. Carlos Villaro Lassen, Secretary General of the EHHA (European Holiday Home Association; the association includes the companies Airbnb, HomeAway, Interhome, TripAdvisor, and Smartflats.be) stressed the importance of renting out holiday homes as a supplement to existing tourist facilities, and noted their importance and advantages for certain target groups. The Director for Europe, Middle East and Africa at the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), Daniela Wagner, talked about the travel habits of tourists from Asia and various aspects of the collaborative economy. A specific problem was highlighted by the representative of the city of Vienna, Klemens Himpele, who pointed out that companies such as Airbnb should provide cities and states with data on their business partners in individual destinations (everyone offering their own accommodation capacities via the business platforms). This is the only way that would ensure the payment of all the taxes, as well as the capture of actual data on tourist overnight stays. Providing these data would enable states and cities to carry out more effective monitoring, and in that way prevent the grey market and tax evasion. The difficulty lies in the fact that these kinds of companies do not want to submit data,

although they are willing to conclude special agreements with individual states and cities. We talked to Janja Hojnik of the Faculty of Law at the University of Maribor about the legal aspects of the functioning of a collaborative economy, and about regulation of that area.

FACING THE CHALLENGES IN TOURISM

The Slovenian Minister of Economic Development and Technology, Zdravko Počivalšek, pointed out that today there is a need to be focused, innovative and open to the new realities of the market. At the same time it is vital to establish standard criteria and regulations for all providers of goods and services. In Slovenia we wish to create a name for ourselves as a hospitable country with high standards of sustainable practices that accepts innovations and the collaborative economy, but with great responsibility and in a way where all stakeholders gain. What began as sharing, for instance one's home to improve the household budget and the experience of foreign guests with regard to meeting local people, has today become big business. And where this involves business, we need adequate regulations and rules. This is the new reality which we must not and will not deny. Different countries and cities have reacted to it in different ways. But they are faced with the same challenges: How to deal with this new phenomenon? How to accept and regulate it? How to ensure appropriate fiscal contributions? How to enable consumer protection? How to guarantee safety?

Slovenia does not want to prevent or restrict such businesses, but wants to establish equal conditions and rules for all providers of goods and services in the market.

The Director General of the Slovenian Tourist Board, Maja Pak, also stressed at the BSF that platforms such as Airbnb are successful because they started offering special and different experiences that are unique and authentic. They have enabled visitors to get closer to the local people, and this is something that modern tourists are increasingly seeking. The collaborative economy, which to begin with was associated with backpackers from the very beginning, has today grown into a multi-billion euro business that exerts

increasing influence on existing tourism providers. The challenge for everyone involved in tourism lies in how to live with the new forms of collaborative economy and benefit from them. Of course, on the condition that the rules of the game are the same for everyone.

The round-table panel discussion was also joined by State Secretary Eva Štravs Podlogar. She underlined that offering private apartments and rooms for tourism is useful, especially in locations that lack "classic" tourist accommodation facilities. The effects for tourism are positive, particularly in terms of increasing the number of guests and their spending. The main drawback lies in the

fact that many providers are not appropriately registered, their business is not declared and they do not register their guests. This in turn leads to tax evasion and unfair competition. Registering the business of renting out rooms is very simple in Slovenia, so it is possible to pursue this business here on the basis of existing legislation. The role of the state lies principally in raising awareness among providers of tourism services and tightening supervision.

Based on an analysis of the situation in Member States, the European Commission decided to draw up guidelines for regulating the area of short-term renting out of accommodation marketed via platforms, which should be observed by all Member States.



The round table panellists (left to right): Christian de Barrin (HOTREC), Carlos Villaro Lassen (EHHA), Eva Štravs Podlogar (Min. Econ. Dev. and Tech.), Daniela Wagner (PATA), Klemens Himpele (Vienna), Janja Hojnik (Faculty of Law, Maribor). The panel was moderated by journalist Igor E. Bergant. Photo: Nino Verdnik



Nestled in a heritage-protected landscaped park in the centre of Portorož, the luxurious Hotel Kempinski Palace features seawater swimming pools, a vast state-of-the-art spa and wellness area, various restaurants and bars as well as views of the Adriatic Sea.
Photo: Anže Malovrh/STA

LUXURY HOTELS IN SLOVENIA

For special guests

DANILO GOLOB

Slovenia is known as a green, boutique destination for visitors seeking peace, special experiences and personal fulfilment. Growing numbers of guests are looking for products with high added value, something reflected in Slovenian tourism, which is increasingly focused on the country becoming established as a destination for “five-star” experiences.

Guests who want something extra, who are more demanding and have greater purchasing power, need to be offered exclusive accommodation.

Kempinski Palace Portorož and Atlantida Boutique Hotel in Rogaška Slatina are hotels that offer luxury services, and in August 2017 the eagerly anticipated five-star hotel in the Slovenian capital was opened, the Hotel InterContinental, headed by experienced hotel manager Miloš Cerovič.

HOTEL INTERCONTINENTAL

Ljubljana is experiencing a booming tourism business, and according to Tourism Ljubljana the city recorded 206,995 overnight stays in August, a 2.5 percent increase on the year before. In the first eight months of 2017, there were a total of 976,764 tourist overnights, an increase of 9.3 percent over the same period last year. This surge in numbers is clear proof that Ljubljana urgently needs a five-star hotel.

The Hotel InterContinental, the only hotel with five stars in Ljubljana, is the highest building in the capital, with 21 floors. It covers 23,404 square metres of floor space and has 165 rooms, of which 104 are superior, 27 deluxe, 19 king club, 10 junior suite, and four executive suite, along with a 160-square metre presidential apartment with a fireplace. The hotel also offers guests five multi-purpose rooms. Reserved especially for members of the exclusive Club InterContinental is the 19th floor, the pool and wellness centre on the 18th floor, and the restaurant and bar on the 20th floor, which has a large terrace offering a magnificent panoramic view of Ljubljana. The restaurant has an open design that can accommodate around 200 guests, selecting dishes from the outstanding international menus prepared by the Michelin star chef Alfredo Russo.



The InterContinental is a five-star hotel located in the centre of Ljubljana. Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

LUXURY, REDEFINED IN THE HEART OF LJUBLJANA

Luxury is the banner under which the new hotel announces its presence. General Manager Miloš Cerović says that this is conceived of as a combination of Slovenian hospitality, which will be conveyed to hotel guests by employees from the local community, and the high standards of the InterContinental Hotel Group (IHG) brand, which will meet the expectations of the most demanding guests. The hotel also focuses on sustainability and the responsible management of the environment and society. This is seen in green views out of the hotel windows, the high-quality drinking water flowing from the taps, and the haute cuisine in the restaurant, where all dishes are prepared from fresh, seasonal and only locally produced ingredients. The heartfelt efforts of the staff in working to give each guest a superlative experience mean that visitors come away with very positive and lasting memories of the destination. While still technically a new operation, the Hotel InterContinental has already received great feedback from its guests in terms of meeting the high standards and expectations that people naturally have for a hotel of this calibre.

BY THE SEA

The Kempinski Palace Portorož, which is following in the 120-year tradition of Kempinski hotels, also boasts a range of luxury services, with a clear focus on the guests and their individual wishes and personal preferences. This modern top-quality hotel provides luxury rooms and suites, and outstanding restaurants offering guests local specialities. Additional relaxation is further ensured with the Rose Spa offers a variety of treatments as well as relaxation in the pool.

Kempinski Palace Portorož is also an ideal destination for events and conferences. Last year it won first prize at the SEEbtm (SEE Business Travel & Meetings) 2016 awards in Belgrade, where it won in the category of "Best Seaside Resort for Conferences and Meetings (100-200 rooms)."

Of course, since the hotel is right on the Adriatic shore, guests can also enjoy unforgettable sunsets.

IN A PEACEFUL SETTING

The boutique-style five-star Atlantida Boutique Hotel in Rogaška Slatina, which is famous for its tradition of therapeutic baths and mineral water, has been open since September 2016. It offers accommodation in 76 twin-bed rooms and apartments with above-standard fittings, and relaxation in the Wellness & Spa Centre (with a pool, fitness equipment and wellness facilities). The hotel represents the story of Atlantida (or Atlantis), a place with knowledge of balancing the health of the body, emotions, mind and spirit. It is a source of inspiration, well-being, pampering and tranquillity, prioritising the connections among humans, nature and the envi-

ronment. It is thus an ideal destination for guests who seek peace in a natural setting, who prize tradition and are aware of the importance of their health.

Slovenia already has an enviable track record in providing luxury tourism, and now the aim is for the country to become even more established as a boutique destination that offers guests something more.



The architectural design for the 165 rooms in the Hotel InterContinental was provided by the office of Wrightassociates Interior Design in Munich, and it incorporates a variety of Ljubljana motifs. Photo: Anže Malovrh/STA

LUXURY CAMPING BY THE KOLPA

A big berry story – Big Berry Campsite

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ
PHOTO: BIG BERRY ARCHIVES



Clean, bright and open concept

The Primostek resort in south-eastern Slovenia's Bela Krajina region is in every way a fine example of transferring new ideas to an old environment, and a showcase of modern-day tourism. It brings together in one place the various potentials of the location, linking a national vision and that of the Big Berry brand, and the individual wishes of the guests who are looking for greater variety in tourism offerings.

Big Berry Campsite has brought an innovative product to a unfamiliar location, which has waited, once abandoned, to return to the focus of events and for small-scale crafts and activities to revive.

They promote the region and unspoilt nature, a driving force of Slovenian tourism.

They offer and encourage a connection with the local community and the beauty of a destination such as the River Kolpa, as well as with the people and activities that make up the life of the area. They offer each guest an authentic experience of traditional values, which they all remember well.

This is based on the increasingly popular concept of luxury camping known as glamping. You won't find tents here, but you can stay in a cute little mobile home made by the Slovenian manufacturer Hosekra. There are currently seven mobile homes available which can accommodate two to six persons. At the campsite you can stroll along the River Kolpa, lounge in hanging baskets, sprawl on specially made outdoor beds and read books in comfortable chairs with views of the river.

CAMPSITE AS STUDY LABORATORY

During our visit to the site we encountered an international team of students creating a franchise. This means that if you buy a mo-

bile home, you can also get the entire plan of how to "set up a destination," which Big Berry (BB) now refers to as lifestyle camping. They see the campsite as a laboratory for studying how certain ideas that are important for the success of the mobile homes play out in practice. For this reason, their business is not totally dependent on how many mobile homes are booked, although they stress that this is a completely normal resort and anyone can come at any time.

They host as many people as possible, who will then spread the word around the world. So the group has already hosted more than 120 bloggers, instagrammers and journalists.

This concept of promotion, which plays out on social media, is already being looked into by five campsite owners in Croatia, Austria and Italy.

They tell us that those with the largest number of followers charge for their visits, but of course there is a return for the company: the invitation to spend a few days by the Kolpa, with the BB team putting on daily tours and experiences from the local environment, is invariably followed up with a report posted on various social networks. There is thus virtually no hidden nook where they haven't taken bloggers. Moreover, evidence that they are really trying hard to showcase and connect with the local community can be seen

in the breakfast basket: actual local delicacies, including Krško Polje salami. They have arranged for suppliers to provide miniature portions, in much smaller packages than we are used to, so as to generate the least possible food waste. Plus the locals of Bela Krajina are only too happy to provide fortifying refreshment after the numerous intense activities that a visitor can enjoy. Such meals begin with a geographically protected Bela Krajina pogača, or savoury cake, complimented by some local wine, especially the red metliška črnina and Bela Krajina white, modra frankinja or one

of the predicate wines, which gain their sweetness from the late harvest – sometimes even in January – and fine mould.

A visitor soon notices that buttons, as featured in the brand's logo, appear sewn onto various unexpected places. The company notes that a button is something that connects things and holds them together, and that it is round like a berry, while it also has the possibility of being different. The same is also true of the Big Berry Campsite.

Special features around Big Berry Campsite:

Vizir Brewery – famous for being one of the pioneers of craft beer in Slovenia.

Pečarič Oil Mill – cold-pressed oils with an eco certificate are gaining greater standing in Slovenia, and the Pečarič Oil Mill is now producing 20 different types of such oils. They are best-known for their walnut oil, as they have as many as 400 walnut trees growing on their estate.

Otok – close to the village of Otok stands an old military DC-3 aircraft (Dakota), which reminds people that during the Second World War the Partisans had an emergency airfield here, from which the Americans and British ferried the wounded to Allied hospitals in Italy.

Source of the Krupa – the source of the River Krupa is regarded as one of the most beautiful karstic river sources in Bela Krajina. This very sport is a habitat for the proteus salamander, or olm, which is best-known as the 'little dragon' inhabiting Postojna Cave.

Metlika and Črnomelj – these places are nearby and easy to visit.

Ascent up Krašnji Vrh – this can be done in various ways – on foot, by bike or by car. On the summit there is a tower with fantastic views of Bela Krajina and the surrounding area. Big Berry Campsite also offers canoes and kayaks, beach volleyball and its very own jetty for bathing in the Kolpa. Recently, the company also arranged a lovely space for barbecuing.

CEO of Hosekra, Boštjan Hostej: "We want even more partnerships with local companies. In the one year that we have been operating, the international Big Berry team has grown to 40 people from 26 different countries. We mainly provide daytime activities on the majority of global social media, and of course for guests staying at the resort. This year we also started two new projects, the gastronomy project BB Chef, where each week we host different chefs, and the project BB Mastermind, where successful business people share their stories with the BB team and invited guests. By the year 2030 we want to have 300 locations around the world."



It's not only about a house, the cosy atmosphere inside makes you feel at home.



Inside of the house wood smells like in the forest.

KOPER

European Destination of Excellence 2017

SLOVENIAN TOURIST BOARD, INES DRAME
PHOTO: JOŠT GANTAR

European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) is the biggest European platform for promoting sustainable and responsible tourism. The Slovenian Tourist Board collaborates in this project in line with its goal to support destinations and products with an emphasis on sustainable development.

Ribič pier, Koper





EDEN is a European Commission project which since 2007 has brought together locations and areas that are developing environmentally, culturally and socially responsible tourism. Slovenia has been involved in the project since 2008, and today boasts seven winning destinations and 14 finalists. The EDEN project facilitates international promotion, recognition, education, linking and exchange of best practices, and is based on national selections that take place every other year; these result in the selection of the winning destination of excellence, as well as the finalist destinations.

The European Commission chose cultural tourism as this year's overarching selection theme. A total of 14 applications were received in the public call, covering the territory of 35 Slovenian municipalities.

The expert committee for EDEN in Slovenia, headed by Janez Bogataj, ethnologist and EDEN ambassador, selected four finalists: Radol'ca, Ptuj, the Karst (Kras), Slovenske Konjice and the winning destination, which was selected through evaluations in the field.

The title of European Destination of Excellence 2017 was awarded to Koper – a unique example of the coexistence of history, culture, nature, tourism and modernity.

