



**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**

CONTENT

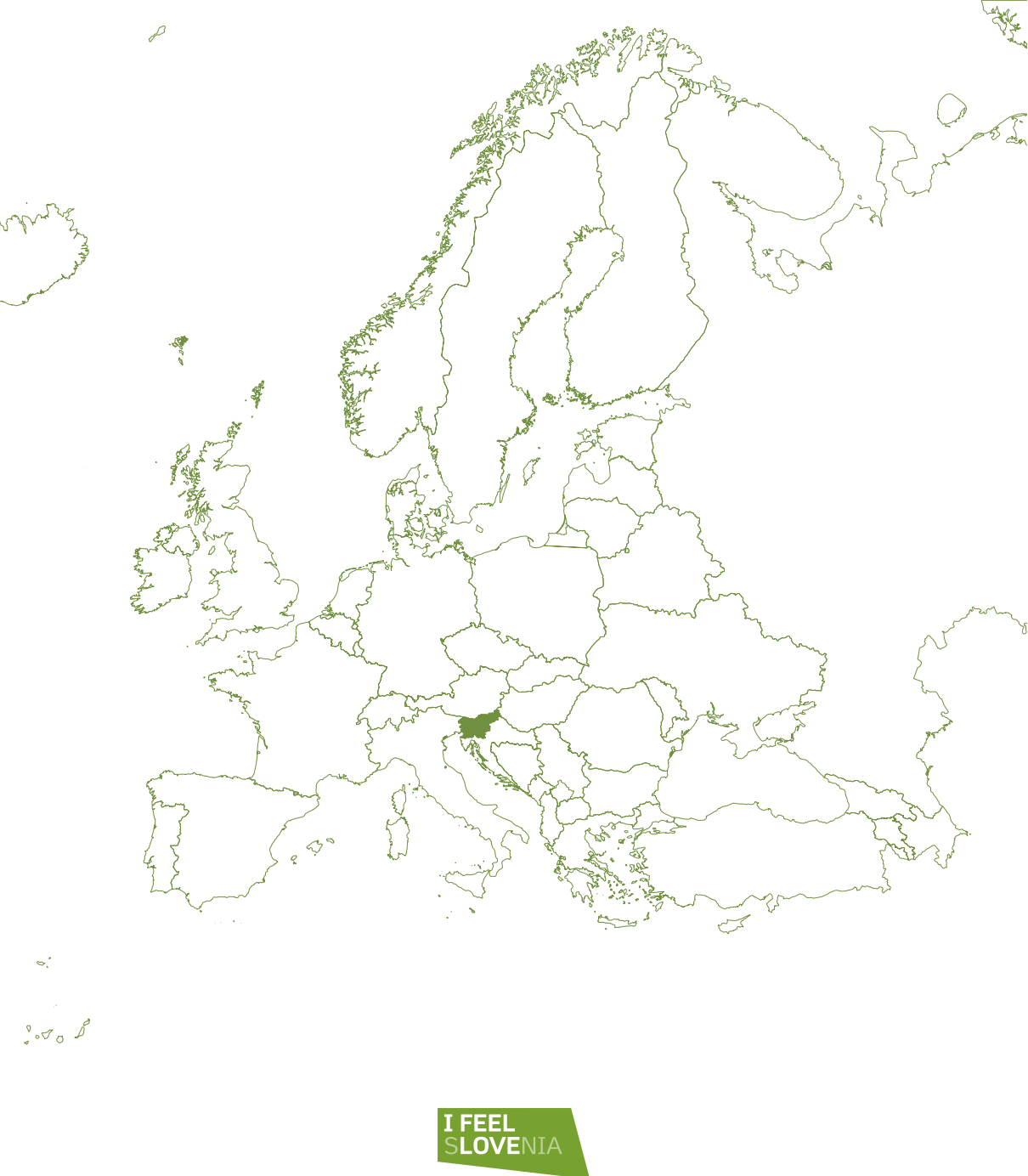
INTRODUCTION	5
THE STATE OF SLOVENIA	6
ECONOMY	20
SCIENCE	32
EDUCATION	40
SOCIETY	46
CULTURE	52
SPORT	66
HIGHLIGHTS	76

CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji
Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana

308(497.4)
908(497.4)

I feel Slovenia / [editors Polona Prešeren and Danila Golob ; translation Secretariat-General of the
Government of the Republic of Slovenia, Translation and Interpretation Division, DZTPS, Amidas]. - Ljubljana
: Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia, 2016

ISBN 978-961-6435-59-8
1. Prešeren, Polona
285088512



INTRODUCTION

You simply have to love Slovenia, as it is the only country in the world with the word “love” in its name. This play on words denotes Slovenia in all its essence – a successful, creative, diverse and responsible country, despite the fact that it is one of the youngest countries on earth in terms of years of existence. In 1991, it declared its autonomy and independence and demonstrated that even young and small countries can become global players.

It is hard to miss Slovenia in Europe with its strategic position in Central Europe – at the junction of the Alps, the Mediterranean, the mysterious Karst and the wide Pannonian plains. Within an area of 20,000 km², we can admire its exceptional geographical diversity with rich natural and cultural traditions. It is precisely this mark of its position and natural conditions that have importantly denoted the character of Slovenians, while the turbulence of historically important transport routes has added vitality and inspired their creativity.

You really have to love Slovenia. The feeling of affection for and belonging to Slovenia is indelible. Slovenia was described as heaven under Triglav by Cankar, the towering genius of Slovenian literature. It should be further explained that Triglav is the highest Slovenian peak and a mountain in the Julian Alps, and also one of the biggest national symbols. It is the mountain that has become the symbol of what it means to be Slovenian.

Also, where else in the world could you admire the noble Lipizzaner horses, the practical kozolec (hayrack), beehive panels and the Carniola bee, taste delicious potica (cake), and be astonished by the grammatical dual verb form that allows us to say that two people love each other in Slovenian? Or meet such big names from the world of culture (such as the architect Jože Plečnik) and science, important inventions (logarithms), numerous successful athletes (Anže Kopitar, Tina Maze, Peter Prevc, Jan Oblak, and many others), and people who enjoy unspoilt nature so much that their favourite pastime is mountaineering?

In this publication, you will get to know Slovenia with all of its particularities, lifestyle, inhabitants, exceptional athletes and, last but not least, its political arrangement. We certainly hope that you will also feel Slovenia.

THE STATE OF SLOVENIA

1991 was a turning point for Slovenia and Slovenians. In that year, Slovenia appeared on the global political map as an independent country. However, Slovenians laid foundations for statehood more than a thousand years ago. The country's extraordinary geographical position played an important role in this process, and the diverse landscape has marked the country's rich natural and cultural heritage, inspired the creativity of its inhabitants, and produced a number of exceptional individuals.

OUR PAST

Over years, Slovenians have maintained their small numbers with pride, and it was the small size of Slovenia itself that compelled us to accept variety and diversity. We are a South Slavic nation. In the 6th century, our Slavic ancestors emerged from the Carpathian Mountains and settled in the territory of present-day Slovenia. As early as the 7th century, they founded the first Slavic state, the principality of Carantania, under the leadership of King Samo. Carantania existed for almost 300 years and was known for its democratic organisation and the sovereignty of its people.



The ritual of installing Carantanian dukes.
Photo: Gojmir Anton Kos/Archives of National Gallery of Slovenia

The principality of Carantania is particularly notable for the ancient ritual of installing Carantanian dukes. The ritual took place at the Prince's Stone (Knežji kamen) and was performed in a Slavic language. It persisted in its original form until the first half of the 15th century. The installation ritual was also described by French historian Jean Bodin in his book *Six livres de la Republique*. Thomas Jefferson underlined a reference to it in his copy of the book, which gave rise to speculation that it inspired him in writing the draft of his "Declaration of Independence". However, there is no historical evidence of this.

The crossroads of the Alps, the Pannonian Plain and the Mediterranean was a very lively area even before that. It was inhabited by a variety of peoples, who helped shape the area's cultural heritage, such as for instance the Illyrians in the early Iron Age, and then the Celts, who in the 3rd century BC established the Celtic Kingdom of Noricum, which later became a Roman province. The period of the Roman Empire left a rich cultural heritage in the first towns that appeared in this area.

It took a long time for the rich blend of old and new to mould into an independent national community, which matured in the 16th century, when it published its first books and formed the seed of the national programme. Over time, history has created a number of important symbols that remain embedded in our historical memory: the Carantanian coat of arms and the Carantanian hat, the Prince's Stone from the Zollfeld Field (Gospodsvetsko polje), the Freising Manuscripts, the coats of arms of Slovenian regions, particularly Carniola, the dynasty of the counts of Celje, the linden leaf, and Triglav, the highest mountain in Slovenia. These were the basis for the national symbols of the Republic of Slovenia – the coat of arms, the national flag and the national anthem.

Despite the fact that, until the 20th century, the Slovenian national community was governed by foreigners – most of the time it was under Habsburg or later Austro-Hungarian rule – it managed to shape its national identity. After the First World War, Slovenia became part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and after the Second World War, of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

After more than seventy years of living in Yugoslavia, Slovenians reached a consensus on independence. In a plebiscite in 1990 almost 90% of the Slovenian electorate voted in favour of Slovenian independence. In June 1991, Slovenia became an independent state. In January 1992, it was recognised by the European Union, and shortly afterwards it also became established in the international community. In 1998, the young state of Slovenia became a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, over which it also presided.



1991 was the year when Slovenia became an independent parliamentary republic.

Photo: Ukom archives

2004 was an important milestone for Slovenia, as in that year it joined the European Union and NATO. On 1 January 2007, Slovenia became the first of the new Member States to adopt the EU's common currency. It was also the first new Member State to hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, during the first half of 2008. Slovenia has been an OECD member since July 2010.

SLOVENIA'S POLITICAL SYSTEM

The Republic of Slovenia is a parliamentary representative democratic republic and a social state governed by law. The present Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia was adopted on 23 December 1991, following the results of the plebiscite on the country's sovereignty and independence on 23 December 1990, when Slovenes overwhelmingly voted to secede from the Yugoslav Federation.

According to the Constitution, "Slovenia is a state of all its citizens and is founded on the permanent and inalienable right of the Slovenian nation to self-determination".

The Constitution also lays down the foundations of the legal system, which is based on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, on the principle of a legal and socially just state, on a parliamentary form of state authority, and on the separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers, with a parliamentary system of government.

Parliament

The bicameral Slovenian Parliament consists of the National Assembly and the National Council. The highest legislative authority is the National Assembly (with 90 deputies elected to a four-year term) with one representative of each of the Hungarian and Italian minorities, which has the right to enact laws. The deputies represent all the people of Slovenia.

The National Assembly exercises legislative, voting and monitoring functions. As a legislative authority, it enacts constitutional amendments, laws, national programmes, resolutions, etc. It also creates its own internal rules, ratifies the state budget and treaties and calls referendums. It elects the Prime Minister

and other ministers, the President of the National Assembly and up to three Vice-Presidents. The monitoring function of the National Assembly includes the setting up of parliamentary enquiries, votes of no confidence in the Government or Ministers, and constitutional proceedings against the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister or Ministers in the Constitutional Court, Human Rights Ombudsman etc.

The right to vote is universal and equal. All citizens who have attained the age of eighteen years have the right to vote and stand for office.

The President of the Republic represents the Republic of Slovenia and is the commander-in-chief of its armed forces. The President calls elections to the National Assembly, promulgates laws, proposes a candidate for Prime Minister to the National Assembly following consultations with the leaders of deputy groups, proposes candidates for judges of the Constitutional Court and members of the Court of Audit, appoints and recalls ambassadors, accepts the credentials of foreign diplomats, grants clemency, etc.

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia is a body with executive power and is the highest body of the state administration. It determines, guides, and coordinates the implementation of state policies in accordance with the Constitution, laws and other general acts passed by the National Assembly.

The Government functions as a cabinet led by a Prime Minister. It consists of the Prime Minister and ministers. Ministers head ministries and determine the political guidelines for their activities. Their number is not determined in advance, but each government coalition decides on the number according to its political goals and needs.

With regard to the EU, the Government represents the Republic of Slovenia and makes submissions to EU institutions.

