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July-August

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Welcome to Slovenia

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SLOVENIA**



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Photo: Bruno Toič

WELCOME TO SLOVENIA

We Slovenians are proud of our country, a paradise in the heart of Europe. A land of mountains, the sea, the Pannonian plains and exceptional people. A place where foreigners are welcome, and most of all a country that cherishes all ethnic Slovenians, even if they do not live in their homeland. Thus we say to the latter: Welcome home! And to all who are visiting for the first time: Enjoy your stay, and please come again.

Like locals, visitors can take pleasure in the views from the mountain peaks and hilltops, and a dive into the depths of the sea. Discover the Karst landscapes, caves, waterfalls and rivers. Experience the breadth, depth, distance, and height of the country, moving from one world to another. A walk around Slovenia is like a trip around the world, as you travel from the cold snow to the warm coast. While some places in the country have already become tourism mainstays, we would like show you some of those that are less well-known.

In addition to its varied landscapes, Slovenia has enormous potential for cultural tourism. This is because one aspect of the country's unique appeal is its people's ability to develop extraordinary projects, which belie any preconceptions about Slovenia's small size. This ability draws on our sensitivity, sense of time, a natural feel for aesthetics and vision, and a deep appreciation for tradition.

Children are also an important part of this story, and Slovenia can also pride itself on being exceptionally concerned with their welfare. This is, of course, as it should be. They are the ambassadors of tomorrow, the ones whose lives are, and will continue to be, proof that ours is a land of the future, a land of challenges and achievement.

Tanja Glogovčan, Executive Editor

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Seeking the answers to pressing issues of today's globalised world





Planinsko polje.
Photo: Matevž Lenarčič

WHAT TO LOVE

You have to love Slovenia – indeed, it’s the only country with the word ‘love’ in its name. Moreover, the nation’s strategic position in Central Europe means there’s much for fans of history to discover, both ancient and modern. And where else in the world can you visit the birthplace of the noble Lipizzaner horses, try delicious Potica cakes, explore the mysterious Karst, and enjoy unspoilt nature, from the Mediterranean coast the Alpine mountains and forests? You’ve just got to come to Slovenia.

EUROPEAN YEAR OF CULTURAL HERITAGE 2018

Raising awareness of our common European culture

DAMJANA PEČNIK



The ginger bread in Slovenia is called Lectar and represents living heritage. The traditional Lectar heart (ginger bread heart) has a love thought in the middle, as it was given as a present to the love ones.
Photo: Miran Kambič

The European Commission has proposed to the European Parliament and European Council the declaration of 2018 as the “European Year of Cultural Heritage”, with the aim of promoting exchanges and the respect of European cultural heritage as a shared resource, of raising awareness about our common history and values, and strengthening the sense of belonging to the European area.

The contribution of cultural heritage to economic growth and social cohesion in Europe is still insufficiently known and often underestimated. At the same time, the heritage sector in Europe faces numerous challenges, such as dwindling public budgets, a decline in participation in traditional cultural activities, increased environmental and physical pressure on areas of cultural heritage, a shift in values and expectations owing to the transition to digital technology, and illicit trade in cultural assets.

The principal aims of the European Year of Cultural Heritage are to raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities in this area, and to emphasise the role of the EU in promoting common solutions.

In line with this agenda, the European Year of Cultural Heritage will have the following general goals:

- Contribute to promoting the role of European cultural heritage as an essential component of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, where the focus will be on the best ways to ensure the preservation and protection of this heritage, in order for a wider and more diverse public to enjoy it. These efforts will cover measures to develop audiences and educate them about heritage, which will serve to promote social inclusion and integration, with full respect for the individual jurisdictions of Member States.

- Strengthen the contributions of European cultural heritage to the economy and society through the direct and indirect economic potential of heritage, which includes the capacity to support the cultural and creative industries and promote creativity and innovation, sustainable tourism, stronger social cohesion and the creation of more long-term employment.
- Contribute to promoting cultural heritage as an important element of the EU’s international dimension, by promoting greater interest in European heritage and expert knowledge in partner countries. Heritage has an important part to play in several programmes in the area of foreign relations, especially – although not exclusively – in the Middle East. Promoting the values of cultural heritage is also a response to the deliberate destruction of cultural treasures in conflict areas.

Measures will include information and promotion campaigns, with events and initiatives on the European, national, regional and local levels. These will serve to spread key messages and information by presenting examples of best practices.

MAKING CULTURE MORE ACCESSIBLE

The Ministry of Culture welcomes the proposed declaration of 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage, since it recognises this as a contribution to establishing cultural heritage as a strategic resource for a sustainable Europe, including through the promotion of its integrated, intersectoral and participative preservation in the broadest sense of the word. Slovenia will play an active part in preparing and implementing the year.

Aware that our common European cultural heritage conveys the values, principles and ideals of the Union's Member States, in the Year of Cultural Heritage we will undertake to pursue throughout Europe the common goals of greater accessibility to heritage for all citizens.

We are raising awareness of its importance for quality of life within the community, and enhancing its potential for promoting creativity and establishing intercultural dialogues based on respect for cultural diversity.

In order to implement the European Year of Cultural Heritage, the Ministry of Culture will set up an interdepartmental working group that will link together different fields and seek synergies among them. Public institutions in the area of culture have been called to plan activities in their 2017 work programmes that they will implement in 2018 as part of the project. The Ministry will also invite the active participation of stakeholders from other sectors (education, research, business, the environment and social affairs). Only through the collaboration and networking of all interested parties, from state bodies to non-governmental organisations and volunteers, and based on a participatory and future-oriented approach, can we ensure accessibility and the right to heritage for all, and strengthen the potential that heritage has in building a peaceful and democratic society, in sustainable development and in the promotion of cultural diversity and creativity.



The oldest testimony about rafting on the river Drava dates back to 1280. The knight Otto Velikovaški owned the document that allowed the collection of tolls for the transportation of wine barrels. In the land register of the St Pauline's monastery dating back to 1289 it is also mentioned that people transported timber along the river Drava all the way to Maribor.
Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik

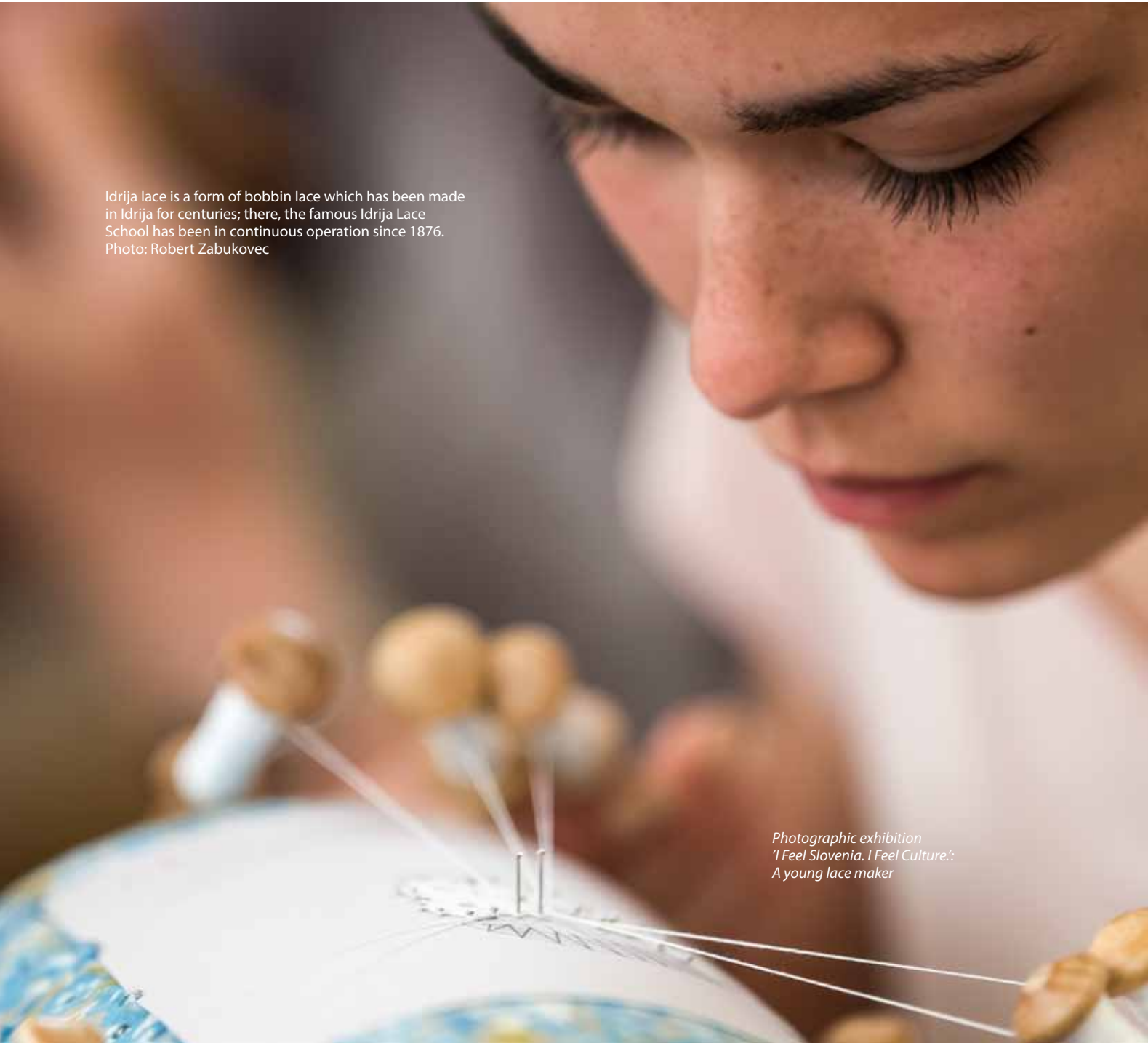


Korant, or kurent, as some call it, is a traditional carnival mask in Ptuj field, Drava field, and Haloze hills. According to traditional superstition the korant is believed to be a demon that pursues winter and allures Nature into spring awakening.
Photo: Marko Sinkovec

IT'S SLOVENIA CULTURE TIME

In 2018 and 2019 culture will be the main theme of Slovenian tourism

PETRA ČAD



Idrija lace is a form of bobbin lace which has been made in Idrija for centuries; there, the famous Idrija Lace School has been in continuous operation since 1876.
Photo: Robert Zabukovec

Photographic exhibition
'I Feel Slovenia. I Feel Culture.'
A young lace maker

This year the Slovenian Tourist Board (STB) is bringing to a close its two-year theme of "healthy waters", and in its place the next two-year theme of Slovenian tourism will be culture, which will be highlighted in STB market communication activities and tools. The preparations for communicating this strategically selected theme began last year, and all the strategic and marketing principles will be brought together this month in the Operational Plan for Marketing Cultural Tourism in Slovenia.

Slovenia is recognised as a green, active and healthy destination, and through the two-year culture theme we are seeking to inspire tourists to discover more in-depth the cultural wealth of Slovenia's heritage, art, festivals and events, cuisine and the lifestyle of its people.

Slovenia is in fact a cultural crossroads of nations and regions, a treasure trove of influences and discoveries.

We boast boutique tourism in the old centres of the country's historical cities, and through ethnological tourism we draw people to the countryside, while with our top-class culture and art we attract them to the cities.

CULTURAL ICONS AND INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED MONUMENTS AND AREAS

The icons of Slovenian tourism, such as Ljubljana, Bled, Piran, Postojna and Ptuj, are becoming increasingly recognised in foreign markets, and at the same time these treasures attract people not just with their natural and geographical features and general attributes, but also with their rich cultural histories.

In addition to its iconic attractions, Slovenia is a destination of internationally recognised monuments and protected areas.

The UNESCO World Heritage List includes Škocjan Caves, with the largest underground river canyon yet discovered; Idrija, with what was once the second biggest mercury mine in the world; and the Ljubljansko Barje wetland, with its heritage of ancient pile house dwellers. And since the end of 2016, UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list has included the Škofja Loka Passion Play, which has been staged every 6 years on the streets of the medieval town centre of Škofja Loka since the original creation of the text in the Baroque Era. Ljubljana also features in the UNESCO network of creative cities as a city of culture. Moreover, Slovenia has three sites of special interest that have earned a European Heritage Label from the European Commission: Franja Partisan Hospital in Cerklje, Javorca's Memorial Church of the Holy Spirit in the Soča Valley, and Plečnik's Žale Cemetery, the Garden of All Saints, in Ljubljana.

PLEČNIK'S LJUBLJANA AND SLOVENIA

The architect Jože Plečnik helped shape the image of Ljubljana and left his mark across Slovenia. This year marks the 60th anniversary of his death, so 2017 is Plečnik Year, and in 2025 Slovenia will mark the 150th anniversary of his birth.

The master's work in Ljubljana, together with Prague, are candidates for the inclusion of Plečnik's eternal humanist architecture on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

You can experience this heritage through a guided tour of the man's house, a walk through Plečnik's Ljubljana, or a Plečnik tea and honey cookie in the National Library café. This giant of European architecture spearheaded green thinking, as can be seen in the centre of Slovenia's capital city, which is like a large open-air living room, full of green areas for rest, study or socialising. People are also drawn to Plečnik's works in Kranj, in the areas in and around Kamnik, in Celje, Prekmurje and the Šentvid plateau.

Slovenia also boasts three of the oldest treasures in the world, which enhance the country's range of cultural tourism attractions in unique ways. It was in Slovenia that the oldest musical instrument in the world was discovered – a Neanderthal bone flute from the Divje Babe site – as well as the oldest wooden wheel and axle in the world – which were drawn from the Ljubljansko Barje wetland. In Maribor, meanwhile, the façade of the Old Vine House in the old city centre of Lent has been home for more than 400 years to the oldest grapevine in the world. It is listed in the Guinness Book of Records as such, and still produces grapes every year.

In every month Slovenia hosts numerous festivals and events across the country. Early in the year, with the promise of spring, the Shrovetide Carnivals are a big attraction, with their mysterious kurent figures, and then the two biggest Slovenian festivals are held in summer: Ljubljana Festival and Lent Festival, plus a multitude of other festivals large and small. The autumn then begins with the Martinmas wine festival, also known as Martinovo or St. Martin's Day, when the must turns into wine. While the end of the year features Advent and Happy December, when city centres come to life with Christmas fairs and events featuring Nativity scenes.



In the old Maribor city centre of Lent, the Old Vine – the oldest grapevine in the world – is still growing today in front of the Old Vine House. The black velvet grapevine (modra kavčina) is confirmed as being more than 400 years old, and is in the Guinness Book of Records as the oldest in the world, still producing its noble fruit. The Old Vine symbolises the rich wine culture of Maribor, Štajerska and Slovenia. Photo: Domen Grögl

THE CAPITAL CITY, URBAN CENTRES AND COUNTRYSIDE

One foot in the town, the other in the countryside! In Slovenia you can experience the coexistence of the urban and rural, the modern and traditional. In addition to Ljubljana, the historical towns and cities across the country offer museums and galleries, operas and concerts, and tours of architectural gems at every step. Then the just nearby you can find yourself in the natural setting of the surrounding area, where you can tour a castle, a rural church or simply admire the diverse cultural landscapes that surround you.

The Slovenian countryside preserves its authenticity with many customs, habits and celebrations. There is a wide variety

of fascinating workshops and presentations linked to the culture of daily life and holidays – for example, you can make your own trnič cheese or learn how to make paper by hand.

Nor does Slovenia lack superlative cultural and artistic pleasures, and you can seek them out in theatres and concert venues, as well as on dance stages. Alongside all of this we should not omit the pleasures of our cuisine, which links and marks both the towns and countryside. At culinary events and workshops held all over the country you can become closely acquainted with the wealth of dishes from the full 24 gastronomic regions of Slovenia.