The European Commission and Slovenian Tourist Board include the destinations holding this prestigious title in their promotional activities. Destinations of excellence also become members of the Slovenian EDEN network, and gain the chance to join the European EDEN association, which fosters the promotion and exchange of best practices associated with the sustainable development of tourism. The official award ceremony for the winner and finalists will take place in Slovenia on 15 November, and Koper will receive the European Commission prize in Brussels in March 2018.

On the announcement of the winning destination for cultural tourism, Boris Popovič, Mayor of the City of Koper, said: "We are honoured that Koper has won the title of European Destination of Excellence. This provides us with new impetus, and at the same time stands as confirmation that we are developing Koper in the right direction. It is no secret that just over a decade ago this was regarded as a mainly industrial town, while today it ranks at the very peak of Slovenian tourism. A range of investments, enhanced features for tourists, new tourism products and the increasingly frequent arrivals of passenger vessels have enabled the development of tourism in our destination, where cultural tourism plays a very important part. We are proud to be developing this in partnership with numerous players."

CITY OF SUNSHINE, CULTURE AND GREEN COUNTRYSIDE

When you arrive in Koper, the sun accompanies you at every step. An ancient symbol greets you right at the city gates, which invite you in to streets and squares stamped by the culture of the Venetian Republic. This European Destination of Excellence is a city of tourism committed to cultural and environmental sustainability. This city, which is inextricably tied to Istria, the lush hinterland of Slovenia's Adriatic coast, is also one of the green destinations of Slovenia (part of the Slovenia Green project).

DISCOVERING KOPER OF THE SERENISSIMA

In a place where in the Bronze Age there was a rocky inhabited island surrounded by the sea, there is now a city of historical treasures from various periods. The medieval core of the city is stamped in particular with features from the Serenissima period, the 500-year rule of the Venetian Republic. The outstanding Praetorian Palace, the Loggia, the city tower and cathedral with the altar piece by Vittore Carpaccio draw visitors to the central square, from which spread streets with Venetian houses. These include the Car-

paccio House with its special collection of objects showing Koper's cultural heritage.

While the term Serenissima refers to the period of the Venetian Republic, today the word also evokes the greater connection with oneself and with nature offered by rambles through the Koper countryside. The Mediterranean environment and climate, the special features of the Karst margins, settlements with Istrian houses and wells, and the unique Istrian culture, are good reasons in any season to visit locations such as Krkavče with its mysterious stone, Lopar and its Bardinc House, Socerb with its Karst margin climbing cliffs, and Hrastovlje in particular, with its Church of the Holy Trinity housing a unique fresco of the danse macabre. In addition to guided tours, excursions and thematic trails, Koper and Istria offer outstanding year-round opportunities for sports in a natural environment.

THE KOPER HEARTBEAT AT EVENTS

A string of cultural, sports, entertainment and especially gastronomic events are presented right through the year in Koper. The Istrian version of the Carnival, with Shrovetide processions, partying and dances, drives away the winter.

In December, Koper sees in the New Year in its own special way. In between, there are festivals of Istrian specialities and wine.

Check out the Refošk Wine Festival, the event From Vineyards to Olive Groves and of course Sweet Istria, the September event that tempts visitors to take the sweet-toothed route through town, with tastings and sales of Istrian and other confectionery.

ISTRIAN CUISINE

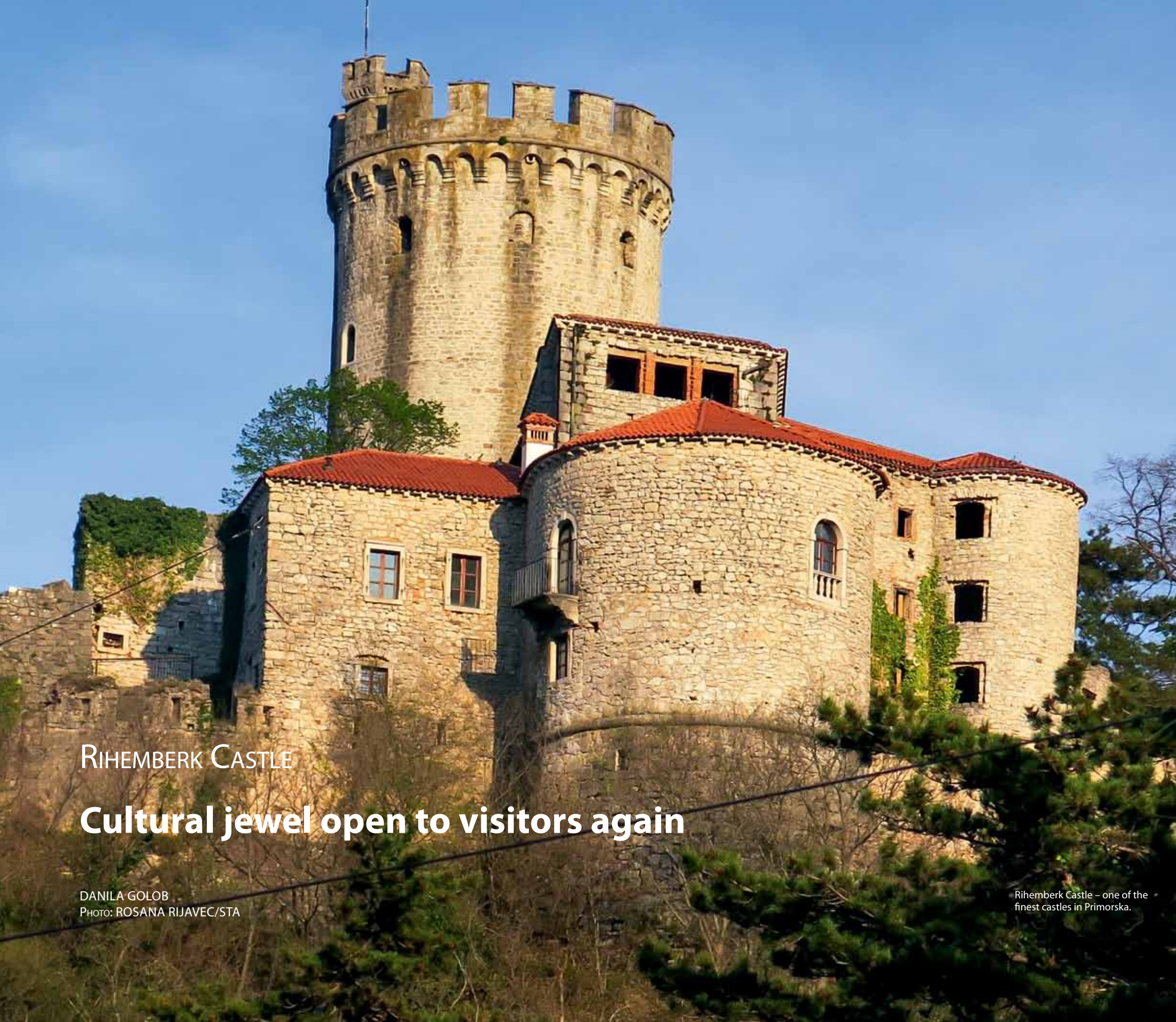
You can really get to know the cultural heritage and sunshine of Koper by tasting it. This area, with world-famous producers of olive oil and wine, will spoil food-lovers with both Mediterranean and authentic Istrian cuisine. You can find local specialities everywhere – in restaurants and tourist farms, in cellars and osmica feasts. Istrian cuisine wins people over with its natural ingredients. They are filled with a flavour that comes from the power of the sunshine in Slovenia's brightest city.



Old town, Čevljarska street



The Praetorian Palace is a 15th-century Venetian Gothic palace in the city of Koper. Photo: Matej Vranič



RIHEMBERK CASTLE

Cultural jewel open to visitors again

DANILO GOLOB
PHOTO: ROSANA RIJAVEC/STA

Rihemberk Castle – one of the finest castles in Primorska.

One of the biggest and oldest castles in the Primorska region, standing on a slope above Branik in the middle of the Vipava Valley, Rihemberk Castle languished alone for the past decade, but after renovations it now has a new lease of life. At the opening in June, lords of the manor, knights, court ladies, gentlemen and jesters conjured a proper medieval atmosphere for visitors.

Rihemberk, one of the most picturesque castles in Slovenia, has been protected since 1999 as a cultural monument of national importance. It fell into ruin over a long period of time, and owing to holes and dangerous damage to the walls it was closed to the public. When the municipality of Nova Gorica acquired the castle from the state in 2013, it started the process of renovation in cooperation with the Branik Local Community. One of the conditions for the transfer of ownership from the state to the local community was that the municipality of Nova Gorica would have to re-open the castle to visitors by 2023. Last year the municipality drew up a renovation conceptual plan, and this year they worked out the conservation plan, which is the basis for obtaining a construction permit.

Now that the most urgent repairs have been made, visitors can tour the exterior sections of the castle, the gardens and terraces. The interior sections will be renovated in stages, with part of the building being intended for various activities such as an information office and a small catering establishment in the entrance tower. The plans call for part of the castle to remain closed to tours and the general public even after renovation. The Nova Gorica authorities want those sections to be arranged for special educational purposes. In 2016 the city authorities joined the Restaura project, which envisages a model of public-private partnership for long-term development.

The aim is for Rihemberk Castle to become a cultural, scientific and tourism centre for this part of the Primorska region, and a space for reflection and creativity.

RICH HISTORY

Rihemberk Castle is an extensive medieval fortification with an exterior defensive wall and towers, residential sections, cisterns and a prominent central Romanesque keep. Ever since prehistoric times (1600 – 700 BCE) there was a fortification in the area of the castle, protecting access to the Karst plateau and then to the sea, while at the same time it allowed control of transport through part of the Vipava Valley. The castle

complex started to emerge in the 13th century. It was first mentioned in 1230 in connection with its original feudal owners, the house of Rihemberk, then in the first half of the 13th century the Counts of Gorizia had it additionally fortified. The later Habsburg owners added two sections along the walls with towers, first at the beginning of the 16th century in the late Gothic style, and then later in a Renaissance design. In 1646 Rihemberk came into the possession of the House of Lanthieri, which completed the castle's appearance. The final (female) descendant of the Lanthieris married Count Lewetzow, and the castle remained in the ownership of the Lewetzow-Lanthieri family until World War II.

During World War II the castle was mined and burned. In its long history it has suffered much damage, but that inflicted in the last war was the greatest, with the castle then falling into ruin. It was

only in the 1960s that the castle underwent its first renovation works, which have continued on and off to the present day.

MYSTERIOUS INHABITANTS OF THE CASTLE

Rihemberk Castle is exceptionally important in cultural and historical terms. Previous archaeological excavations have revealed evidence of settlement in prehistoric times, in late Antiquity and in the Middle Ages, with the remains of buildings and pottery finds being uncovered.

Today the castle stands out as an important refuge for bats, which have chosen the abandoned castle cellars and towers as their home, from late spring to early autumn. Female bats come here to give birth to their young and care for them.



The castle is built in the form of an irregular pentagon, in the middle of which is the imposing keep, around 27 metres high, next to which is the castle chapel, with a palazzo on the other side. The basic castle complex is surrounded by Renaissance-period walls with defensive towers (rondellas).

To date a full 11 species of bats have been recorded, and since they include two rare and endangered species, it was decided that this part of the castle would not be renovated or opened to the public.

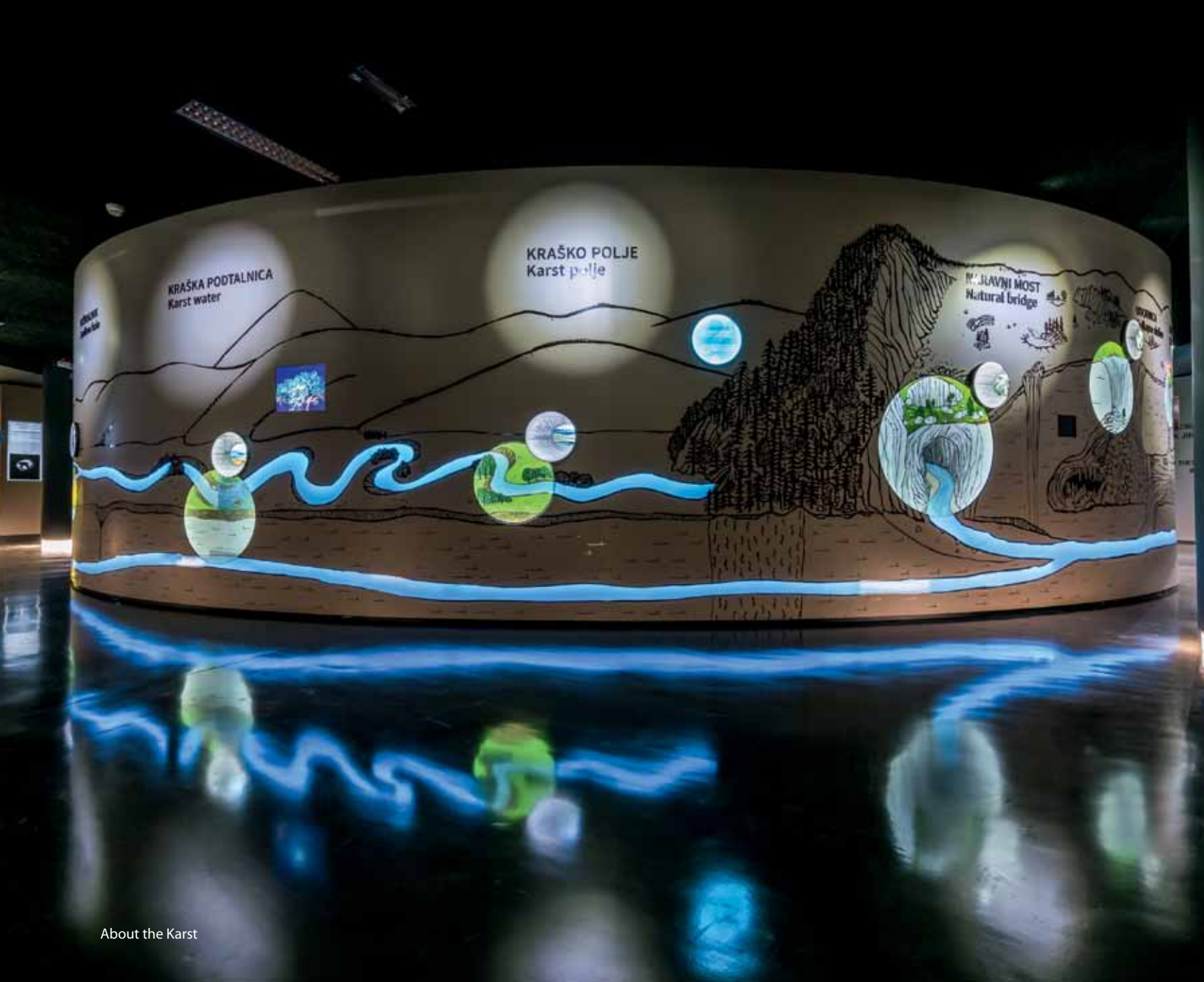
The species include a large number of highly endangered large horseshoe and Geoffroy's bats, which are vital to the local ecology. Indeed, due to their presence here, the area of the Branica Valley was included as one of the Natura 2000 protected nature sites.

