

Sinfo

July-August

The Best from Slovenia

IN FOCUS
Typical of Slovenia
and Slovenians

**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**



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SLOVENIA**

Sinfo

SLOVENIAN INFORMATION

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IF YOU WANT TO GET TO KNOW SLOVENIA, YOU HAVE TO LOOK WITH THE HEART



Photo: Bruno Toič

Statistics tell us about both quantity and quality. They also present us with an average, a mean, while building on the diversity of data. But behind all this are stories.

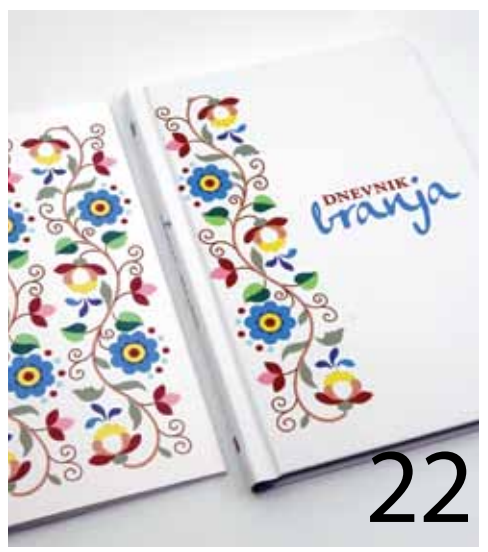
This time, alongside the adjectives that encapsulate the essence of our stories – excellent, green, original, responsible – we have further reinforced all of the above with jokes and some basic facts about Slovenians. It is right that we as a nation should be conscious of our own value, and it is also right and fitting that we should look at ourselves with humour. Even statistics prove that we Slovenians have more than hundred reasons to be proud of ourselves. We have always belonged in the ranks of the pioneers, and we still do. With pride, then, are we able to show our country, in all its diversity, to those who will visit Slovenia this summer. Including those aspects that are perhaps hidden at first glance.


We will draw attention to unique gastronomic pleasures, original events and artists, hidden jewels of Slovenia, pioneers of science, and sporting heroes. With pride. And of course there's nothing wrong with having a little fun, since we have plenty of reasons to be happy. Read about what makes a typical Slovenian, although he or she is anything but average, whatever the statistics say. If you want to see the real Slovenia, you have to look with the heart.

Tanja Glogovčan

Tanja Glogovčan, Executive Editor

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Špičnik
Photo: Nea Culpa d.o.o./www.slovenia.info

TYPICAL OF SLOVENIA AND SLOVENIANS

If there were no stories and facts, there would be no statistics. And vice versa. Average implies an upper and a lower limit. But in life we play in all three dimensions.

THE TYPICAL SLOVENE

Good motor skills and a sense of humour

POLONA PREŠEREN AND MARTIN BAJŽELJ
 PHOTO: JULIE WESLEY/WWW.SLOVENIA.INFO



Slovenes love mountains and sea.

Can you imagine living in a country with a population of just two million people? Can you imagine that the population of an entire country, a member of the European Union and NATO, a country that has made numerous respected contributions to the global stock of knowledge, would only fill a suburb of one of the world's great cities?

We Slovenes often joke that in this country, everyone knows everyone else. We love to sing, play sports, go hiking in the mountains, attend artistic and cultural events, we value our spare time, and we are active. We speak a lot of foreign languages, we are ecologically oriented, and our character has been formed by various circumstances, from our geographical position to our history and culture.

WHAT DO THE STATISTICS SAY?

Let's start with women. A Slovenian woman is most likely to introduce herself as Marija or Ana. Those are the most popular women's names in Slovenia, while the most popular girls' names in recent years have been Nika, Eva, Lana, Lara and Sara. She is most likely 44.1 years old and has 1.2 children. She would most often tell you that she had her first child at the age of 29.1 years and was 29.4 years old when she got married. Just three decades ago the situation was quite different – she got married at just over 22 and had her first child at just under 23.

University enrolment includes around 60% women, and this ratio is maintained among graduates, six out of ten of whom are women. Two thirds of female graduates obtain their formal education in the social sciences (the humanities, economics or law). Women account for around 40% of doctoral degrees.

Women in Slovenia most often contract cardiovascular diseases, and their average life expectancy is 83.7 years, which is nearly six years longer than men.