The judicial system is the third branch of state authority. The task of the judiciary is to decide on the rights and duties of citizens, and charges brought against them. All courts are regular courts, and act in accordance with the principles of constitutionality, independence and the rule of law. There are four

levels of courts of general jurisdiction: country and district courts, higher courts (which are courts of appellate jurisdiction) and the Supreme Court, which is the highest court in the system.

The state prosecutor's office holds a special place within the justice system, as it is an independent state authority, but still part of the executive branch of power.

The Constitutional Court is the highest body of judicial authority in terms of protecting constitutionality, legality, human rights and basic freedoms. Judges independently exercise their duties, but in accordance with the constitution and the law.

The Court of Audit is the highest body for supervising state accounts, the state budget and all public spending. It is independent in the performance of its duties and bound by the Constitution and relevant legislation.



The Bank of Slovenia is the central bank of the Republic of Slovenia. In carrying out its role, it operates according to the Statute of the European System of Central Banks (ESCB) and of the European Central Bank (ECB). As a member of the ESCB its key tasks are to define and implement Euro zone monetary policy, to conduct foreign exchange operations, to hold and manage the official foreign reserves of Member States, and to promote the smooth operation of payment systems.

Local self-government

Slovenia has a long tradition of regionalism and local self-government. The Local Self-Government Act stipulates that a municipality is a basic self-governing local community, with at least 5000 inhabitants; an urban municipality has at least 20,000 inhabitants.

The Human Rights Ombudsman is responsible for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in relation to state authorities, local authorities, and persons in public office.

The information commissioner is an autonomous and independent body which supervises the protection of personal data and access to public information.



Photo: Mostphotos



The national flag.
Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA

NATIONAL SYMBOLS

The design of Slovenian national symbols was influenced by significant historical circumstances. One of the most notable is the Slovenian struggle for independence, together with the struggle to preserve the Slovenian language, the struggle for a unified and autonomous political-administrative entity, a united Slovenia, and the struggle for fundamental political and human rights.

The basis of Slovenian national symbols was formed in the 19th century in accordance with the concept of national awakening. The national symbols of Slovenia are enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, and their use is provided for by law.

The national flag

The country's flag is the white-blue-red national flag of Slovenia with the national coat-of-arms of Slovenia. The white-blue-red Slovenian flag, whose colours come from the medieval coat of arms of the Duchy of Carniola, became a symbol of Slovenian identity as early as in the 19th century.

The ratio between the width and length of the flag is one to two. Each colour occupies one third of the width of the flag. The coat-of-arms is located in the upper left-hand corner, with the central point of the coat-of-arms covering an area which is one-quarter of the length of the flag and the point where the white and blue colours meet. The top half of the coat-of-arms, where the stars are, is on the white stripe, and the lower half on the blue stripe. The height of the coat-of-arms is one-third of the flag.

The coat of arms

The national coat-of-arms of Slovenia is a shield, in the middle of which, on blue ground, represents Mt. Triglav in white, under which are two undulating blue lines which represent the sea and rivers, and above which are located three six-pointed gold stars that form a downward-pointing triangle. The shield is bordered in red. The design of the shield is in accordance with accepted principles of geometry and colour. The coat-of-arms features all three colours of the Slovene tricolour: white, blue, and red. The gold stars recall one of the colours of the historical flag of the province of Carniola.

The lower part of the coat-of-arms symbolises the Slovenian landscape, which encompasses Alpine peaks in the northwest, a maritime expanse along the Adriatic in the southwest and the Pannonian plain in the east. The verticality of the Alps is represented by the highest mountain, Triglav, while the maritime and lowland areas are expressed by the two horizontal waves. The mountain and the water at its foot can equally be understood as universal symbols, which do not refer uniquely to the Slovenian landscape. They symbolise the fundamental inner balance of the human individual, and the balance between masculine and feminine principles. The coat-of-arms was designed by sculptor Marko Pogačnik, who describes it as a 'cosmogram'.

The national anthem

The text of the Slovenian national anthem is the seventh stanza of Zdravljica (A Toast) by Slovenia's greatest and most celebrated poet, France Prešeren (1800–1849). The melody of the anthem is from the 1905 choral work of the same name by Stanko Premrl. Zdravljica was written in 1844 and published with some changes in 1848, during the Spring of Nations in Europe. It has been interpreted as promoting the idea of a united Slovenia, furthered by the Slovene national

Žive naj vsi narodi
Ki hrepene dočakat' dan,
De koder sonca hodi,
Prepir iz sveta bo pregnan,
Derojáh
Prost bo vsak,
Ne vrág. Ne sosed bo maják.
Na zadnje je, pozáti!
Kozarce zate vzdignimo!
Ki smo zato se zbratli,
Ki dobro o hreću mislimo.
Dó kaj dni
Náj živi,
Bog, kar nas dobrih je Guoli! —

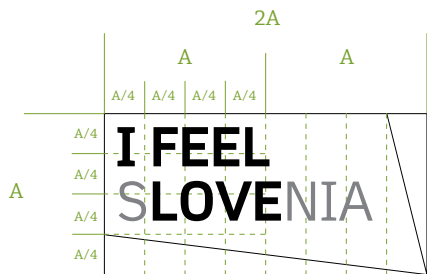
movement, which at that time was very active in the cultural and political fields. Zdravljica became an important feature of Slovenians' struggle for recognition of their rights and freedoms, calling for greater awareness of national identity and struggle for independence. The fact that its author, France Prešeren, is considered the greatest Slovenian poet also adds to the poem's symbolism.

The stanza of the poem used in the anthem is about equal opportunities and the peaceful co-existence of nations in the world:

*God's blessing on all nations,
Who long and work for that bright day,
When o'er earth's habitations
No war, no strife shall hold its sway;
Who long to see
That all men free
No more shall foes, but neighbours be.*

The national brand I FEEL SLOVENIA

Slovenia's national brand "I feel Slovenia" has been in use since 2007. The brand was developed with a view to increasing Slovenia's competitiveness in different fields. Since two thirds of Slovenia is covered with forests, green is the logo's dominant colour. We like to call it 'Slovenian green'; it tells a story of unspoilt nature and our desire to keep it that way.



**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**



Photo: Nea Culpa/www.slovenia.info



ECONOMY

Slovenia lies in the heart of Europe. Throughout its history, the area of modern Slovenia was a crossroads of trading and transport routes leading from east to west and from north to south. All these diverse influences helped shape its character. Today, this can be seen in Slovenia's vibrant economic activity as well as in the valuable contributions Slovenian inventors and scientists make to the world's wealth of knowledge.

Many internationally acclaimed Slovenian inventions speak to a tradition of progress and assertiveness. In the same way, progress and assertiveness are the driving forces of Slovenia's economic activities based on green energies and organic development. Slovenia's main distinctive asset in terms of its economy and development is its well-preserved environment.

The common denominator of Slovenia's economic development is harnessing niche opportunities. But due to Slovenians' proverbial ardour and zeal to excel in areas they are well-suited for, these niches often evolve into boutique businesses. Slovenian companies strive to progress in step with nature. They endeavour to innovate and excel in their services and products, thereby preserving consumers' trust in the quality of Slovenian brands.

At home and abroad, many successful products have helped win the renown of Slovenian companies; one need only mention the world-famous Elan skis, used by a number of skiing champions, the top-level and stylish-designed Gorenje appliances, the ultralight Pipistrel aircraft, and Akrapovič exhaust systems.

GEOSTRATEGIC POSITION

Slovenia, with its position in the strip of land between the Alps and the Adriatic Sea, is one of the most important European crossroads between Central Europe and the southeast and west of Europe. Its geostrategic position helps the country be exceptionally well-integrated in international and economic flows. On one hand, it has excellent connections with the countries of the European Union, which it bridges with the Western Balkan Countries and the entire region of Southeastern Europe. The developed transport and communication infrastructures provide excellent conditions for business.

Although Slovenia is one of the smallest countries in the world, also in terms of population, it has managed to keep its position in a competitive globalised world and further strengthen it with membership of international associations.

Slovenia's economic particularities and uniqueness are based on its geostrategic position, natural resources and the cultural and historical framework that marked us, the Slovenians, as a nation and made us who we are today. Slovenia also stands out for its record as a safe and peaceful country.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Slovenia is at the very top of the European countries in terms of the richness of its natural resources - forest cover and abundance of water.

Wood is a very important natural asset. The oldest and most popular handicrafts in Slovenia are based on wood. Wood also provides the inspiration for many exceptional design solutions and innovative approaches. Forests and lumber are considered Slovenia's oil.

Water is an equally important resource and Slovenia has plenty of it, too. It ranks third in the EU (after Finland and Sweden) by amount of fresh water per inhabitant in terms of a several year average. Sustainable management of water as a strategic resource of the future also opens new jobs and development opportunities.

Slovenia is the third most forest-covered country in the EU (again after Sweden and Finland), with its annual wood increment rate at 9 million m³. Apart from being a building material, wood is also an important renewable source of energy.



Wood and water are important natural resources.
Photo: Aleš Zdešar/www.slovenia.info

BOUTIQUE EXCELLENCE

The Slovenian economy is niche and boutique oriented; innovation, creativity and scientific achievements are the key points of the future-oriented Slovenian economy.

Slovenia is a member of the European Union and OECD, and its currency is the Euro.

The good results achieved by Slovenian companies are due to competitive advantages, such as the traditional hard-working character of the Slovenian people, its highly educated human resources, reliability and innovativeness, an internationally oriented economy, high-quality industrial design, and a well-developed infrastructure. All these assets add a character of boutique excellence to the Slovenian economy.

Today, the Slovenian economy is extremely export-oriented, since exports range from 65% to 70% of GDP. The most important trading partner for Slovenia, accounting for as much as three quarters of all trade, is the European Union, i.e. its member states of Germany, Italy, Croatia and France, followed by Russia, Serbia and Poland.



Wooden sunglasses by WoodStock.
Photo: WoodStock archives

GLOBAL PLAYER

Slovenian companies that have achieved global success primarily stem from the services sector, including IT, as well as the pharmaceutical and car sectors. Other prominent economic activities include food production, electrical appliances, and the metallurgical and chemical industries.

Slovenia has a long tradition of engineering and a strong culture of innovation. Due to a highly educated and competitive workforce, it enjoys a reputation as a productive and forward thinking economy, increasingly relying on knowledge-based industries. In services, sectors such as telecommunications, business and financial services are among the fastest growing, while technology-intensive production in sectors such as pharmaceutical, chemical, electrical and electronic equipment, machinery and automotive industries comprise about half of all value added in the manufacturing sector.

About a third of the country's territory is made up of farmland. The majority of **agricultural production** is represented by integrated, nature-friendly crop production. Organic agriculture has an important share, as well, and is primarily oriented towards arable farming.

Slovenians enjoy producing food for themselves: as much as 71% of the population produces its own fruits and vegetables at home. As consumers, Slovenians are prepared to pay a higher price for a Slovenian-made product, as they value its quality. Slovenian companies are aware that the basic principle in establishing a trademark is a high-quality product linked with an interesting and sincere story.

In the **food producing sector**, many prominent trademarks have won recognition both in Slovenia and abroad. Another traditional farming activity in Slovenia that prominently contributes to its green future is bee-keeping. The Republic of Slovenia and the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association have proposed to the United Nations Organisation that 20 May be declared World Bee Day. Namely, in the context of efforts to protect bees and bee-keeping, raising public awareness about the importance of bees and bee products hold an important place.

The **pharmaceutical industry** plays a major part in providing for a healthy and high-quality life. Krka and Lek are the most successful Slovenian pharmaceutical companies, the leading producers of generic drugs in the region. The pharmaceutical industry therefore is one of the drivers of Slovenia's

development. Together, the pharmaceutical and food producing industries are among the most green-oriented and highly-developed industrial potentials in Slovenia.

Slovenia is also proud of a set of **high-tech companies** that have outgrown their niche and become market leaders in their respective fields: Akrapovič boasts high-end exhaust systems for motorcycles and performance cars, while Pipistrel has won a number of international recognitions, including NASA awards for its ultra-light airplanes.

Technology-based entrepreneurship is growing rapidly and a number of Slovenian start-ups are gaining traction, while some have already grown into global operations. The success of Slovenian start-ups is exceptional. This is not surprising, since they are founded by people who want to change the world and the things around them. In addition to new technologies, start-ups from Slovenia offer interesting innovative products, geolocations, mobile applications and solutions from biology, chemistry and more.