Europe is home to only the smaller bats, and has just 32 of the 1,116 species discovered to date around the world. So far, at least 30 of these have been found in Slovenia.

The castle is open on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, and also on weekdays for groups by appointment. For guided tours of the castle, contact the Branik Tourism Society. Visitors can access all the exterior areas of the castle, including the courtyards, passages, stairs, gardens and terraces. A special attraction is the climb up to the 27-metre high viewing tower, with its wonderful views of the Vipava Valley.



In the period when Rihemberk Castle languished above Branik alone, bats chose it as their home in the warmer months.



About the Karst

EXPO POSTOJNA CAVE KARST

Postojna Cave in space and time

TANJA GLOGOVČAN
PHOTO: IZTOK MEDJA

Slovenia boasts a rich subterranean realm. The country's most famous cave globally, and its most visited karstic cave, is Postojna. This natural jewel and its history can now be seen at the EXPO Cave Karst exhibition. The exhibition will be of interest both for visitors encountering the Karst and caves for the first time, as well as for experts. At the same time it offers a unique view of the principle of sustainable development.

The topics presented describe the cave in space and time, with emphasis on its natural and cultural heritage in the world sense, and human activities around and in the cave since the earliest humans, the periods before and after discovery of the inner parts of the cave, and human activities of exploration and developing modern cave tourism up to the present day. The exhibition EXPO Cave Karst is intended for anyone interested in the wider historical and social context that led to this Slovenian cave being the most famous subterranean tourist cave in the world.

The exhibition collection was opened after 111 years of aspirations and concepts that flowed from the first idea of setting up a Postojna Cave museum.

The Postojna Cave company, which secured the collaboration of the Karst Research Institute of Slovenia's Academy of Sciences and Arts in the project, has fulfilled its mission in an outstanding manner. Such projects are generally under public ownership, and a special feature of the EXPO Cave Karst exhibition is that it is a private endeavour.

Marjan Batagelj, CEO of the Postojna Cave company, says: "EXPO Cave Karst constitutes a major enhancement to the existing attractions, and an upgrading of the interpretations to date of the cave through the use of new content which previously visitors did not encounter. With the biggest permanent exhibition on the cave and karstic phenomena in the world, we are fulfilling the dreams of numerous administrators and those in previous generations who worked to put such ideas into practice, although their completion kept getting put off into the future."

Nadja Zupan Hajna, who was the lead expert in setting up the permanent exhibition, notes that: "Postojna Cave is the biggest tourist cave in Slovenia and Europe as a whole, and its fame around the world has been achieved through nearly 200 years of intensive tourism development. The cave boasts a great many superlatives of natural and cultural importance, and as such is a priceless asset that must be well managed and preserved for future generations."

Using interactive presentations, the exhibition is a testament to the emergence and extraordinary history of tourism at Postojna.

Visitors can get more familiar with the Karst and related phenomena through the projections of various content on a three-dimensional model, and can discover the special features of the karstic environment and the world-scale superlatives of Postojna Cave on the Wall of Fame. The whole experience is instructive, interactive, and fun. After touring the exhibition, visitors can also watch a 13-minute video on the creation of karstic terrain, as well as enjoy two other free exhibitions: Life Within a Billion Years and Butterflies of the World.

PRESENTATION IN SPACE AND TIME

One result of the knowledge and collaboration of experts at Postojna Cave and the Karst Research Institute is that the cave is presented in such a way that visitors learn about the natural evolution and development of tourism at this site, as well as the importance of the cave, in space and time, with the use of new technologies and methods of interpretation.

As Nadja Zupan Hajna says: "The biggest challenge was how to present the cave and the science of it in a way that would be interesting for the diverse range of visitors, who are all ages, of differing education levels and from completely different cultural environments."

Different themes are therefore presented separately, but are linked by a common thread – Postojna Cave in space and time. First of all there is a presentation of the superlatives for which the cave is famous, then its position in the physical environment, then the geology – for without the right kind of rock there is no karstic terrain or caves – and then the surface terrain, which is shown schematically on the surface from the Pivka sinkhole into Postojna Cave to the source of the River Ljubljanica at Vrhnika. The creation of caves is described, and we see the 'personal details' of Postojna Cave, its inanimate and animate dimensions, the characteristics of water percolating through karstic rock, the pollution of caves and karstic

land, how humans used caves and experienced them in the past, what was known about the cave before the major discovery of its inner sections, cave exploration, preparation of the cave for tourist visits and the development of the necessary infrastructure and guide service, managing the cave over time, advertising, events, underground mail and art.

PRINCIPLE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Within the main theme, one of the sub-themes is devoted entirely to an interpretation of what a karstic aquifer signifies in terms of water supply, and just how vulnerable the subterranean karstic features and groundwater are.

Special attention is paid to the youngest visitors, who are led through the exhibition interactively by a proteus and cave beetle, and who can even try driving the real cave train. A fun and interactive way to learn.



Indeed, due to the perforated cave structure, the purifying power of the aquifer is extremely low. As part of the exhibition, visitors are also shown the story of discovering the secret of how the proteus or olm (the famed little dragon of the cave) reproduces, in the form of video morphing.

A STORY OF YOU AND ME

The exhibition is truly a story of space and time, but at the same time something more. It is a story of us, you and me – who we are, what arouses our interest, what kind of environment we live in, why we are how we are, and how we must respect nature, so that one morning another piece of the mosaic can be added: the story of our space and the time that we live in, which those who come after us will learn.

The exhibition comprises three sections: **karst, animals and humans**. Greatest attention is paid to the key characteristics of the subterranean area, especially Postojna Cave itself. The exhibition also highlights various potential pollution threats. The story includes the life in the caves – existing and extinct animal species, as well as humans. Over the last 200 years Postojna Cave has been marked by the development of tourism, and the exhibition also shows the most prominent achievements of individual periods in history. In its own way, Postojna Cave also represents the history of Slovenia in the last two centuries.

Human first appear as Ice Age cave dwellers, then through history their role changes, and they become explorers of the cave.



NATURE IN COLOURS

Symbiosis Institute promotes the development of ecotourism

TANJA GLOGOVČAN

On the Bloke plateau the sole surface watercourse is the Bloščica, which winds lazily across the upland. In places by the stream the ground is permanently saturated and very poor in nutrients. One distinctive species found here is the sundew, a carnivore. Its tiny leaves are covered in mucilaginous stalks that end in droplets (like dewdrops, hence its name) of sticky juice. These trap tiny insects, from which the plant extracts nutrition, thereby obtaining substances not available in the poor soil.
Photo: Gregor Šubic

Slovenia's waterfalls, lakes, sea, karstic caves and mountains offer enchantment in all seasons. Whoever comes for the first time never comes for the last. This is also the basis on which the Symbiosis organisation markets nature-study excursions and trips in cooperation with the local people.

Nature in colour is the brand under which the Symbiosis Institute, a social enterprise, markets trips and excursions focused on the natural sciences. It offers a variety of programmes for multi-day trips and one-day excursions.

This is a tourist product that involves not just spending time in nature but also in-depth observation of plants and animals.

The organisation has been in operation since 2003, and last year it acquired a licence to operate as a tourism agency.

A LOVE OF NATURE

The tourists who join their programmes are not looking to visit the traditional natural features that are part of Slovenian mass tourism. Instead they are looking for lesser known places where there is not so much crowding, noise or car parks. Often such tourists want to see Lake Cerknica, Rakov Škocjan, Javorniki, the Pivka intermittent lakes and the Nanoščica river basin.

Apart from wanting to see lesser known places, they also have the chance to take part in general nature-observation programmes. In the new year of 2018, Symbiosis will offer new trips with the chance to observe wild orchids, amphibians and reptiles, butterflies and grasshoppers. All these plant and animal species demonstrate the great natural diversity of Slovenia.

The largest numbers of guests come from the Netherlands and the UK, while many also come from Japan. This year a special excursion was organised for Japanese visitors to see hellebores in the natural environment. These plants do not grow in the wild in Japan, but are commonly cultivated as ornamental plants. In Slovenia, however, a full five species thrive naturally.

There is also notable biodiversity in the species of butterflies. Guests from the Netherlands were able to see more species of butterflies here in one day than they exist in their entire country.

The guide welcoming visitors to the kingdom of birds and animals is Paul Veenvliet, a biologist by profession who is well acquainted with the different species of animals and plants, and is also able to recount numerous fascinating stories about them.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

As they enjoy the natural surroundings, visitors are also happy to try the local food. Minestrone, rotolo dumplings, cured meat products and cheese, fresh and salt water fish, pies, potica cake, stews, game dishes, lamb and other home-raised meats. This gives the local people opportunities to profit, as they can open tourist farms where visitors can stay the night and partake of some of the specialities of the area.



Rosika
Photo: Symbiosis Institute Archives

Tourism governed by the rule that nature is an asset and its integrity, beauty and biodiversity need to be respected, is increasingly valued by tourists themselves, and in the Slovenian market this is becoming a more common feature of what is offered.

Nature conservation is not a barrier to development, but it is a challenge. For the local people it is also an economic opportunity. The Symbiosis Institute has determined that it is sometimes only with the arrival of foreign guests that locals realise just how beautiful and unique some plants are, and that they should be seen as special assets that need protection.

There are now quite a few such tourism programmes internationally, especially in Western Europe. Moreover, it is not true that this kind of tourism is intended solely for a small group of enthusiasts, since in many countries observing nature is a common leisure pursuit and hobby.

HELPING SCIENCE

The trips are not just an ordinary walk through meadows or forests, they are also an opportunity to collect data for natural science purposes. At Symbiosis they point out that there are guests involved in professions that are not related to nature, but who in their free time are very serious about studying some groups of animals or plants. An example of best practices in this context is the Netherlands, where a full two million people are members of conservation organisations. In this way the Dutch can gather around 8 million pieces of data on the species of plants and animals that live or are present in their country.

As a non-profit organisation, Symbiosis invests its profits from tourism into its conservation projects, in the hope that these funds will also finance extra activities in the local communities of the locations visited. They also pursue the principle of social entrepreneurship. The development of their ecotourism product, which will continue in 2018, is supported by the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund and by the Slovenian Ministry of Economic Development and Technology.



During May and June in the Alpine and hill areas of central Slovenia it is possible to encounter the Clouded Apollo, a butterfly with very noticeable translucent white wings. Males have a curious strategy for mating, whereby after mating they seal the female's hindquarters with a waxy coating, in this way preventing the female from mating with another. Caterpillars feed exclusively on corydalis, small herbaceous plants that bloom in early spring. Photo: Symbiosis Institute Archives



Colourful green grass field
Photo: Symbiosis Institute Archives

HOMAGE TO SLOVENIA'S HOP-GROWING TRADITION

A story of beer and a fountain

TANJA GLOGOVČAN



The fountain is a marketing channel for the promotion of high-quality beer brewed with Slovenian hops. Since the Green Gold Beer Fountain opened, some 90,000 glasses of beer have been sold. The largest numbers of tourists come from Italy, Spain and Germany.
Photo: Nea Culpa

Beer has a long history in the Slovenian lands, as seen by the find in the Ljubljansko Barje wetlands of beer barrels dating back 3,900 years. Slovenians also have a museum that tells the story of beer, while beer culture itself is becoming an increasing part of how beer producing regions promote themselves to tourists. Moreover, we also have a Beer Fountain.

Located in Žalec, this is a unique tourist attraction that is not just the only such fountain in Slovenia, but the only one in the world. It draws visitors by the thousands, both from Slovenia and abroad. Last year visitors could enjoy a brew of native Žalec Kukec, the dark blacksmith beer from the Pod Roglo hotel brewery, golden light Kratochwill beer, copper Adam Ravbar, and a pint from the Vizir brewery. This year visitors will also have the option of alcohol-free beer on tap.

THE STORY OF THE FOUNTAIN

The Green Gold Beer Fountain is above all an innovative and striking tourist product, the first of its kind in the world, and one which has placed Žalec on the global map of unique attractions. The fountain is a homage to the hop-growing heritage of the Lower Savinja Valley and the town itself.

Its very shape symbolises a hop seed cone, which is indicated in the two semi-circles or two fountains, one for beer and the other for water. The semi-circles are adorned with copper lace, symbolising the head of foam on beer.

The inventive nature of the Green Gold Beer Fountain can be seen in the interweaving of tales of the hop-growing heritage, the innovative concept of beer on tap, the superlative technology and attractive architecture.

This is a way of linking a tradition, which is most deeply rooted in the Savinja Valley, with present times and preserving it for the future.

This year the fountain acquired another pipe and an automatic glass washer. Owing to the special chamber where the decanting nozzle is sterilised by UV rays, the light indicator of the levels, detection of the presence of CO₂ in the machine room and a advanced system of hooking up pressurised gases, the fountain is always clean and the beer uncontaminated.

The Municipality of Žalec has also arranged the area surrounding the fountain. By improving both the spatial and hygiene conditions, the space by the fountain is no longer just a "beer hall," but also a beach by the fountain, a library by the fountain and once a month a kitchen at the fountain.

This space is attractive not just because of its functionality, but also owing to the possibilities it opens up for the area.

In Žalec you can now tour the town and its surroundings in the old-time Oldi Goldi bus. As part of the Green Gold Festival, throughout the period when the fountain is open in April until it closes on 31 October, there are numerous experiences on offer: concerts, sports events and other activities related to hops and brewing, which serve to preserve the hop-growing tradition. Each year Žalec chooses a Fountain Ambassador, who receives their ambassadorial beer (this year the beer is a green Štajerc). This system provides an opportunity to showcase the flavours from smaller breweries, which are increasing in number every day in Slovenia.

SLOVENIANS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN BEER LOVERS

Slovenians cannot compare themselves to other nations in consumption of beer per capita, but they do have a refined taste for its quality and an abundant knowledge of how to create a high-

quality brew. Evidence that our Slovenian ancestors were already steeped in hop-growing and brewing traditions very early on can be found in the records of feudal serf farms.

The first known brewery, a feudal brewing operation, was in the tower of Loka Castle.

There are also records of beer in some medieval land registers. From the exclusive and rare stone beer and the festive *koritnjak* of Carinthian farmers, towards the end of the 18th century beer brewing became a serious business.

I'LL HAVE ONE BOTTLED OR ON DRAUGHT, PLEASE

The terms for the beer in Slovenia brewed by the oldest and biggest brewery, Pivovarna Laško Union, are simply Union and Laško. They are still the most popular, although alongside the big companies the country has a multitude of craft breweries that are just as good, although tradition remains something that Slovenians love and value.

It is admirable that in addition to their efforts to produce high quality beers, Slovenians put great efforts into preserving the cultural heritage associated with brewing.