They are less likely than men to choose a career in politics, and are still in the minority among management positions. A little more than a decade ago they accounted for 21.8% of managing directors and members of management boards, while at the end of 2015 this figure was 2.8 percentage points higher. According to their self-assessment, they are generally more satisfied with their lives than men are. However, they are slightly less satisfied than men with their use of their leisure time. They are also on average more satisfied with their jobs than men.

A probability calculator would tell you that a Slovene man would most likely introduce himself as Franc. Otherwise, the five most popular combinations of men's names and surnames include the surnames Novak and Horvat and the first names Jožef, Franc, Janez and Štefan. Among younger men the most popular name is Luka.

The average age of a Slovenian male is 41.2 years. He first wore a wedding ring and exchanged vows at just under 32 years of age, and had his first child soon thereafter.

The average Slovenian male lives to be just over 73, while his life expectancy is nearly 78 years.

Slovenian men stand out in terms of their attendance of artistic and cultural events in comparison with the rest of Europe. A full



If you are a woman and you live in Slovenia:

- you are one of 1.04 million female residents
- your name is probably Marija, Ana, Maja, Irena or Mojca
- you are generally better educated than men
- your average age is 44.1 years
- your average height is 165 cm and your average weight is 69 kg
- you have an average of 1.5 children
- you will probably outlive your male peers
- you are generally more satisfied with your life and more satisfied than men in general
- you are at a higher risk of poverty than men (15.6% vs 13.0%)



If you are a man and you live in Slovenia:

- you are one of 1.02 million male residents
- your name is probably Franc, Janez, Ivan, Anton or Marko
- you are generally more poorly educated than women
- your average age is 41.1 years
- your average height is 178 cm and your average weight is 85 kg
- you will probably be outlived by your female peers
- you are generally less satisfied with your life and less satisfied than women in general
- you are at a lower risk of poverty than women (13.0% vs 15.6%)

25.6% of men in Slovenia attended at least one live artistic or cultural event in 2015 (theatre, concert, ballet), which was the highest percentage among men in the EU-28. They were followed by men in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Austria. In terms of attendance of sporting events, at 21.7% Slovenian men are ranked in 10th place among EU Member States.

Sociologists, demographers and other social policy professionals have noted that young people in Slovenia are leaving their parents' homes later and later. Girls are leaving home at just over 27, and boys at just over 29 years of age.

According to data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SURs), Slovenia's population increased by 14,028 in 2018, with the number of Slovenian citizens decreasing by nearly 2,300, while the number of foreign citizens increased by more than 16,300 (13.4%). As of 1 January 2019, 138,193 foreign citizens accounted for 6.6% of all residents of Slovenia.

THE STEREOTYPICAL SLOVENE

When we designed a national brand for Slovenia in 2007, we conducted several in-depth analyses that formed a picture of the identity of the Slovenian brand. When we conducted a survey of how residents of Slovenia see themselves, the respondents selected *commitment to the things we like to do, diligence* and *activeness* as the most important qualities of Slovenes. Other Slovene qualities according to the respondents include orderliness and individuality. We value quality of life, and we like to spend our free time outdoors.

In sports we push the envelope, we are adventurers and daredevils. We are enthusiastic researchers and have contributed numerous discoveries and inventions to the global stock of knowledge.

We put a lot of effort into sustainable development, and believe in organic development, a circular economy and green as a concept. That colour so marks us both literally and figuratively that we even call it Slovenian green. It reflects our commitment to simplicity and to preserving the natural world for our descendants.

In the scientific realm, the two most prominent researchers of the Slovenian self-image are psychologists Anton Trstenjak and Janek Musek. In his book *Reflections on the Slovenian Individual*, Dr Trstenjak recorded his observations and reflections on the image of Slovenes. In addition to positive qualities, like being well-disciplined and honest, he also lists depression, a tendency to be on bad terms with people, and servility. Dr Musek established that in terms of personality we are just as diverse as other nations, and he also believes that this is a difficult thing to generalise, as personality traits go from one end of the spectrum to the other. Nevertheless, he has investigated three widely accepted stereotypes of Slovenes.



Slovenes are hard-working.

Slovenes are withdrawn and taciturn.

Dr Musek believes that Slovenes are among the more introverted nations, along with the central Europeans and Scandinavians. In fact, we are even more introverted than the English, and that is also how we are seen by our southern neighbours, who think we are humourless, dour and egocentric.

Slovenes are hard-working and well-disciplined.