The oldest wheel and axle in the world are 5,200 years old. They were discovered in the Ljubljansko Barje wetland, whose pile house dwellings are part of the UNESCO World Heritage List. Research has revealed that the wheel was made by a highly skilled prehistoric wheelwright, with excellent knowledge of wood and skills in building wheels and carts. Photo: Matevž Paternoster



Burnt and broken objects have been found in Mušja Jama cave at Škocjan, mainly weapons and animal bones. These items indicate that ritual offerings were made to a deity above the cave in the Bronze Age. People made pilgrimages to this sacred site from what is today Italy, the Alps, the Pannonian Plain, the Balkans and Greece. The magnificent entrance to the underground space and the dramatic entry of water have since the earliest times given Škocjan an exceptional religious and symbolic power. Photo: Jošt Gantar

WELCOME HOME – THE SLOVENIAN MEETING POINT FOR A DAY

Scattered around the world, but at home in Slovenia

BLANKA MARKOVIČ KOCEN
PHOTO: USZS ARCHIVES



Since 2011, every year on the first Saturday in July the Government Office for Slovenians Abroad has organised a Welcome Home gathering, which usually attracts several thousand countrymen and women from all corners of the globe and across the nation's borders.

The event evolved from what used to be expatriate picnics, and now offers a high-quality overview of Slovenian expatriate and regional cultural and artistic creativity. Last year's event, which took place against the backdrop of the 25th anniversary of Slovenian independence, was a particularly special celebration.

Leaving one's home is not as easy as it looks. Everyone feels a twinge in their heart when they leave their homeland and enter a foreign country, known only from books, the media, or perhaps not even that. This makes it even more wonderful to return home, and the annual Welcome Home gatherings are a sincere expression of that feeling.

The organizer promoter of the Welcome Home event, the Government Office for Slovenians Abroad, is in its own way expressing thanks to our fellow countrymen and women, for without the support of the Slovenian minorities and expatriate communities that preserve our culture, language, songs and traditions beyond the country's borders, Slovenia would not have become part of the family of successful and developed countries.

LJUBLJANA IS MORE SLOVENIAN THAN AT ANY OTHER TIME

The first joint gathering of Slovenians in neighbouring countries and around the world, held in 2011 in Ljubljana, was attended by around 2,000 people, of whom 500 came from all corners of the globe. At that time the capital was full of Slovenian songs, conversations and dances. Although these guests came to their homeland from all over the world, almost no foreign words could be heard. It was, and remains, wonderful to see and hear so many young people who are now third or fourth generation expatriates and who still speak Slovene.

Some groups – choral, folklore and others – have since become regular guests at this event, which draws Slovenians from neighbouring countries and around the world to return to their homeland and recall traditional customs and ways. At the same time, the event is a heart-warming reception of our kinfolk who come home for the summer, be it for a holiday, visit, language course or camp.

FAMILY AROUND THE WORLD ARE A MAJOR ADDED VALUE FOR SLOVENIA

The Welcome Home gatherings always show just how strong the awareness of belonging to the Slovenian nation is among our relatives abroad.

Bubbling energy, hugs, handshakes and expectations of all things good are mainstays of the event. Indeed, we Slovenians who live within the borders of our nation rarely feel such Slovenian heart and spirit than at these times.

"Come to Slovenia, give the younger generations a chance to see our green country," was how Gorazd Žmavc, the Minister for Slovenians Abroad, exhorted expatriates to come to Ptuj in 2015, adding: "I should emphasise our efforts to address you actively, our kinfolk around the world, since you are a key part of creating a successful Slovenia. You are an exceptional added value for our country, you were with us in shaping our independent homeland, and you are the greatest promoters of Slovenian culture and beauty around the world."

SPECIAL GATHERING DURING SLOVENIA'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY

The Welcome Home gathering in 2016 had a special importance and even more celebratory atmosphere, given that year's 25th



On the Saturday afternoon that summer, numerous folklore groups performed in front of the City Hall, with some going on to become permanent features of the Welcome Home event. Photo: Office for Slovenians Abroad Archives

anniversary of Slovenian independence and statehood. In previous years perhaps few people noticed the traditional stands around Ljubljana city centre, but last year the celebration was on a larger scale, with both guests and hosts able to enjoy superlative cultural events, such as the concert by the All-Slovenian Symphony Orchestra and guests at the Slovenian Philharmonic, and the opening of the exhibition To the Promised Land – Slovenian Women in America, in the National and University Library.

THIS YEAR WELCOME TO POMURJE

This year's Welcome Home event will take place from 7 to 9 July at Rakičan Manor House in the Pomurje region. It will begin with an event in the late afternoon of the Friday, marking the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in Pomurje, and will continue with a premiere screening of a film about Slovenians in Bethlehem, USA. Friday evening will conclude with the Sobota Summer festival.

Saturday morning will be devoted to organised tours of Pomurje, and a guided tour of Murska Sobota. The organisers are also planning a round table discussed on the strategy for a long-lived society, and a lecture on the Year of Plečnik. Saturday afternoon will be given over to sports, with Slovenian teams from neighbouring countries and further afield competing in a five-a-side football tournament.

This year's Welcome Home gathering will conclude with an ecumenical service for Slovenians abroad and at home, conducted by the Bishop for Slovenians Abroad, Peter Štumpf, and Evangelical Bishop, Geza Filo.



POTICA CAKE IS HOME AND HOMELAND

Every Slovenian woman needs to know how to bake potica

TANJA GLOGOVČAN
 PHOTO: TOMO JESENIČNIK



The homeland or territory of potica is western and north-western Slovenia. Potica as we know it today could not yet be talked about in the 15th century. In developmental terms it evolved from various generic forms of local cakes.

Any Slovenian woman of substance knows how to bake potica. Mothers must teach their daughters how to bake potica, as this is the culinary dowry that Slovenian brides bring to a marriage. The aroma of potica thus pervades holidays, and the essential ingredient for a good potica is love.

No Christmas or Easter holiday in Slovenia is complete without a walnut potica cake. Equally, potica is common at weddings and funerals, and at all major family and national holidays.

Potica is home, homeland, family happiness, it is the memory of childhood. It is also becoming an increasingly important part of Slovenia’s tourist attractions, and part of State protocol.

It can appear in various interpretations: different ingredients (hazelnuts, chocolate, poppy seeds, pork crackling and so forth) and different sizes (mini or full-sized). The most common ingredient for all of these is leavened dough made of white or buckwheat flour.

THAT ONE DAY

Slovenia lies at the meeting point of the Alps, Mediterranean and eastern Pannonian Plain, hence the differing views on how the forerunner of potica was named and prepared. We can find “gubana” (a holiday cake of Friuli), “putizza” (a Trieste dessert), “pohača” and “šartal” (in Austrian Carinthia) and so on.

Among the earliest recorded mentions of the word potica is a reference by Primož Trubar (1508-1586) in the book Catechism from 1575, which uses the form “povitica”.

It was then described in more detail by Janez Vajkard Valvasor (1641-1693) in his work *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*, which mentions it in a description of Christmas pastries. The early sources also indicate that on holidays this cake was baked by both the nobility and peasants, who all also blessed it. This shows that since the earliest times it was a special holiday food.

FIRST COOKBOOKS

In the first Slovenian cookbook, published in Slovenian in 1799 by Valentin Vodnik (1758-1819), there is no recipe given for potica in its forms of kolač, pogača, gubana or presnec, and potica appears later as a generic cake in some German-language sources. The first edition of the famous cookbook *Die Süddeutsche Küche für Anfängerinnen und praktische Köchinnen*, written by Katharina Prato (1818-1897), a Slovenian woman, was published in 1858. This book recorded recipes for dishes made of leavened dough: špehovka, ocvirkovka and cakes with various fillings (fresh fruit, raisins and almonds, honey biscuits, marmalade and so forth). It also featured poppy seeds and walnut potica. For the latter there is even an illustration showing that this was indeed potica or povitica, a rolled-up cake without the central hole (otherwise typical of potica).

The most successful cookbook of the time was written in 1865 by Magdalena Knafelj Pleiweis (1815-1890), who devoted an entire chapter to “good bread and potica”.

The book also distinguished between potica and the dumpling-like štruklji, with the predominant method involving baking the cake in a mould with a cone in the middle. She set the ball rolling for numerous other writers to develop the recipe, a process that continues to the present day.

It is also interesting to note that despite the classic recipe there are potica variants for individual regions.



The characteristic potica baking mould (potičnik), with its fluted central cone, dates to the early 19th century.

AROUND THE WORLD

Much credit for spreading the popularity of potica around the world goes to generations of Slovenian expatriates, especially in the USA. Alongside Kranjska klobasa sausage, carnations and folk pop music, walnut potica is an important part of the ethnic identity. One of the best-known expatriate cookbooks, entitled *Slovene-American Cookbook*, was written by Ivanka Zakrajšek and published in 1945, and mention should also be made of *Woman's Glory – The Kitchen*, edited by Albina Novak and issued in 1953 by Slovenian Women's Union of America on its Silver Anniversary. In America, potica is even made by some U.S. companies.

Dessert pastries similar to potica also exist in the cuisines of Austria, Italy, Hungary and all the way through Turkey to Russia.

A sweet pastry similar to potica (especially the poppy seed version) is made in Hungary, where it is called "beigli". A close relative of Slovenian walnut potica in Croatia is "orehnjača", in Romania it is "cozonac", in Turkey "nokul" and so on. However, the similarities here are mainly visual, as the fillings vary and preparation methods differ.

GASTRONOMIC STRATEGY

Slovenia established a Gastronomic Strategy in 2006, the cornerstone of which is a culinary pyramid. In this way Slovenia is presented as a place of distinct culinary diversity, with tarragon potica among three dishes at the top of the pyramid. The other most typical versions are walnut, crackling, bacon, and carob, now followed by a growing number of variations.

Recipe for potica

Ingredients for the dough:

- 500g white flour
- 30g yeast
- 120g butter
- 80g sugar
- Three egg yolks
- 2.5dl milk
- Rum
- Lemon or orange peel
- vanilla essence
- Salt

Ingredients for the filling:

- 500g ground walnuts
- 100g sugar
- 100g honey
- One dl milk
- Two eggs
- vanilla essence
- Ground cinnamon
- Ground cloves
- Lemon peel
- Rum

Put the flour in a bowl, sifted if you like, and add salt. In one cup dissolve the yeast in water or milk, and in another mix the eggs, sugar, rum, vanilla essence, lemon or orange peel. Heat the milk and melt the butter. Add hot milk to the flour, stir and add the mixture of eggs, sugar, rum and flavourings. Stir again, add dissolved yeast and melted butter and stir into a medium thick dough. Knead this until it is elastic inside and smooth on the outside. Make sure the dough does not stick to the bowl and that it is not too hard. Cover the dough with plastic film and leave to rise at room temperature. Once the size of the dough has doubled, knead it once, roll it out and spread it with the filling.

Melt the honey in tepid milk, then add one half of the walnuts along with the sugar, eggs, flavourings, spices and rum. Spread the filling on the rolled-out dough and sprinkle with the other half of walnuts. The temperature of the filling should be equal to that of the dough. Roll tightly, put in a mould, prick and leave to rise. Before baking, coat with a thin layer of milk and egg mixture, and make sure the holes are not blocked.

Bake 50 minutes at 190°C.



Source: Taken partly from Janez Bogataj's *Potice iz Slovenije*, Ljubljana 2013, Rokus Klett Publishing House.

KUHNAPATO – BON APPÉTIT WASHINGTON DC

Tasty Slovenian heritage

ANKA PELJHAN
PHOTO: KUHNAPATO ARCHIVES

Zala Gruntar, Urška Vidmar, Tanaja Odar, Taša Ličen and their teacher Petra Ušaj with creator of the project Kuhnnapato Anka Peljhan.



Food brings together or connects the most diverse groups – and even continents. Slovenian primary school children have been reviving the exceptional treasure trove of traditional, typical local or regional dishes through the Kuhnnapato (“Cooking and That”) project for the last seven years. Now they are sharing Slovenian heritage in direct, edible form to children of public schools in Washington DC, and indirectly to a much wider audience.

These young people are first-rate ambassadors, presenting the diversity of Slovenia’s regions to the world, along with the cultural and culinary customs of their homeland. Their dishes speak of our geographical and climatic characteristics, and consequently the natural resources we work to preserve and share.

INTERNATIONAL FOOD DAY

Washington DC has celebrated an International Food Day for the last four years.

This year, DC Mayor Muriel Bowser officially proclaimed 10 May 2017 “Slovenian Food Day”.

At the initiative of the Slovenian Embassy in Washington, and in cooperation with the DC Public Schools Global Education team and a local nutritionist organisation, we offered a Slovenian menu consisting of breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack to a total of 50,000 children at 113 local public schools. With the help of DC Central Kitchen and Sodexo Magic, on that day school cafeterias served *frtalja* omelette, celery and polenta and a meat and egg salad. There was a Slovenian flavour to everything, including at Harriet Tubman Elementary School, which this year is part of the Embassy Adoption Program and where we officially celebrated the day.

In the morning celebration and opening of the Slovenian promotion and its traditional meals, the Slovenian Ambassador to the USA, Mr Božo Cerar, spoke to those present. Ms Delbar, principal of the school, added her own words of greeting and encourage-



ment. After singing the US national anthem, the children also sang Slovenia's and raised the Slovenian flag. Together we watched a film about Slovenia, and schoolchildren from Ajdovščina gave a presentation on the features of Slovenia and its culinary specialties. We were also honoured with a visit by Ms Kate Ireland, director of the DCPS global education programme, and her associates.

The participants in the Kuhnato project were accorded special honour and confidence by the Slovenian Prime Minister, Miro Cerar, who issued an official letter of greeting.

Prompted and assisted by the Slovenian Government Communication Office, we presented all the local Washington schools with English copies of a book containing recipes that was published

based on several years' research into Slovenia's culinary heritage. The book, which will now enrich American elementary schools, will also encourage the young people who have now learned about these traditions to build on their knowledge of food preparation and get to know Slovenian culture from the dinner table.

In order for a little part of Slovenian cuisine – in fact that of Primorska, since we were accompanied by a group of children from Šturje Primary School in Ajdovščina – to take root in their memories, we also gave a cooking workshop for a local class.

Alongside the fun of mixing polenta, cutting fruit and vegetables, and kneading dough, the children exchanged their knowledge and skills and established invaluable contacts between our two nations.



Egg herbal omelet

FROM PLATE TO COUNTRYSIDE

For the third year running, the Kuhnato project has given us the opportunity and honour of enlivening events in Washington DC. On 13 May 2017, the EU Delegation to the USA and the embassies of the EU member states in Washington held their 11th open day, called the EU Embassies' Open House Day. This is when each country tries, in as attractive way as possible, to encourage more tourists to visit them.

In the premises of the Slovenian Embassy in Washington we thus gave an outstanding presentation of part of Slovenia's culture related to traditional food, and thrilled nearly 3,000 visitors.

Traditional Primorska snacks in modern form were presented and promoted by Zala Gruntar, Urška Vidmar, Tanaja Odar and Taša Ličen, along with their mentor Petra Ušaj, from Šturje Primary School in Ajdovščina. We should note that this school has been involved in the Kuhnato project for six years now, and has carried out its mission with distinction, since over this time the participants have come to know a considerable number of the most interesting and delicious dishes of their grandmas, which may otherwise have been forgotten. Just as important, the presentations of these dishes have inspired numerous local food establishments which, thanks to the efforts of the children, are now once again offering polenta, celery, various Primorska stews and minestrone.



Children from Šturje Primary School in Ajdovščina gave a cooking workshop for a local class.