The most popular Slovenian domestic beers are Union and Laško. Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

The former Pivovarna Union malt house, with its nearly half-century old architecture, has been preserved to the present day virtually unchanged on the outside. It was built in 1923 in the tradition of the late Baroque. Up until the 1970s it was used for obtaining malt, one of the four basic ingredients of beer. A decade later it was converted into a staff canteen. After 1987 it was then converted into one of the biggest brewing museums in Europe. The Ljubljana city authorities declared the Pivovarna Union Museum Collection a cultural monument of local importance, for it showcases an important industrial and technical heritage and at the same time strengthens awareness of Ljubljana as an industrial city. It displays antiquated and obsolete brewing machinery that has been painstakingly refurbished as exhibits. In 1986 a permanent museum collection was set up with the title Brewing Museum. The exhibition received numerous accolades, including an EMYA award given by the European Museum Forum, and a Valvasor award from the Slovene Museum Society. In 2014, on the 150th anniversary of the brewery, the museum had a make-over.

At the permanent exhibition of the Brewing Museum visitors can see a historical presentation of beer production, barrel-making, distribution, innkeeping equipment, beer vessels, the development of labels, marketing and two reconstructions of premises.

The permanent exhibition, A Story Going Since 1864, shows the historical development of Pivovarna Union brewery.



The Green Gold Fountain has eight taps. Photo: Nea Culpa

SLOVENIA – THE FIRST BLOCKCHAIN START-UP COUNTRY

One of the leading countries with regard to blockchain companies

TADEJ SLAPNIK



Prime Minister Miro Cerar was speaking at the Digital Slovenia 2020 gathering in October when he gave a wide-ranging speech on blockchain technology, stating that the government "wants to position Slovenia as the most recognised blockchain destination in the European Union." Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

By positioning its economy as "Green, Creative, Smart," the Republic of Slovenia is dedicated to becoming one of the leading countries with regard to the use of blockchain technology, which underlies innovations such as Bitcoin.

Several local blockchain companies have already achieved great success in the development of digital investment platforms, which gives Slovenia an advantage as it aims to become the world's leading start-up destination for such firms.

Blockchain technology can be applied in various contexts to provide secure communication and record-keeping.

It uses distributed ledgers to ensure that data is exchanged properly between different devices, guaranteeing that the value – in the case of so-called cryptocurrencies – will be transferred safely.

This is one of the key differences of this approach compared with the internet technologies currently used to transfer data. Since it is extremely efficient, the blockchain method can be used as the fundamental technology for business and governmental services, thus giving the economy a greater competitive edge, and so increasing the well-being of the entire society. However, while sitting at the core of various emerging distributed economies, blockchain itself presents many issues for regulators worldwide who are trying to find a legitimate legal context for this revolutionary technology.

MANY NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Despite some concerns, the distributed economy is also making possible many opportunities which have not yet been fully explored. The emerging services go far beyond Bitcoin into the fields of banking, insurance, and new models of creating and sharing

content, in addition to other activities, representing a globally-connected ecosystem of supercomputers and a market valuation already in excess of \$170 billion USD. Moreover, the number of services, users and companies grows bigger every day. Step by step, the distributed economy is becoming a true alternative to centralized systems. The first concrete moves in this direction can already be seen in banking and financial services (so-called fintech, short for "financial technology"), and soon blockchain technology will spread into all sectors of the economy.

EQUAL PARTICIPATION

All previous technology revolutions were led primarily by the United States, but this time will be different. For the first time, the rest of the world can participate equally. Every revolutionary technology has its own business development model—if the internet is based on start-ups, blockchain is based on ICOs. Blockchain enables a new, better world in which all people can equally participate, regardless of their sex, age, race or geographical background. The distributed economy provides a definitive answer to the problem of brain drain.

Slovenia is thus welcoming the new technology with open arms. Two already established brands, Bitstamp and ICONOMI, are paving the way to revolutionary standards for safe transactions and investments in digital services, while Cofound.it is building an alternative to the existing VC start-up ecosystem. All three companies, and others like them, have one thing in common: their vision to target billion-dollar markets, become world leaders in their vertical fields and the next EU "unicorns."

Dr. Miro Cerar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia: "Slovenia as a whole is, therefore, setting itself up as a blockchain-friendly destination, and to that end it is establishing the pillars of a national blockchain ecosystem in the area of the transfer and spread of information, the adoption of legal regulations and the promotion of a supportive environment for the development of companies working in the area of blockchain technology."

Due to the potential of blockchain technology and Slovenia's goal of being a pioneer in this field, the cooperation between the state and key representatives of the related companies is a logical step that will help our nation gain more prominence in the terms of technological development and innovations.

THE THREE PILLARS OF THE BLOCKCHAIN ENVIRONMENT

In the last few years Slovenia has taken several measures to create an ecosystem that will allow blockchain to thrive. Strong intergovernmental collaboration is furthered with Blockchain Think Tank Slovenia, established in 2017. This serves as an open space that enables individuals, organisations, commercial and state bodies to work together, share and exchange information. The think tank is one of the three pillars of the blockchain environment in Slovenia, responsible for the exchange and transfer of information among all the relevant stakeholders (from the government, research and innovation bodies, companies and non-governmental organisations), as coordinated by the Ministry of Public Administration.

The second pillar represents the activities of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia in the policy and legal area, as co-coordinated by the Ministry of Public Administration, with the Minister Boris Koprivnikar acting as Chief Digital Officer, and the Prime Minister's Office, with State Secretary Tadej Slapnik working as coordinator for blockchain-related activities through the Slovenia Land of Start-ups initiative.

The third pillar is the Noordung Blockchain Hub, responsible for the business side of the blockchain environment in Slovenia, with a focus on networking and the development of business models and projects, as coordinated by the Herman Potočnik Noordung Space Centre, Nena Dokuzov. Those three pillars represent a framework for the blockchain ecosystem in Slovenia, with the aim of enabling

existing and emerging companies based on blockchain technologies to explore their ideas, and through Initial Coin Offerings to raise capital for their further development in the very near future.

SLOVENIA, THE BLOCKCHAIN HEAVEN

"By making some wise and future-driven strategic decisions, Slovenia can become one of the most desirable destinations for global blockchain start-up companies," claims a convinced Zanel Batagelj, representing biggest projects from slovenian blockchain community of the Cofound.it company.



The first clear signal the government was making some serious moves was July's Blockchain Meetup Slovenia 2017, held at the Noordung Centre, with more than 300 blockchain enthusiasts in attendance.

Dr Miro Cerar, the Slovenian Prime Minister stated: "Successful Slovenian companies working with blockchain technology are already ranked among the world's leading developers of digital investment platforms, and therefore we want to position Slovenia as the most recognised blockchain destination in the European Union."

The start-up companies Cofound.it and DataFund together with NovakRutar law firm The start-up companies Cashila, Ionomi, Cofound.it, and Aragon spent the last few months intensively working with all the relevant stakeholders in Slovenia, such as the Securities Agency, the Financial Administration, Office for Money Laundering Prevention, the Central Bank, Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of Finance, the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, and others.

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EU Blockchain meetup as one of the most important steps towards Slovenia as Blockchain heaven took place at Celje Fair "Feel the Future" on 20th of October 2017 and motivated attention of more than 300 participants and speakers to attend and co-create the development of the Blockchain ecosystem in Slovenia and abroad.

The "Feel the Future Declaration: Initiative Blockchain Europe" adopted in the final part of the meetup means a strong commitment to support blockchain economy on the European level, positioning Slovenia as an important partner of European commission in co-creation the new blockchain economy era.





FOLDING SKIS

Elan's latest innovation

POLONA PREŠEREN

Elan is a company specialising in sports gear, and is known for its range of innovations in skiing equipment over the years. This time in the form of some especially desirable skis.

Alpinist Davo Karničar was surprised by the efficiency and safety of these skis.
Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik

Some of you might still remember the MBX skis, on which even Hollywood stars slalomed down the white slopes. Then later came the carving skis, which revolutionised Alpine skiing and changed the style and method of the sport. This was followed by skis using fusion technology and amphibio skis.

But Elan's development team did not rest on its laurels.

This year they introduced to the market the folding Ibx 84 Tactix skis, which were developed in collaboration with the Slovenian armed forces.

Historically there have been quite a few attempts to manufacture folding skis, but for one reason or another they all failed. Making folding skis that did not sacrifice their fundamental functions seemed like an impossible task. Until now.

Alongside the Slovenian Armed Forces, Elan's folding skis project enjoyed the involvement right from the start of Davo Karničar, one of the best ski mountaineers of all time, and the first person to ski down from Everest. His ambition this year to ski down the second highest peak in the world, K2, had to be postponed due to bad weather and other unfavourable conditions. But even Karničar admitted: "In the beginning I was sceptical that on these skis you could ski as safely and efficiently as with classical skis. But soon all my doubts were dispelled. I was thoroughly surprised by the efficiency and safety of these skis."

This innovation at Elan's manufacturing base in Begunje na Gorenjskem was masterminded by head of development Vinko Avguštin, who said that the basic concept of the skis was taken through five stages, and after each one the situation was carefully reviewed. "Our aim was for the folding skis to retain all the functionalities of non-folding skis. It turned out that the skis actually outperformed those without the system for folding," said Avguštin.



Ibx Tactix skis will be available in shops in 2019.

The skis are of course best suited for touring ascents and ski touring, for they are much easier to carry uphill. Moreover, they perform surprisingly well on descents.

In a way, the folding skis have a dual mission. On difficult ascents, where you have the skis strapped to your backpack, you are much more mobile than with standard skis. This is because with folding skis you don't have anything sticking up above your head or down below your waist to impede you. Furthermore, the folding skis make climbs easier when you need to use an ice axe, since you can freely move your arm above your head. This markedly improves safety.

The folding skis also have an advantage on descents. Especially when for whatever reason you need to take them off. If you have classical skis strapped to your backpack on a descent, then ty

can snag on rocks or roots, and even the slope itself can be a hindrance. The folding skis automatically eliminate all these problems. Of course, the skis also need to prove themselves in their primary function – skiing. Here, the folding skis work very well, in spite of their slightly increased weight. The Elan team also point out the base plate under the ski boot, which stiffens up the ski and in particular it allows it to be more active, so skiers feel much safer.

Ibx Tactix skis are available in recreational and military versions. They feature a special plate that rotates 180 degrees. It takes approximately 20 seconds to extend and fold them. In their "extended" state they measure 163 centimetres, but folded up they are just 90 centimetres long. They allow for much easier, more efficient and safer movement through winter terrain. For the moment the skis are not yet available for retail sale, but should hit the shelves in shops some time in 2019, and are expected to retail at around EUR 2,000.





20 YEARS OF SLOVENIA IN INTERNATIONAL MILITARY OPERATIONS

A contribution to peace, security and stability

TANJA GLOGOVČAN
PHOTO: DANIEL NOVAKOVIČ/STA

Reception hosted by Slovenian President Borut Pahor

This year we mark 20 years since Slovenia sent service personnel on their first international mission, to Alba in Albania. Since then they have actively contributed to peace, security and stability in numerous parts of the world.

Slovenia's very own heroes have been continuously present in places where the lack of security means that people are still living in uncertainty, and the functioning of basic social systems is rendered difficult or impossible. Our soldiers are renowned for their professionalism and commitment.

Alba (Dawn) was the first international operation in which the Slovenian Armed Forces participated.

Since then, the military has been an active member of many missions and the teams sent on them, and are among the most professional of the participants. Evidence of the excellent training received by the Slovenian members of international operations can be seen in the fact that in all these years there has not been a single fatality.

Our nation's military is currently active mainly in the Western Balkans, Afghanistan and Libya.

COMMEMORATION AND GRATITUDE

This major anniversary and milestone has been marked in Slovenia throughout the year. Two events in particular stand out. In May, the President of the Republic Slovenia, Borut Pahor, held a reception for mission participants from the Slovenian Armed Forces and Police, and also for civilian functional experts who took part in international peace-keeping missions. It was held in that month because Slovenian soldiers were sent on a peace-keeping mission for the first time in May 20 1997. The other important event was a broad interdepartmental conference at Brdo pri Kranju. This was organised jointly by the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior, under the honorary patronage of the Slovenian President Borut Pahor and Prime Minister Miro Cerar.

MAJOR NINA RADUHA

Slovenian women on peace missions

TANJA GLOGOVČAN
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES



Major Nina Raduha is a university graduate of political science with a specialisation in defence studies. She gained her master's degree in criminal law science from the Faculty of Law in Ljubljana. She has been employed with the Slovenian Armed Forces since 2003.

Women have been part of Slovenian military missions since the Alba operation 20 years ago. One of these brave soldiers is Major Nina Raduha, commander of the Slovenian Contingent in Lebanon. Major Raduha is also the first female commanding officer of a contingent in UNIFIL – the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

She is in command of the 22nd Slovenian contingent, which for the most part is made up of members of the 132nd Mountain Regiment. She took up her duties in Lebanon on 20 May this year. This is her first assignment to United Nations forces, having previously served in 2007 in Althea, the European Union operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Upon her appointment she said she felt honoured and privileged to be shouldering this great responsibility.

“Because as a commander, regardless of gender, I need to bring all my soldiers safely home with some good and professional work left behind us. We will all give our best to implement UNIFIL’s mission in the area of operation.”

Why did you decide on a job in the military?

Since my earliest days I have been interested in different things, things that are not typical, which prove that stereotypes are false. I liked to challenge myself in things that seemed impossible to others, and I admired the perseverance of soldiers who through their courage and unbreakable support for their homeland emerge victorious in the most impossible situations, and who are prepared to give their lives for something greater. I was interested in action, dynamics, a different way of life, comradeship, dedication... And since I wanted to get an education alongside the action, after secondary school I enrolled in defence studies and from that point on my career was mapped out. After I graduated, I completed the one-year training course for officers and joined the Slovenian Armed Forces

(SAF) as a young lieutenant. At that time, I didn't know that the officer's profession differs in many respects from that of a soldier, and that there is "much less lying around in mud and digging trenches." I always believed that being an officer or soldier meant living life honourably, for the team, sometimes at the limits of your capacity, and with dedication. And today this still convinces me that I made the right decision.

You applied for work on the mission. Did you really want to go to Lebanon?

I applied for the mission because I wanted to face the challenge of leadership and command. And I met all the conditions. I decided to go to Lebanon because I wanted to complete an international operation under the United Nations. In an environment offering completely different conditions of operation to those, for instance, within NATO or the EU.

Describe your work day.

The unit operating in the field adjusts its timetable to the coordinated matrix of operation, which is coordinated on the level of Sector West command. This means that the routine is not the same each day. But regardless of the departure for the assignment, the working day has to begin no later than eight in the morning, and is most commonly over after seven in the evening. Actually setting off on an assignment demands a lot of preparation, inspections of vehicles and equipment, checking communications, additional training and clearing up and cleaning after the assignment. In one week we perform between five and six operational assignments, one day is set aside for maintaining technical equipment, armaments and premises, and one day for rest.