The average Slovene is diligent, hard-working and conscientious. His or her work habits are steady. In this respect we are much like the Germans, from whom we differ in one important respect – in their hearts, Germans are group-oriented and collectivistic, while we Slovenes are much more individualistic in our industriousness, which perhaps lowers our efficiency in certain areas.

Slovenes are a humble and servile nation.

The perception of servility probably stems from the literary works of Ivan Cankar and other realists who depicted the tragedy of the Slovenes under the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Research indicates that we do not appear to be a particularly compliant nation in comparison with others, and we also harbour the spirit of adventurism and ambition.

THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SLOVENES

Have you noticed that you can't spell Slovene without love? And even the Slovenian language is something special, for real lovers. It is the only language with a dual form, as in singular, dual and plural. This makes it that much more complicated for speakers of other languages, but nevertheless more and more of them are signing up for summer classes in Slovene. We Slovenes are proud that our language and culture have been preserved over the centuries. We also know a lot of foreign languages: everyone speaks at least one, and many younger people can speak two or more.

Slovenes have made a noticeable contribution to the global stock of knowledge. To list just a few: theory of space travel (Herman Potočnik Noordung), logarithmic tables (Jurij Vega) and the physical law of heat radiation (Jožef Stefan – Stefan-Boltzmann law).

We are a small nation that lives on a small territory, and therefore it is not surprising that we all know each other. We are a large family, and it's easily possible that you might know the President, or at least someone who knows him. Or at least the former President, or someone who knows him.

Arts and culture are an important part of our lives. Publishers say that poetry collections are nowadays by far the most commonly published works by young Slovene authors. Judging by this, we are also a nation of poets. A lot of Slovenes are generally interested in the arts and participate in various cultural activities at an amateur level.

Hiking is one of the traditionally most popular ways of spending leisure time in Slovenia. There are countless opportunities for all kinds of hikes on maintained and marked paths. It is said that you are not a true Slovene if you have never climbed Triglav (2864 m), Slovenia's highest mountain. Triglav has long been the inspiration

for numerous poets, writers, painters and politicians, and has become the symbol of the Slovenian identity.

Gardening is another popular hobby among Slovenes. We like to grow fruits and vegetables in our gardens, and we save indigenous seed varieties.

Slovenia also prides itself on its exceptional biodiversity (due in part to the Natura 2000 ecological network and protected areas including national, regional and nature parks). Slovenia has the highest percentage of territory protected as Natura 2000 sites (37%) of all European Union Member States.

Slovenia is home to 140 of the 900 different plant and animal species listed as endangered or rare at the EU level. In other words: a full 15% of these species live on one half of one percent of the EU's territory. These species include the brown bear, the largest animal that is conserved in the EU through the Natura 2000 network, which can weigh over 300 kilograms. The smallest animal on this list also lives alongside many of our streams – a tiny snail of the genus Vertigo.

Where does Slovenian green come from? Slovenia is characterised by having a lot of forest cover (58% of the country), which ranks it in third place in Europe in this category. According to the findings of the European Commission, Slovenia's forests have the highest level of species diversity among all EU countries, and they are very important to the preservation of biodiversity in both Slovenia and the EU as a whole.