INNOVATIVE SLOVENIA

2017 Tourism Award “Snovalec”

MORANA POLOVIČ

Since 2009 the Slovenian Tourist Board has organised the Snovalec (Creator) awards, through which it helps bring innovative tourism projects to fruition. This therefore involves the promotion and fulfilment of new ideas and inventions in tourism.

Applications for the 2017 Snovalec were assessed by a 10-member expert committee, and the best applicants were invited to present their ideas in person. Of the most innovative ideas to win over the committee, there were four to which we will distribute €15,000 gross in grants. The finalists receive the grant funds only after full implementation of their invention or of its key development stages, in line with the contract. The deadline for implementation of winning ideas is 9 November, 2017.

THIS YEAR’S SNOVALEC WINNERS

Alongside the existing tourism services of the Ars Viva youth hostel, overnight capacities and cultural events, which are entirely oriented towards accessible tourism, the Institute for Cultural Integration and Socialisation of Social Groups wishes to add the option of cycling adapted for those with mobility impairments, which will enhance their range of accessible and sustainable tourism options in the Notranjska and Karst region.

Before they develop three tourist products for mobility impaired persons in Loška Dolina – cycling weekends, guided cycling tours and a package of cycling holidays in the Notranjska region – they will mark out the cycle paths in Loška Dolina and put them in a mobile cycling app.

By procuring the bicycles and holding an annual cycling event, they will promote cycling among mobility impaired persons and the sustainability of their tourism offerings.

CULINARY JOURNEY ON A MUSEUM TRAIN

This food-focused trip on a museum train has been organised by the ABC rent a car in turizem d.o.o. and Bled Higher Vocational College for Hospitality and Tourism.

The ride along the Bohinj line, which was part of the Austro-Hungarian railway and links the regions of Gorenjska and Primorska, is part of Slovenia's cultural and technical heritage, and is in itself an unforgettable experience, since it offers magnificent views of the picturesque landscape.

An even more special experience was conjured on 13 May 2017, on the trial culinary journey with the museum train, as catering and hospitality students from Bled treated the passengers to local delicacies from places along the way.

Starting at the train station they served masovnik (a dairy herder dish from Gorenjska and Primorska) and buckwheat kasha (groats). On the train they served šebreljski želodec (pig stomach casing stuffed with fine meat and bacon), Tolmin cheese and quark balls, to which they added tarragon or horseradish. Passengers quenched their thirst with traditional drinks, such as sweet pear liqueur, apple wine and wine.

They were accompanied on the train by a man dressed as the Imperial Heir Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and there was music and group activities along the way. The Mayor of Bled, Janez Fajfer, who accompanied the passengers in folk costume, said that through its combination of technical heritage, cuisine and the beauty of the landscape, the journey was an enjoyable and instructive experience.

On their arrival at Nova Gorica the travellers continued their journey to Goriška Brda by coach, where local people awaited them with baskets full of Brda cherries. Here they visited a restaurant where they served veal stew with polenta and cherry dessert, using recipes suggested by the students together with their mentors.

Everyone on the train went home with a culinary souvenir: tarragon potica cake, potica with pork crackling and pajtička, a Cerklno cake of salted leavened dough stuffed with walnuts, onions and honey.

In 2018 the team plan to carry out at least six such culinary journeys.

CLIMBING HOLIDAYS

Jurij Ravnik is a climbing instructor with more than 20 years of experience. He has written, designed and published three best-selling climbing guide books covering the Karst margins, and served as editor of the climbing magazine Beta. He is also a coach for the Slovenian paraclimbing team, and in his long career has worked with experienced professionals as well as with beginners and children. He wants to develop sports climbing holidays lasting one week and offer them as a tourist package, including transfer from the airport and back, overnight accommodation, food, climbing equipment and instructor, plus guided tours of local sites of interest. In other words, arranging active leisure time into a rich, varied and attractive package suitable for everyone, from beginners to professional climbers. The aim of the project is to bring as many foreign guests to Slovenia as possible, and not only to attract those who are already here. The project will enhance the range of nature-friendly, active tourism that the country offers, since the region has some of the best climbing walls and great conditions for enjoying them all year round.

Over the summer 2017 the packages will be prepared and the promotions started,



Museum train.
Photo: Miško Kranjec

and the first guests are expected in the autumn, beginning in October. Agreements are already in place with local people and inns, and climbing locations have been chosen. Since Ravnik has also written guides to the Karst margins and Istria, he knows the area very well (for more on this go to www.krimp.si).

STORY OF A DRAGON AND TARRAGON

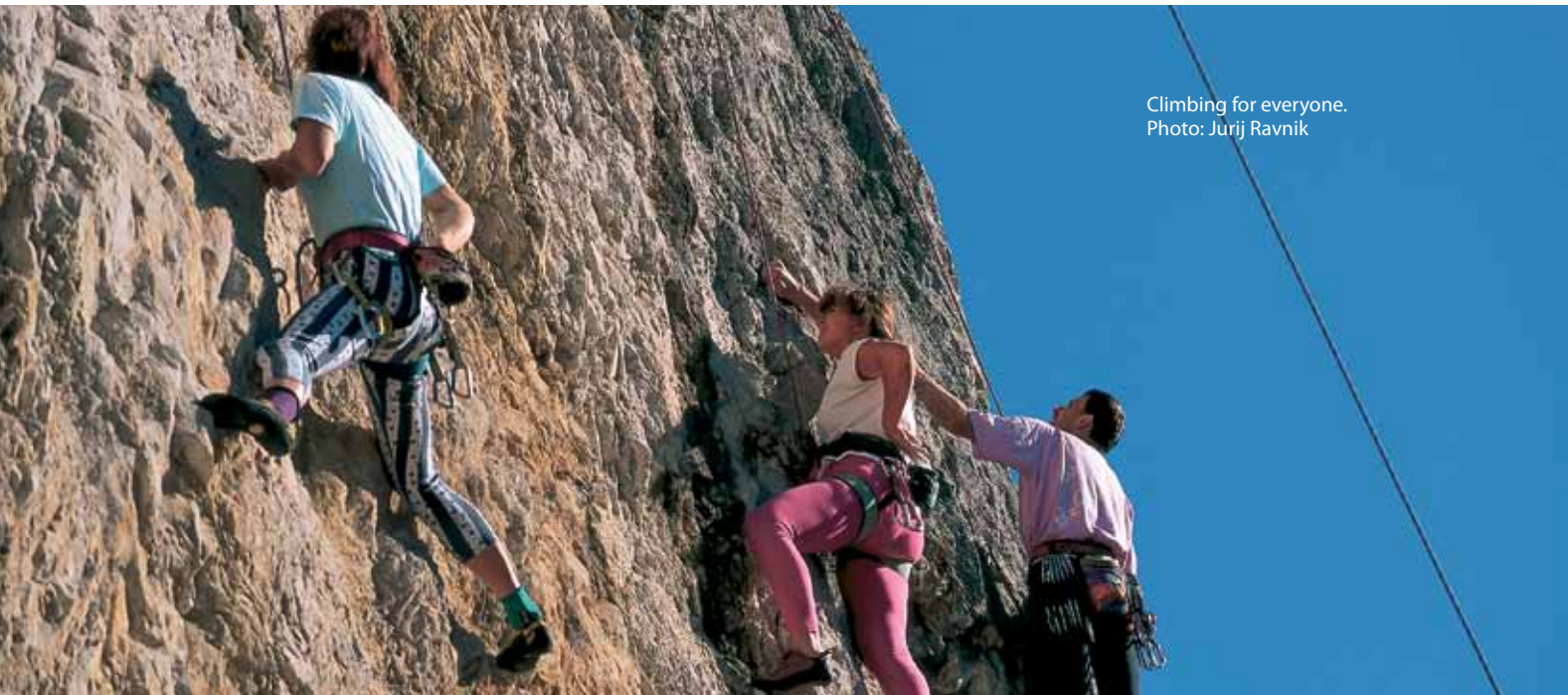
The company Sončna trgovina, which sells artistic storytelling design souvenirs with an emphasis on the mascots of specific tourist destinations, collaborates in this project with the architect, illustrator and caricaturist Marko Kočevár. They pay special attention to introducing the latest trends to their work, so they are developing an app that will enable closer links between destinations and their mascots through interactive stories and adventures.

The story of the dragon and tarragon began just over two years ago, with the development of storytelling design souvenirs with the image of a little dragon and a cityscape, with the team also researching the culinary specialities of the city of Ljubljana.

In checking various sources they discovered that tarragon is the dragon's herb, and very closely connected to Slovenian cuisine and tourism, since it was used in past centuries to soothe the tired bones of pilgrims and travellers.

They thus set themselves the task of preparing tarragon brandy and liqueur – Dragon Fire – which they hope will in time become one of Ljubljana's culinary attractions. These products will be followed by other drinks, such as tarragon wine liqueur and various cocktails and non-alcoholic beverages, like Dragon Tea and flavoured water. Their aim is to enrich what is offered with a range of culinary products, and especially desserts.

All the items will be sold in distinctive packaging and the emblem of the dragon and tarragon story, as designed by caricaturist Marko Kočevár. The company's main sales strategy will be to use the new products and marketing approach to increase the appeal of numerous Ljubljana establishments, restaurants and shops that will offer the souvenirs to tourists. The company's vision is to convey to visitors through storytelling the main Ljubljana legend of Jason and the Dragon, and in this way to put into context the products of other manufacturers linked to the legend, the mascot or to tarragon.



Climbing for everyone.
Photo: Jurij Ravnik

ALPE-ADRIA TRAIL

Hiking in the Garden of Eden

POLONA PREŠEREN

Trenta Valley is famous for traditional homesteads and numerous bridges across Soča River.
Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik/www.slovenia.info

When I took a few days in May this year to hike the Slovenian section of the Alpe-Adria Trail, I truly felt like I was walking in the Garden of Eden. Magnificent nature, hiking trails that inspire the even the most jaded hikers, and the range of culinary experiences on offer, all convinced me to take on some other stage of the trail on my next visit.

The entire Alpe-Adria Trail (AAT) is 750 km long and connects Grossglockner, the highest mountain in Austria, with the Adriatic Sea. It links together three regions: Austrian Carinthia, Slovenia and Friuli-Venezia Giulia in Italy. It is a trail of three countries, which owing to its diversity, cultural heritage and natural beauty, is becoming one of the most recognised European footpaths. The trail comprises 43 stages, each averaging 20 km or a little more. Hikers can combine them as they wish, and thus determine their own personal distance. Each stage leads along a marked path you can hike in either direction. Hikers can travel the trail from the glaciers to the sea, or vice versa. Most hikers, however, opt to walk towards the sea. The ATT is also a very attractive culinary excursion destination, and each stage ends in a place with adequate facilities for overnight visits.

Enjoyment is the mainstay of hiking this trail, which runs mostly through non-Alpine areas. While the altitude differences are not excessive, and the walking is pleasant, you must be prepared to hike a few long hours, so it's a good idea to be in proper physical shape before setting off on your walk.

The trail runs along established hiking paths, and was designed by partners from Austria (Kärnten Werbung), Slovenia (Slovenian Tourist Board) and Italy (Friuli-Venezia Giulia Tourist Board). Individual mountaineering societies take care of maintaining the trail and marking it with signs. Each year, before the tourist season, there is an opening event at a different location, and this year it was in Bovec on the shortened 24th stage of the AAT along the emerald-green River Soča. Here the walking was enhance with live music and local cuisine.

THE TRAIL

The trail itself is interesting, not least because it goes through three countries. Its designers were guided by the concept that they should aim to create a route for enjoyment that runs along existing paths of adequate hiking quality, and the slogan “Hiking in the Garden of Eden” has stuck to the project. Referring to the trail in this way also indicates the great variety of scenes one encounters on the southern side of the Alps, and in the Alps-Adriatic area in particular.

On the hike from the High Tauern, going passed lakes and streams all the way to the Adriatic coast, hikers discover the cultural diversity of three different countries that are linked by a long common history.

The beauty and magic of the landscape during the hike ensure many unforgettable impressions and moments. Each stage in itself reveals numerous special features. And yes, along the way you will not just observe the landscape, but also sense it in all its abundance. Each stage offers numerous distinguishing features that have an important influence on the rhythm of walking, and invite hikers to make a stop and soak it all in.

KRANJSKA GORA TO TOLMIN

I started my journey at Kranjska Gora, the beginning of the 23rd stage. This is the first Slovenian stage if you start below the Austrian glaciers. The trail leads past the famous Russian Chapel, which is dedicated to Russian prisoners from World War I who died while building the road over the Vršič mountain pass. On the other side the trail descends to the source of the River Soča, along the Walk of Peace, then follows the river downstream.



The Virje waterfall near Bovec is a magical spot. It was featured also in the movie *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*. Photo: Boris Pretnar/www.slovenia.info



The famous Russian Chapel is a must stop on a way to Vršič Pass.
Photo: Iztok Noč/www.slovenia.info

In Trenta I was able to take a look at the famous Trenta home-steads, I tried sheep's cheese at isolated farms, and marvelled at the wonder of the emerald colour of the Soča. Since there had been rain a few days earlier, the waters had an even more striking colour. Spring was in the air, and it had painted the meadows and forests in a soft green, while the mountain peaks were still draped in white snow.

The concept of the AAT is that it should run along existing hiking paths, connect them, and of course that these hiking paths should be maintained to a passable standard. From Trenta to Bovec the route follows the Soča trail, which runs along the banks of the river.

Hikers cross the river several times on suspended wooden log bridges, which is itself a special experience. Along the way there are also numerous little waterfalls.

From Bovec via Drežnica to Tolmin the trail follows the Walk of Peace, which is another testament to the battles of the World War I. The Walk of Peace passes through the area of the Isonzo (Soča) Front, which Ernest Hemingway wrote about in his novel *A Farewell to Arms*. Indeed, you can still come across some abandoned bunkers or military bases in the area.

After four stages and four days of walking, I concluded my hiking holiday in Tolmin. The experience was fantastic, and I am already planning my next trek along other stages. Discovering the natural environment, local traditions, cultural heritage and outstanding local people was a truly lovely experience. I visited villages and locations that I would otherwise probably never see. I encountered their stories and tasted the local cuisine. Almost every village in these parts has its own typical dish. If you decide to do it, you can hike the trail by individual stages, or you can simply adapt the hike to the time available and how well prepared you are. Even if you just do a stage or two, you will not regret it, and will come home full of inspiration.

Useful information

Difficulty of trail: The AAT is easy to moderate, with no technical challenges. There are no trail sections that are secured with ropes, or that involve dangerous exposure – not even on the rare high mountain stages (in the High Tauern National Park and Triglav National Park). You just need to be cautious and able to walk over rocky terrain.

Physical fitness: The AAT requires hikers to have a good level of fitness. The length of trails, altitude differences and difficulty of ascents along individual stages can differ greatly. You need to be prepared to hike up to eight hours and cover 25 km a day, and able to deal with 1,500 metre climbs and descents. Some fitness training would thus not go amiss before setting out on your adventure!

Unfortunately, you cannot do the AAT by mountain bike, since for the most part it involves footpaths where mountain bikes are prohibited.

Accommodation: You can find accommodation on the AAT website under the Lodging tab, or you can book through the AAT reservation centre, which will arrange stays for you.

Food: The names of currently open restaurants and mountain lodges along the way are listed in the detailed descriptions of the stages (the Stages tab) on the AAT website. This and other important information can easily be printed out or loaded onto your mobile device.

Camping: Camping is not allowed along the AAT. In all three countries camping is permitted only in campsites, which are not established in any of the stages.