My working day begins before seven in the morning and often ends late into the night.

The most important thing is the work with my contingent. This involves a range of coordination work, meetings with the team and issuing guidelines.

I must emphasise that we are an outstanding team. I should make special mention here of the commander of the reconnaissance assignment, who is a truly first-class link between myself and the troops.

I consider my other task to be working within the Sector West command, which involves me working in the Operations Section (J3), in the non-kinetic operations area. As part of this I face a daily agenda of several meetings, planning and coordination procedures, formulating operation documents, making assessments and analyses and working with key leaders – and so on and so forth, and if I add to this all the reports for back home and the daily orders, it's already way past midnight.

And what is your “personal mission” in Lebanon?

My personal mission is to build a team, to shape a cohesive and unbreakable 22nd Slovenian Contingent in UNIFIL, to bring all the lads safely home and to leave behind us professional work and a visible contribution to fulfilling the mandate of the force mission under which we are operating. My additional wish as commander of the small Slovenian contingent, which numbers 15 members, is to earn our place among the big players, and I must say that so far our professional approach, hard work and daring are proving very successful.

A purely personal wish is to gain as much experience as possible in a crisis and international operating environment, to learn as many new things as possible, to get to know as many new people as possible and to acquire a part of their knowledge.

And in this way to take a step forward in my personal growth as a contribution to the common goal of the mission – a peaceful and secure Lebanon.

Who have you already met there and what possible common goals have you identified?

The common goal of all members of UNIFIL is to fulfil the force mandate in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1701. In ac-

cordance with that resolution, the focus of the UNIFIL forces operation is on maintaining peace and calming the situation, making regular patrols and providing surveillance of the terrain, detecting rocket-firing positions, bunkers and equipment, and training and working with members of Lebanese army units. As part of the ITA Brigade, in the western sector of UNIFIL responsibility, the Slovenian contingent carries out tasks of stabilisation in line with the UN mandate, with the objective of preventing renewed hostilities and creating the conditions for establishing a lasting peace. Within the UNIFIL forces our unit is placed in Sector West, where it operates directly under the command of the united brigade in which the lead nation is Italy. Through individuals and units in this sector, another 10 countries are involved in addition to us and the Italians (from Ireland, Finland, Ghana, Estonia, Korea, Armenia, Serbia, Malaysia, Fiji and France).

In professional terms we have most contacts with members of the Sector West command, where in addition to myself there are two other members of our contingent, and where our contingent is directly placed. On a daily basis we encounter the local environment in performing our duties and in showing our presence in the area of operation.

I count as the greatest privilege (both personal and for the contingent) the fact that we served under the command of the exceptional General Francesco Olla. This is a man who gave absolutely no precedence to his own soldiers, and any precedence was gained on the basis of expert and professional work. And we may also thank him for his initiative and support in the organisation of cultural evenings for the countries operating within Sector West. He is truly a general with a capital 'G'.

So Slovenia also responded to his initiative and organised a national day?

Yes, that was a really nice project in which we all participated. Some of us gave talks, we sang and danced, others cooked and sang, and still others mixed music and provided video content, then others were on instruments and helped in a raffle, some compered the show and handed out little flags – in short, we put in a serious shift that day, but it paid off. We presented Slovenia in the best light.

You are one of the rare women to hold such a high rank in the Slovenian military. How do you see yourself as a woman in the male ranks?

No, I'm not, there are quite a few women in the SAF, I think around 16%, which is exceptional compared to other countries. And quite a few women hold high ranks, we even have a female brigadier.

The experience to date has been for the most part positive, if you're not looking to cut corners because you're a woman, if you hold your head up as an equal, if you're not waiting for someone to open the door for you, then you're there, part of the team and that's what counts. It is true, though, that personally I sometimes get the feeling that I have to prove myself more than a male colleague, that I have to do things 120% – but this is not a real problem, I realised this soon after I joined up and took it as part of the deal.

Can you offer any special message in this regard? Does a woman have different responsibilities?

Women should not and cannot have different responsibilities to those of men, especially not in the military, because you're responsible for the lives of those under you ... no way, never. My responsibilities are the same, and I must carry out my duties just as well as the others, there is no other way. The alternative would involve short cuts which in the long run don't lead to the desired results, set objectives and good relations.

What I would like to communicate is – go forward with courage and integrity, no

obstacle is so hard that you can't get over it, and integrity always bears fruit, even though it sometimes hurts.

And in all this, never forget that things are viewed differently from different angles, and sometimes the greater success requires you to step out of your comfort zone, and never, absolutely never, forget that we are all human.

You are also a wife and mother – is your family in Lebanon with you?

Yes, the most important role in my life is being a wife and mother to three wonderful children. With the incredible support of my husband and parents, as well as my patient children, I am probably very fortunate that my primary mission can be so successfully combined with my career. I am extremely proud of this. We talk about everything and support each other. And then my husband can also have a successful military career and my children can fulfil all their school and other obligations. We love one another.



She took part in the mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and currently serves as commander of SVNKON 22 UNIFIL. She has performed all command duties up to company level.

THE CHURCH ARCHITECTURE OF JOŽE PLEČNIK

Slovenia and the Czech Republic propose two Slovenian and one Czech church as outstanding architectural achievements

TANJA GLOGOVČAN



The Church of St Michael in Črna Vas is humble, built of inexpensive materials, in the spirit of vernacular architecture, but it is still magnificent. Plečnik built this church at the same time as the National and University Library (NUK), hence certain similarities between the two. The stone walls feature brick inserts that break up the monotony of the grey stone, and the staircase to the church space is also reminiscent of that at NUK leading to the main reading room.
Photo: S. Rancov

Outstanding examples of Jože Plečnik's architectural designs can be seen in sacral buildings in Slovenia and the Czech Republic. In 2011 the two countries recognised a selection of these as cultural heritage of exceptional universal value. In 2015 they together placed on the UNESCO Tentative List six selected monuments that represent Plečnik's innovative architectural idiom that blends into the surroundings.

The monuments chosen, such as the promenade along the river banks and the bridges over the River Ljubljanica, Vegova Street and the National and University Library, and the All Saints Garden at the Žale cemetery, are joined on the Tentative List by the churches of St Michael and St Francis in Ljubljana and the Church of the Most Sacred Heart of Our Lord in Prague.

The UNESCO Tentative List is an inventory of monuments that the member states of the Convention recognise as heritage of exceptional importance, and which in the future they intend to nominate for the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. ICOMOS, an advisory body to UNESCO, attended a round table in July 2017 in Ljubljana organised by the Ministry of Culture.

Plečnik's work in Ljubljana was recognised as exceptional, where the architect undertook both large and small developments to shape the physical environment.

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH

The church was built between 1937 and 1939. Construction was especially challenging in the marshy wetland south of Ljubljana. The church and bell tower required 350 piles, with the foundations built upon with stone, brick and timber. The church was roofed

with heavy concrete shingles. The stone used for construction was from the quarry at Podpeč, and the bricks were from the Vrhnika brickworks.

Owing to the marshy terrain, Plečnik raised the church above the natural level of the land. In this way on the ground floor he gained the lateral space needed for the presbytery and classroom. The bearing structure of the main area for worship above the ground floor is created by masonry corners of stone and brick. The intervening rounded columns are constructed of factory-produced concrete drainage pipes. They hold up the massive timber roof structure, which is covered with concrete shingles made especially for this church. The infill for the exterior is composed of double wooden siding, which on the southern and northern exteriors features a horizontal strip of windows that provides light.

In its foundations the bell tower is separate from the church – it is designed simply as a wall supporting the bells. Plečnik conceived it as a cavity wall, and on the outside placed a staircase. He positioned the bell tower in what was optically the most effective aspect, in the axis in front of the church entrance, and included it in the composition of the staircase. When the surroundings turn green in the spring then the bell tower comes to life, and the wild vine climbing up it visually enhances the landscape. At the beginning of the entrance axis, originally right by the staircase, the architect placed two pairs of columns. Smaller concrete drainage pipes are used as a fence.

The church was laid out in what was for its time an unusual north-south orientation, making the main axis shorter, as the altar is placed along the long northern wall and divides the church interior into two sections.

The use of wood in this church provides a surprisingly homely warmth in the interior.

The playful composition of massive, smooth and decorated columns in combination with the thin, painted wooden uprights gives the visitor the experience of completely independent forms arranged in series in front of the altar space and beside it. The interior of the church was furnished in 1940 with the installation of the main altar, chandeliers and pews. The movable wooden side altar, which was already in use previously in the Barje area, found a home in the corner to the right. Plečnik designed the short distance from the entrance to the altar with a wooden passage and wooden side doors, and at the same time used it for a communion table.

Candles were placed in wrought-iron candlesticks linked together by a wrought-iron railing right next to the altar steps. To the left of the altar stands the simple low block of the pulpit, clad in tombac plate. The altar is positioned in front of the reredos and raised up a few steps. On either side there are arcade screens with entrances to the sacristy behind the altar. In the axis above the tabernacle there is a simple cross of the Crucifixion, and to the left of the axis the Virgin Mary. The patron Saint Michael is a stylised figure of a winged angel in front of a concave round metal screen, secured not in the altar axis but to the right on a stone pillar. The space above the altar is dominated by a large chandelier, a ring suspended from the cross from which hangs A and Ω. From the centre of the cross descend scales with a sword placed through them, both attributes of St Michael. A similar playfulness imbues the wooden pews in the two sections of the church for the congregation. An important factor in creating the impression of the space is the elements that do not in fact support anything, but appear to hold up the wooden entablature. The decorative wooden pillars have a similar optical function here to the non-bearing columns.

St Michael's brings together an incredible number of elements which Plečnik had previously used: wooden infill, walls of stone and brick, roofing materials and so forth. The bell tower is in fact the only completely new feature in this work.

The stand-alone position of the tower, its dominance and at the same time the optical barrier to movement up the stairs across the landing into the church, can obscure the fundamental debt which the Church of St Michael owes to the National and University Library in Ljubljana (NUK). The staircase is in fact a miniature imitation of the long staircase leading to the hall of the large reading room of that library. The identical motif work in the church nave and the reading room retrospectively confirms the sacred character of the central motif at NUK.

CHURCH OF ST FRANCIS

Plečnik's thinking about this church was in part linked to his Church of the Most Sacred Heart of Our Lord in Prague. That church is grandiose, a building of staggering dimensions.

It was precisely through the Church of St Francis that Plečnik presented himself to Ljubljana, and thereby introduced a monumental scale in new parts of the city. The central concept of this building was indeed innovative and novel at the time.

Despite this novelty, Plečnik modelled his design of the spacious nave on ancient Christian basilicas. The ceiling is wooden and flat, and all around is a strip of windows. Under Plečnik's direction, the church was initially furnished with a simpler version of the main altar, pulpit and side altar in 1929 and 1936, all in a single line along the columns in front of the reredos. Plečnik pushed all the altar section into the central square of the nave, in other words the



St Francis in Šiška (1925–1927, bell tower in 1931). In its design the church represents one of Plečnik's principles in designing modern church spaces: a hall of square dimensions surrounded by a colonnaded hallway, with the altar moved to the auditorium area. The hall is covered by a flat wooden ceiling, and up high is a series of windows reminiscent of an ancient Christian basilica, while the church interior has simple, asphalt flooring. The façade has an ascetic design, with the entrance portal providing the only point of emphasis. The bell tower ends in a round and open pillared construction for the bells. Photo: D. Prelovšek

section for the congregation. By 1937 the chandeliers had been installed, an extraordinary composition of tiny plastic elements in the large space. Then came the pillar with the eternal flame, set asymmetrically in the inner square. After the war Plečnik supplemented the main altar, and in the 1950s he created extraordinary furnishings in wood for the sacristy, chapel and baptistry. The special chapel with its "Baroque" composition in an ellipse of staggered thin wooden pillars, with an architrave and a smaller ellipse in the upper floor with gilt work, is an outstanding achievement of the architect's later period.

Another element of fascination owing to its cylindrical shape is the bell tower, which was completed in 1931.

Next to this cylindrical form Plečnik placed four thin four-cornered pyramids – a motif he used around the same time at his church in Prague.

CHURCH OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF OUR LORD IN PRAGUE

The foundations for this church were laid in 1928, in the middle of a large square. Plečnik's guiding concept here, at least as regards the exterior, was an ancient Greek temple, or perhaps the Neo-Classical Church of La Madeleine in Paris.

In accordance with Plečnik's concept, the exterior was constructed in three horizontal layers. Above the lower section of concrete the structure rises up in a stone wall that gently flares out towards the

top, into which has been inserted an even pattern of somewhat jutting prisms of granite. This cold tone contrasts with the smooth background of warm brown stone. On top this main section has been placed a third layer, light in colour and executed as a rendered wall. In this are placed windows lighting the interior of the church. The same elements have been used in the construction of the mighty bell tower, which features two representations of pyramids on its sides, while its main faces include two large circles with clocks.

The interior features the same simplicity of design, which Plečnik created as a single unit, with nothing inside to hinder the view of the altar or divide the space in any way.

The periphery of the nave features masonry pilasters bearing the bright, windowed upper storey above an emphasised yet simply profiled cornice. The ceiling is a flat, wooden coffered construction. In its basic periphery the crypt has the form of a single vaulted space, with a brilliantly wrought reredos featuring a composition of variegated stone and brick, and with "cubist" window frames just below the top of the vault on either side. From the outside the church as a whole has a pronounced solidity.

The main altar is just slightly raised a step above the church floor, while the side altars, placed in the corners beyond the wall around the altar, are higher. Six saintly figures are suspended between the pilasters behind the altar, while the whole composition is topped by a suspended seraphic Christ in the axis just under the cornice. Side altars were later placed along the sides of the nave.

The solid shell of the building, cased in ceramic cladding with white square caesuras, expands in the lower section towards the cornice. Upon it rests the light-providing storey with its simple rectangle windows and elegant garlands beside the roof corning in the sections between the windows. The motif of the building expanding towards the peak is repeated in the cornice, which is nothing other than a rectangular, sharply hewn roof stratum. The same motif of

expansion is repeated in the three entrance portals. The square bases in the axis of the portals were intended for plastic adornment, which further dramatised the play of the constructed masses on the main entrance, in contrast to the shallow borders of the portals and windows. Plečnik designed the presbytery in the very same way, except that there the role of main framer of the mass of the walls is played by the portal and windows with their oversized frames and lintels high above the windows. The body of the light-providing storey is markedly lower here. Of course the motif of the roof or rather the low triangular pediment remains on the main entrance. The huge clad column section expanding towards the top rests on a massive white base set between the pilasters. Above this is a similar light-giving window section, but with higher windows and a tympanum. The architect had thin pyramids placed on balustraded bases.

Looking at the structure in terms of the iconography of a capital city, this is indeed a regal church. Certain other details, such as the stone paved area and wall together with the semi-circular staircase in front of the main entrance, underline this impression.