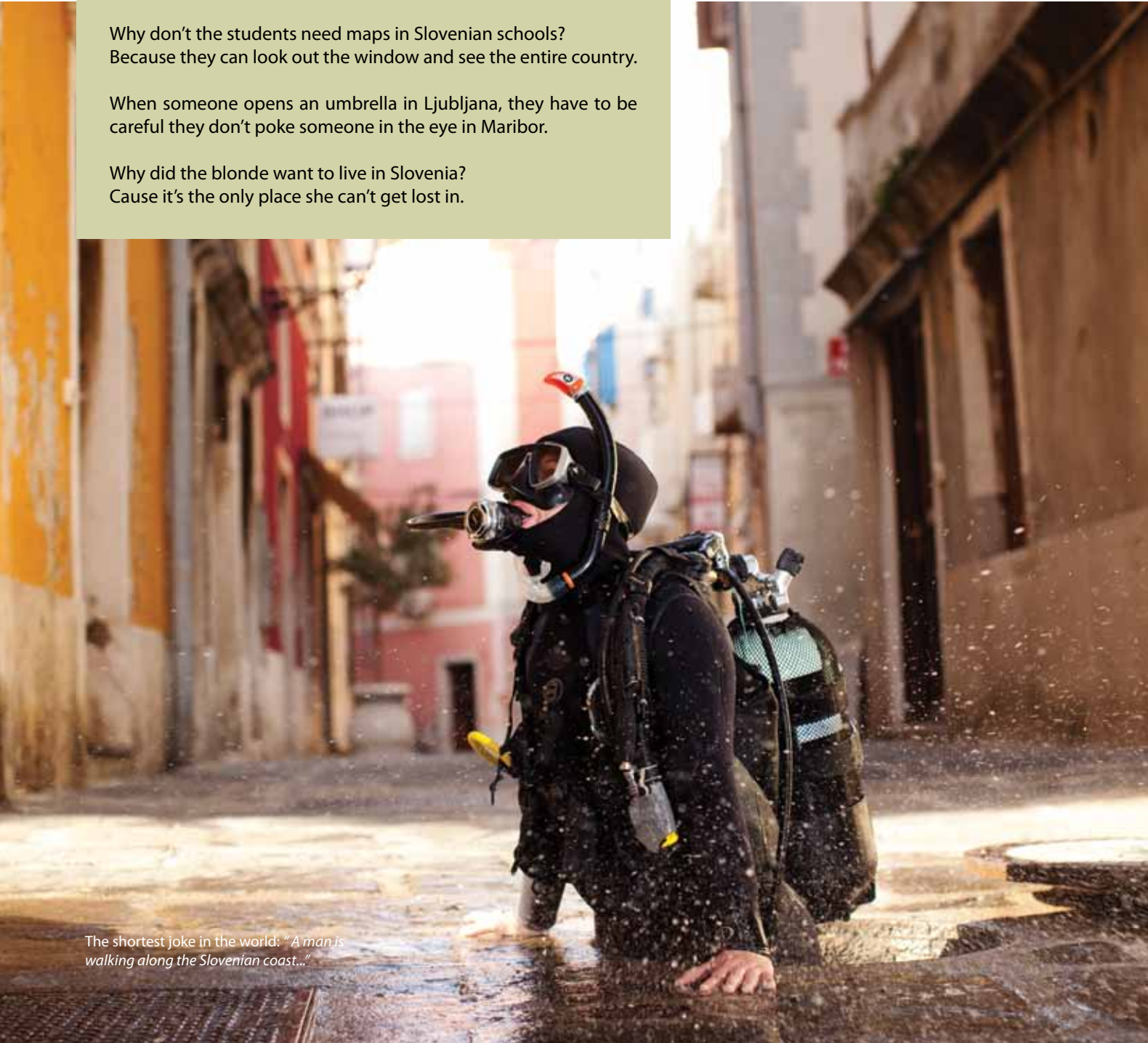
We are one of the smallest nations to have qualified for world championships in team sports – football, basketball, hockey, volleyball, handball... and have achieved outstanding results. We are also proud of our many amazing athletes who compete in individual sports.

JOKES ABOUT SLOVENES

Why don't the students need maps in Slovenian schools?
Because they can look out the window and see the entire country.

When someone opens an umbrella in Ljubljana, they have to be careful they don't poke someone in the eye in Maribor.

Why did the blonde want to live in Slovenia?
Cause it's the only place she can't get lost in.



The shortest joke in the world: "A man is walking along the Slovenian coast..."

SOME STATISTICS ABOUT SLOVENIA SINCE ITS INDEPENDENCE AND MEMBERSHIP IN EU

AFTER 15 YEARS OF EU MEMBERSHIP...



1,997,004	population	2,070,050
73.48	average life expectancy, men	78.05
81.08	average life expectancy, women	83.66
54,815	number of children in nursery education (school year)	86,703
61.4	percentage of children in nursery education (school year)	80.4
9,106	number of start-up companies	18,631
0.91	current expenditure on environmental protection, % GDP	1.24
171,555	number of connections to the sewerage network	268,039
12,400	number of events in cultural institutions	22,025
2,683,404	attendance of cultural events (number)	4,358,382
13,900	GDP per capita (€)	22,182
701.90	net pay (€)	1,092,74
6.3	unemployment rate (%)	5.1
14,143	goods imports (€ millions)	30,706
12,783	goods exports (€ millions)	30,870

Source: SORS

WHAT HAS CHANGED IN SLOVENIA SINCE INDEPENDENCE?