Tolmin is a lovely town along the Walk of Peace route.
Photo: Matevž Lenarčič



SAVE THE CHILDREN

Slovenia is the most child-friendly country in the world

POLONA PREŠEREN
PHOTO: MOSTPHOTOS

The international Save the Children organisation has published its first report on where children have the best lives. Out of 172 countries in the world, Slovenia was ranked first, along with Norway, ahead of Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden.

This is the first annual report from Save the Children that reviewed and analysed data on 172 countries.

The “End of Childhood” index measures the health and wellbeing of children around the world, taking account of nutrition, access to education, infant mortality, child marriages, child labour, teen pregnancy and regional conflicts.

The organisation notes that childhood ends too early for at least 700 million children around the world. Among the main reasons for this are poor health, armed conflict, violence, child marriages, early pregnancy, malnutrition, exclusion from the education system and child labour. The report also calls on countries to take steps against discriminatory policies and customs, and to invest in public services so they will attain the global development goals agreed to in 2015 under the auspices of the UN. At that time, world leaders also committed to eradicating poverty in all forms, and to protecting the planet for future generations.

Slovenia has established an integrated approach to pre-school education, combining education, play and care in pre-school institutions. Comprehensive care for preschool children involves meals, rest and sleep, as well as various educational programmes.

Most of ten best countries in the world are European, with the exception of South Korea, which shares tenth place with Germany, Belgium and Cyprus. According to Save the Children, these countries score very highly in terms of health, education and child protection. The bottom ten countries include seven from West and Central Africa.

SLOVENIAN CHILDREN HAVE A NICE CHILDHOOD

“The fact that Slovenia is in first place, together with Norway, is a reason for us to be proud. But there is of course always room for improvement,” said Anja Kopač Mrak, Minister of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

Through its legislative measures, our country takes good care of the quality of life for children, in terms of the variables that this study examined. For example, Slovenia has no malnourished children, there are very few cases of newborn mortality due to birth complications, and almost all children go to school and get an education.

Moreover, children are not forced into exploitative and dangerous work, and a very small percentage of girls give birth under the age of 18. Children's safety is also not threatened by war or state conflicts, nor is there any traumatising due to the violence caused by such events.

TOUR OF SLOVENIA

Broadcast by the Eurosport TV network for the first time

TANJA GLOGOVČAN



The 24th Tour of Slovenia international cycling race took place in mid-June under the slogan "Fight for Green". For the very first time the Tour of Slovenia was broadcast live by Eurosport, the most-watched sports television network in the world. Over 113 million cycling enthusiasts from places as far afield Asia, Africa and the Middle East followed the race, as well as those in Europe.

The Tour of Slovenia concluded with the victory of Poland's Rafal Majka, which had largely been expected. Here the Pole managed to overcome fierce competition and win in a fight to the finish against the Italian Gianni Visconti and the Australian Jack Haig.

The riders covered almost 650 kilometres in four stages: the first was set between Koper and Kočevje; the second encircled Ljubljana; the third stage, which was the most challenging, was held on the Celje – Rogla route; and the last stage was set on the Rogaška Slatina – Novo Mesto route.

Thanks to the excellent technical crew, sports fans around the world had the opportunity to admire Slovenia's natural beauty as they watched the exciting race unfold.

WIDE VIEW THROUGH A CAMERA LENS

Slovenia is a country that tells its authentic green story at every push of the pedal. This time round, it attracted a great deal of attention by hosting the 24th version of this cycling race, which was broadcast live by Eurosport, the world's most popular sports television network.

Over 113 million cycling fans in Europe,

Asia, Africa and the Middle East were thus able to follow the race.

Excellent coverage of the event was provided by four commentators: two from Slovenian national television and two based in Eurosport's Paris studios. In addition to the 50-strong Slovenian crew, the Spanish International Sport Broadcasting TV and the Dutch partner North East Pennsylvania Netherlands also took part in the project. Besides the ground footage, viewers could also watch the race from the air, thanks to a special gyroscopic camera. The broadcast thus offered high-quality graphics and images from a variety of perspectives.

CYCLING IS IN THE SLOVENIAN GENES

The enormous interest shown by Slovenians in the race, and their love of cycling in general, are both testaments to the fact that this sport is our blood.

Around two weeks before the race, the Slovenian Tourist Board focused on Slovenia's green story in cycling by launching a special project entitled "Cycling Ambassador of Slovenia".

On their six-day free trip around Slovenia, the Cycling Ambassadors rode through several locations. They cycled through the Slovenian capital, discovered the underworld in Podpeca, experienced Solčavsko and Maribor with the Prlekija region and Jeruzalem, and visited the Posavje region. They also took in the scenery in the Karst, Goriška Brda and Soča Valley. In the Karst region, they visited Postojna Cave and Predjama Castle. They also attended the Red Bull Goni Pony bicycle race to Vršič, where the cyclists rode Slovenia's legendary Pony bicycles. They then brought their adventure to an end with a visit to Bled and Bohinj, the pearls of the Alpine foothills.

MORE SUCCESS TO COME

The young Slovenian cyclist Tadej Pogačar will surely take one step closer to the top next year. With strong levels of organisation, world class participants and the very best media professionals involved, this year's Tour of Slovenia served as an excellent showcase for our skills in these fields. However, the country's natural beauty should not be overlooked, and that is yet another reason why the next Tour of Slovenia promises to once again be a truly special occasion.



Cycling Ambassadors
Photo: STO Archives



The first Slovenian to finish was Tadej Pogačar, who had just turned 18 years of age; he crossed the line in fifth place, only 36 seconds behind the winner.
Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

#SLOdelujem

We all are interested in doing the best for Slovenia

GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION OFFICE
PHOTO: TAMINO PETELINŠEK/STA



Prime Minister Miro Cerar met leading members of Slovenia's business community at Brdo pri Kranju in order to seek, through constructive and sincere dialogue, clear solutions designed to strengthen the economy, increase Slovenia's international competitiveness, and consolidate trust between the Government and business community.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

Ministers from various departments sat down with representatives of the business community to seek ways to create even better working conditions in Slovenia. Sincere and constructive conversations were held in ten separate discussion groups with specific challenges relating to employment, new investment, the elimination of uncompetitive elements of the tax environment, transport infrastructure as the foundation for a competitive economy, strengthening the confidence of the business enterprise sector in the justice system, high-quality and efficient public administration services, integrating education and the business sector, exploiting Slovenia's development potential, and changes in health legislation and building regulations.

The purpose of the discussions was to define short- and long-term targets in individual fields, and to seek common solutions that will improve people's lives.

Conference participants identified as possible measures to increase investment for greater promotion of Slovenia as a country that is attractive to investors, with an emphasis on the circular economy, implementation of the "one-stop shop" principle, adoption of an investment law that will allow incentives and the equal treatment of foreign and domestic investors, and the creation of a stable and

predictable business environment, including through labour legislation reform.

With regard to the need for an efficient tax system that guarantees a competitive business environment, conference participants highlighted necessary changes in the areas of taxation of active incomes and salaries, the promotion of equity or capital financing, and taxation of immovable property. They also proposed changes to tax incentives for research and development, an overhaul of existing tax incentives for employing young people, and lump-sum taxation for micro-enterprises.

The completion of Development Axis 3 by 2023, the ranking of Slovenia among the top five European countries in terms of smooth traffic flow by 2030, and construction of the second track of the Koper–Divača railway line by 2025, are the most important long-term infrastructure goals that will contribute to making the economy even more competitive.

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD COOPERATION

Speaking after the conference, the Prime Minister said that such cooperation is the key to Slovenia's further development.

"When we work together, we are strong and successful. This is something we

know how to do in Slovenia, we have already proved this many times."

The Minister of Economic Development and Technology, Zdravko Počivalšek, said that he believes economic growth will reach a record level this year, although further steps need to be taken to enable the business environment to be even more competitive, such as the elimination of administrative obstacles, the introduction of flexible labour legislation, and tax reform.

Boštjan Gorjup, President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GZS), commented that event had a positive focus. "We did not stop at seeking solutions, we also made decisions. We agreed on a range of measures whose realisation we will now monitor," he said after the conference.

The Government and the representatives of the business community agreed that cooperation (#SLOdelujem) and dialogue can lead to concrete measures to improve the future of Slovenia.



Minister of Education, Science and Sport Maja Makovec Brenčič, discussing the important role of business.

PM Cerar told representatives of the business community: "We want to help the business enterprise sector, above all by creating the best possible business support environment. All of us have to work together to ensure that Slovenia goes forward into the future through sustainable development, through an awareness that we have to create good conditions for the younger generation so that they are able to build on our work for an even better tomorrow. At the same time, we must guarantee a good quality of life to everyone. The quality of life that I see and wish for in the future for Slovenia is an active life for all individuals, a healthy life, secure and free, a life that allows all generations to be creative and inventive. Slovenia must be development-oriented, it must be modern, it must become digital, and must move towards development, but always with a human heart and human face."



Prime Minister Miro Cerar believes that working together is the formula for the economic success of Slovenia.

THE USA

One of the most promising outbound markets for Slovenian tourism

REBEKA KUMER BIZJAK



Sevnica.
Photo: Iztok Medja

The USA is the second most important global outbound market from the point of view of tourist arrivals, and the most important in terms of tourist spending. The last few years have shown a positive trend in tourist arrivals from the USA to Europe.

The European Travel Commission (ETC) reports that USA the upswing of the American economy, a strong US dollar and growing consumer confidence have all contributed to the appeal of Europe as a holiday destination. Americans thus accounted for 5% of total arrivals (27 million) to Europe in 2016, with further growth predicted (+6% annual average) up to 2020. The growth in tourists from the USA to Europe is also expected to continue because of the country's historical connections with Europe, political conflicts and the threat of terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa, health concerns in Central and Latin America, and of course stricter security measures and other concerns affecting visits by American tourists to Muslim countries around the world. Security, however, is also factor that could have an extremely negative impact on this growth in tourist numbers, at least with regard to major European cities.

American visitors – alongside those from Canada, China and other Asian countries (as well as Russia, where an upswing in tourist numbers is predicted in the next few years) – continue to be of key importance for Europe and its tourist destinations.

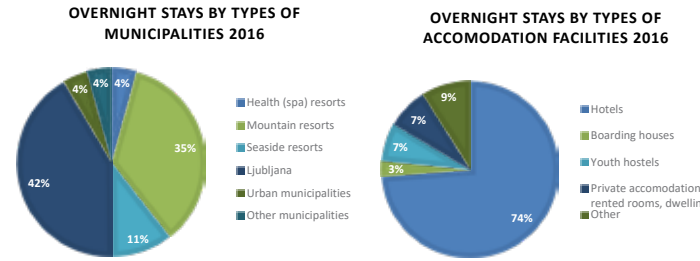
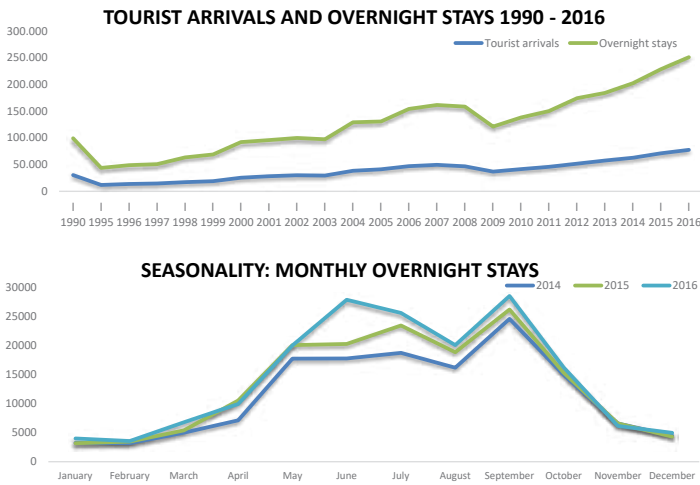
THE USA AND SLOVENIA

Some facts on American tourists in Slovenia (figures from SURS, the Statistical Office of Slovenia):

- Among visitors to Slovenia, Americans are in 14th place in terms of overnight stays. Arrivals and overnights have been growing constantly since 2010.
- September is the busiest month for American tourists in Slovenia, followed by the spring and summer months. Ljubljana is the most popular destination, while municipalities in mountain areas are in second place.
- Americans most frequently stay in four- or five-star hotels, and top the list in terms of average daily expenditure.

USA - TOURIST MARKET OVERVIEW

	2016	Rank	Share	index 2015/2016	PBD
Tourist arrivals	77.666	12.	2,70%	108.8	2,23
Overnight stays	173.527	14.	2,50%	110,2	



Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia



Ana Roš.
Photo: Hiša Franko Archives

- When it comes to choosing travel/holidays, American tourists devote most attention to personal safety, the friendliness of the local population and the cleanliness of the destination.

American tourists in Slovenia spend more than the average visitor. Surveys of foreign tourists in Slovenia carried out by SURS in 2015 ranked their level of spending as very high, at more than €160 a day per individual. The largest proportion of this goes on accommodation. Eating out in bars, restaurants, etc., accounts for a little under a third of daily expenditure, while shopping and gifts for just under 10%.

Security is an important factor in the choice of destination, followed by its reputation, which also ranks very high.

Most important of all is the fact that American tourists gain an excellent impression of Slovenia: more than 70% of such visitors to the country came away with a better impression than they had expected, and are therefore certain to recommend the destination to others.

The Slovenian Tourist Board (STB) has recently noted, in the context of its global PR activities, a significant growth in awareness of Slovenia as a tourist destination on the part of global media. Of course, in 2016 a Slovenian became the First Lady of the USA, a fact that gave added momentum to this greater interest. Thanks to Melania Trump, Slovenia's profile on the world map has been increasing ever since Donald Trump announced that he was running for president.

Moreover a significant proportion of the world's leading media outlets have reported on the homeland of the new First Lady.

Many have come to Slovenia for the first time to try and find out more about her country of origin, and have gone away surprised at the beauty and orderliness of our nation. In recent months, more than 50 global media companies have visited Sevnica, Melania Trump's hometown!

Foreign media have also started to take notice of Slovenia thanks to top chef Ana Roš, one of the stars of the second season of the Netflix series Chef's Table, and the recipient of the title World's Best Female Chef 2017.

It therefore seems reasonable to expect a continued growth in interest in Slovenia in the coming years, as well as an increase in the share of American tourists coming to the country. As recent history has shown, these are tourists who tend to choose products with high added value and at the same time are keen to find new destinations.

Overall, the STB has identified the USA as one of the key overseas markets for Slovenian tourism, and is stepping up its promotional activities there.

It included America in last year's global digital campaign and, together with representatives the Slovenian tourism industry, has attended various business events in the USA with the aim of making connections with US-based travel agencies, tour operators and media. The STB has also hosted numerous American journalists and influencers on study tours, giving them the opportunity to discover the various tourism products that Slovenia offers. The STB will continue with a range of activities in the US market in the coming years, and in this way continue to strengthen Slovenia's profile as a tourist destination.

COMMUNICATION IN THE US MARKET

Due to the increased interest in Slovenia, the STB has prepared a specific communication strategy for the US market.