Slovenia boasts several **world-class architects**, who bring to life award winning timber constructions. Both primary wood products and wood-based building materials are used for panel, timber frame and solid timber constructions. Plentiful Slovenian wood resources have led to innovative applications such as wooden bike frames or sunglasses frames.

Slovenia also sees **social entrepreneurship** as one of the important aspects of the economy. Thereby, it wishes to promote the development of the economy through measures that have positive effects on society and the wider environment, to promote business in cooperative form, the growth of social enterprises and economic democracy.



Exhaust technology and innovation by Akrapovič.
Photo: Akrapovič archives

VISION OF SLOVENIA

Slovenia is an open and innovative society of creative individuals. Through the development of social, technological and institutional innovations we have developed a model that actively offers responses to global challenges.

Slovenia's vision is to become the co-creator instead of the follower of global trends in priority niche areas. Its vision is Green. Creative. Smart.

Greening Economy

Slovenia is aware of the significance of concern for the environment and of sustainable development. Green development programmes are oriented towards long-term solutions. These are the economic and development programmes that respond to strategic opportunities, arise from national human and natural resources and promote innovative solutions.

Sustainable development and commitment to preserve natural resources for future generations are the basis for the orientation of Slovenia's long-term development: a green economy.

In this way, Slovenia follows the orientations of the international community while responding to global and national challenges. Slovenia is aware that green economy is the future.

Creative

Slovenian companies are aware of the importance of including the creative sector and design in their development processes.

Slovenia also places great emphasis on linking the cultural and creative sectors with the economy within the framework of incentives for innovations and the growth of companies.

This involves an active search for responses to global challenges with an emphasis on ecological design and the preservation of the environment.

Slovenians want to become established in several fields with a particular orientation towards niche development. We see innovation and design as two important competitive advantages. This enabled the establishment of design awareness in Slovenia. The fact that, for example, several prestigious international Red Dot design awards went to Slovenian designers in recent years is evidence of a stable creative energy in this field.

Smart

Slovenia intends to position itself as the country with the best conditions for creating and innovating, oriented towards the development of medium- and high-technology solutions in niche areas.

Slovenia is oriented towards the faster development of a digital society and the exploitation of opportunities enabled by information and communication technologies and the internet for general economic and social benefits. By means of the accelerated development of a digital society, Slovenia aims to exploit the



Adria Mobil from Novo mesto is a successful manufacturer and exporter of caravans and camper vans. Photo:Adria Mobil archives

development opportunities of information and communication technologies and the internet and become an advanced digital society. It wants to become the reference environment for the introduction of innovative approaches in the use of digital technologies.

FORMS OF ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION

Slovenian companies are united under the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, craft and small business operators are joined in the Chamber of Craft of Slovenia, while the Ljubljana Technological Park assists in establishing startup companies. Economic diplomacy and the public agency SPIRIT are further in charge of promoting and assisting Slovenian companies in international markets.



Contemporary Design in Slovenia.
Photo: Domen Maček and Doroteja Pal

SLOVENIAN TOURISM: GREEN. ACTIVE. HEALTHY.

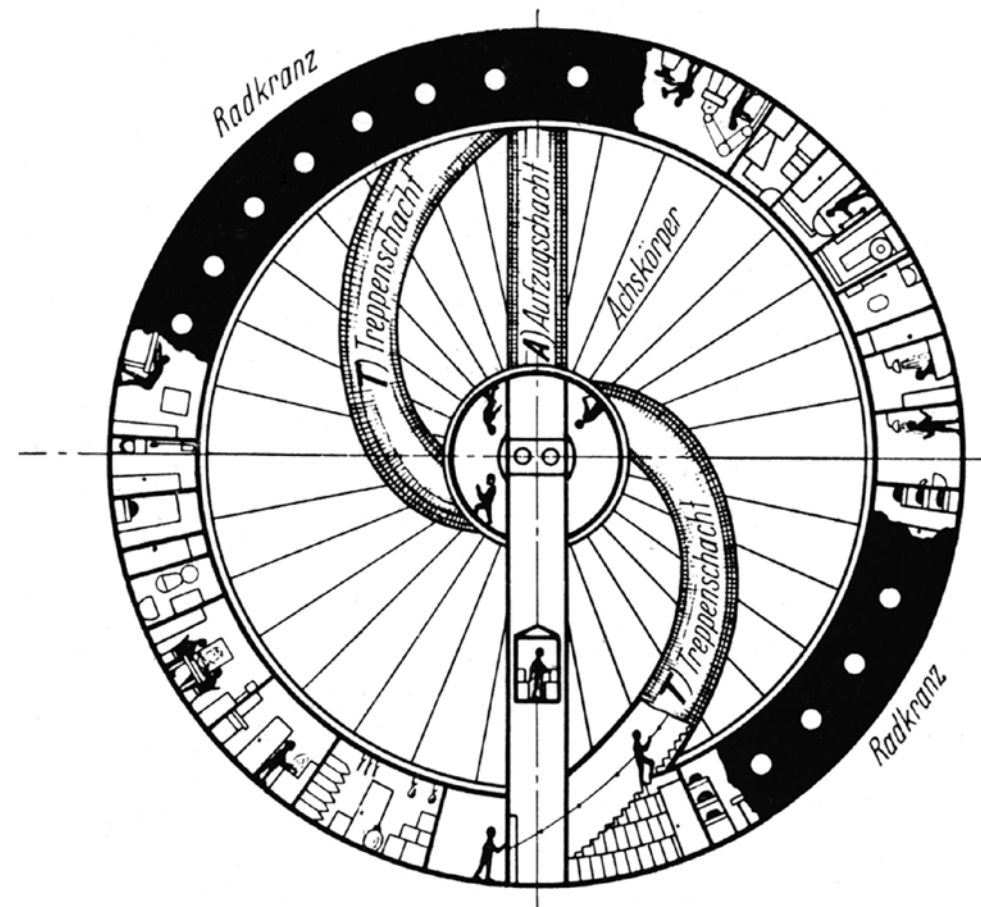
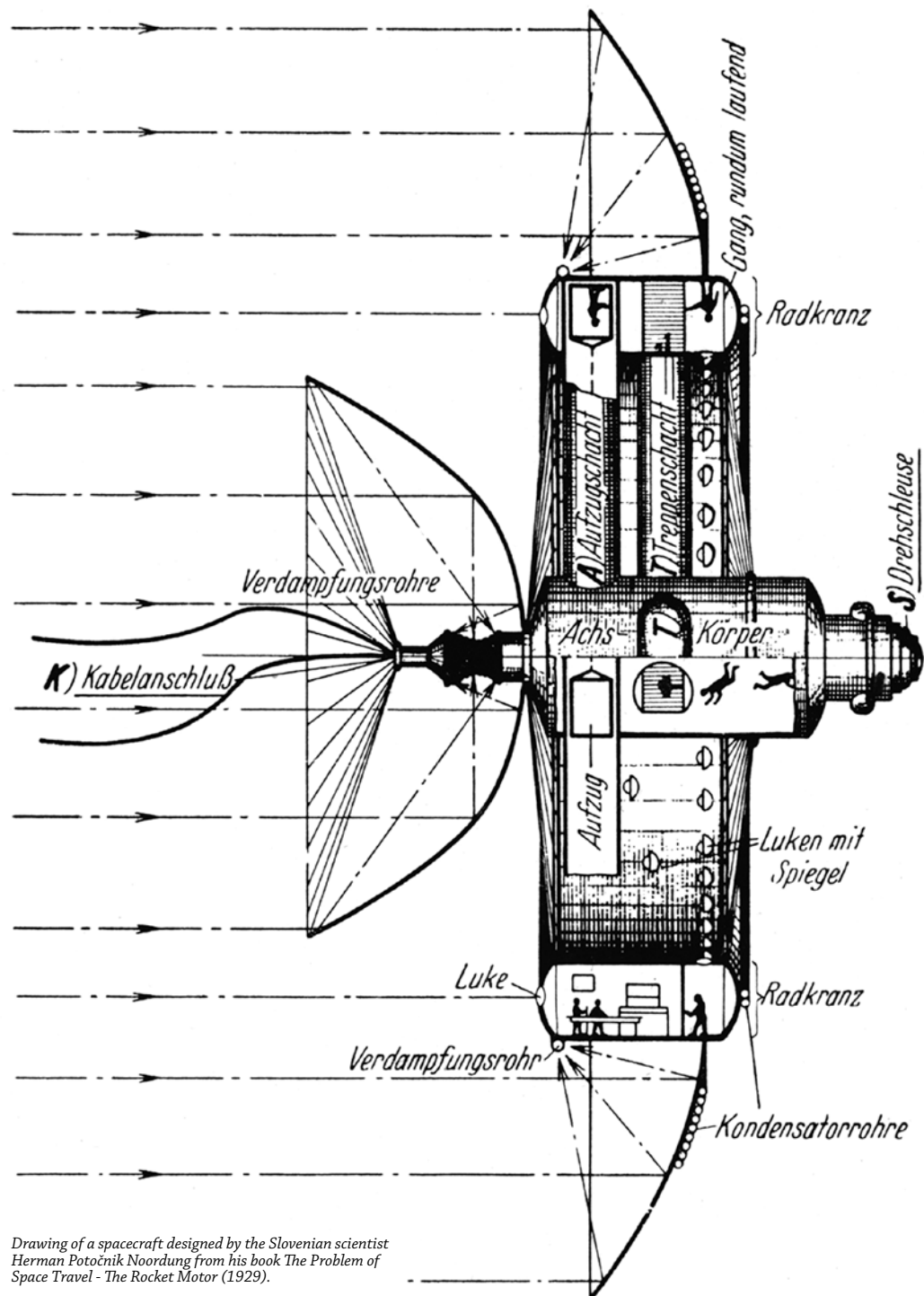
Tourism is also increasingly gaining importance, since a visit to Slovenia leaves a lasting impression on every traveller. Slovenian tourism is oriented towards developing tourist destinations with diverse and high-quality products and services, primarily suited to short-stay vacations. But by developing an attractive and varied range of integral tourist services, Slovenia is increasingly becoming a highly desirable destination for long-stay vacations.

After all, Slovenia is still a relatively undiscovered part of Europe, which makes it genuine, authentic and richly traditional, but also a modern, innovative, and, due to its size, easily manageable destination. Slovenia is the perfect spot for discoveries and exciting experiences. Its special advantages are its atmosphere of cosiness and homeliness, unspoilt nature, a rich cultural heritage, and numerous opportunities for an active and relaxing vacation.

Opportunities for active vacationing include mountaineering, cycling, trekking, rafting, golf, kayak rides, hunting, swimming, sailing, fishing, as well as snow and water skiing, and numerous other sports. Slovenia's greatest advantages are its smallness and diversity. You can enjoy the mountains, the Pannonian plain, and the seaside – all in one day!



Green. Active. Healthy.
Photo: Aleš Fevžer/www.slovenia.info



SCIENCE

Knowledge is crucial for a society's successful development. Slovenia is aware of this and thus encourages talented individuals to take a step forward and set the bar of what is possible, discover new things and search for innovative and sustainable solutions. In this way, we Slovenians contribute to the global treasury of knowledge and take part in solving numerous social challenges with which we are faced and help to shape the progress of humankind.

Slovenian knowledge, talent and creativity are limitless. Slovenians have always been incredibly curious and, therefore, today Slovenian science stands on the shoulders of giants that have – even in the times of working by candlelight – taken Slovenian science into the world when it was still so big.



Research in pharmaceutical industry.
Photo: Krka archives

SCIENCE IS SLOVENIA'S TRUMP CARD.

Even today, Slovenian scientists, hand in hand with their colleagues at home and abroad, are achieving incredible results.

Slovenian science is excellent, internationally established and world renowned, and influential in many areas.

Slovenian researchers publish their discoveries in the world's key scientific journals (e.g. Nature, Science) and present them at distinguished international conferences and symposia.

Slovenian researchers connect themselves successfully both internationally and within European research. They participate in the big European research and development projects of the Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development such as the current Horizon 2000 programme. More and more frequently they also lead these projects.