The execution of the façade itself, with "dotted line" verticals, creates a highly modern effect, and superbly expresses Plečnik's feeling for a plastically contoured façade layer. The regal impression of the church is also enhanced by the bell tower. An extraordinary effect is created by the use of two large round windows with clocks in the bell tower, decorated with stylised antique weaving. The view through the structure of the bell tower tempers its monumental quality. The ramps rising by the walls up to the top of the bell tower, with smooth sides and the rectangular grid of distributed circles of huge flowers, do not offer the impression of a church, but rather of the interior of an astronomical observatory. Yet in truth, for Plečnik this was merely a secondary area which virtually no one saw, and for that reason it required no further emphasis or ornamentation.

The Church of the Most Sacred Heart of Our Lord in Prague radiates superlative quality in part because Plečnik used no cheap materials for it. An extraordinary effect is created by the circular windows in the bell tower that also have two large clocks. Certain other details, such as the stone paved area and wall together with the semi-circular staircase in front of the main entrance, are also imposing. The execution of the façade itself, with "dotted line" verticals, creates a highly modern effect, and wonderfully encapsulates Plečnik's feeling for a plastically contoured façade layer.

Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA



ARCHITECTURE FESTIVAL

What does the future hold for cities and architecture?

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ
PHOTO: MARTIN VOGRIČ



The symposium On Power in Architecture, held on 20 September in Ljubljana, kicked off the ten-day festival Future Architecture, organised by the Museum of Architecture and Design (MAO). There were lectures, workshops, film screenings, exhibitions and pop-up events, which brought together architects, designers, artists and curators, who over the past two years have helped create the European programme Future Architecture. Over these two years more than a thousand creative people have presented their ideas via the platform.

Matevž Čelik, head of the platform: "In a period of two years since the creation of the platform, it has offered more than a hundred events, from conceptual exhibitions to the pioneering publishing platform Archifutures, and it has driven initiatives in local communities around Europe and beyond its borders, with more than 200 as yet unestablished architects, urban planners, curators, critics and others, for the most part young specialists. This is the next generation of architects, for whom architecture is a field of intellectual exploration that can promote social change and deal with serious issues in situ."

The Future Architecture festival offers a unique insight into the diversity in the work of coming generations of architects, who are determined to break down existing barriers – not just physical, but also invisible professional and ideological walls.

In addition to a presentation of events as part of the Future Architecture platform, which were prepared by curators from 18 member institutions, the festival featured an expert discussion on Internet Engagement and Methods of Subversion, with Charles Broskoski and James Taylor-Foster investigating a collection of real-world projects and platforms. We heard tales told by architecture from futurologist Ludwig Engel, and also how to recognise stories in architectural projects and then how to recount them, as was explained by the representative of Bureau N. The festival also featured the Slovenian

pavilion for the 16th international architecture exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia 2018 and the catalogue Faraway, So Close, which accompanies the 25th Design Biennial (BIO 25) with curators Maja Vardjan and Angela Rui.

"Since 2015 the Future Architecture platform has been supported by the Creative Europe programme (subprogramme Culture). The first Europe-wide architecture platform, with 18 members, is one of 13 platforms which this year successfully applied in the call for the European Platforms 2017 programme. Future Architecture will therefore continue for the next four years, with the same support, since it will receive funds amounting to 2,000,000 euros," reports MAO, the coordinator of the platform in which a further 16 members from 15 countries are participating.

The platform links together the talents of various professions from the as yet unestablished generation, and enables them to present their ideas for the future of cities and architecture.

In the two years of its operation, some 628 ideas have been presented by 1,016 promising creative talents, and it has offered more than 100 events, with more than 200 emerging architects, urban planners, curators, critics and others, for the most part young specialists from all over Europe and the rest of the world.

DECEMBER HOLIDAY SPIRIT IN SLOVENIA

Celebrations, Customs and Traditions

TANJA GLOGOVČAN, DANILA GOLOB

In Slovenia no Christmas holiday is complete without the traditional potica cake, a treat that was mentioned in Janez Vajkard Valvasor's ground-breaking work, first published in 1689, *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*. At one time you were only allowed to eat this cake after returning from midnight mass, but now it can be enjoyed at any time. Despite this greater availability, Slovenian potica, rolled up in alluring circles, stuffed with walnuts, hazelnuts, quark, poppy seeds, honey, cream or pork crackling, is still an indispensable holiday food.



Potica cake with poppyseed filling.
Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik

Of all the **holiday breads**, the most magical powers were once attributed to those made for Christmas. Each member of the family, including the animals, received a piece, for it brought good fortune to the house, health to parents, rapid growth to children, and a husband for girls, while also fattening livestock, driving evil spirits from the house and protecting the homestead from lightning and thieves. Special powers were held by the ceremonial bread of Štajerska, known as *kuc* or *krhljak* (fruit bread). The Christmas bread of the Bela Krajina, Dolenjska and Notranjska regions was beautifully decorated with dough Nativity scenes and animals.

On the eve of the Feast of **St Nicholas** (from December 5 to 6), the custom was to put baskets or plates on the window ledge or table before children went to bed. In Slovenia, St Nicholas traditionally

brings children walnuts, dried fruit, pastries and biscuits, as well as some small gifts.

On the Feast of **St Barbara**, 8 December, Slovenians have the custom of planting wheat grass, which sprouts by Christmas and then serves as a decoration or symbol of prosperity. In Slovenia it is called "Christmas grain" in Gorenjska, "sprouted grain" in Štajerska, "wheat" in Dolenjska and "eternal life" in Bela Krajina.

In the period running up to Christmas Slovenians place an **advent wreath** on the table, woven from evergreen branches, and in some places from moss. It is adorned with candles, dried fruit or other simple decorations. The gradual lighting of the candles symbolises the growth of the good at this season.



Holiday bread is decorated with dough Nativity scenes.
Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

Nativity scenes are an obligatory part of the Christmas atmosphere, alongside New Year trees. In addition to home scenes, there are some fascinating live Nativity displays that can be seen around the country, such as in Postojna Cave, Mojstrana and elsewhere. In Slovenia the first church Nativity scenes were set up in 1644 by the Jesuits in Ljubljana.

In some parts of Gorenjska they still preserve the ancient custom known as **“follow the bell,”** when people ring a bell through the entire village at 22:00 on Christmas Eve, inviting the locals to midnight mass.

The **practice of sprinkling holy water and lighting incense at home** is very old, dating back to pre-Christian times. The smoke, fire and holy water would supposedly protect the home, animals and fields from disaster, and would summon to the house prosperity, health and a good harvest. In Slovenia each member of the family had their own part to play in the blessing ritual. The master of the house burned blessed wood in a pan, placing in it embers, incense and pitch. This gave the house a very pleasant fragrance. While walking around the home, the woman of the house prayed and sprinkled holy water with a spruce branch or other greenery, and the children followed their parents carrying lanterns or little



A very old and typical custom is wassailing, where people sing carols for Christmas and New Year, and also enjoy cups of hot mulled cider, with this tradition still seen in many places from 24 December to 6 January.
Photo: Slovene Ethnographic Museum

candles. This custom has been retained to the present day in some places.

New Year fir trees adorn Slovenian homes, streets and squares. Each family decorates them in their own way. Some use natural materials, while others use traditional ornaments, but all have twinkling lights.

A very old and typical custom is **wassailing**, where people sing carols for Christmas and New Year, and also enjoy cups of hot mulled cider, with this tradition still seen in many places from 24 December to 6 January.

The **Feast of St Stephen** (28 December) has also been celebrated for centuries, and on that day farmers traditionally dedicated themselves to the saint for the **protection of their horses**. On this occasion wassailers would walk from house to house greeting people thus: “God bless this house and the people who live in it.” They then offered the people living there seasonal greetings and wishes for health and happiness. The third part of the wassailing ritual was a request for a gift. When they received this, the wassailers offered thanks by saying something like the following: “may the horses, donkeys and pigs play around your house, all in one cauldron.” The wassailers were always joyful and full of fun.

A special role and significance was enjoyed by **“beaters,”** who played their part on 28 December. On that day children went around the village at first light with St Nicholas sticks beating the adults. First they got their parents, then they went from house to house. The adults bought their way out of a beating by filling the children’s pockets with bread, potica, walnuts and other treats. These days, however, the tradition is all but unknown in Slovenia. In Podkoren this custom was called šapanje, in Koroška šapavica, in Gorenjska pametiva, in Porabje the children would friškati around the houses, and Prekmurje children would go rodivat.



Slovenian wood Christmas tree by Rada Kos.
Photo: Xmas3 Archives

On the morning of New Year's Day a woman was not allowed to be the first visitor to a house, for that brought misfortune. Moreover, in order for fruit trees to bear an abundant harvest in the coming year, the farmer would shake the snow off each of them on New Year morning.

On the eve of Three Kings Day the family would bless the house with incense and water. Over the entrance the master wrote the initials of the three kings in the middle of the numbers for the year, such as 20 + G + M + B + 17. The inscription then had to stay above the door until the next year, a custom that is still practiced today.

On that night Slovenian villages would be visited by Three Kings wassailers, who brought good wishes for health and happiness to the house.

The festive time of Christmas and New Year was over when the woman of the house stopped opening the bins in the granaries, as she would do during the Christmas period so that God's blessing would be called into them. She would sit at the bin and sift through it, selecting only the best grains for seed. Each year spring would come once again to the land, summoned forth by the wheat grass on the Christmas table, the evergreen decorations in the "Holy Cor-



A live Nativity scene was first presented in Postojna Cave 30 years ago.
Photo: Valter Leban

ner" of the house, and by little spruces along the village stream.

Socialising with friends over mulled wine, usually in the decorated city streets, remains an obligatory part of the festive atmosphere in Merry December.

Among the finest Slovenian Christmas and New Year postcards are those by Maksim Gaspari, which contain elements of the Slovenian national tradition, its customs and practices, the culture of its costumes and architecture, and the images of individual Slovenian regions. Gaspari, who lived from 1883 to 1980, was also the first Slo-

venian painter and illustrator to produce a likeness of the Slovenian Grandpa Frost, and what was called the national Nativity scene.

The most popular Slovenian songs that people like to sing and hear during the Christmas and New Year season include Bela snežinka (White Snowflake by Veter), Novo leto (New Year, Rok'n'band), Na božično noč (On Christmas Night, Pop design), Silvestrski poljub (New Year's Kiss, Eva Boto and Žan Serčič, plus another song with the same name, by Alfi Nipič), Božični večer (Christmas Evening, Tone Rus group) and Za božič bom sam (I'll be Alone for Christmas, by Jan Plestenjak with the Slovenian Symphony Orchestra).



Christmas postcard (Merry Christmas) by Maksim Gaspari.
Photo: Slovene Ethnographic Museum



Festively decorated Ljubljana
Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

CARTWRIGHTING

A woodworking trade that dates back thousands of years

DANILA GOLOB



The Technical Museum of Slovenia houses a permanent exhibition on the development of cartwrighting products. These include cartwrighting items from the second half of the 19th century, when manual work was still predominant. A manual lathe made in 1771 is of particular note. The collection also includes a home-made combined wood-processing and cartwrighting machine made in 1938. Photo: Blaž Zupančič/Technical Museum of Slovenia

A five thousand two hundred-year-old wooden wheel with axle found on the Ljubljana Marshes is the oldest such find in the world. This represents the beginnings of the cartwrighting trade in Slovenia, as the wooden wheel is the cartwright's most recognisable product. Unfortunately, this craft is slowly dying out.

The stock of the cartwright's trade was making wooden parts for hauling vehicles, mainly carts. In Slovenia, cartwrighting developed as a self-taught independent cottage industry, which was particularly important due to the development of transport from the 17th century onwards. In addition to carts, cartwrights made and repaired sleds, skis, tool handles, wheelbarrows, hearses, farming implements (harrows, ploughs, seeders, tillers, ladders, wine presses, and spinning wheels) and so on, and in the 20th century also wooden parts for car chassis.

Cartwrights learned their trade from masters and at vocational schools. Their work was closely linked to that of blacksmiths.

The cartwright made the wooden parts of the cart, while the blacksmith made the metal parts for the wheels. Cartwrighting and blacksmithing were two important trades, and it is impossible to imagine how life would have been in past centuries without them. In 1927 there were 30 cartwright's shops in the Murska Sobota region, and 36 workshops in the Pomurje region in 1957.

Cartwrighting was first affected by the construction of the railway network, and with the mass production of rubber wheels and tyres for carts and tractors, and the huge expansion of car ownership in the 1970s and 1980s, it completely died out. In Slovenia, all woodworking trades are now classified as loss-making professions. Although in principle young people could continue the tradition, we have not had any schools for blacksmiths, lorimers or cartwrights for many years. Today, the cartwright's trade has completely died

out, and is only supported through the preservation of ethnological heritage.

ONE OF THE LAST CARTWRIGHTS IN SLOVENIA

In Slovenia only a few masters of the old cartwrighting techniques remain. The 85-year-old Janez Pergar from Dole pri Krašcah is one of the few who still makes wooden wheels, carts, coaches, "extravagances" (horse-drawn carriages for excursions and entertainment), carriages, children's wagons and other cartwrighting products.

He learned his trade at a woodworking school in Ptuj, which offered courses in cartwrighting, carpentry, barrel making, lathe turning and joinery. The students lived in a Minorite monastery, and had three months of courses, then spent nine months working in a cartwrighting workshop. After completing his schooling, Pergar became apprenticed to a master cartwright who had opened a workshop in Moravče. A cartwright's education took three years, and while Pergar worked for the master for a time in the 1950s, he soon realised that the trade was dying out due to mechanisation. He took a job at Avtoservis in Domžale, and then worked at Avtomontaža. After his retirement, he started working with wood again.

Pegar, who uses ash and spruce to make his products, has plenty of work. Since there are only a few cartwrights still working, he receives orders from all over Slovenia. And despite mechanisation, farmers still need tools. In addition to various types of carts, people come to him if they need to put a handle on an axe, shovel or other tool.

He also manufactures Viktorija coaches (the type used by the Empress Maria Theresa), carts for the queen of the wine harvest, carriages used at the conference centre in Brdo pri Kranju, and for other occasions.

A large car dealer even commissioned a carriage for the opening of a new dealership. After the event, the client told Pergar that



One of Slovenia's last remaining cartwrights, Janez Pergar from Dole pri Krašcah in the Moravče Valley.
Photo: Baribal, Agencija za medije in marketing

his carriage was the most popular and photographed of all of the luxury vehicles. Pergar responded that you have to remember that cars were based on ordinary carts, and that German engineers like Daimler and Benz mounted their early internal combustion engines in wooden vehicles.

Pergar needs 150 hours to build a child's wagon, and around 230 for an excursion cart. Wheelwrighting accounts for most of the work. The old master does not know how many products he has made, but he does know that it is a very large number.

Janez Pergar also works with the Technical Museum of Slovenia in Bistra, with various associations such as the Moravče Valley Artisans Association, and is frequently invited to workshops at which he presents the cartwright's trade to young audiences.