Formation of pillars of communication

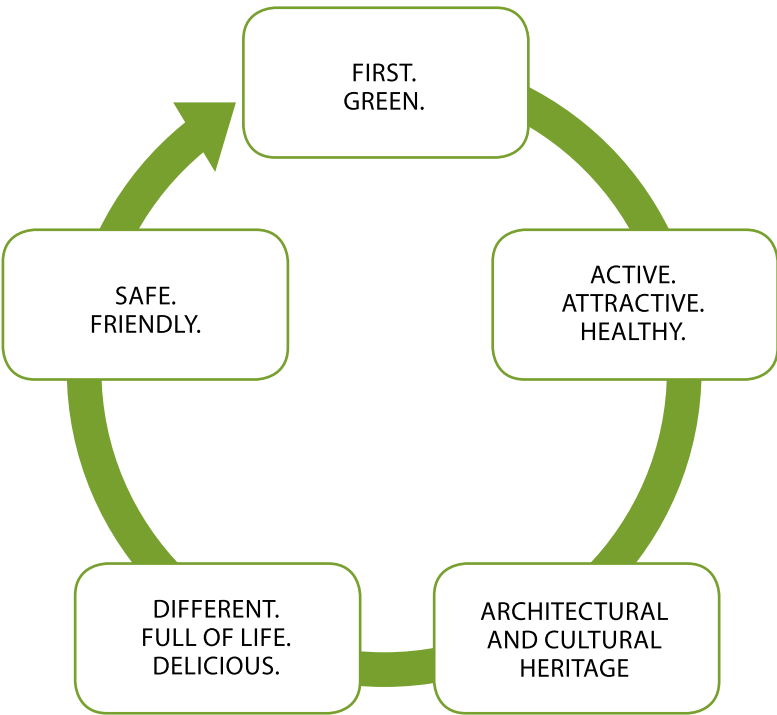
The following areas serve as a basis for the communication activities through which we present Slovenia as an attractive tourist destination:

- FASHION & LIFESTYLE
- DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE
- HEALTH, WELLNESS & FAMILY
- CULINARY EXPERIENCE

Citing facts

When talking about Slovenia's connections with the First Lady of the United States, during the first phase of Donald Trump's presidency we are sticking to the principle of citing facts according to the "less is more" approach, avoiding emotionally charged connotations. The First Lady of the USA should serve as a reference point to help locate Slovenia more quickly and easily on the map of the world, rather than as a key component in the presentation of Slovenia's tourism products in the USA.

Messages





CASTLES OF SLOVENIA

Crowns above the City

DANILO GOLOB

Bled Castle.
Photo: Rožle Bregar

Slovenia is truly a fairy-tale country. Its landscape is dotted with castles, manor houses and fortresses that conceal stirring stories of the past behind their walls. Some castles have been renovated and converted into museums, hotels and venues for events, and many sit proudly on hilltops and offer breath-taking views.

The castles in present-day Slovenia were built in various periods of the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance and baroque periods, although the first traces of castle-building date from antiquity. From the tenth century onwards, several hundred castles, manor houses and great country mansions were built in the land, which, though small, was a strategically important territory.

Taking into account all existing structures, from those that have been renovated to those that lie in ruins, there are estimated to have been around 900 castle-type buildings in Slovenia over the past centuries.

Castles were built on clifftops and hilltops – wherever access was only possible from one side, which in those times made them easy to defend. From the sixteenth century onwards, manor houses and country mansions began to be built in low-land areas, while magnificent palaces began to appear in towns. All are evidence of our rich history, although this was often unkind to such buildings, since many have fallen into ruin or disappeared without trace. Well-planned and well-constructed castles, on the other hand, withstood even the largest peasant revolts and enemy attacks. Many places around Slovenia are famous precisely because of their wonderful castles, today lovingly restored and a source of pride for the entire country.

SOME NOTABLE CASTLES

Ljubljana Castle, a powerful medieval fortress, dominates the skyline of Slovenia's capital city and offers an unforgettable panoramic view of its surroundings into the far distance. It is constantly surprising us with new experiences. This year, for example, an exhibition entitled Plečnik above the City has opened at the castle to honour the memory of Ljubljana's most famous architect. This exhibition of Jože Plečnik's plans for the Castle Hill, both realised and unrealised, remains on view until 1 October 2017.

Bled Castle stands on a steep cliff above Lake Bled. The image of this castle above the lake, with its romantic little island and church, is a classic view of Bled that is instantly recognisable both at home and around the world. Based on written sources, Bled Castle is the oldest in Slovenia, being first recorded in 1011. Notable features – in addition to the spectacular view – include the castle forge, printworks, Knights' Hall and castle chapel. Many prominent world leaders and politicians have visited Bled Castle and enjoyed the unique

view over the beautiful surroundings. Bled is also the venue for many traditional annual events, such as Medieval Days, a summer cultural programme held at the castle, the Bled Festival and the Okarina Festival (dedicated to folk and world music).

Predjama Castle is something unique among Slovenia's castles: carved into a cliff and connected to the passages of a cave that lies behind and beneath it, it was built almost 800 years ago. It is the largest cave castle in the world, and has been officially recognised as such by Guinness World Records. The most famous inhabitant of the castle was the rebellious knight Erasmus of Predjama. According to legend, Erasmus defied the imperial army for more than a year. The besieging army tried to starve him out and thus crush his resistance, but thanks to a secret passage through the cave behind the castle he was never short of fresh food. Today the castle is said to be haunted by his ghost.

Celje Castle, which stands on a hill above Celje, is the largest medieval castle in Slovenia and was once the home of the Counts of



Ljubljana Castle.
Photo: Arne Hodalič

Cilli (or Celje). The latter were the most important ruling dynasty to have their home and dynastic seat within the territory of present-day Slovenia. The castle offers magnificent views, while visitors also enjoy exploring the walls and other remains of this once mighty structure that altogether cover an astonishing 5,500 m². The best-known story connected to Celje Castle is that of the forbidden love of Frederick II of Celje for Veronika of Desenice, a noblewoman of a lower rank. The principal opponent of their relationship was Frederick's father, Hermann II of Celje, who had his son locked up in a tower, where he remained for more than four years. Since that time the tower has been known as Frederick's Tower. Veronica was accused of having seduced the man through witchcraft, and thus occurred the first known witch trial to take place within the territory that today falls within the borders of Slovenia.

Maribor Castle stands in the old town centre. It was built between 1478 and 1483 on the orders of Emperor Frederick III in order to fortify the north-eastern section of the city walls. The present castle is a mixture of architectural styles, reflecting the different periods

of its construction. The most important room in the castle is the formal Knights' Hall, which is decorated with frescoes by members of the Quadri family and Lorenzo Laurigo. The oval ceiling contains the scene of a cavalry battle between the Christian and Ottoman armies, painted in 1763 by Johann Gebler of Graz.

Podsreda Castle is one of the few well-preserved cultural monuments from the Romanesque period, and undoubtedly the most important in Slovenia. It was built in the first half of the twelfth century, and its medieval core survives practically whole, making it notable even at the European level. Visitors to the castle can also view an exhibition dedicated to the celebrated mathematician Jurij Vega.

The Brdo estate boasts a history dating back more than 500 years, and **Brdo Castle** was home to several famous noble families. Today the Renaissance castle is used for state functions and ceremonial duties, and over the years has hosted heads of state, royalty and diplomats from all over the world. In 2001, Brdo was the venue for



Podsreda Castle.
Photo: Jošt Gantar

the first meeting between the then US president George W. Bush and the Russian president Vladimir Putin. The castle is open to visitors during European Cultural Heritage Week.

Otočec Castle, the only “water castle” in Slovenia, stands on an island in the middle of the River Krka in the beautiful countryside of the Dolenjska region. The Renaissance castle is surrounded by an almost 200-year-old park planted with native and exotic tree species. The island is reached by two bridges from north and south. The picturesque castle building, with its compact residential wing and spreading walls, has been fully renovated and converted into a luxury hotel. Sensitively restored in the spirit of the Gothic and Renaissance, it offers guests a complete experience of days gone by combined with the total comfort of the present. Otočec Castle is thus the ideal venue for business meetings, and also one of the most attractive locations in Slovenia for weddings and other celebrations.

Mokrice Castle was first noted in written sources in 1444, although the essential features of the present Renaissance castle

date from the sixteenth century. The castle’s history is marked by finds from the period of the Roman Empire, when a road ran from here towards Byzantium, and other finds from the time of the Ottoman incursions. One legend connected with Mokrice Castle tells of Countess Barbara, who was unlucky in love. Widowed at a tender age, she fell in love with a nobleman who was a great traveller and, having set off on a journey, did not return. For many years the Countess waited for him, until at last, one spring morning, her heart broke. In sorrow, she climbed to the top of the tower and threw herself into the void. According to legend, although she died her heart remained alive, and is still at Mokrice today. Every year on 4 December, the Feast of St Barbara, a cannonball rolls three times round the castle courtyard, impelled by the ghost of the unfortunate Barbara. Today Mokrice Castle is an exclusive hotel and serves as a venue for ceremonial events, conferences and other meetings, and gala receptions.

Trees and duck ponds form the wonderful backdrop to **Snežnik Castle**, whose origins date back at least to the thirteenth century. It is one of the two castles in Slovenia that can boast the original



Otočec Castle.
Photo: Terme Krka Archives



Predjama Castle.
Photo: Alen Kosmač



Snežnik Castle.
Photo: RRA Zeleni Kras d.o.o. archive

interiors of its last princely owners. Inside, visitors can see the reception rooms, the bedrooms of members of the household, the guest bedrooms, two dining rooms, the theatre, the private drawing room, the library, the servants’ quarters and the cellar – all with their original furnishings and fittings. The Egyptian room is an interesting curiosity. Besides original furniture, works of art, books, tiled stoves, light fixtures, carpets and a wealth of useful and decorative objects, the castle contains a fine collection of hunting trophies from the time of its last owners.

Bogenšperk Castle was built in the early sixteenth century as the successor of a medieval fortification. The square building has a tower at each corner and a large internal courtyard. It flourished above all in the period in which it was owned by the distinguished polymath Johann Weichard Valvasor, a fellow of the Royal Society of London, who spent 20 years of his life here (1672–1692). Visitors

to Bogenšperk can view examples of his extraordinary work, which among other things includes a study of the intermittent (i.e. disappearing) Lake Cerknica, and a history of the territory comprising the greater part of present-day Slovenia.

Rajhenburg Castle is said to have its origins in the ninth century. In its current form it largely dates from the first half of the seventeenth century, although it was considerably remodelled by Trappist monks in the nineteenth. Until the Second World War the monks of Rajhenburg made cheese (of the well-known Trappist variety), sparkling wine, chocolate and chocolate liqueur. Rajhenburg Castle has been proclaimed a monument of national importance, and its complete restoration, which included the discovery of its earliest Romanesque and Gothic parts, has increased its importance in the context of the development of architecture and society in Slovenia.

One of the oldest and best-preserved castles in Slovenia is **Strmol Castle**. Its interiors mainly date from the baroque and Biedermeier periods. The castle contains a rich collection of works of art and objects of great value, that are still on view today. The castle was fully restored between 2010 and 2012 in order to conserve its cultural heritage. Strmol Castle is now a hotel that offers a unique experience to its guests and serves as a magnificent setting for business meetings and private functions.

Sevnica Castle is more than 700 years old, and stands on a hill commanding a view over Sevnica’s old town centre. Noble rooms decorated with frescoes and a variety of museum collections add to its charm. Of particular interest to visitors are the finds unearthed in the nearby late antique settlement of Ajdovski Gradec, with its two Early Christian churches. The castle is also used as a venue for concerts and other events. The terraces of the castle hill are planted with vines of the Blaufränkisch variety. After a visit to the castle, visitors can stop at the winery to sample a range of wines produced there.

Imposing **Ptuj Castle** stands on a hill above the town of Ptuj, and is built on the remains of a Roman temple. Owing to its strategic position, the castle played a very important role in the Middle Ages. For centuries, the mighty fortification protected the settlement below it, while today its picturesque beauty attracts many visitors. In the seventeenth century the castle gained state rooms with rich stuccowork decoration. Today these are used to house museum material.

The origins of **Brežice Castle** date back to the year 1241, when Brežice was first mentioned in written sources. The castle is decorated with remarkable paintings, which experts have described as a “first-rate baroque gallery” and a “little encyclopaedia of ancient mythology”. Today the castle is home to the Posavje Museum, consisting of numerous collections. The winemakers Vino Brežice have been maintaining and carefully tending their noblest and most precious wines in the cellars of Brežice Castle since 1946. The castle cellar, carved into the living rock and walled with stone and brick, is the only cellar of its kind in Slovenia. The castle hosts numerous events, including the concerts of the Brežice Festival.

LIVELY GOINGS-ON AT CASTLES

In July the many concerts and accompanying events of the international *Bled Festival* will take place at various venues in Bled, including Bled Castle and the Festival Hall. The *Okarina Festival*, which takes place in Bled from 27 July to 6 August, offers music from all over the world and a range of outstanding performers.

Ljubljana Castle hosts the exhibition *Plečnik above the City*, dedicated to the world-famous architect Jože Plečnik, and the *Disappearing Cultures* photography exhibition organized by National Geographic Slovenia.

Events at Podsreda Castle take place under the *Musical Summer at Podsreda Castle* banner. The programme includes numerous concerts and international music seminars featuring outstanding domestic and foreign musicians. Brežice Castle hosts the travelling exhibition *Towns and Market Towns on the Croatia–Styria Border*, and the exhibition *Water in Art*. There will also be plenty to attract music lovers. Wonderful concerts of early music featuring outstanding performers from all over the world will take place as part of the *Seviqč Brežice Festival*. Every Saturday and Sunday, Celje Castle (also known as Celje Old Castle) is the venue for a *Living History event*, where visitors can feel the spirit of the turbulent past. It also hosts the medieval Land of Celje festival at the end of August.

In July, Bogenšperk Castle hosts the fourth edition of the *International Printmaking Days*, at which established artists from Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia will demonstrate their skills. In the summer months archers, swordsmen and horsemen gather at Predjama Castle to demonstrate their fighting prowess and offer insights into life in a medieval knights’ camp. *Erasmus’ Tournament* is a popular event with young and old alike.

DISCOVER THE TREASURES OF METLIKA

Truly special experiences

DANILO GOLOB



Traditional Slovenian dance Belokranjsko kolo.
Photo: Uroš Raztresen

Metlika lies in the hilly Bela krajina region below the Gorjanci mountains. To the south it is bordered by the Kolpa, Slovenia's warmest river. Metlika's charm lies in its diverse natural and cultural heritage, and above all its friendly and hospitable people.

Situated in the south of Slovenia, in picturesque surroundings, Metlika was once a true crossroads of cultures, religions and nations. It has a rich history and was for 200 years the capital of the Habsburg military frontier zone known as the *Militärgrenze*. The raids of the Ottoman Turks left their mark on Metlika, as did the two World Wars. The town began to flourish in the late nineteenth century, a period that saw the establishment of the first organised firewatch in Slovenia, the creation of the first national reading society in Bela krajina and the wider Dolenjska region, and the founding of the first savings and loan bank.

The medieval town consists of three picturesque squares, on one of which stands the imposing Metlika Castle, today home to the Bela krajina Museum and the Slovenian Firefighting Museum.

The town square (*Mestni trg*) is the location of St Nicholas's Church, the provost's house and the former commandery of the Teutonic Knights, a medieval religious order. Here, too, is the building that once housed Wach's pharmacy, with its relief of the Holy Trinity, and the town hall with its roof turrets and iron town crest. Old streets, elegant townhouses, interesting façades, beautifully carved doors and balcony railings, along with the numerous plaques and symbols on buildings, all give us an image of the life of our ancestors.

ENJOY UNSPOILT NATURE

The Kolpa, the river that marks the border between Slovenia and Croatia, is one of the cleanest and most unspoilt in the country. It is exceptionally well-stocked with fish and other species, many

of them rare and protected. A very warm river, it is ideal for swimming, kayaking, rafting, canoeing and angling, and also for walks along its banks.

In 2010, the Kolpa was awarded the prestigious title of European Destination of Excellence (EDEN).

Cycling routes lead through Metlika and its surrounding area, a landscape full of karst phenomena, meadows, vineyards, fields and forests.