In order for their research to fulfil its potential in new products, processes and services, Slovenian researchers also cooperate with the economy, mostly with those successful Slovenian companies that invest a lot in development themselves. However, the increasing amount of prominent actors are not only big and strong companies in terms of development, but also young people who are searching for less established and modern ways and are transforming their ideas and knowledge into marketable products, e.g. by means of funds raised via internet platforms for mass financing.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Slovenian scientists are discovering: a new superconducting memory element, which is an important step in the development of superconducting computers; new possibilities to treat chronic inflammatory diseases such as arthritis; and the discovery that the infection of a mother by the Zika virus affects the brain development of her unborn child.

Slovenian scientists are developing: new batteries for the next generation of electric vehicles by means of reversible entry into the oxygen network; the most

precise algorithm for identifying terrain in the world; procedures to manufacture complex cell factories that can replace our dependence on fossil fuels in a few years' time; cell computers and magnet liquid crystals.

Slovenian scientists are cooperating: As regards international research and development cooperation, Slovenian scientists are teaming up with the most eminent researchers and institutions. Thus, Slovenian scientists participated in the discovery of the Higgs boson in the collision of elementary particles within the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) and in breaking the symmetry between matter and antimatter in the Japanese High Energy Accelerator Research Organisation (KEK). The results of these joint efforts are the two Nobel Prizes for physics, to which Slovenian physicists have contributed significantly with their theoretical predictions that have been experimentally confirmed.

Slovenia is also an associate member of CERN.

Slovenian research has contributed significantly to the development of processes and technologies that are based on the use of renewable energy sources and waste materials whose carbon footprint is insignificant. By developing new materials and processes, the researchers enabled optimisation of the use of conventional and renewable gas energy carriers.



Biotechnical Faculty, University of Ljubljana.
Photo: Črt Slavec

BIG NAMES OF SLOVENIAN SCIENCE

Today we can use electronic calculators, but until they were invented, log tables were used for complicated logarithmic equations. In the 18th century, the Slovenian JURIJ VEGA (1754-1802) published medium-scale log tables whose quality and comprehensiveness surpassed all previous log tables. They were translated into nearly all global languages and were used worldwide until the invention of electronic log calculation. But Vega was not only a skilled mathematician; he further displayed his ingenuity in the Austro-Hungarian army, rising to prominence as the founder of modern ballistic science. For those efforts, he was awarded the then highest decoration, the Order of Maria Theresa.

Do you like photography? JANEZ AVGUŠTIN PUHAR (1814-1864) was the first Slovenian photographer and an important photography inventor, who invented a new process for making photographs on glass, based on sulphur evaporation.

JOŽEF STEFAN (1835-1893) is the physicist behind Stefan's law on thermal radiation. The leading Slovenian scientific research institute is named after him. He would be proud of this fact, as well as the fact that the Jožef Stefan institute ranks among the top research institutes in Europe.

Slovenians have our very own Nobel Prize Winner: FRIDERIK PREGL (1869-1930) was awarded the prize for his discoveries in chemistry in 1923.

Slovenia has its own Wright brothers: EDVARD (1886-1911) and JOSIP RUSJAN (1884-1953) were the pioneers of aviation in Slovenia, making their maiden flight flying of 60 metres at an altitude of 2 metres in 1909.

Fly me to the moon: HERMAN POTOČNIK (1892-1929) was one of the founders of space travel. A military officer, an engineer, and a specialist in rocket technology, he published his book *The Problem of Space Travel - The Rocket Motor* in 1928, setting out detailed plans for a human breakthrough into space and envisioning the establishment of a space station in geostationary orbit.

Assembling helicopters isn't easy. VINKO KRISTAN (1917-1942) was the inventor of a helicopter (calling it the "samofrc" at the time). He assembled his first pedal-driven helicopter in 1926, at least ten years before the first helicopters were produced in Germany. His helicopter made of wood and linen had the shape of a pyramid, with one propeller on the top and another one on the side for aerial navigation.

SCIENTIFIC ORGANISATIONS

Slovenian scientists mostly work in one of the 10 public research institutes and 3 public universities. With their outstanding work they continue the strong tradition of science in Slovenia, whose start can be traced back to the 17th century with the establishment of the Academia Operosorum, a predecessor of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SAZU) as the highest national scientific and arts institution established in 1938.

The world-renowned Jožef Stefan Institute is the leading Slovenian scientific research institute, whose researchers cover a broad spectrum of basic and applied research in natural and life sciences and engineering. The Institute specialises in top-level research and technology development, in the field of production and control technologies, communication and computer technologies, knowledge technologies, biotechnologies, new materials, environmental technologies, nanotechnologies, and nuclear engineering.

Bringing science to the people. Hiša eksperimentov (The House of Experiments) is a science centre whose mission is to inspire people to become and stay curious - interested in learning, asking questions and seeking for the answers. The Science Centre activities empower society, promote science, life-long learning, positive thinking and represent a link between formal and non-formal education.

Today, Slovenian science is represented by Dragan Mihailović, who works with nanotechnology, biochemist Roman Jerala, quantum physics expert Tomaž Prosen, philosopher Mirt Komel, computer expert Jure Leskovec, virologist and medical microbiology specialist Tatjana Avšič, and many others.



The Cultural Centre of European Space Technologies (KSEVT) in Vitanje.
Photo: KSEVT archives



Hiša eksperimentov (The House of Experiments).
Photo: Branko Čeak



EDUCATION



Photo: Mostphotos

Slovenia encourages curiosity, openness and innovation in education. This is a part of the everyday mission of Slovenia’s development, since we are aware of the importance of young people for the future of the country.

Slovenia has a high-quality, all-inclusive and accessible education system that can be compared with that of the rest of Europe. Slovenian young people are highly educated, which is proved by international research in the area of education, as well as by the world renowned success of pupils and students in international knowledge competitions.

PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

Slovenia provides appropriate conditions for quality pre-school education in kindergartens, as well as for their financial accessibility. In the case of families that have two or more children enrolled in a kindergarten at the same time, the state covers 70% of the kindergarten fee for the second child, while parents are exempt from payment for the third and any subsequent child.

Internationally, our kindergartens are placed at the very top also because educational elements are added even for the youngest pupils in addition to basic services and to their upbringing.

PRIMARY EDUCATION

In Slovenia, primary education for children and youth is free of charge and lasts nine years. The curricula clearly define what the children should achieve in individual classes. The standards of knowledge, which serve as the basis for examining and evaluating knowledge, are also defined. A lot of attention is paid to the learning of foreign languages.

Inclusion of children with special needs

In the Slovenian education system, special attention is paid to children with special needs. They can be included in diverse programmes; for each of them, a guidance committee establishes their individual educational needs, while an expert group prepares an individualised programme. In Slovenia, we have established a system that also recognises children with shortcomings in individual areas of learning and thus, a special teaching aid is enabled for them.

Music Schools

In Slovenia, we have very well developed basic music education in public and private music schools, which includes ballet and expressive dance lessons. As much as 14% of the entire population attend them. Among children, the piano, guitar and violin are the most popular instruments to learn.

Care for School Meals

Slovenia is aware of its duty of care for healthy and good quality food for children and youth, and is developing awareness of a culture of healthy food and good nutrition. We are one of the few European countries that support such food quality and care for the development of young people by publicly financing this area.

Information and Communication Technology in Education

The Slovenian education system follows global and European trends in the introduction and use of information and communication technology in educational institutions. The state encourages the production of interactive e-textbooks, which stimulate the autodidactic process.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

In Slovenia post-compulsory education begins with upper secondary education. It is divided into general upper-secondary education, technical upper-secondary education and vocational upper-secondary education. Following the completion of compulsory education, approximately 98% of students continue their education at upper-secondary level.

By passing a vocational matriculation exam, students get a chance to continue their education in short cycle higher education and professional higher education study programmes. And, with a general matriculation exam, they can enrol in various university programmes.

POST-SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The advantage of Slovenian post-secondary education lies in its links with the private sector. The educational process is adjusted to students; the programmes are flexible and composed of modules. The studies are supported by information technologies. Practical education takes place in new and modern inter-company training centres, while undergraduate thesis projects present the solution of specific business problems, rationalisation of production processes and applicative research. The lecturers at higher vocational colleges are also selected experts from their respective industries, who bring rich and practical experience and applicative knowledge from the economy into the educational process.

HIGHER EDUCATION

In Slovenia, higher education pursues the objectives of providing quality, excellence and diversity. The study structure determines two types of higher

education programmes (professional higher education and university programmes) and three at the postgraduate level (specialist, masters and doctoral programmes).

Higher education in Slovenia has undergone several legislative and structural changes in recent years. Rapid institutional development and a significant increase in student numbers has made Slovenia a more interesting and desired country for many foreign students. In recent years, the mobility of students and higher education teachers and staff has also increased.

Slovenia has four universities: the University of Ljubljana, the University of Maribor, the University of Primorska and the University of Nova Gorica.

ADULT EDUCATION

The Slovenian population is, as is the trend in the Western world, ageing. The changing demographic situation has showed the importance of adult education and of putting the principle of life-long learning into practice.

There are programmes tailored to the needs and particularities of those adults who want to obtain a primary education, as well as programmes for those who want to obtain a secondary education. They can also obtain knowledge and skills in special programmes for adults.





SOCIETY

Slovenian identity was shaped by the Slovenian people over centuries, and in 1991 this culminated in the creation of an independent state. Remaining unchanged amidst ever-changing times, the Slovenian identity reveals the persevering and adaptable character of our nation. The building blocks of present-day Slovenia are founded on this national identity, reflecting the vision of the state and giving a symbolic promise. To get to know Slovenia, you have to live it, to feel it through words, sounds, colours, touches, actions and experience. The traits of the Slovenian identity will continue to provide the foundation for the country's future development.

Slovenia is a small but remarkably diverse country, with pristine nature, a vibrant culture, a rich history and an enviable quality of life. Forests give Slovenia a special green colour; it is Slovenian green that forms the core of the national brand I feel Slovenia.

It is no coincidence that the brand's slogan is I feel Slovenia. One cannot get to know Slovenia by simply viewing its image – one must feel and experience it – through words, sounds, colours, feels, action, and experience. I feel Slovenia is an emotional brand, and this sets it apart from the brands of other countries. Thus our mission is clear – to move forward with nature.



Slovenians place a high value on family in connection with the local environment.
Photo: Irena Herak/Ukom archives

POPULATION

Ethnic Slovenians comprise the majority of the country's population. There are also national minority communities of Italians and Hungarians, who are considered indigenous minorities. Their rights are protected under the Constitution, each having a representative in the National Assembly. Other ethnic groups include Croats, Serbs, Bosnians, Macedonians, Montenegrins and Albanians who came to Slovenia after World War II. The status and special rights of Roma communities living in Slovenia are determined by statute.

RELIGION

Under the Slovenian Constitution, religion and state are separate. Religious communities enjoy equal rights, and pursue their activities freely. According to the Constitution, no one is obliged to declare their religious or other beliefs; thus no precise figures on the numbers of various religious groups are available.

The majority of Slovenes are Roman Catholic, although various other religious communities, spiritual groups, societies and associations are registered in Slovenia, including Evangelical, Muslim and Orthodox communities.

WELFARE STATE

The right to health-care services comprises services at the primary health care level, including dentistry, health-care services in certain types of social care institutions, specialist out-patient services, hospital and tertiary level services. It also includes the right to health resort treatment, rehabilitation treatment, and transport by ambulance and other vehicles, medicine, and technical aids. Under the compulsory health insurance scheme, insured persons are also entitled to various financial benefits (compensation for salary during temporary absence from work, reimbursement of travel cost, etc.).

The state ensures the functioning of social care institutes, creates the conditions for private social work activities, stimulates and supports the development of self-help, charity work, programmes enabling a more independent life for the disabled, and voluntary work. Rights to social care services and contributions are determined according to the principles of equal availability and free choice for all those entitled.

The state makes efforts to prevent social exclusion, particularly by influencing the social position of the population in the areas of taxation, employment and work, and through grants, housing policy, family policy, health care, education and in other policy areas.

MEDIA

All Slovenian media, with the exception of the public institution of Radio and Television Slovenia (RTV SLO), are privately owned, and the state has no authority over them, nor does it have any responsibility for their work and existence. A variety of electronic media, newspapers, weeklies, fortnightly publications, academic and professional journals, cultural magazines, entertainment tabloids and magazines are published.