TECHNICAL MUSEUM OF SLOVENIA

The museum is dedicated to the collection, preservation and dissemination of information about Slovenia's technical heritage, with an emphasis on products of local knowledge and those which either had a significant impact on the lives of Slovenes, or were in some way characteristic of the Slovenian territory. The museum is located in the former Bistra Carthusian monastery in Bistra pri Vrhniki, which keeps permanent exhibitions on farming, transport, forestry, woodworking, hunting, fishing, textiles, printing and electronics.

The Technical Museum of Slovenia also houses an exhibition presenting cartwrighting in Slovenia. It features a display of the most important hand tools used by cartwrights to make wooden wheels and the other parts of carts. In addition to the reconstruction of a workshop with tools and products, it also presents the history and importance of cartwrighting in Slovenia. Visitors can watch a short film which presents some of the individual tasks and products of cartwrights and farriers. The cartwrighting collection also features an overview of the development of animal-drawn vehicles in Slovenian farming, together with the various component parts of those vehicles.



A wooden wheel. A blacksmith puts metal casings around the hub and rim, and the wheel is finished.
Photo: Blaž Zupančič/Technical Museum of Slovenia

UPPER SAVA VALLEY

Treasure trove of stories written by nature and history

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ

PHOTO: KRANJSKA GORA TOURISM ARCHIVES



Kranjska Gora ski centre.

The magical Upper Sava Valley lies in the far north-western part of Slovenia, squeezed between the peaks of the Julian Alps and the Karavanke range, on the edge of Triglav National Park.

KRANJSKA GORA – COSMOPOLITAN SKI CENTRE

Kranjska Gora is a very active ski centre in the winter, while in summer it is a magnet for cycling events and a great starting point for excursions in nature. It was transformed from being a herding settlement in the 14th century to the present-day cosmopolitan Alpine village due to its increasing strategic importance, which spurred construction of the road over the Vršič pass and the railway line, then later the erection of the Planica Giant ski-jumping slope.

The record ski flights this enabled boosted tourism, and the slopes of Vitranc saw the installation of the first cable lift.

Today the area also offers a summer toboggan run, climbing wall, fascinating museums, ethnographic events, wild parties and much more.

PODKOREN – ALPINE HEART OF THE VALLEY

The quiet, removed village of Podkoren is just two kilometres from Kranjska Gora and features all the elements of the Upper Sava architectural heritage. Podkoren, with its ski centre on the outskirts of the village, is the centre for an annual Alpine Skiing World Cup, and also boasts the wonderful Zelenci Nature Reserve, where the source of the River Sava Dolinka is located. Podkoren was the site of a road toll, and through it led a paved medieval road, with mail carriages passing by. Right up until the construction of the Karavanke Tunnel, the road over Korensko Sedlo was the main transport link between Central and Northern Europe, and at that

time a lot of mystical stories were gathered there. "My old nest..." wrote the famous British researcher and admirer of Gorenjska, Sir Humphry Davy, about Podkoren and its surroundings. Podkoren can also be a fun place, since it hosts the lively Meeting of Devils from Three Countries, which is one of the most famous Upper Sava public festivities.

MOJSTRANA – STARTING POINT FOR THE JULIAN ALPS AND HOME OF OLYMPIANS

Mojstrana lies at the entrance to the Triglav National Park, with three magnificent Alpine valleys leading into the heart of the Julian Alps. The Krma Valley offers the easiest access to Mt Triglav, the Kot Valley is a place of enchanting silence, while Vrata will stun you with the Triglav's mighty north face. Once a place of mining and ironworking, today Mojstrana is most famous for its outstanding alpinists and skiers, for as many as 18 Slovenian Olympians were born in Mojstrana and nearby.

DOVJE AND BELCA – IDYLIC VILLAGES BELOW THE KARAVANKE

Dovje is a village dating back a thousand years, with a farming tradition and the best-preserved typical Alpine architecture. In the settlement of Podkuže at Belca, and not far from Mojstrana, you can still observe cattle grazing freely in the Alpine pastures.

MARTULJEK FOREST AND SREDNJI VRH – MOUNTAIN CATHEDRAL

Martuljek Forest acquired its name from a stream, while the household names for Srednji Vrh (Middle Peak) are from the period of

Turkish incursions. After World War I, this area had developed milling, ironworking, timber floating and charcoal making, which is now being revived as a local tradition. Modern-day Martuljek Forest (Gozd Martuljek) is a wonderful mix of unspoilt Alpine nature, with mountain waterfalls, a rich ethnographic heritage and the Martuljek range with its central slender rocky pyramid of Špik, which gives the rock face a special magic.

RATEČE – PLANICA – THE HEROES OF PLANICA FLY LIKE BIRDS, THE BEST-KNOWN TUNE IN RATEČE

Slovenia's icon of folk-pop, Slavko Avsenik, dedicated the song Planica to ski jumpers at one of the biggest ski flying hills in the world, the one at Planica. Rateče is known for its long, cold winters, but also for its abundance of sunny days when you can ramble over Alpine meadows in the foothills of the Karavanke. In the

church of St Thomas in Rateče you can see copies of the famous Rateče manuscripts – one of the four oldest written records in the Slovenian language.

ETHNOGRAPHIC GEMS PLUS ALL THE ADRENALINE YOU WANT

The winter idyll of the valley offers plenty of active experiences. Skiers and snowboarders will enjoy the challenge of the slopes, and others the chance of recreation on groomed cross-country trails and toboggan runs. And you can engage in some truly special activities climbing frozen waterfalls, skating, ski touring, day and night snow-shoeing, and walking by torchlight. But the soul of Kranjska Gora is and will remain Alpine skiing. A special feature of skiing in this area is the diversity of terrain, which offers high-quality skiing both for beginners and top skiers, as well as ideal spots

for snowboarders. Ski cable lifts and pistes are arranged on the slopes of Vitranc from Kranjska Gora to Planica at elevations of 800 m to 1215 m. The ski centres are linked by a system of five chair lifts and 13 drag lifts.

MORE THAN 40 KM OF CROSS-COUNTRY TRAILS

Those who love a genuine connection with nature will be thrilled at the more than 40 km of groomed cross-country ski trails, below the downhill ski centres, past the source of the Sava, below the ski jumps at Planica, and on into the Tamar area. The entire Upper Sava Valley is in fact a cross-country paradise. The famous frozen waterfall in Gozd Martuljek, Lucifer, is one of the most popular spots for frozen waterfall climbers. They can test their skills against the frozen waterfalls below Prisank and in Tamar, or against the artificial frozen wall in the Mlačca Gorge in Mojstrana, where Christmas is enlivened by a live Nativity scene with an ice backdrop.

TOBOGGANING BY TORCHLIGHT

Those who are drawn to revive forgotten moments of childhood fun, or to unwind in a slightly different way, will really enjoy tobogganing. In addition to the toboggan run at the Kranjska Gora ski centre, there is organised night tobogganing on groomed and lit toboggan runs. In the evenings, all-terrain vehicles head out to the groomed toboggan run, to Tromeja, Macesnovec, Gozd Martuljek or Krnica, and all that remains is the "sweetest part" of the adventure: sliding down into the valley by torchlight. But there is plenty more winter fun to be had. Guests can also opt for day or night snow-shoeing, torchlight hikes, bike riding in the snow, skating on little frozen lakes and skating rinks, swimming in covered pools, cavorting in the Kranjska Gora Snow Park or visiting the Kranjska Gora Eskimo Village.

Alongside its sports thrills, Kranjska Gora offers a range of music and entertainment, open-air concerts and in the Vitranc auditorium, plus relaxing in the hotel beauty centres and spas. You can also try your luck at either of the casinos.

The high points of the winter season are the world cup events Pokal Vitranc in skiing and Planica in ski flying, along with the major open-air concerts during the two events, Q Max Party and Open-Air Planica.



Ski touring.



Ice climbing.



Slovenia offers lots of winter fun activities.
Photo: Iztok Medja

NEW SEASON AT CANKARJEV DOM

Honouring Slovenian writer Ivan Cankar

POLONA PREŠEREN



Cankarjev dom - Slovenian cultural and congress centre presents, produces, co-produces, organises and provides cultural and artistic, congress and other events, state ceremonies, exhibitions and festivals. Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

On the 100th anniversary of the death of the Slovenian writer Ivan Cankar, the country's biggest cultural institution, which bears the name of this literary giant, has made far-reaching preparations for the season. They have big plans, and interest from the public in their events is always huge.

"Our preparation of events for the new season was guided mainly by the awareness that superlative cultural programmes for all generations and major scientific and social gatherings leave indelible marks in the core and wider circles of our audiences. The unknown becomes known. And vice versa. Our programme is a common path into the unknown, into spiritual spaces that open up to us like unexplored landscapes. And there is a truly special enjoyment in that. We are also guided by our mission – a commitment to art and science. We care for the classical with reverence, and create the modern with excitement," said Uršula Cetinski, Director General of Cankarjev dom in presenting the new season.

In collaboration with the Delo newspaper publishing house, Cankarjev dom has marked the start of the new season with the publication of a sumptuously illustrated book of interviews entitled *Oder. Podoba. Spomin. (Stage. Image. Memory.)*, which brings together interviews from the Saturday supplements of the main newspaper Delo with world-class artists and performers who appeared as guests last season in Cankarjev dom.

One of the new features of the season is the European Jazz Conference, which took place in September. The mood will also be merry in the Great Reception Hall and elsewhere in the Cankarjev dom lobby, where 31 December 2017 will see a New Year's Eve social gathering with a festive programme in almost every auditorium. Preljocaj's *Romeo and Juliet* in Gallus Hall, the operetta *Peter Kušter* in Linhart Hall, the Club programme, and for the first time this year a New Year's Eve programme in Cankarjev dom Gallery, where you will be able to "journey" together with world traveller Alma Karlin. Since September the Cankarjev dom Gallery has hosted an exhibition entitled *Alma M. Karlin – Columbus's Daughter*, which is dedicated to the 90th anniversary of the writer's return from her eight-year journey around the world.

CANKARJEV DOM FOCUSES ON CANKAR

This season attention is being focused on Ivan Cankar, due to the 100th anniversary of the writer's death.

Events include a festival devoted to the writer entitled Cankar on Cankar, which seeks to present the Slovenian author from various viewpoints as an important Central European writer whose work was in tune with the influences of his time.

From January to June 2018 numerous events will be held as part of the Cankar on Cankar festival, marking the centenary of his death. The main performance piece of the festival will be *Pohujšanje v dolini šentflorjanski/Scandal in the Valley of St. Florian*, directed by Eduard Miler, a theatre co-production staged by SNG Drama Ljubljana, Mestno gledališče ljubljansko and Cankarjev dom. The festival will conclude in June with the opening of an exhibition on Ivan Cankar in the City Museum of Ljubljana that will shed light on the writer's life, plus an exhibition of his literary works in the Cankarjev dom Gallery. The National and University Library will also join in the marking of this special anniversary.

In addition to celebrating the past, Cankarjev dom is also devoting significant attention to educating the younger generations, with the new season offering young people numerous events and educational programmes. These can stimulate greater interest in both cultural activities and discovering science, and are aimed at various age groups of children and adolescents.

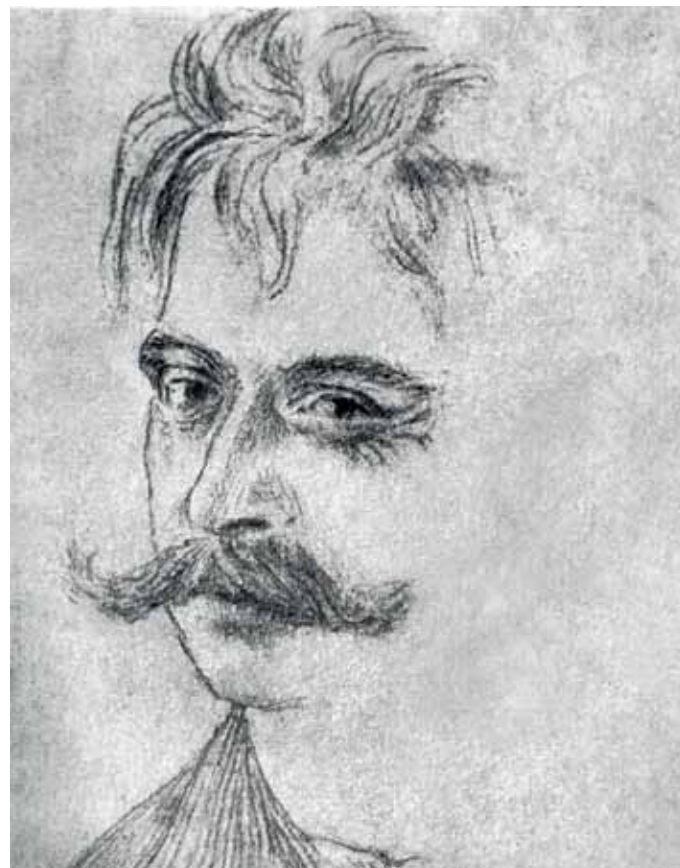
While younger people can take advantage of specially designed season ticket packages, adults can still enjoy those tickets and cycles that have a longer tradition: the theatrical Magnificent 7, musical Gold and Silver packages, the modern music cycle Predihano, Cankarjev dom Tuesdays with outstanding musical guests and Music of the World, and the Blue and Orange packages for the Slovenian Philharmonic.

FROM FILM TO CONFERENCES

Among the more popular events at Cankarjev dom is the film festival, which will take place this year between 8 and 19 November. This year's 28th Ljubljana International Film Festival (LIFFE) will focus on the French cinema of recent years, addressing both current topics and the historical excesses from which France cannot

shy away. Meanwhile, all the standard festival features remain on the programme. It should be added here that from year to year the festival has attracted even more visitors and aficionados of the seventh art. Cankarjev dom is also organising an International Festival of Mountaineering Film and a Festival of Documentary Film.

The cultural events in Cankarjev dom are supplemented by numerous other events, including international conferences, expert meetings, social gatherings and festivals. These include the biggest Slovenian book fair, and in recent years the Dao Yah Festival of Holistic Health, where under the leadership of distinguished experts there are numerous talks, workshops and presentations. At Cankarjev dom every visit is an experience, even if you're just stopping in for a drink at the coffee shop.