A "PASSPORT" TO BELA KRAJINA

The people of Bela krajina are good-natured folk who like to share their goodwill with visitors to their beautiful region. They have come up with a very special "passport" that – joking apart – offers numerous benefits to those lucky enough to make the trip. As you begin the descent towards the Kolpa from the Vahta pass in the Gorjanci, you arrive in the "Free Territory of Bela krajina, Union of Wine Districts". In Jugorje you will be stopped outside Peter Badovinac's *gostilna* by "customs officers", who will ask you for your passport and road tax vignette, or rather "winegnette" – essential documents if you want to enter the land of silver birches, Metliška Črnina (the local red wine), and roast suckling pig and lamb, fresh from the spit. They will serve you a "karampampuli", a liquid visa, and issue you with the necessary documents. You can even exchange your euros for bronze, silver or gold florins. After something good to eat, you can continue on your way through the Free Territory of Bela krajina. The passport brings you numerous benefits in restaurants and bars, at campsites, when buying wine from local vineyards, and so on.

A SCHOOL FOR YOUNG AND OLD

In Radovica, six kilometres from Metlika, there are two very interesting schools: the Clever Clogs Primary School (*Osnovna šola Brihtna glava*) and the Brain Box Primary School (*Osnovna šola Bistra buča*), both of them offering a very special syllabus. All of a sudden you find yourself transported back to the schools of the 1950s. During the course of a “lesson”, visitors discover the cultural and natural heritage of Bela krajina in a humorous, interesting and varied manner. The lesson is of course conducted by a strict schoolmaster or schoolmistress, who is quick to wield the cane, and if you misbehave you will be sent to kneel on corn kernels in the corner as a punishment, just like in the old days. The stern teachers then test you to find out what you know about the land of silver birches, and at the end of the lesson you will receive a “certificate” with your name on it, as proof that you have learnt a lot about Bela krajina.

THE SCENT OF BELOKRANJSKA POGAČA

Metlika is also famous for its cuisine. It is full of variety, and some original recipes have survived right up to the present day.

The most famous traditional dish from Bela krajina is without a doubt the local flatbread known as *Belokranjska pogača*.

Today a protected dish awarded Traditional Speciality Guaranteed status by the EU, it is the queen of Bela krajina cuisine. A good *pogača* is always home-made and the result of a great deal of energy and effort. It is round, which symbolises unity and infinity and is cut in such a way as to give everyone an equal share. The salt and caraway seeds scattered on top illustrate the precision of the person who makes it. *Belokranjska pogača* is a dish of welcome, and the traditional way of serving it – by breaking it – joins together all who are present. Visitors to the region can watch it being baked by Mojca Kramarič at the House of Good Bread (*Hiša dobrega kruha*) in Rosalnica, near Metlika.

EVENTS IN METLIKA

The Wine Spring in Bela krajina, or *Vinska vigred v Beli krajini*, has for years been the biggest wine festival in Slovenia. For three days

featuring folklore groups, tamburitza ensembles, choirs and wind bands.

They can also visit one of the town’s museums or the art gallery, make their own *Belokranjska pogača*, try succulent lamb or suckling pig, roasted on a spit, and spend the evening dancing to the rhythms of local rock and pop groups. There is also plenty going on in Metlika in the summer months. A very well-attended series of international cultural events called *Pridi zvečer na grad* (“Come to the Castle Tonight”) takes place in the castle courtyard, and every year offers a high-quality, varied programme featuring top local and foreign performers. Music, poetry, dance, theatre... there is nothing nicer than sitting down on a warm summer’s evening to enjoy a pleasant event that is lent additional charm by the castle that serves as its backdrop. *Pridi zvečer na grad, nežno zveni vabilo, pridi občudovat, kaj se bo tu zgodilo* (“Come to the castle tonight, / the gentle invitation is clear. / Come to the castle tonight / and see what will happen here”). This is the annual invitation from the organisers, composed specially for the event by the poet Tone Pavček.

in May, Metlika lives and breathes the Wine Spring. This traditional event based around winemaking and local culture takes place in the three squares of the old town centre, and every year attracts numerous visitors from near and far who are keen to sample the local wines and gastronomic offerings. The event began as a competition at which the region’s wines were judged and placed on display, a custom that has survived to the present day. The event now also includes a flatbread competition, and the coronation of the wine queen.

The *vigred* also caters for the more athletically inclined, and for 35 years cyclists have been taking part in the now traditional ride from Ljubljana to Metlika for the event. The nine-kilometre St Urban’s Run has also been a feature of the *vigred* for the last 11 years.

The Wine Spring is an unforgettable experience for visitors which gives them a chance to discover local customs and traditions, enjoy a varied cultural programme



The river Kolpa offers an intact, picturesque, and invaluable source of inner peace.
Photo: Big Berry



Whenever *Belokranjec*, a Bela krajina native, invites you to his ‘shrine’, you are not offered just a glass of wine, but also warm, savoury Bela krajina flatbread called *belokranjska pogača* which the housewife makes with lots of love.
Photo: Uroš Raztresen

A LAND OF DREAM LOCATIONS FOR FILMING

Film crews in different landscapes in less than two hours

MOJCA PLANŠAK, SLOVENIAN FILM CENTRE



Slovenia is one of Europe's most picturesque countries, with interesting views on offer at every step. Not only is it extremely varied, combining the Mediterranean, Alps, Karst and Pannonian plain in a small area, but another advantage is that all of these landscapes are accessible in less than two hours by car.

It is thus no surprise that many foreign filmmakers have observed that our country is a microcosm of Europe as a whole.

FIRST FOREIGN FILMS MADE IN SLOVENIA IN THE 1950S

A romantic comedy from 1953, *Nezgode lepe Irene* (*The Misadventures of Beautiful Irene*, orig. *Irene in Nöten*), was the first full-length foreign film to be made in Slovenia, at a studio that was then located in Fornače, near Piran. The director of this Austrian-Slovenian co-production was E. W. Emo, and in addition to the co-producer Triglav Film, Slovenia was represented by numerous Slovene cinema professionals, including the acclaimed composer Bojan Adamič, who wrote the score. Piran in particular is a location that has long appealed to film producers and directors. During the 50s, 60s and 70s, you could spot Marcello Mastroianni, James Mason, Maximilian Schell, James Coburn, Yves Montand, Simone Signoret, Alida Valli and even František Čap on the streets of this beautiful coastal town.

Slovenia was very popular among foreign producers even when it was still a part of Yugoslavia. Perhaps the best-known film made in Slovenia during this time is *Cross of Iron*, from 1977, directed by one of the most controversial Hollywood directors of the 60s and 70s, Sam Peckinpah.

Shooting took place at the beginning of this year for the Indian film *Bharjari*, in a number of locations that are making their first appearance in such a production: Štanjel, Kamnik and Sevnica Castle. Other scenes were shot in Ljubljana and at Celje Castle. Filming at Sevnica Castle was completed in a single day, and the film crew were enthusiastic about the beauty of both town and castle. Photo: RTA Agencija Arhives

Filming in the Jezerina area in the Brkini Hills began in April 1976. Sam Peckinpah is known for his innovative approaches to filmmaking and storytelling, such as his pioneering work with slow-motion, among many other innovations. He also excelled at contrasting the old and new worlds, as can be seen in *Cross of Iron*, whose lead roles were played by James Coburn and James Mason, while several Javorje locals appeared as extras. This is a historical film set during World War II, and from the viewpoint of cinematic history it is unquestionably the most important film that has been made in Slovenia.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR FOREIGN PRODUCERS AND INVESTORS

The Slovenian Film Centre is a Slovenian state agency which has nurtured creativity in the Slovenian film and audio-visual field for many years. It is also charged with promoting our country as an attractive location for filming. In order to honour both these commitments, in October 2016 the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted a measure which allows foreign audio-visual producers to claim certain expenses. This is a significant step in the development of the Slovenian film industry, as it brings about closer cooperation between audio-visual creativity and the local economy. This measure will thus have economic, financial and promotional benefits, and it is particularly important to note that it will affect the development of service activities and related occupations, create new jobs in the film industry, and last but not least increase Slovenia's recognition as a tourist destination. The move was very well received by the international film community at this year's 70th Cannes Film Festival.

Overall, Slovenia is one of the most attractive locations for filmmakers in Europe, with respect to both its natural and cultural characteristics and geographic location.

What's more, the local film infrastructure offers foreign producers logistical and technical support, as well as creative talent, professionals, artisans and assistants who understand visual creativity and film production, are happy to travel for their work and experienced in carrying out international projects.

RECOGNITION OF SLOVENIAN FILM LOCATIONS AND SLOVENIAN FILM IN THE FUTURE

Slovenia is already extremely appealing for filmmakers and producers, and with the adoption of the new policy providing reimbursements for expenses has become even more accessible. Several foreign films have been shot in Slovenia over the last decade, including an instalment of the cult film series *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian* (2008), the majority of which was filmed in the Soča Valley. The crew, led by director Andrew Adamson, were looking for areas of natural beauty similar to those of New Zealand,

where the first part of the film was shot. Among recent collaborations, we should also mention the work of American director Michael Moore, whose recent documentary, *Where To Invade Next* (2015), was also partially filmed in Slovenia.

The first film in which Slovenia participated as a minority co-producer was the Oscar-winning film *No Man's Land* (2001). It was filmed almost entirely in the town of Pivka during the summer of 2000.

The main production company was the French Noé Productions, with Slovenian Studio Maj as a co-producer. The cast included several outstanding actors from Slovenia and other countries of the former Yugoslavia, as well as international stars such as Katrin Cartlidge,

The cult film *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian* (2008) was filmed in in the Soča Valley at Bovec, a small town on the edge of Triglav National Park in northwest Slovenia, where the mountains provide a surprisingly good match for peaks of New Zealand.
Photo: Slovenia Film Commission Archives



known from the films *Breaking the Waves*, *Before the Rain*, *Career Girls*, *and Naked*, and *Simon Callow*, seen in such hits as *Shakespeare In Love*, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Amadeus*, and *Maurice*.

Between four and five full-length feature films are made in Slovenia each year, and are formally presented at the national Festival of Slovenian Film (FSF). This year's 20th Anniversary FSF will be held in Portorož from 12 to 16 September. From this autumn on, Slovenian films and their audiences will receive further attention, the result of cooperation between the Cankarjev dom cultural centre and the Slovenian Film Centre – gala pre-premieres of Slovenian films that

are just about to be released, which will be shown at Cankarjev dom in Ljubljana. The first of these is a children's film called *Košarkar naj bo* (*Let Him Be a Basketball Player*), directed by Boris Petkovič and with a screenplay adapted from a book by the Slovene writer Primož Suhodolčan. By the end of the year it will be followed by: *Ivan* (dir. Janez Burger), *Družinica* (*The Basics of Killing*, dir. Jan Cvitkovič), *Slovenija, Avstralija in jutri ves svet* (*Slovenia, Australia, and Tomorrow the World*, dir. Marko Naberšnik), *Rudar* (*The Miner*, dir. Hanna W. Slak), *Vztrajanje* (*Perseverance*, dir. Miha Knific) and *Privid* (*A Dream*, dir. Boštjan Slatenšek).

The Indian film industry is the only foreign film industry to regularly shoot in Slovenia. Owner of the RTA Agencija Katarina Karlovšek was responsible for introducing the country to Indian cinema screens in 2012. Since then, 12 different film and television projects for the Indian market have been filmed here. Making films in Slovenia is the best possible promotion in the Indian market, since it is well known that Indians are keen to visit the locations they see on the screen. Photo: RTA Agencija Arhives



NAUTICAL TOURISM IN SLOVENIA

We Slovenians are a Mediterranean people

TANJA GLOGOVČAN



Marina Portorož.
Photo: Tina Kosec/STA

The development of nautical tourism was a logical result of Slovenia's excellent geographical position and mild Mediterranean climate, as well as the catchment area of nearby Central Europe. As is the case with the rest of the world, this type of tourism is an industry with a bright future in Slovenia, because it is commercially interesting and environmentally friendly.

There are three large marinas in Slovenia: Marina Portorož, Marina Koper and Marina Izola. Slovenian Istria is also home to some municipal marinas and a yacht centre in Izola. While Portorož, Izola and Koper used to be saltwork and fishing cities, nowadays all three are central points for Slovenian tourism.

TODAY A MARINA STANDS ON THE SITE OF THE ABANDONED SALT PANS

The oldest of the three is Marina Portorož, which has been closely linked to salt pans throughout its history. Salt was important not only for the people to survive, but also for the area's economic development. However, in a more tourism-oriented environment the abandoned salt pans began to appear out of place. From the cape, Piran was gradually developing and expanding into an economic, trading and political centre. Needs thus arose for berths, new houses, galleys and boats, as well as more warehouses, salt pans and salt flats. Over time this part of the coast was also becoming a more important tourist centre. Hotels, bathing facilities and entertainment centres were built, and tourists looking for sea adventures and amusement came from near and far. The salt pans in Lucija became increasingly abandoned, which led to a boathouse being built there in 1964 for sports and recreation. The House of Water Sports, which later became Marina Portorož, then emerged from the remains of the area's salt pans.

In June 1979, the first sailors navigated into the new marina. At that time, the marina also expanded its tourism services to include a café, restaurant, tennis court, pool, and more.

Such developments included the service activities that the marina established along with the construction. A 20-ton crane was acquired by marina in 1980, which today still operates without a problem, and has proven to be a significant asset to the facility. Moreover, a series of bigger and more powerful cranes have been added over the decades, and so the marina is able to lift larger and more varied vessels. Today Marina Portorož is home to a port, services, sports facilities and catering. It covers over a thousand berths in the sea, on land, in two hangars and in the Fazan canal. It is well-positioned and protected from winds coming from all directions in the eastern part of the Bay of Piran, which offers favourable conditions for safe navigation and amateur sailing in every season of the year. In addition to the berths with water and electrical connections, wide parking areas, toilets and a petrol station, today's marina is a modern nautical centre which can also offer guests a wide range of superior services, including complete and continuous maintenance of the vessels, top-quality restaurants, a dedicated area for camper vans and comfortably furnished apartments. In this way, the marina attracts not only nautical enthusiasts but also other tourists who are looking for relaxation and new experiences. Attention is focused on tourists of all ages, including the very youngest, with the marina having bathing facilities, a playground, several beach-volleyball courts, a picnic area and a summer bar to offer children. Besides visitors from Slovenia, which is increasingly becoming a nautical nation, most guests come from Austria, Germany and Italy.

IZOLA USED TO BE A FISHING TOWN

Unlike Portorož, Izola was mainly a fishing town, although the people living in this area have also long worked in the wine production industry. You can feel the deeply-ingrained spirit of the Mediterranean along each medieval street of the old town centre, while

the rural areas around Izola offer a spectacular view of the Gulf of Trieste.

The construction of Marina Izola started in the early 1990s, and has been in its current, completed form since 2004.

At first nautical tourism was rare and considered a privilege of the rich, with the area starting to prosper from this at the turn of the 21st century. At that time such tourism started to become a more popular way to spend a holiday, even for many Slovenians.

The marina in Izola offers guests everything required for a comfortable life at sea as well as on land: large piers, green spaces and

service areas, indoor and outdoor parking, agencies selling new and used vessels and charter services. Tennis courts, an outdoor swimming pool, a business centre, a bar, a casino, restaurants and a shop with nautical equipment are all available in the immediate vicinity. The marina has 620 berths for vessels up to 30 metres long, and is equipped with connections for water and electricity (220V and 380V), concrete berths and stainless-steel bollards. The marina also has a travel crane for lifting and launching vessels, a mast crane, workshop service facilities for engines, navigation devices, and painting as well as plastics, steel, and wood workshops. The Amfora residential facility is located in the centre of the marina, which is where you can find the marina administration, reception, restaurants, shops, apartments, and a parking garage, all set in a charming location near the piers.