Slovenia has three news agencies: STA, the Morel Press Agency, and TTA, which was the first tourist press agency in Slovenia and a new step in informing the interested public with news from Slovenian tourism.

A TYPICAL SLOVENIAN

The story of Slovenia is written by its people. We Slovenians are individualists, hard-working and enthusiastic about everything we enjoy. We create small, niche attractions and stories of great importance for each of us, something unique that we can identify with. As a nation we have thus maintained the Slovenian identity over centuries.



Slovenians love outdoor activities.
Photo: Nea Culina / www.slovenia.info

The Slovenian national character is marked by distinct individuality and at the same time a profound sense of belonging to our country and society. Slovenians place a high value on family in connection with the local environment.

THE SLOVENIAN WAY OF LIFE

Over a third of the population lives in towns and cities of more than ten thousand inhabitants. Slovenia's largest city is its capital, Ljubljana. Other largest towns are Maribor, Celje, Kranj, Velenje, Koper and Novo mesto. Most people can enjoy some advantages of both rural and urban lifestyles at the same time. Slovenians like to build holiday homes in natural settings, away from urban areas, in order to improve their quality of life.

A great majority of Slovenians live in their own flats or houses and the share of homeowners is among the highest in Europe. Households are not large: a third of the population lives in four-member households, and over a fifth in three-member households. Recently, the share of those living as couples or alone has increased considerably.

Sport is important; we Slovenians are traditionally very keen on mountain hiking and climbing. There is a great variety of mountaineering options. The mountain hiking trails are well-tended and marked. No wonder that Slovenia's highest mountain, Mount Triglav (2,864 meters or 9,396 feet), became a symbol of Slovenia.

All outdoor activities are very popular. Increasingly, people want to stay fit, and out of all outdoor activities, walking, cycling, jogging and other sports practiced by health-conscious people are very popular. Every Slovenian town has its "local peak", which is usually a small mountain that is popular with the locals.

CULTURE

Culture and arts are the pride and heart of our national identity. The attitude of Slovenians to their national culture is quite intense, and Slovenia boasts a well-developed network of cultural institutions, organisations and associations comparable to most developed European countries. There is a rich cultural life not only in the biggest towns, but in almost every corner of Slovenia.

About a fifth of the two-million-strong population regularly attends cultural events.

In Slovenia, 3.6% of all workers are employed in cultural work (Eurostat).

Theatre and film shows, exhibitions in museums, galleries and at exhibition grounds and events in cultural centres invite approximately 9 million visitors per year.

CULTURE AS A VALUE

Slovenia builds its identity on an extremely rich cultural heritage, and if we are to understand this, we have to know the heritage well. One of the most important written testaments in the development of Slovenian and Slavic languages and culture was the Freising Manuscripts. These are the oldest records in Slovenian, created between 972 and 1039, probably before 1000. They are an important element of the identification of Slovenians with achievements in the field of culture and art. The manuscripts are kept at the Bavarian State Library in Munich, Germany.

Almost every Slovenian is a poet or painter, cook, dancer, winemaker, musician, director, actor, blogger or engraver. From all that we love we can make art. There are also traditions of artists working in several handicrafts and trades, which have been transferred from generation to generation down through the centuries, Slovenians are successful in many contemporary arts accessible to all generations. We respect cultural and artistic creation and everything to which we add a personal touch. Cultural activities in Slovenia have many faces and one could say that art is where Slovenians make their wishes come true. We leave a part of ourselves in everything we do.

Cultural events are well attended; various festivals (especially during the summer) impress visitors who come from near and far. Theatrical events and

concerts are also very popular; we love to read and are proud of our cultural tradition.

Slovenia has a very extensive, high-quality and internationally recognisable amateur culture. Some 4900 various amateur cultural associations with almost 100,000 members are active in Slovenia.



Photo: Dejan Mijović/STA

LANGUAGE

The official language in Slovenia is Slovenian, as determined by the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, which also guarantees the Italian and Hungarian minorities the right to use their respective languages and develop their cultures in the areas in which they live.

Although Slovenian is part of the South Slavic language group, it also shares many features with the West Slavic branch. Slovenian has been also influenced by the Roman, Germanic and Ugric worlds.

About 2.4 million people around the world speak Slovenian as their mother tongue.

It is a special language: the most notable is the use of dual form, the grammatical number used for two people or things in all the inflected parts of speech, which is nowadays rare phenomenon in linguistics.

Linguists have identified forty-six clearly established dialects in Slovenian speaking area.



Cerkovna Ordninga (Church Order), written by Primož Trubar, was published in 1564.
Photo: Daniel Novaković/STA

LITERATURE AND BOOKS

Slovenians feel literature; it has helped build our identity, and it has kept its prominent role until today. When Primož Trubar, a Protestant priest, published the first Slovenian printed books – Catechism and Abecedarium – in 1550, he put the Slovenian language and nation on the map of European nations in the spirit of the time of the Reformation. Trubar smuggled the first Slovenian books in barrels from the Tübingen printing house, which is not a legend, but a proven historical fact. Even the great man himself could probably not have imagined that this would lay the foundations for the Slovenian literary language, on which artists of future generations would build, nor the rich repertoire of creativity that would follow his work.

Slava Vojvodine Kranjske (The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola, 1689), an encyclopaedic work by ethnographer and historian Janez Vajkard Valvasor. The book is the first systematic outline of Slovenia's history, territory and way of life. His treatise on Lake Cerknica earned Valvasor membership of the Royal Society in 1687.

Ever since, the language and the literature written in it have been closely intertwined with the national consciousness, which was best expressed by France Prešeren, the greatest Slovenian poet and a known personality of European Romanticism. His poetry was also one of the foundations of the first important national political programme, which served as a basis for the development of a clearly defined national identity. Prešeren is the author of Zdravljica (The Toast), Slovenia's national anthem.

Slovenian writer Ivan Cankar wrote that Slovenia is a slice of heaven under Mt. Triglav. This representative of Slovenian modernism, and one of its most prominent authors, was among those who linked literary creation with political activism. This is further evidence of how creativity and (international) political activity go hand in hand. Today, these authors are succeeded by numerous writers and poets, including Srečko Kosovel, Boris Pahor, Drago Jančar, Tomaž Šalamun, Aleš Debeljak and Brina Svit, whose works have been translated into several foreign languages, proving that a language spoken by a mere two million can produce priceless treasures, too.

Slovenia holds global records for the number of new book titles issued per capita. Most of these titles are literary works, with a high share of Slovenian literary titles and translations of contemporary foreign literature.

A lively book market requires an appropriate organisation of authors, publishers and booksellers. Most authors are members of the Slovene Writers' Association, whose unwavering intellectual commitment makes it one of the most respected associations. The Slovenian section of PEN International enables Slovenian authors to participate in activities at the international level and meet foreign writers.

One in four citizens of Slovenia is a member of a general library, and every member visits a library about twenty times a year. Twelve books borrowed annually per capita place Slovenia among the top-ranking countries in Europe.

A name to remember: Slavoj Žižek, philosopher, writer and lecturer. Catch him at one of his lectures in different parts of the world.

THEATRE

The first plays in the territory of present-day Slovenia were staged in the 16th century by seminarians of different religious schools (especially the Jesuits); the oldest preserved example is the *Škofjeloški pasijon* (*Processio locopolitana*; The Škofja Loka Passion), a model example of Baroque theatre at the time. Capuchin monk Romuald Marušič, who lived in the Škofja Loka Monastery, wrote the first draft in 1715 and completed the final version in 1727. The passion play is a procession that stops at certain points in Škofja Loka.

The origins of Slovenian theatre go back to 1789, when Anton Tomaž Linhart first staged his comedy *Županova Micka* (Micka, the Mayor's Daughter) at the then German Estate Theatre. After a relatively long hiatus, theatre activities increased towards the end of the 19th century with the founding of the Drama Association. The first professional theatre, SNG Drama in Ljubljana,

was established before the First World War and has been the home of the best Slovenian theatre artists until today.

Slovenia now has thirty-four professional theatres in all important regional centres, two opera and ballet houses, and two professional puppet theatres. The Academy of Theatre at the University of Ljubljana was established in 1945.

As well as institutional theatres, Slovenia has several active experimental theatre companies, whose achievements significantly shape the sphere of the performing arts. Theatre is an area of Slovenian culture that has achieved outstanding success and acquired a reputation confirmed by international media in the last three decades.

FILM

While the first Slovenian documentary was made only shortly after the invention of the film camera by Karol Grossman in 1905, only a few isolated films and short silent documentaries were produced before the Second World War. However, the European scene was strongly marked by Ita Rina, a Slovenian-born silent film star.



Famous Slovenian film Kekec.
Photo: The Slovene Film Archives (SFA),
The Archives of the Republic of Slovenia (ARS)

Film production came to life after the Second World War. The first Slovenian sound full-length film, *Na svoji zemlji* (On Our Own Land), directed by France Štiglic, transcended the stereotype of socialist realism in film with its emotional power and sincerity. Most other Slovenian films from the period depicted the war and social topics in a surprisingly intimate, emotional way, which differed from the ideological matrix of the immediate post-war years.

This was also the beginning of the era of high-quality children's films, many of which (e.g. *Kekec* by Jože Gale or *Dolina miru* by France Štiglic) also won awards in Western Europe; they were followed by modernist films by Matjaž Klopčič and Boštjan Hladnik. Slovenian production also includes numerous films based on Slovenian literary works.

The 1980s marked the beginnings of critical, socially committed films problematizing the established historical outlook. After Slovenia's independence, an entirely new generation of directors appeared and film production strengthened considerably in the new millennium. Although most films still focus on the social issues of marginalised groups, the number of comedies, romances and examples of other genres is not small. Directors such as Igor Šterk, Damjan Kozole, Metod Pevec, Janez Lapajne, Andrej Košak, Miha Hočevar, Žiga Virc, Mitja Okorn and Jan Cvitkovič are the names that have attracted the most attention in the last few years. An important role is played by public television, which regularly undertakes joint projects with film producers.

The Liffe film festival is deeply established among Slovenian fans of cinema. The festival offers an overview of selected contemporary global production and information about films and winners of important awards, as well as educates through film workshops, multimedia interactive projects and accompanying projects.

MUSIC

Music is a widespread art form among Slovenians. We like music of all kinds: classical, pop, popular folk music...We like to sing, both in choirs or only by and for ourselves. The most popular genre is popular folk, followed by pop music, classical music, rock, jazz and ethno.



A Neanderthal flute, which is at least 45,000 years old and which was found in Slovenia, is the oldest musical instrument in the world.
Photo: Tomaž Lauko

The first secular songs date from the 9th century. The Reformation played an important role in music, too, as it produced songbooks written by Trubar and Bohorič. The great composers of the time include Jurij Slatkonja, the first Bishop of Vienna, and Jacobus Gallus Carniolus. In the 19th century, music, too, was influenced by the elements of national awakening.

In addition to fifteen professional orchestras, Slovenia has numerous musical institutions, associations and choral ensembles. There are thousands of active choirs that unite lovers of song and musical culture of all generations.

The Slovenian National Theatres of Ljubljana and Maribor each has an operatic orchestra, and there are two symphony orchestras: the Slovene Philharmonic Orchestra and the RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra. The Slovene Philharmonic orchestra has a large and loyal audience, and often hosts famous musical names (including Ana Netrebko, Elton John and Sting).



Retro-avantgarde rock band Laibach.
Photo: Matjaž Tancič

VISUAL ARTS

The visual arts comprise an artistic field with a strong tradition in Slovenia. Although excellent church painters were active as early as in the 12th and 13th centuries, painting developed relatively slowly and gained broad visibility mainly in the Baroque and later periods.

One of the oldest works of art (from the transition from the 6th to the 5th century BC) in Slovenia is Vače Situla, whose symbol also inspired the decoration on Slovenian identification cards.

Representatives of Slovenian Impressionism in the first quarter of the 20th century produced outstanding works. After realist Anton Ažbe, who was active mostly in the German cultural sphere, Ivana Kobilca, Ivan Grohar, Matija Jama, Matej Sternen and Rihard Jakopič reached the peak of Slovenian painting. The first visual arts academy was opened after the Second World War, which increased the number of artists.