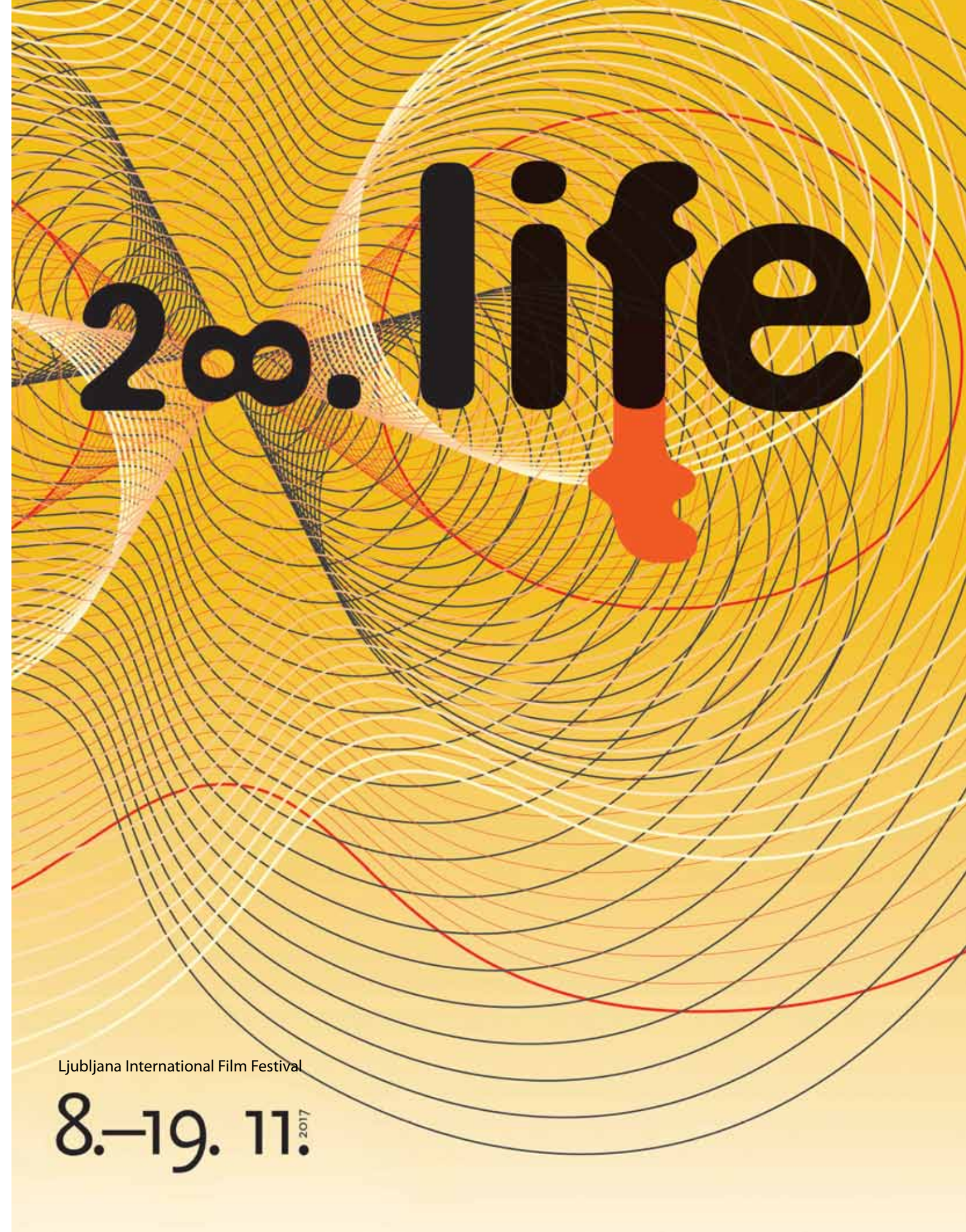


Ivan Cankar (1876 – 1918)

The story-teller, poet, dramatist and essayist Ivan Cankar is regarded as a central figure of the literary period of modernism from the end of the 19th century (fin de siècle) and beginning of the 20th. Alongside Cankar, mention should also be made of the poets Dragotin Kette, Josip Murn and Oton Župančič. However, Cankar was the only one in this group to create a sizeable body of prose and dramatic work in addition to poetry.

Cankar worked in a historically important period that marked the evolution of the Slovenian identity. This was a time when numerous nations within the Austro-Hungarian Empire began struggling for greater national identity, which led to the collapse of the Empire following the First World War. For this reason, Cankar needs to be read and assessed in the spirit of the period in which he worked.

Cankar was one of the first Slovenian writers to live from his profession. His literary opus makes him the greatest Slovenian story-teller and dramatist, a master of prose and style.





Laura Unuk became the world youth chess champion in Uruguay.

CHESS PLAYER LAURA UNUK

Unbeatable at seventeen

TANJA GLOGOVČAN
PHOTO: NEBOJŠA TEJIĆ/STA

Laura Unuk is the World Youth Chess Champion, and is successful both on the board and at school. She collects chess prizes one after the other, and her next major objectives are to become a world member champion and grandmaster.

Before securing the title of World Youth Champion at the World Under 18 Championship this year in Uruguay, Laura had won a gold medal in the under 16 category at the World Youth Chess Championship in South Africa in 2014, the under 18 gold at the European Youth Rapid and Blitz Chess Championships 2016 in Serbia, gold at the team European Championship for Young Women in 2016 (Slovenia A, teamed with Ivana Hreščak) in Romania, and also at the European Youth Rapid and Blitz Chess Championships 2015 in Serbia. Laura is clearly part of the young chess elite.

SHE MADE HER FIRST MOVE AT SIX

This passion for chess can be blamed on her grandfather, who showed Laura her first moves. And although she tried other sports, she also came back to chess, and to the table, and when she made a move her love of the game only matured. But her love of physical sports comes in handy today, as Laura is certain that her success can also be attributed to her good physical condition and self-care. This means that Laura gets up early, eats breakfast and goes on a run, which is what she did in Montevideo.

Apart from being very disciplined, she is also aware that it is important to study the other players well.

She underestimates no one, and strives to identify the way they think, like a poker player predicting the next bet.

Her discipline, strong will, self-confidence and consistency are also evident in school. Although Laura is frequently absent from her secondary school classes, she is a successful student. She is also convinced that her chess skills are an enormous help in her generally outstanding school results, especially in mathematics.

I HAVE HIGH GOALS

Laura is happy and proud to have earned the title of best of the young women chess players, but this is not where it ends for her.

She has her sights set very high. First, she wants to be world champion in her class, and then become a grandmaster.

To become a grandmaster you need two recognised grandmaster contests, and Laura needs just one more. She already has the rating and enough points, so all she needs now is another good tournament. This means that soon she will join the other Slovenian women who are grandmasters: Darja Kapš, Jana Krivec and Ana Srebrnič.

TEENAGE ENJOYMENT

She is also aware that she needs some downtime. In her free time she likes to pursue photography and drawing – in other words, art. Her smile also says that she is a teenager – playful, positive, mischievous and curious. The kind that likes to hang out with her peers. And her smile also says she is happy being a teenager.

Laura represents the modern generation of chess players; she also plays chess online, and sometimes against her computer. But most of all she likes face-to-face games, with a living person.

Laura's home club, the Ljubljana Chess Club, has already made preparations together with her for more challenges. Go Laura go!

SLOVENIAAAAAA - THE WINNERS!

Champions of European basketball

TANJA GLOGOVČAN
PHOTO: TAMINO PETELINŠEK/STA



Goran Dragić, Anthony Randolph, Matic Rebec, Aleksej Nikolić, Klemen Prepelič, Edo Murić, Jaka Blažič, Gašper Vidmar, Saša Zagorac, Žiga Dimec, Vlatko Čančar and Luka Dončić – the 12 Slovenian heroes. Their success can also be credited to coach Igor Kokoškov and his assistants Jaka Lakovič, Aleksander Sekulić and Rado Trifunović, along with the entire team headquarters.

With its win in Istanbul, Slovenia became the new European basketball champions. The team's success was enhanced by captain Goran Dragić, who was selected as Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the championship, and Luka Dončić, who along with Dragić was a pick for the All Tournament Team.

The Slovenian team beat Serbia 93:85 in the final of the EuroBasket championship, this year held in Istanbul. This was a dream come true for Slovenia, which won its first title in the senior competition.

The team got there without a single loss, something no other team has accomplished since FIBA expanded the European championship to 24 teams.

Slovenia is also the smallest country to hold the gold medal in the EuroBasket since it started in 1935, and the 15th country to become European champion.

This, the greatest result for a Slovenian team sports in the country's history, was celebrated in the Sinan Erdem Dome by around 7,000 Slovenian fans, who had travelled by whatever means they could to Turkey. In front of the venue and inside it they provided an unforgettable backdrop, and just like the Slovenian basketball players they earned the affection of all of Europe.

MERIT IS NOT MEASURED BY STATISTICS, AND A GOOD TEAM IS UNBEATABLE

Something that especially inspired the viewers was the team spirit, the friendship among the players, their thanks to the public and particularly to Slovenian fans.

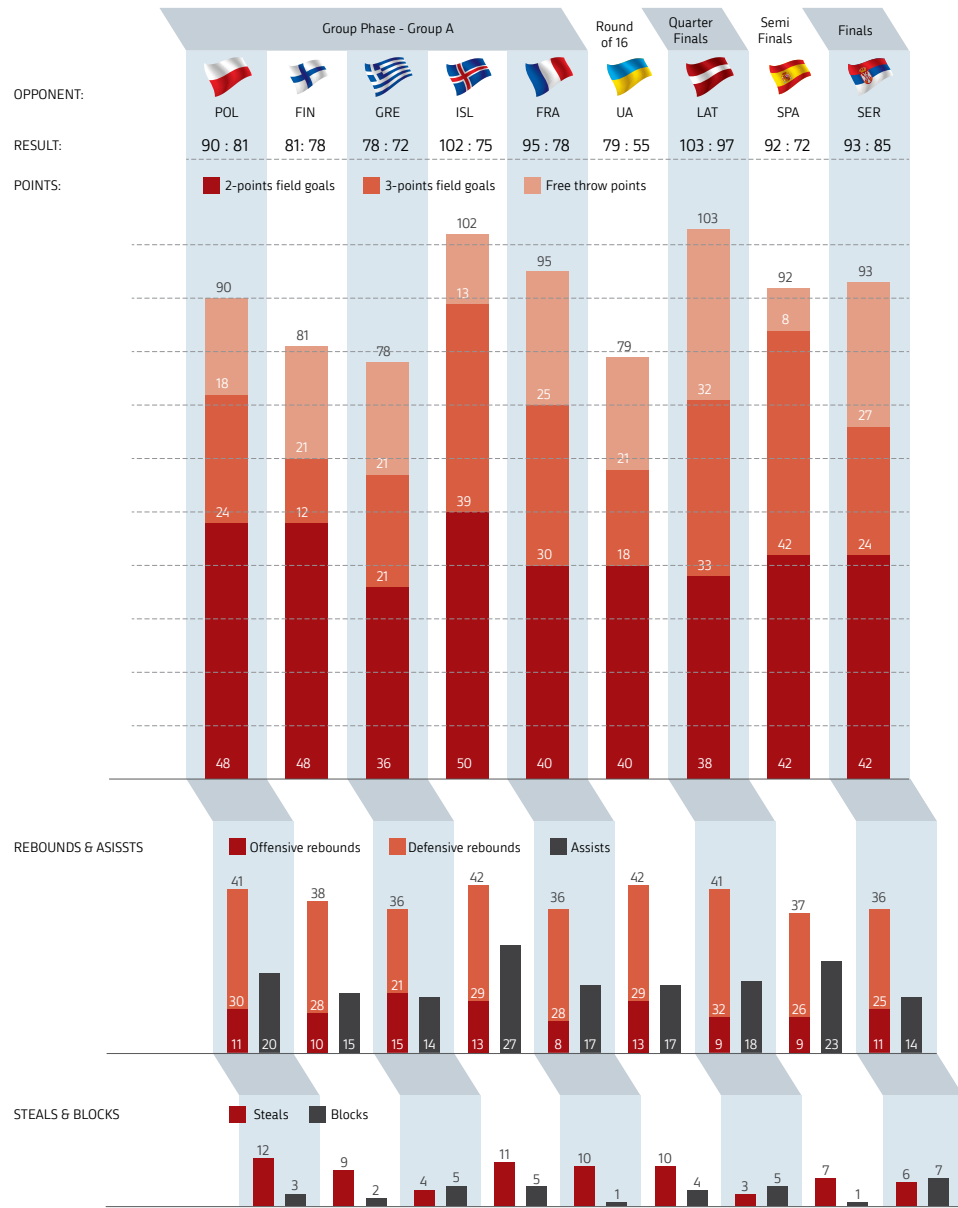
Goran Dragić, star of the championship, said of his team-mates: "That was a fairy-tale ending. Childhood dreams are no longer dreams but reality. Congratulations to all my team-mates, without them I wouldn't have this gold around my neck, and the same goes to the fans who carried us to victory. We wanted the gold medal, we knew it wouldn't be easy and we can be very proud, especially after everything that happened to us. Luka injured his ankle, cramps stopped me continuing, but Prepelič, Blažič, Randolph and Vidmar stepped up, and they did incredible work. Thank you, seriously, thank you."

At the same time he admitted that the victory was also of great importance for him personally: "I'm very happy. This is the high point of my career. I was one of those people who predicted a medal before the championship, and my dreams have come true. We all need to get some sleep now, I think, to be able to recognise in the morning what we achieved. Even when we got into the dressing room after the game, we just looked at each other and didn't know how to celebrate. These are truly the dreams of any sportsman. All your life you train twice a day, you tape up your ankles and knees, you have bruises on your body, and in the end you experience what you've wanted all your career," said Goran.

Alongside Goran Dragić, Slovenia's success can be credited in large part to Luka Dončić. This year the barely adult player was selected as the most promising in the Euroleague. Now throughout Europe and also in the USA they are speaking of him as a true basketball star. The young prospect was appearing for the first time in the European Championship, and yet won a gold medal and was selected for the



The five best players to make the All Tournament Team were Goran Dragić and Luka Dončić, plus the Russian Alexey Shved, Serb Bogdan Bogdanović, and Pau Gasol from Spain.



All Tournament Team. He came, he saw and he conquered. The best young basketball player in Europe also praised the Slovenian fans:

“It was only when I was given such a great reception by the fans that I realised what the win meant to them. The fans gave us massive support on the path to victory. I want to thank everyone who encouraged us and stood by our side. I’m speechless. I dedicate this medal to all of Slovenia.”

Alongside Goran Dragić and Luka Dončić, the other Slovenian players also attributed their success to the team as a whole. As Klemen Prepelič said: “One of the reporters there was reporting for her media corporation, reading out statistics, and I took the piece of paper from her hands and told her that statistics were not important. The essential thing is that we are a real team.”

The coach Igor Kokoškov also described the golden Slovenian boys in glowing terms: “Behind us is an incredible tournament and final that we will remember all our lives. These lads are truly what a real team must be. I am proud to be a part of that team and this celebration of Slovenian sport. The success is a team effort, everyone deserves credit, from the first to the last person in the basketball association, in the team, the headquarters and in the arena. The final was as taught as a string. At the last moment we lost important players, all due to injury. But a good team always finds a way to victory, and we proved that we are a good team.”



Luka Dončić is a rising star in the basketball world, even though he is barely 18 years old. He currently plays for Real Madrid in Spain.

Goran Dragić currently plays alongside the basketball elite of the American NBA. He plays as point guard/shooting guard as well as playmaker for the Miami Heat.