The legend of Izola: During the war with Genoa, the people of Izola asked Saint Mauro for help. A white dove flew from the church above the Genoese fleet, which could not see the coast because of a miraculous white cloud that had appeared. The Genoese followed the dove, which took them far in the open sea, before the dove then returned to the church. It then dropped an olive branch from its beak as a symbol of peace and safety. The 23rd of October has been a holiday in Izola ever since, and a dove with an olive branch on a blue background was chosen for the coat of arms created in memory of the event.
Photo: Jaka Ivancič

AN ISLAND AND A SALT PANNING TOWN

Koper, or Capo d'Istria (the head of Istria), used to be an island and a salt panning town. While its origins go as far back as the Roman era, the Venetian Republic has left the most prominent mark on the area, which was the time when this town flourished both economically and culturally. Koper is one of the oldest towns in Slovenia, and the medieval structures and elements typical of Baroque architecture in the old town centre are well preserved, and have survived to the present day. Today, Koper's port makes it primarily a harbour and industrial town.

Marina Koper is a member of the Grafist Group, and is the northernmost marina in the Adriatic.

Owing to its enviable position and high standards of service, the Marina Koper is a very popular transit port and one of the most important European centres for the delivery of new vessels from leading European producers.

Marina Koper is the smallest of the three marinas in Slovenia. Nevertheless, it offers all the basic services: vessel storage, lifting and launching; the lifting and launching of the masts; external washing of the vessels; repairs and maintenance of vessel engines and electronics; and all other services that vessels require. The marina also offers tourism services, especially food services, although on a much smaller scale than the other two marinas. Overall, the marina has 70 berths, and the maximum length of vessels is 18 metres, while the maximum permissible draft is 3.5 metres.



The entire area covered by the Sečovlje saltworks was proclaimed a nature park in 2001. At the same time, the Museum of Saltmaking was declared a cultural monument of national importance. The Sečovlje saltworks were also the first wetland area in Slovenia to be included on the list of wetlands of international importance protected by the 1993 Ramsar Convention. They are an irreplaceable habitat for many endangered species, and are a particularly well-known habitat for birds. Indeed, almost 300 different species have been observed here to date, almost 100 of which also nest here, while for at least four species this is their only nesting place in Slovenia.
Photo: Janez Tolar

ARCHITECT JURE KOTNIK

Focus on the concept that everything is possible

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ



Dr Jure Kotnik, architect.
Photo: Janez Marolt

The Forma Viva family house in Ravne na Koroškem, along with the Kekec nursery school in Ljubljana and the Ajda nursery school in Ravne na Koroškem, is a project that has served to place Jure Kotnik among the most progressive and innovative European architects and designers of the younger generation.

The Europe 40 Under 40 awards are presented annually by The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies (Dublin, Ireland) and The Chicago Athenaeum: Museum of Architecture and Design (Chicago, USA).

Paris, Ljubljana, Ravne na Koroškem, Minsk and Zurich are some of the locations featuring structures, principally nursery schools, created by the Slovenian architect Jure Kotnik. He also works as an advisor on the architecture of schools and preschools for the World Bank and the Council of Europe Development Bank in Paris, and lectures regularly at events around the world.

Kotnik gained attention at home and abroad several years ago with his first monograph covering the general topic of container architecture. This also earned him a Plečnik medal for his contribution to the field of architectural theory, criticism and professional journalism. His big international breakthrough – for a long time he divided his time between Paris and Ljubljana – began precisely with that work. He sent a sample chapter from the book on container architecture to five foreign publishers, of which four responded positively. The monograph, which has been translated into Spanish, English, Italian, German and Chinese, became a notable success and enjoyed a strong international reception. This was followed by an exhibition on container architecture that travelled around Europe and the USA.

CONTAINERS AS BUILDING BLOCKS AND THE BASIC COMPONENTS OF CONTAINER ARCHITECTURE

To date Kotnik has created five container architecture projects, with the construction and design making use of both shipping containers and office or new containers. He also used this approach for a residential construction project, in which he enhanced the basic living container.

Kotnik points out that container architecture is attractive in spatial terms, especially when it is mixed and combined with other materials.

In this way a house can become architecturally more complex and at the same time closer to established notions of what such a structure should be. For the most part containers have been converted into galleries, studios, student housing units and, more recently, into temporary buildings accompanying various important events. For the City on the Seine, Kotnik designed a mobile container lighthouse to mark the 40th anniversary of the Paris Port.

As the architect says of working on this project: "Owing to its density, Paris is perhaps conservative in spatial terms, but this is still a city that is particularly good for details and nuances. People are generally open to a variety of concepts, and for this reason you can encounter a lot of them. Much can be contributed to the good flow of concepts and ideas by architecture, for instance a high-quality public space, something we are increasingly aware of in Slovenia, too, and this can be seen especially in recent years in the Ljubljana renovations. In architecture in general, increasing importance is being given to squares, parks, children's playgrounds and other urban spaces intended for leisure use."

DISTINGUISHED BY INNOVATION AND IMAGINATION

In his book on container architecture Kotnik covered a field that had not yet been explored in much depth, and in this way broke new ground. "This is a recipe for our country to fill these tiny spaces," he notes.



The Forma Viva at Ravne na Koroškem links together architecture and sculpture. Photo: Janez Marolt



Hipster boutiques at a temporary location create a new epicentre in Zurich. Photo: FrauGeroldsGarten.ch

“Big things can come from little stories. You don’t have to make an entire car, you can just make exhaust pipes, to give the example of Akrapovič, which I think is outstanding.”

And what is the most common starting point for Kotnik’s projects? Usually it is innovation, since in his view this is the simplest thing. In his dissertation he defined a method of innovative architecture that is a hybrid. “Innovation in architecture can mean very small interventions, details that make a major change and achieve an effect even with a small financial input. So the question is not how, but what.

Innovation as such is the guiding principle of all activity, it is the oil of the 21st century. Ideas make the world go around, especially in the transition from the material to the digital.

Today you can create an empire out of your own home. Uber has no cars, Airbnb has no real estate, Alibaba has no shops – and there are similar stories in Slovenia, such as Talking Tom. This app with a talking cat has a greater economic reach than five large traditional companies that together could employ thousands of people. This is a good reflection of the potential of our times.”

ADVISOR ON SCHOOL AND PRESCHOOL ARCHITECTURE FOR THE WORLD BANK

After containers came nursery schools, and with it one of Kotnik’s specialisations – the architecture of educational institutions. He published a book about preschool structures, which was released by the Chinese branch of the Australian publishing company Images. The Kekec nursery school in Ljubljana is a hybrid, because it has a façade that serves both as play equipment and shading.

Kotnik speaks with particular pride of this aspect of the project. “For the same price you get this added value, which comes from innovation. The children can also change the appearance of their nursery school, which is a privilege not enjoyed by most youngsters. Millions of children around the world go to nursery school, but only in Ljubljana, which was the first place to adopt this approach, could the children co-create the exterior, and this image and idea then travelled the globe.” Indeed, it even reached China, where Kekec has appeared on the covers of three magazines and one book.

HEALTHY BUILDINGS AND MATERIALS THAT DO NOT HARM THE ENVIRONMENT OR PEOPLE

Most of all Kotnik prefers to work in wood, since it is a truly high-quality building material that enables a complete microclimate.

“Healthy architecture is made from healthy materials,” he says, “and it’s important to know that they are not ground up and processed construction waste, possibly from countries where supervision is low or non-existent. What makes a space healthy and pleasant is that it has sufficient natural lighting. Many other factors affect the quality of life, including noise, air quality and the like, and all this needs to be taken into account in planning.”

Kotnik also weaves a variety of research into his architecture. Serious behaviourist, psychological and neurological studies have been conducted on the effects of colours and other elements in physical space. The brain is an inspiration for him, and with interiors especially he gets involved in the neurological perception of space, colour, texture and other elements. “Although in the past thousand years we have been quite disciplined, we still have a major physical predisposition about how to grasp physical space: when it appears bigger, when smaller, when it induces us to move, to make us calm, and this involves a lot of effects.”

GIVING IDENTITY TO PROJECTS

Recently Kotnik has focused on the creation of identity more than on classical architecture.

Through projects involving the physical environment, his clients can build their profiles and their own communication, both internally with employees as well as externally with customers and the wider community. A good example of this is the lobby of the Centre of Excellence in Finance (CEF) in Ljubljana, which was a small but very successful project. Through the transformation of an ordinary entrance hall – involving just one percent of the funds invested in renovating the Bank of Slovenia lobby – it became an additional learning space and an informal place for workshops, receptions and more. Owing to the good relationship between the materials and space, this design was highlighted as a project of the week by the OECD’s Centre for Effective Learning Environments. This project shows that with a focused design you can produce world-class results, even for the price of just one or two designer couches. Now working in his own office, Jure Kotnik designs architectural projects which aim to take advantage of any given physical space in ways that are as environmentally responsible as possible, while fulfilling the practical demands of his clients.



Learning through play and fun. Slide and stairs intended for learning about colours and for playing at the Šmartno nursery school. Photo: Janez Marolt



Spacious playrooms, multi-purpose spaces and furnishings for a dynamic nursery school environment. Photo: Janez Marolt

MILITARY BAND ORCHESTRAS CONCERT IN KOBARID SQUARE

Music to replace the cruel language of enmity

JOŽE ŠERBEC



The Orchestra of the Slovenian Armed Forces.
Photo: Željko Cimprič

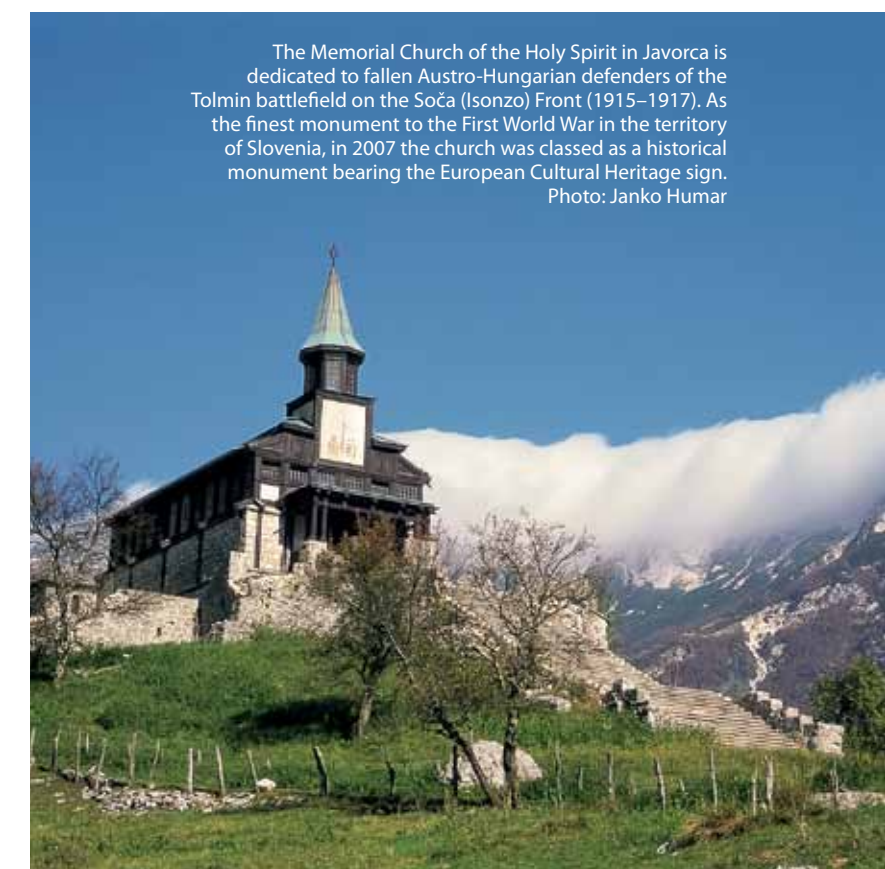
This year marks 100 years since the biggest military clash of all time in Slovenian territory – the Battle of Kobarid. On the 80th and 90th anniversaries of the Kobarid Battle the Slovenian Ministry of Defence, the Orchestra of the Slovenian Armed Forces and Kobarid Museum organised concerts in memory of those who took part. Both concerts were in October, on the Kobarid Museum Day, and five orchestras from each of the countries involved in the battle took part in the events.

For this year's 100th anniversary of the Battle of Kobarid, which also marked the end of the military encounters on the Soča Front.

Participation was confirmed by the military bands of Austria, Hungary, Italy, Germany, Croatia and of course the host, Slovenia.

In contrast to the earlier concerts in October, which tends to be chilly and rainy, we decided this year to hold the event in July, when Kobarid is full of tourists. This year's concert event will take place on 9 July at 6 pm in Kobarid Square. The group of organisers for the 100th anniversary is also bigger. In addition to the Slovenian Ministry of Defence and Kobarid Museum, this anniversary event will include the Slovenian National Committee for the 100th Anniversary of World War I (2014–2018), the Committee for State Celebrations from the Ministry of Culture, Kobarid Municipality, The Walks of Peace in the Soča Region Foundation, and the Soča Valley Development Centre.

On the evening before the joint concert, individual military bands will give promenade concerts in the locations where they are staying, namely Bovec and Kobarid, as an invitation to the main event the following day in Kobarid Square. Before and during the band performances, those assembled will be addressed by Kobarid Mayor, Robert Kavčič, the Slovenian Minister of Defence and Andreja Katič, who is also chair of The National Committee for Marking the 100th anniversary of the First World War.



The Memorial Church of the Holy Spirit in Javorca is dedicated to fallen Austro-Hungarian defenders of the Tolmin battlefield on the Soča (Isonzo) Front (1915–1917). As the finest monument to the First World War in the territory of Slovenia, in 2007 the church was classed as a historical monument bearing the European Cultural Heritage sign.
Photo: Janko Humar

WORLD WAR I ON THE SOČA RIVER

In military history the Battle of Kobarid is recorded as the most important event in the European battlefields of 1917. For the Italian military it signified the complete crushing of its Second Army on the Soča, and the victors called it the Miracle at Kobarid. For the Slovenians on the Soča it meant a return to their homes, albeit ruined, and for the inhabitants of Friuli it meant fleeing as refugees. For some young German officers it signified one of the brightest moments of their military careers, enabling them to rise to the rank of Field Marshal in the next war, while for some generals this was the most shameful conclusion to their careers.

This year's 100th anniversary concert will honour the memory of all those involved in the ravages of the war.

It will commemorate those who by the banks of the Soča and on the steep slopes

above it lost their young lives, were wounded, crippled, or died of starvation after the battle in prison camps of the exhausted empire, or who suffered in some other way.

The ferocity of the battles along the Soča marked many generations, continuing up to the present day, and the landscape along the river will bear the scars for the next thousand years.

After a century the cruel language of enmity, suffering and violence will be replaced by the universal and humane language of music. The concert should signify for all of those assembled a commitment to preserving the memory and heritage of these terrible events, and for the honoured guests a reminder of the dangers of poking at the unhealed wounds of the two world wars.



The Kobarid Museum developed from a museum collection which was set up by the locals with professional assistance of Goriški muzej in 1990. It first operated within the frame of the Tourist Society of Kobarid.
Photo: Boris Pretnar



The Charnel House was built in the memory to the fallen Italian soldiers in the First World War. There were transmitted posthumous remains of 7014 unknown and known soldiers from the surrounding military graveyards. The soldiers fell in the neighbourhood of Tolmin, Kobarid and Rombon.
Photo: Željko Cimprich

ŽIVA PLOJ PERŠUH

An onstage virtuoso must also become a virtuoso offstage

TANJA GLOGOVČAN
PHOTO: DARJA ŠTRAUS TISU



The Triple Bridge European Career Centre for Artists was created at the initiative of the Branimir Slokar Academy, Mini Theatre and En-Knap Productions. A platform that brings together a number of institutions or partners, it aims to provide young artists with professional skills in various artistic fields while helping them develop those they will need to manage and create their own careers. It works both with aspiring artists and with individuals from other professions that are needed in this field, such as directors, technicians, stagehands, and so on.