The established painter Zoran Mušič worked in Paris and Venice, Gabrijel Stupica reaped fame at home and in Western Europe, Andrej Jemec inspired with his artistic language all the way to Japan. After 1955, when the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts was launched, the graphic art school of Ljubljana also won wide recognition.



Zoran Mušič, the most acclaimed Slovenian modernist painter, worked in Venice and Paris. A permanent exhibition of his works is displayed in the National Gallery of Slovenia in Ljubljana.

Photo: National Gallery of Slovenia archives

A special place in Slovenian culture is reserved for architecture, mostly thanks to the works of Maks Fabiani and, after the First World War, the works of architect Jože Plečnik. Plečnik worked in Vienna, Prague and Ljubljana. His typical personal style with a partly neo-classicist approach produced some monumental projects, such as Zacherl house and Church of Holy Spirit in Vienna, the rearranged Prague castle of Hradčani, the National and University Library, Triple Bridge (Tromostovje) and Žale Cemetery in Ljubljana. Some of his contemporaries and students (Ivan Jager, Ivan Vurnik, Edvard Ravnikar, Milan Mihelič) continued to develop the enviable tradition of Slovenian architecture.

Slovenians view innovation and design as important competitive advantages. Designers made many important breakthroughs, especially in industrial design. Slovenia systematically developed these accomplishments with the well-known Biennial of Industrial Design, which became an important regional centre of the activity.

Some icons of World design are telephones by Roman Savnik, microphones by Marko Turk, Rex chair by Niko Kralj and Elan skis by Gigodesign.

Visual arts in Slovenia have a relatively diversified system of professional institutions: the National and Modern Galleries Museum of architecture and design and the International Centre of Graphic Arts. The results and contemporary production may be viewed in several hundred art galleries open across the country.

The National Gallery of Slovenia is a central national institution for older art works that keeps the largest collection of fine arts on the Slovenian territory; it covers the period from the High Middle Ages until the end of the 20th century. In 2016, the National Gallery of Slovenia shone in all its beauty. For the first time, the tri-partite gallery complex – the oldest and now completely renovated Narodni dom Palace of 1896, Edvard Ravnikar's New Wing of 1993, and the glass Entrance Hall of 2001 – functions as a unified structure. A new permanent collection composed of approximately 600 paintings and sculptures is on display.

INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL EVENTS

Slovenia annually hosts many events that enjoy recognition beyond its national borders. Among the most notable are the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts (which has gained a reputation as one of the greatest European visual art events), the annual Ljubljana Summer Festival, Festival Lent in Maribor, the Exodos festival of dance arts in Ljubljana, the Ana Desetnica street theatre gathering, the PEN writers' meeting in Bled, the Vilenica writers' meeting in Sežana, and the Biennial of Industrial Design.

Especially important in this respect is the Cankarjev dom Cultural and Congress Centre in Ljubljana, a member of the network of the most prominent global cultural festivals, which is Slovenia's window to the world in terms of exchange and collaborations between Slovenian and foreign artists.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Slovenia had no huge metropolis and its central national institutions were established mainly in the 20th century. There is, however, an even more interesting ethnographic and ethnological heritage.

Beautifully preserved old town centres (such as Ptuj, Piran, Škofja Loka, Kranj, Ljubljana) display the central European heritage of late Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque architecture. The same applies to the majority of churches that constitute an important share of cultural heritage. The best-known examples of religious heritage are the Late Gothic church at Ptujška gora near Ptuj, and the Romanesque and Baroque Stična, Kostanjevica, and the Gothic Pleterje and Žiče monasteries. The town of Idrija, with an abandoned mercury mining complex, is a well-preserved cultural monument of the early industrial era and is on the UNESCO list of world heritage.

Slovenia is interesting for its many castles and manor houses, which were used by the aristocracy as holiday homes and hunting lodges. The best-known castles, mainly museums now, are those in Ljubljana, Bled, Ptuj, Podsreda, Predjama, and Snežnik, all popular tourist spots.

There is also an interesting ethnographic and ethnological heritage; rural architecture, original solutions for planning small settlements and houses, kozolci (hayracks) as an original rural "tool" for drying hay, and quaint town centres that radiate the organised modesty of former townspeople are the most visible features of the cultural heritage. The architecture of the Karst region with its stone walls, dense villages and details on its stone houses is also unique.

Movable cultural heritage is promoted by more than sixty museums and by many more museum collections. The biggest museums are the national general museums in Ljubljana: the National Museum of Slovenia and the Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia, Slovenian ethnographic, Technical and Natural science museums. Specialised museums and regional museums are spread in all regions of Slovenia. The most interesting include the Pomorski muzej of Sergej Mašera in Piran, Park vojaške zgodovine in Pivka, the Kobarid museum, which won the best European museum prize.

Kurenti are one of the original carnival characters from Ptujsko polje that are supposed to chase winter away. Other carnival masks include the Cerkljanski lafarji, Pustovi, Škoromati, and others.

Painted beehive panels are a unique reflection of folk creativity and rural art in the Alpine region of Slovenia, dating from the 18th and 19th centuries and depicting everyday life and religious scenes.

Sophisticated Idrija lace, the wooden products of Ribnica (woodenware) and ceramics from Prekmurje are also part of its folk creativity.



*Strmol Castle is one of the oldest and best preserved castles in Slovenia.
Photo: Strmol Castle archives*



SPORT

Slovenians are closely connected with sport. Exercise fills us with vigour and gives us the energy necessary for recreational and professional goals. We excel at sports and transcend boundaries. We ski where nobody has skied before; we climb where nobody has climbed before; we swim where nobody has swum before; we cycle for distances that others do not. We do not overcome basic natural laws and limits – we discover them.

Because we engage in sports activities we enjoy, we are capable of excelling at them. It is our persistence that makes us discover the limits set by nature. And because we value balance and safety, we respect these natural limits. Slovenia radiates a special sporting energy, because its people are constantly in motion and in touch with nature.

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS

The desire to move is a part of every Slovenian. The eagerness with which we pursue our recreational goals comes from a desire for balance. We excel at sports because we enjoy movement. Because nature is all around us and because nature calms us and gives us renewed energy, being active is a part of our everyday life. Slovenians associate jogging, skiing, hiking, or any other physical activity with a high quality of life. We cannot imagine a balanced life without physical activity. Because we dare and because we pursue the activities we love, we are capable of excelling.

Diligence is part of our character, pushing us to discover nature's limits and transcend them.

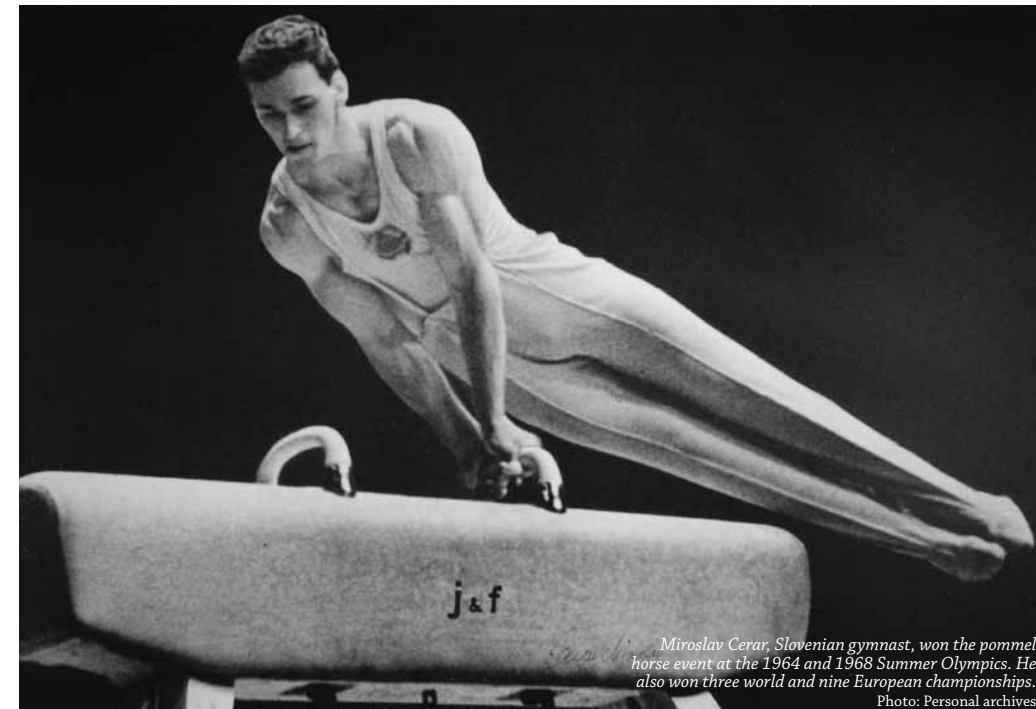
It seems incredible that a nation of two million achieves such great results at sports events. For many years now, Slovenia has been at the top in terms of the number of medals won by population ranking. We are the only small nation to have made it to the greatest competitions in team sports (football, ice hockey, basketball, handball, volleyball) and whose exceptional athletes achieve outstanding results in individual sports (skiing, cross-country skiing, ski jumping and ski flying, gymnastics, rowing and white-water canoeing).

Many top athletes have made their mark on Slovenian sports. Their achievements will not be forgotten. The sports heroes who left their mark not only on Slovenia, but also on global sport, are recorded in the Sports Hall of Fame. Listed sports

heroes were selected by the Association of Sports Journalists of Slovenia. This Hall of Fame is unique, as it is the only one in the world that unites athletes from all branches of sport.

Slovenia ranks 6th among EU Member States in terms of active participation in sports. The EU average for people who play a sport at least once a week is 40 per cent, while in Slovenia the average is 52 per cent.

The first Slovenian encyclopaedic writings, Slava Vojvodine Kranjske (1689), describe boating, cave exploration, fishing, hunting, mountain climbing, shooting and skiing as sports of that time on the territory of modern Slovenia. The 17th century description of a skier in Bloke is the oldest written record of skiing in Central Europe.



Miroslav Cerar, Slovenian gymnast, won the pommel horse event at the 1964 and 1968 Summer Olympics. He also won three world and nine European championships.
Photo: Personal archives

INSTITUTIONS

Despite the early documented existence of sport, Slovenian sports societies did not appear until nearly two hundred years later. The first Slovenian sports association, Južni sokol (The Southern Falcon), was founded in 1863. This was the beginning of the general organisation of physical activities in Slovenia.

In 1905, the **Slovenian Falcon League** (Slovenska sokolska zveza) appeared, uniting 115 societies. The first professional sports leagues were formed between the First and the Second World Wars. After the Second World War, the **The Physical Culture Association** (Fizkulturna zveza) was established, which later became the **The Sports Association of Slovenia** (Športna zveza Slovenije). In the 1970s and 1980s, there were special physical culture associations, which were responsible for financing sports activities. At that time, many more gymnasias and other sports facilities were built.

In 1991, the **Olympic Committee of Slovenia – Association of Sports Federations** was founded. It watches over Slovenian sports at the institutional level. It is the central non-governmental sports organisation, an umbrella sports organisation in Slovenia that, together with its members, develops and integrates top-level sports, sports for everyone and sports at the local level, thus functioning as an active promoter of a high-quality life with exercise.

Slovenian sports colours – green, blue and white – are increasingly used. Every day, more sports organisations are becoming aware of the significance of having a uniform visual identity.



SLOVENIA AS A SPORTS VENUE

Slovenia is a natural sports venue, and its diverse geography allows for numerous sporting activities. It is no surprise, then, that Slovenians are very fond of recreational sports. Naturally, sporting activities also exist at the institutional and professional levels.

Practising sports is one of the most popular pastimes. There are also many recreational sporting events held throughout the year around the country.

Slovenia's rich geographical diversity and numerous year-round recreational and big international sports events offer great opportunities for recreationists and other sports enthusiasts.

Planica – A Place of World Records

In Slovenia, we have exceptional sports infrastructure. Especially noteworthy is Planica, where a jumping facility for the crazy sport of ski jumping, invented by Slovenians, was set up as early as 1930. Today, there is a modern sports facility Nordic Centre in Planica, dominated by the jumping or flying hill, where ski jumpers can jump past the 250 metre mark. Other athletes and lovers of recreational sports may also enjoy the running stadium, cableways, athletic and football stadium, biking and walking trails, cultural heritage park, information centre with a bar, zip-line, and high-quality tourist and sports services. Planica reflects the knowledge and excellence of Slovenian designers, engineers and other specialists. It is a symbol of a daring approach, natural beauty and of world-renowned heritage. Planica is one of the national symbols of Slovenia.