The career centre was born out of the idea that young artists formed and trained in Slovenia require additional, consistently planned support. In the opinion of the founders of Triple Bridge, a virtuoso performer on the stage also needs a specific set of skills to help raise his or her profile. These include public relations, marketing, promotion and the formulation of product design strategies. Other vital fields are "backstage" skills and production, organisation and logistics skills. Skills that enable artists (not just musicians) to do what they do and make a living from it.

Not everyone will be a soloist, not everyone will be a lead actor, but everyone can use their abilities, follow their vocation and become employable.

To do this, they need encouragement and someone to stand by their side while they acquire the required skills. In short: an onstage virtuoso in any artistic genre must also become a virtuoso offstage. We recently spoke to Živa Ploj Peršuh, the renowned conductor and artistic director, who is also one of the founders of the Triple Bridge project.

The project has attracted the active support of a range of prestigious institutions. How does this collaboration work, and what institutions are involved?

Our current partner countries are Italy (Rome), France (Lille), the Netherlands (Amsterdam), Spain (Barcelona), Belgium (Brussels), Montenegro (Podgorica), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo), Serbia (Belgrade), Croatia (Zagreb) and, the latest addition, Austria (Vi-

enna). Hungary (Budapest) is also set to join us, and Germany is in the process of getting involved.

In this way someone could, for example, attend a cello masterclass in Ljubljana, study cultural management in Rome, and learn about digital media in Brussels.

The Branimir Slokar Academy is currently welcoming young people from all the partner cities and elsewhere in the world to Ljubljana. In the forthcoming season we could, for example, send people to Amsterdam, where they would learn about everything connected to the organisation of an orchestra: from orchestral management to administration and marketing – in short, everything that a producer working for a public organisation or an organisation like ours could need. This exchange is possible both in France and the Netherlands. These opportunities are already open through this project. Our partner institutions in these countries are prestigious national symphony orchestras, such as the Orchestre National de Lille and the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, musical institutions such as the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, and various foundations, concert halls and music academies around Europe.

Another important partner is the online platform Hello Stage, which links young artists, orchestras and other groups with promoters, agents, managers and concert halls. Hello Stage is the largest online community of classical musicians. The driving force behind the platform and its related content are professionals from the musical and marketing spheres. They combine the skills that a

young professional needs to master in order to better understand the various European artistic markets and trends, and so become flexible in the sense of employability at several different levels. Last but not least, Triple Bridge receives financial support from the City of Ljubljana, Festival Ljubljana and the EU's Creative Europe programme.

You started the project last year. Now that it is up and running, how has the experience been?

We are happy to be able to offer the participants a way to enhance their skills in the form of lectures by experts with thorough knowledge of the various European markets and how they operate, who know about the demand for artistic services and what affects it. Our new collaborators are constantly on the lookout for new opportunities, which they then share with the young artists registered on the Hello Stage platform. The second encouraging thing is that the project is seen very positively in other countries, where there is an awareness of the need for activities of this kind.

Has it met your expectations?

We still see an enormous amount of opportunities in the project, and also the possibility of expanding it to other fields of the arts, such as theatre or contemporary dance, so our expectations are still high. Of course, there is still a great deal of work ahead of us, but also enthusiasm.

In its current form, Triple Bridge is a colourful mosaic of different ways of imparting essential skills. In one sense we have exceeded our expectations, in that we have reached other countries and institutions that, since last year, have been entrusting us with their young artists.

With us, such individuals receive targeted training, tailored to their specific needs, which can make them more employable.

You promise musicians, especially young musicians, that you will give them more musical credibility. How?

In our eyes, credibility, whether musical or otherwise, is linked to knowledge, connections, experience and the application of all these factors at the right moment. Quality is undoubtedly our first guiding principle, and it is in this sense that we work and impart knowledge. Nothing happens in art by itself. Above all, nothing

lasts forever, particularly when an artist does not have the necessary grounding and the ability to manage their skills with regard to negotiating the space of the stage – in the domestic, European or global context. This also requires an awareness of the competitiveness of this field, and a desire to keep pace with changes in art.

How do the masterclasses function?

It depends on the teacher, the programme and participant.

Above all they are about imparting knowledge or an exchange of mastery or skills that are passed "from generation to generation".

Naturally they also involve theory, pure facts and invaluable instruction on the use of technique, and while this can be taught in a group, the most valuable thing is individual contact with the teacher. In other words, the time the participant can spend with his or her idol or model – the most sought-after teacher at that moment. Such a teacher then becomes a confidant, a leader, a guru if you like, and a companion on the artist's journey.

Masterclasses can differ greatly – at least ours do – because all our teachers treat the participants with great sensitivity and consideration. That's why it's also important for us that the same teachers, with the same level of quality, come to Ljubljana every year.

And the orchestral academy?

Here we work in a different way, and over a longer period. We spend at least three weeks of the year with the selected musicians and develop various programmes for the symphony orchestra. Before they come to Ljubljana and are accepted as members of the orchestra, they have to pass an audition or be recommended. Even while the orchestral academy is going on, we keep a close eye on them, since we are not only interested in their professional competence and suitability for work in an ensemble of this type, but also in their ability to integrate and accept differences. Here I am thinking of differences in religion, the social environments they come from, communication in various languages, acceptance of different cultures, and so on.

Throughout the rehearsals and the time they spend together, they are with orchestra teachers, mentors who guide them both in rehearsals for individual sections and when they are rehearsing with a conductor. An orchestra has a specific hierarchy that must be re-

spected in order to reach the best possible sound as quickly as possible, and with the fewest obstacles. But orchestral discipline is not a natural state of affairs, and the participants have to put up with a great deal. They have to adapt, accept, perform above expectations, learn to connect, abandon egocentrism to a certain extent, but then in the next moment hold onto it as a positive necessity, and so on.

We aim to help the participants develop a professional attitude, get them used to tests of their ability and auditions with professional orchestras, and also help them to identify their own weaknesses, which over the course of training they must learn to turn into advantages, or otherwise get to the bottom of and overcome.

Do you also offer musical education to children?

Yes, we work very intensively with children, both as performers and as listeners.

A new feature this year is a series of lectures called "The Musician as Entrepreneur". Do music and business go together? Isn't art something that is above material considerations?

It's true that art is above the material, but for that reason it needs conditions, time and space. All this costs money and is not something that happens automatically. This is another of our guiding principles. In order for artists to be able to develop fully and spread their wings in total freedom, especially over the long term, they need an environment that enables this and require more than merely professional artistic skills. A partnership with businesses

that have managers who are likewise disciplined, strategic and visionary, where there is a clear hierarchy, where they feed off inspiration and protect their own inspiring relationships – all this is very close to art, and a relationship can quickly be established as a foundation for working together and sharing the results. Reciprocity is an incredibly powerful thing, and working together over the long term is something that undoubtedly produces results that are good for both parties. That's why, when we approach a company with a view to collaboration, we talk in terms of partnership. Artists can be very successful at opening up emotions, internalising the needs of entrepreneurs or their companies, establishing good contacts in new markets, enthusing audiences with a quality that points to what the local environment can offer, "preparing the terrain", if you like. And of course an artist-entrepreneur partnership is strongest if the groundwork is laid before this: a coordinated vision and activities that go in the desired direction of concluding deals.

What are the main events in store for the 2017 season?

The main events are the concerts that will form part of the Ljubljana Festival programme. Most exciting of all are the two concerts with the Ljubljana International Orchestra.

At the first of these, the orchestra will be joined by soprano Urška Breznik and tenor Aljaž Farasin for a performance of Puccini's wonderful opera *Madama Butterfly*.

The programme will also include works by Brahms, Beethoven and Wagner. At the second concert, the orchestra will host the Italian conductor Carlo Rizzari from the famed Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, who will be working with us for the first time as the successor of the school of the late, great Claudio Abbado.

She is a regular collaborator with the Slovenian National Opera and Ballet in Ljubljana, where she conducts both opera and ballet. She also works with the RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra, the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra, the Symphony Orchestra of the Slovenian National Theatre in Maribor, and the Ljubljana International Orchestra. With the last of these, she has performed concerts in Italy, Serbia, the United Kingdom and Spain. She has also conducted in Germany, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Belgium and Poland. She has participated in musical projects in Mannheim, Germany, and at the Lucerne Festival in Switzerland. Her repertoire ranges from the baroque to contemporary music. She works with numerous Slovenian musicians and composers and, in the contemporary dance field, with the EnKnapGroup and its founder Iztok Kovač. She is the artistic director of the Banimir Slokar Academy, where she also works as a conductor with world-renowned artists (B. Slokar, G. Ahss, K. Pfiz, Y. Kalnits, and R. Curfs). Since 2016 she has been the artistic director of the Triple Bridge European Career Centre for Artists.



JANJA GARNBRET, SPORT CLIMBER

Rising sports star

POLONA PREŠEREN

PHOTO: STANKO GRUDEN/STA

Janja Garnbret is a sport climber. When she won the title of world champion last year, she drew attention to herself in grand style. Despite her youth, her star is already shining brightly.

Even in Janja's first season of competitive climbing, the barely 18-year-old secondary school student from Šmartno, near Slovenj Gradec, achieved much more than many competitors are able to in their entire careers.

Last season was her first in member competition, and she was crowned world champion in technical difficulty, while also being joint winner of the world cup in technical difficulty and combination.

This year she has continued her run of successes, extending the range of her achievements to bouldering competitions. Last year Janja did not compete in these for the entire season, and thus could not achieve truly outstanding results, but in 2017 she is already standing out in this discipline.

Overall, 2016 was Janja Garnbret's year, and her season progressed like a dream. She is distinguished by exceptional proficiency in climbing, and the lightness with which she reaches the summits of even the most difficult routes. For herself she says that she just finds climbing cool. "It's a unique sport that offers a wide range of different movements, you can always improve, even if you're in your best form, because psychological preparation is sometimes more important than the physical side. I like it because you have to be able to work things out in a wide variety of situations, when you have your body under control, and when you have the kind of motivation and desire that you think, 'today I'm not going to fall off the wall'. Moreover, there's never any shortage of challenges, and you quickly get addicted to that."

Janja recommends this sport to all, from the youngest to the oldest. "There is always something for everyone that is just the right kind of difficulty, and that they will enjoy. In addition, you know there'll

never be any shortage of challenges, and that's such a draw that you never want to stop." Janja is also happy that now almost everyone in Slovenia can distinguish between Alpinism and sport climbing, and that more and more young people are taking up the activity.

SHE KNEW IMMEDIATELY THIS WAS HER SPORT

She was very good at climbing even as a little girl, climbed everywhere she could get to, and started training for sport climbing in her native Slovenj Gradec. As soon as she tried it, she knew the sport was for her. At first it was a game, but then her talent and motivation stood out and surprised everyone.

Janja sticks to her training, even though she is a secondary school student. She trains six times a week for around three hours a time, and somehow is able to coordinate this with her school obligations. Although the rhythm is arduous, she never runs out of energy or skips anything. And the hard work is paying off, as she learned so well in 2016, although once a year – when the season is over – she takes a brief break from the sport. Among fans and fellow competitors she is known for her exceptional climbing technique and outstanding psychological preparation, focus and relaxedness.

Taking a broader view, can note confidently that Slovenia is now producing the best sport climbers in the world, and climbing itself in is becoming an increasingly popular sport in the country.

As such, we are already looking forward very optimistically to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, when sport climbing will be on the schedule as an Olympic discipline for the first time, and Janja Garnbret is almost certain to make a big impression on the biggest stage of all.



BLED STRATEGIC FORUM 2017: NEW REALITY

Seeking the answers to pressing issues of today's globalised world

SABINA CARLI
PHOTO: TAMINO PETELINŠEK/STA

The world is rapidly changing, with globalisation and digitalisation significantly increasing the pace of our lives and bringing us closer together than ever before, as well as presenting profound challenges to our self-perception, politics, economy, security, and society. The annual Bled Strategic Forum will address the "New Reality" we live in and seek for answers to the pressing issues of today's changing world.

Providing a high-level platform for discussions, the 12th Bled Strategic Forum will take place on 4 and 5 September 2017 addressing the challenges posed by the “New Reality”. As a leading strategic conference in Central and South East Europe, it offers room for the exchange of ideas and concepts through panels, roundtables and one-on-one interviews in the idyllic environment of Bled, Slovenia.

NEED FOR STRATEGIC VISION

Established political, economic and social elites are losing ground. Populist, nationalist and extremist movements are on the rise. It is difficult to keep up with the vast amount of information that bombards us daily, let alone evaluate its true value or meaning and put it in a proper context.

Wars and conflicts in Europe’s immediate neighbourhood and in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia challenge our views on morality, norms, and values.

Terrorist attacks fuel fear in our lives and societies, and the fact that there are millions of refugees worldwide deepens our sense of insecurity.

With the world order possibly at breaking point, we need a strategic vision, strong democratic leadership, and perseverance. We need to adapt to the new reality, but always remember the foundations on which our modern societies were built. It is vital to ensure that human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law continue to be respected, as well as everything else we have built through the decades.

Keeping the adaptation to the new reality in mind, the Forum will start on Monday, 4 September, with the Opening Ceremony in the Bled Festival Hall, followed by the Leaders’ Panel, which traditionally hosts heads of state and government, ministers and representatives of the business sector. The participants will get insights into the opinions and standpoints of the leaders from this region and beyond, followed by evening discussions with prominent scholars, a night owl session that will look into the phenomenon of fake news, and a gala reception with Ana Roš, a Slovenian chef who was recently named the World’s Best Female Chef for 2017.

The second day’s discussions will provide insights into global nuclear governance, the role of water resources for peace and security, and

the influence of the transformation of the concept of human rights. The European Union, the Western Balkans and the EU enlargement process, and the Southern Mediterranean region, will be examined closely in the related geopolitical and geostrategic panel discussions. Since soft power should not be overlooked in today’s digitalised and globalised world, we will also explore the digital diplomacy of the 21st century, using traditional and social media, and realistic hope as an approach of future-oriented thinkers and doers.

Pressing regional and global issues also raise questions with regard to the role of the business sector.

Since it no longer suffices to understand current changes solely on the basis of past experience, and to try to adapt to a new reality with traditional approaches, we need to create and implement new business, economic and social concepts, and new methods to achieve our goals.

INNOVATING NEW REALITY

The search for such approaches will be at the core of the Business BSF, an integral part of the Forum, organised in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Administration, the American Chamber of Commerce in Slovenia, and the German-Slovene Chamber of Commerce and Industry, under the title “Innovating New Reality”.

The challenges facing the younger generation in their aspirations for a better future will be incorporated into the Young BSF. Taking place on 1–3 September 2017, it will tackle the “(Dis)connected Reality” and give visionary young leaders an opportunity to address issues such as whether we are losing touch with our material reality at the expense of living in a virtual one, or whether we can exist without (dis)connected realities in the realms of electronics, the environment and economics (the so-called 3Es). This goal- and youth-oriented meeting will seek to prompt discussions and create synergies of different ideas, turning them into connected or disconnected realities of and for everyone.

Attracting around one thousand participants, including heads of state and government, ministers, diplomats, businesspeople, scholars and the media from around the world, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Centre for European Perspective will put a unique emphasis on bilateral and multilateral meetings with regional and global stakeholders, and the leaders of today and tomorrow.