The mighty mountains

Slovenians feel mountaineering and alpinism in their bones. Throughout the year, Slovenia's mountain world offers splendour for the soul and an abundance of activities. Its seven thousand kilometres of marked and protected trails and 165 mountain lodges attract hikers, climbers and other nature lovers. The whole country is a network of trails and footpaths of varying difficulty.



Photo: Aleš Fevžer/www.slovenia.info

The countless mountain trails make mountaineering a very popular pastime. At the plentiful huts and cottages along these paths, travellers can find somewhere to stay overnight and enjoy a hearty meal.

Mt Triglav is surrounded by Triglav National Park, an area of 840 square kilometres and one of the most extensive nature reserves in Europe. The Soča and Sava rivers have their sources in Triglav Park, along with the Seven Triglav Lakes, and lakes Bohinj and Bled.

The Slovenian Alps do not reach extreme heights, and even if you are climbing a high peak, you will not be surrounded by lifeless wilderness, but a world of flourishing life. The flora is mostly Alpine, but due to the proximity of the Mediterranean region, it is intertwined with neighbouring floral regions. Famous species of fauna are the chamois, ibex and golden eagle.

Alpinists occupy a special place in Slovenian sport. Their achievements at the extremes of human endurance, among which are the first ascents of some of the most difficult faces in the Himalayas and other mountain ranges, are not a matter of coincidence. Mountaineering and alpinism have a very long tradition in Slovenia, and mountaineering is also one of the most popular forms of recreation.

The adrenaline excitement

Can you imagine a summer holiday where, instead of lying idly on the beach, you boldly take on a series of adrenaline-filled adventures? This can be either a visit to an adrenaline park, tackling white-water rapids on a raft or on a hydro-speed board, a parachute jump, or a free-ride mountain-bike descent.

Adrenaline sport aficionados from around the world flock to Slovenia to enjoy activities that demand a great deal of courage, concentration, nerve and, finally, offer pleasant relaxation. Such outdoor centres can be found all around Slovenia, but especially in the Alpine world.

Guided rafting, kayaking and river-boarding trips on the rapids of the Soča and Krka rivers offer unforgettable adrenaline adventures, and a high level of safety, as the guides at the vast majority of sports centres have a lot of experience and use the best equipment. Canyoning and rock climbing provide a particular adrenaline rush. Some may find descending into these caves rather eerie, as the underground world proves an entirely new experience.

Another very popular sport is mountain biking, especially downhill, which requires great physical strength. Downhill bike parks can be found all around Slovenia. If you are one of those enthusiastic cyclists, you could suddenly find yourself on the other side of the country. Cycling is possible in all seasons in Slovenia, as the mild coastal climate allows for pleasant riding even in the winter months.

Golf

Slovenia's idyllic natural environment offers many splendid opportunities to play golf. Nature has provided an ideal backdrop for golf courses here, and there is a wide range of attractive golf clubs, courses, and practice courses to choose from. The country's different landscapes provide many different natural backdrops, providing a true golfing challenge.



Photo: Aleš Fevžer/www.slovenia.info

INTERNATIONAL SPORTS EVENTS

The successes of Slovenian sportsmen and women are complemented by the people working in sports organisations, who are regarded as excellent organisers of world competitions.

- The Vitranc Cup in Kranjska gora and the Zlata Lisica Cup on Pohorje are included in the World Cup skiing programme.
- The annual final competition of the ski-jumping World Cup takes place at Planica, on the largest natural ski-jump in the world. Every year in March, up to 50,000 spectators visit the Planica ski-jumping event, where numerous ski-jumping records are set.
- The Ljubljana Marathon last weekend in October.



Three hearts marathon in Radenci
Photo: Anže Malovrh/STA

INTERESTING FACTS

- *The Slovenian contribution to the glory of sport: Stanko Bloudek, the civil engineer, was a pioneer of sports in Slovenia. He was one of the first football players, skaters and athletes. He dreamed of men flying on skis, and in the 1930s he constructed the first ski-jumping premises in the Slovenian valley of Planica.*
- *Petra Majdič is the most successful Slovenian cross-country skier. She won 24 World Cup races, of which 20 were sprint races, making her the second-most successful sprinter in Cross-Country World Cup history. She was the first Slovenian cross-country skier to win a World Cup race, the first to get a medal at the World Championships and the first to win a medal at the Olympic Games.*
- *Ice hockey: There are just over one thousand registered hockey players in Slovenia – of which around 200 play in the senior category – and one full-time ice hockey club. Nevertheless, in its 24-year history the Slovenian men's ice-hockey team has played in the World Championship Division I A nine times and qualified for the ice-hockey tournament at 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.*
- *Few in numbers, but with a heart that counts. Slovenia is one of the rare small countries (only 2 million citizens) to qualify for world championships in team sports (football, basketball, ice hockey, handball, volleyball). Slovenian athletes win medals in major competitions. Slovenia boasts an enviable number of medals per capita.*
- *The alpinist Davo Karničar was the first man to ski continuously for five hours from the 8848-metre peak of Mount Everest down to the base camp at 5360 metres above sea level without taking off his skis. For the Seven Summits project, he descended on Elan skis from the summits of all the highest peaks of all seven continents.*
- *By climbing the south face of the Dhaulagiri, Tomaž Humar opened a new horizon in Himalayan climbing. His solitary battle with the highest face in the Nepal Himalayas went on for over a week, and people all around the world were able to watch it directly on their computer screens, just like Karničar's descent.*
- *Tina Maze, Slovenian World Cup alpine ski racer, won 26 World Cup races in her career, which makes her the best alpine skier in the history of Slovenia. Together she won 13 medals at the World Championships and Olympic Games. She is a world record holder - 2414 points in one World cup season (male and female).*
- *Peter Prevc is a Slovenian ski jumper, and one of the most successful contemporary athletes in the sport. He is the winner of the 2016 Ski Jumping World Cup, having finished runner-up in 2014 and 2015. Prevc is also a former world record holder, being the first athlete in history to land a jump of 250 metres, which still stands as the Slovenian national distance record.*
- *Slovenian triathletes have achieved outstanding results and written history in the most difficult competitions in the world – the Ironman Triathlon.*
- *Matevž Lenarčič, who flown around the world several times and once over the North Pole in a Pipistrel aircraft, received the Aviator of the Year Award at the Flightglobal Achievement Awards 2013.*



HIGHLIGHTS

Slovenia's location has through the centuries enabled its regions to develop a variety economic activities, lifestyles and expressions of cultural creativity. Some regions are of historical origin (e.g. Gorenjska, Dolenjska, Notranjska, Primorska, Štajerska, Koroška and Prekmurje), while others were created after the Second World War by political decisions (e.g. Pomurje, Posočje and Kozjansko).

Among the greatest treasures of these regions are the diversity of dialects of the Slovenian language, different building and gastronomic traditions, popular entertainment, and other aspects of the local population's everyday life.



Slovenian vineyards.
Photo: Darinka Mladenović

REGIONS

Ljubljana

The capital of Slovenia is Ljubljana. It's the largest city and home to 280,000 Slovenians, as well as the political, business, educational, cultural and geographical centre of Slovenia. Archaeological findings from the Bronze Age are proof that as early as 2,000 BC, fishermen and hunters lived in pile-dwellings on the lake that once covered the Ljubljana basin.

Prior to the Roman colonisation, Roman legionaries erected fortresses alongside the River Ljubljanica, which subsequently grew into the walled Roman settlement of Julia Emona. The city, with its castle originating in the 12th century and its old city centre, also boasts a rich medieval heritage, as well as numerous Renaissance, Baroque and Art Nouveau buildings.

In the 20th century the works of the architect Jože Plečnik gave the city a new character. He designed the Triple Bridge (Tromostovje) spanning the Ljubljanica, Tivoli Park, Žale Cemetery, the market place, sports stadium and many other buildings (like the National and University Library). There are numerous museums, galleries, theatres and other cultural establishments in Ljubljana.

Ljubljana, European Green Capital 2016, is a city with a green soul. The city, distinguished by its high environmental awareness, has managed to preserve its green image right up to the present day.



Ljubljana.
Photo: Dunja Wedam/www.slovenia.info

Notranjska

Notranjska was arguably the first region to have become more widely known in the world, thanks to the Slovenian nobleman, castle-owner and polymath Janez Vajkard Valvasor (1641-1693), whose comprehensive opus, *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*, describes the special natural and cultural characteristics of this part of Slovenia. His treatise on the intermittent Lake Cerknica earned Valvasor membership of the Royal Society of London in 1687. Also to Valvasor's credit is the first mention of the skiing tradition on the Bloke plateau in Notranjska, which puts Slovenia alongside the Scandinavian countries as one of the cradles of European and world skiing.

- The intermittent Lake Cerknica, world famous Postojna Cave, the picturesque Križna Cave with its small lakes and other karst phenomena. The karst caves are also the habitat of the biggest exclusively cave-dwelling animal in the world: the olm (*Proteus anguinus*) or "human fish".
- The town of Idrija is notable for its special Idrija-type bobbin lace, one of the finest expressions of Slovenian handicraft traditions. The lace-making school in Idrija was founded in 1876 and is the oldest continually working school of its kind in Europe. The town was also made famous by its mercury mine, now turned into a museum exhibiting many technical inventions and machines.



Postojna Cave.
Photo: Iztok Medja

Dolenjska and Bela krajina

The countryside of Dolenjska is hilly and varied. Green. The River Krka is a lifeline and proudly referred to by the locals as the Beauty of Dolenjska. Downstream, the river gently meanders through Novo mesto (the capital of Dolenjska), Otočec and Kostanjevica. Upstream, it flows through the Krka Valley and Suha krajina, where it reveals its dynamic karst nature with tuff formations in the riverbed. The valley of the River Krka also boasts many ancient castles, of which the castle at Otočec stands out.

The part of Dolenjska around the towns of Ribnica and Kočevje is home to traditional wooden ware, known locally under the name of suha roba, as well as pottery.

The region known as Bela krajina is isolated from the rest of Slovenia by the Gorjanci hills. It is considered one of the country's most romantic regions, imbued with southern Pannonian traditions. It is known for its wine-producing slopes, and also for its traditional beautifully decorated Easter eggs called belokranjske pisanice.

- Dolenjska is famous for three important medieval monasteries: the Cistercian Abbey of Stična, the Pleterje Charterhouse and the remains of a Cistercian Abbey at Kostanjevica, which currently serves as an art gallery.
- The Kočevje area is covered by vast forests, the largest primeval woodland in Europe and a protected area since 1888, where many wild animals live, including the brown bear, wolf and lynx.



Otočec.
Photo: Terme Krka archives

Štajerska

Maribor is the second largest city in Slovenia and the capital of the Štajerska region. The city lies between wine-producing hills and the forested slopes of the Pohorje. The symbiosis of the city and the grapevine is affirmed by the 400-year old vine of the local žametovka variety, which grows in the Lent Quarter of the city on the left bank of the River Drava. It is the oldest grapevine in the world.

Celje, once the seat of the Counts of Cilli, an influential aristocratic dynasty from the 15th century, is today one of Slovenia's most dynamic and rapidly developing towns. The town's glorious past is reflected in the ruins of the mighty castle, once the largest in Slovenia. Celje is not far from the Savinja and Šaleška valleys. The former is known for hop cultivation. The Štajerska and Dolenjska regions meet in Posavje and Bizeljsko, where you can relax in one of the many thermal spas and modern wellness centres.

The unspoilt landscape of Kozjansko provides high-quality produce, such as old apple varieties grown in orchards surrounded by meadowlands, characteristic sights in the Kozjansko Regional Park.

- Ptuj is one of Slovenia's oldest towns. The most prominent features of the town are its medieval castle and the oldest wine cellar in Slovenia.
- The health resort town of Rogaška Slatina has a mineral water therapy tradition spanning 400 years. It has developed into a modern health and wellness centre. The town also has a rich glassmaking tradition.
- The wine-producing districts of Slovenske gorice and Prelekija are a picturesque land of rolling hills and plains between the rivers Mura and Drava. Radenci is an important local centre due to its springs of Radenska mineral water and health and spa tourism.



The oldest grapevine in the world.
Photo: Domen Grögl/STA

Prekmurje

Flat land covered by cornfields stretches from the left bank of the River Mura to the Austrian and Hungarian borders. It is characterised by long roadside villages visited by storks, which return there every year. Prekmurje used to be an important centre for pottery, one of the most ancient handicrafts in Slovenia. The trademark of the village of Filovci is black ceramics – water jugs called *pütra*, wine jugs, bowls for sour milk and other pottery products. Farmers in Prekmurje used to carry water in püttras when they went to work in the fields because it stayed cool despite the summer heat.

- Prekmurje is famous for its cuisine. Traditional dishes include layer cake from the Prekmurje region (prekmurska gibanica), cured ham from the Prekmurje region (prekmurska šunka), Prekmurje stew (bograč), potato mush (dödöli), strudels (retaši) and cakes (zlevanke). The culinary delights are served with fine wines, spirits and liqueurs.



In the village of Bogojina, a famous church was built between 1925 and 1927. It was designed by the architect Jože Plečnik, who decorated its interior with local pottery items.
Photo: Jošt Gantar/www.slovenia.info

Koroška

Though it is one of the smallest regions, Koroška is considered the cradle of the Slovenian nation. Following the plebiscite in 1920 the larger part of Koroška (Carinthia) came under Austrian rule. The Slovenian region of Koroška now encompasses three valleys, the Mežica, the Drava and the Mislinja, which are surrounded by three mountain ranges, the Pohorje, the Karavanke and the Savinja Alps. The unspoilt nature and forests will satisfy the curiosity of any explorer. The magic of Koroška can be found in its precious details created both by humans and nature.

Koroška is associated with charcoal burning, timber rafting and ironworks. The unique creativity of its inhabitants is best observed in folk paintings, woodcarving crafts and special painted beehive panels.

- Koroška is rich in forests – dark green spruce forests with an increasing number of larches at higher elevations. It is also a habitat of capercaillies, an endangered bird species.
- Slovenj Gradec, Ravne na Koroškem and Dravograd are its biggest towns. Slovenj Gradec is an important business and cultural centre of the region famed for its fine art galleries and biennial exhibitions of handicrafts. It was also proclaimed a Peace Messenger City by the United Nations.
- In the Mežica Valley lies the well-known Ravenska železarna ironworks. At Mežica, the abandoned lead mine has been preserved and converted into an exceptional museum, which is a cultural attraction popular with visitors.



Gorenjska

The north-western part of Slovenia is Alpine and is known as Gorenjska. For centuries, it has been the country's most developed region. This is best seen in the historical town centres of Škofja Loka, Radovljica, Kranj, Kamnik and Tržič, where ironmaking (smelting and wrought-iron products) was a decisive factor in development. The ironworks in the town of Jesenice, the cradle of Slovenian ice hockey, date from more recent times.

Gorenjska is synonymous with winter sports: Begunje is the headquarters of the leading ski manufacturer Elan, which revolutionised skiing with its carving innovation. Numerous ski resorts and the world-famous ski-jump at Planica are all essential elements of the region's winter image. Bled, Bohinj and Kranjska Gora have always been the most popular Slovenian tourist destinations.

- The Alpine world of Gorenjska covers 20% of Slovenia's territory. Mountain trails are well marked and maintained, as mountaineering is one of the popular pastimes in Slovenia.
- Kranjska Gora has for many years hosted Men's Alpine Ski World Cup races. Slalom and giant slalom events on the slope of Vitranc are legendary. Planica is a cradle of ski jumping that is visited every year by the very best athletes. World Cup competitions in the biathlon are organised every year at Pokljuka.



Primorska

Primorska is also a historic region in the west of Slovenia. Within it, the Posočje area stretches from the shores of the Adriatic to the western borders of Triglav National Park, all the way to the source of the River Soča. The site bears witness to the fierce fighting on the Isonzo Front during the First World War, which is documented at the Kobarid Museum. The battles in Posočje inspired Ernest Hemingway to write the novel *A Farewell to Arms*.

The River Soča is a true emerald-coloured gem in the heart of the mountains and a paradise for adventure-seeking visitors: white water kayaking, canoeing and rafting.

On the right bank of the Soča, near Nova Gorica, lies a wine-producing area known as Goriška Brda.

Slovenian Istria is most strongly associated with the sea. This is a very picturesque and varied landscape, characterised by vineyards, olive trees and Mediterranean fruit trees. On the coast, sea salt and *fleur-de-sel* are harvested; the sea has fish in abundance; truffles can be found in the woods and meadows.

- Kras is famed for its dried ham from the Karst region (kraški pršut). It also gave its name to karstology, the science investigating karst phenomena. Seemingly uninteresting on the surface, the karst underground world is extraordinary and mysterious. The Škocjan Caves are a registered UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- The world-famous white Lipizzaner horses were named after the village of Lipica in Kras. Some consider these to be the best riding horses in the world.
- Besides scenic stone villages, there are three famous ancient coastal towns in the region, Koper, Izola and Piran, and the tourist resort of Portorož.



Izola.
Photo: Matej Vranič/www.slovenia.info

GASTRONOMY OF SLOVENIA

In terms of gastronomy, Slovenia offers a colourful image of diversity. What makes it special is its location at the meeting point of the Alps, the Mediterranean and the Pannonian Plain.

Slovenian cuisine is traditionally based on grains, dairy products, meat (especially pork), sea and freshwater fish, vegetables, legumes and tubers, olives and grapes. It is enriched with fine wines and other alcoholic beverages.

Several dishes and food products are protected under the uniform regulations of the European Union.



Photo: Ukom archives

Protected Designation of Origin

Nanoški sir (hard cheese from the Nanos area), *Mohant* (soft spreadable cheese from the Bohinj area), *Ekstra deviško oljčno olje Slovenske Istre* (Extra virgin olive oil from Slovenian Istria), *Kočevski gozdni med* (forest honey from the Kočevje area), *Tolminc* (hard cheese from the Tolmin area), *Kraški med* (honey from the Karst region), *Piranska sol* (salt from Piran), *Bovški sir* (cheese from the Bovec area), *Istrski pršut* (dried ham from Istria)

Protected Geographical Indication

Kraški pršut (dried ham from the Karst region), *Kraška panceta* (cured pancetta-style bacon from the Karst region), *Kraški zašink* (Karst cured pork product made of neck meat), *Prleška tünka* (pork in minced lard from the Prlekija region), *Štajersko prekmursko bučno olje* (pumpkin seed oil from the Štajerska and Prekmurje regions), *Ptujski luk* (red onion from the Ptuj area), *Slovenski med* (Slovenian honey), *Prekmurska šunka* (cured ham from the Prekmurje region), *Zgornjesavinjski želodec* (stomach from the Upper Savinja Valley region), *Kranjska klobasa* (Kranjska sausage), *Šebreljski želodec* (stomach from the Šebrelje area)

Traditional Speciality Guaranteed

Prekmurska gibanica (layer cake from the Prekmurje region), *Idrijski žlikrofi* (potato-filled pasta from Idrija), *Belokranjska pogača* (flat bread from the Bela krajina region)



Prekmurska gibanica.
Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik

Wines

Wine with Protected Designation of Origin (PDO): Goriška Brda, Vipavska dolina, Slovenska Istra, Kras, Štajerska Slovenija, Prekmurje, Bizeljsko Sremič, Bela krajina, Dolenjska, Bizeljčan, Cviček, Metliška črnina, Belokranjec, Teran. Wine with Protected Geographical Indication (PGI): Podravje, Posavje, Primorska.

Spirits with Protected Geographical Indication

Brinjevec (a fruit-based spirit produced from the common juniper berries), *Pelinkovec* (a liqueur made with natural extracts of wormwood), *Domači rum* (made from molasses or sugar beet juice), *Dolenjski sadjevec* (traditionally made from apples and pears; plums may also be added), *Slovenska travarica* (a spirit obtained from fruit, wine or apple juice), *Orehovec* (a dark brown liqueur from the maceration of a green walnut), *Janeževac* (a transparent, sweet spirit produced with natural extracts of anise, star anise or fennel).



Primorska, Posavje and Podravje are the three wine-producing regions of Slovenia, each offering a wide range of outstanding wines.
Photo: Ubald Trnkoczy/www.slovenia.info

NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY

Slovenia's biodiversity has been exceptionally well preserved (through the Natura 2000 Network and other protected areas, such as national, regional and landscape parks). Of all the European Union Member States, Slovenia boasts the largest share of Natura 2000 sites, as 37% of its territory is covered by Natura 2000.

One tenth of Slovenia's territory is protected under nature conservation laws.

The first natural park in Slovenia was established in 1888 – the forests of Kočevje are the only preserved primeval woodland in Europe. The Triglav National Park, is the biggest Slovenian park. It covers 840 square kilometres, or 4% of the

country's territory. The only national park was named after Slovenia's highest summit, Triglav (2,864 m). Three regional parks (Kozjansko, Notranjska and Škocjan Caves) and 45 landscape parks are intended for the protection of heritage and diversified landscape, forests and native plant and animal species.

Valuable natural features also include one of the deepest caves in the world (Čehi II), the stunning intermittent lake (Lake Cerknica) and a UNESCO World Heritage site (Škocjan Caves).

Slovenia is the habitat of 140 animal and plant species out of 900 protected species which are rare or threatened in the European Union. In other words: as many as 15% of these plant and animal species are present in 0.5% of the European Union's territory. Among them is the brown bear – the largest animal (weighing more than 300 kilograms) protected in the European Union within the Natura 2000 Network. The banks of Slovenian streams are home to the smallest animal on this list – the minute land snail of the genus *Vertigo*.



The common kingfisher, a small bird of wonderful colours.
Photo: Janez Tolar/www.slovenia.info



Capricorn.
Photo: Aleš Zdešar/www.slovenia.info

Water

Water is an important natural asset – Slovenia is among the richest in Europe in terms of abundance of water sources. The amount of fresh water per inhabitant is nearly four times the EU average. The wealth of water in Slovenia is augmented by springs, natural and artificial lakes and part of the northern Adriatic. The watercourse network is over 26,000 kilometres long. There are over 200 natural and artificial lakes and around 7500 water springs in Slovenia.

All across Slovenia the water is of high quality and safe to drink.

Slovenia has many thermal and mineral springs: Fifteen health and tourist resorts (Čatež, Rogaska Slatina, Radenci and Podčetrtek are the most widely known) in the central, north-east and south-east of Slovenia are accredited as natural spas. Some springs have already developed into thermal and medical centres, which in addition to the classic treatments and physiotherapy now offer sophisticated wellness programmes and therapies.



Photo: Ales Zdesar/www.slovenia.info

Forests

Nature gave Slovenians thousands of hectares of first-class forests, which many generations of our ancestors maintained carefully. Forests and wood have influenced our economic and social development over centuries.

Three-fifths of Slovenian territory is covered by forests. Slovenia is the third most forested country in Europe after Finland and Sweden. For comparison, the world average of forest cover is about 30 percent and in Europe about 40 percent.

In Slovenia, forests are synonymous with a high quality of life, with recreational leisure activities which are extremely appreciated, and with a place of relaxation. An increasing number of Slovenians are seeking a quiet moment in the woods and spending their free time hiking, biking and engaging in other recreational activities. Picking forest fruit is popular as well; Slovenians particularly enjoy picking mushrooms, chestnuts and blueberries.

Forests make up the most characteristic type of ecosystem in Slovenia, the country's greatest natural treasure. Forests provide us with an identity and are our promise of a future and an improved quality of life.



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

I FEEL SLOVENIA

Publisher	Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia
Director	Kristina Plavšak Krajnc, M.Sc.
Head of State Promotion Section	Petra Ložar
Editors	Polona Prešeren, M.Sc. and Danila Golob
Design	Irena Kogoj
Photo Editor	Irena Kogoj
Photo on the front page	Mostphotos
Translation	Secretariat-General of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, Translation and Interpretation Division, DZTPS, Amidas
Language editing	Amidas
Print	Collegium Graphicum d.o.o., Slovenia
Number of copies	5000

The contents of this book is also available at
www.ukom.gov.si, www.slovenia.si

Ljubljana, June 2016



**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**

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