1991	5,000 €	GDP (per capita)	22,182 €	2018	
1991	250 %	INFLATION (annual rate)	1.4 %	2018	%
1991	2,000,000	POPULATION	2,080,000	2018	
1991	70 years	LIFE EXPECTANCY	78 years	2018	
2002	8.6 %	SEPARATE COLLECTION OF WASTE	70 %	2018	
2000	115	NUMBER OF ORGANIC FARMS	3,200	2017	
1992	784,550	NUMBER OF VEHICLES	1,568,896	2018	
1991	less than 50%	ENROLMENT IN PRE-SCHOOL	81.7 %	2019	
time taken to earn money to buy					
1991	27 minutes	BREAD (kg)	19 minutes	2018	
1991	16 minutes	FLOUR (kg)	6 minutes	2018	
1991	5 hours 2 minutes	COFFEE (kg)	1 hour 24 minutes	2018	
1991	46 minutes	OIL (l)	13 minutes	2018	

Source: SORS

ON ERASMUS TO SLOVENIA!

Foreign students see Slovenia as a land of opportunity and inspiration

URH FERLEŽ

PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES



Teams of volunteer tutors work at Slovenian faculties helping foreign students get oriented more easily in Slovenia. In the photo, students together with tutors sort out vouchers for student meals.

Each year Slovenia hosts students on study exchanges, and the number of is growing annually. Surveys show that students are very satisfied with their studies and life in Slovenia. As a tutor for foreign students at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana, I have received information on this first-hand.

I have not yet received a negative response to the question as to whether a student likes it in Slovenia. Students most commonly praise the natural environment and concern for it, the accessibility and closeness of everything in towns and cities, the organisation of food for students and the great scope for travelling around Slovenia and neighbouring countries. This article provides some basic statistical outlines of the Erasmus programme in Slovenia, and some testimonials from students who chose the country for their exchange; they have come from all over Europe and beyond.

SOME STATISTICS

Each year Erasmus students come to this country, having decided on a study exchange or practical work abroad as facilitated by programmes such as Erasmus+ and Ceepus, or other agreements between universities. Slovenia has been implementing the Erasmus programme since 1999, although in the first year just 12 students came to the country. In 2018 more than 2,000 students came to the University of Ljubljana alone, and more than 3,500 in total came to all three public universities.

Students come from everywhere, and just in the groups for which I served as a tutor in the 2018/19 academic year, along with citizens of all the countries of Europe there were students from China,

Korea and Brazil. The highest numbers of students come to us from Croatia, the Czech Republic and Poland, while recently there has been a strong rise in numbers from France.

According to the statistics, out of all the countries in the project Slovenia holds the record for the proportion of students on exchange who opt to take a language course (i.e. Slovenian), at 16%.



STUDENT OPINIONS

I asked the students, who had all been on exchange in Slovenia in the last two years, for a brief opinion on the country and on their experience of the programme. I asked them particularly to explain why they had chosen Slovenia and what seemed special about the country and its people.

Veronika Starkova, M. V. Lomonosov State University in Moscow, Russia: *At home I study Slovenian, so I decided to do an exchange in the country whose language I am learning. I would say that Ljubljana is a quiet European village. A peaceful little town where people are never rushing anywhere, and where almost everyone knows each other, in contrast to Moscow. But culture is highly developed here: The National Gallery surprised me with its beautiful Slovenian national art, and there are a lot of different museums and exhibitions. The Slovenians love their culture very much and cultivate it, they like to go to the theatre and exhibitions, then they like to talk about it when they go out for coffee or for a drink in the evening. Slovenians really love sports. Something that seems especially fascinating is the Slovenian custom of hiking in the hills and in summer in the mountains and Alps, which the Slovenians love so much. I travelled a lot around the country, including to the sea. I was surprised at how different nature is there from Ljubljana, even though it's not very far. The time went too quickly for me, I was thrilled with Slovenia and I started to understand why I am studying its beautiful language. I think that Slovenia is a country that is worth checking out, since it is beautiful, and it has a fascinating history, culture and art.*

Elpida Nasou, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece: *I chose Slovenia because at my home university there was not a lot of choice, but I wasn't sorry! Ljubljana is a lovely little green city, I felt safe and everything I needed was close by. There are a lot of things to do in Slovenia, and the nightlife is good too. The Slovenian students and professors were very nice, but sadly I couldn't go to a lot of lectures because they were in Slovenian. There were plenty of opportunities for trips and cheap travel to neighbouring countries. In Slovenia I feel the most special thing is its wonderful natural environment, and among the Slovenians their respect and care for it.*

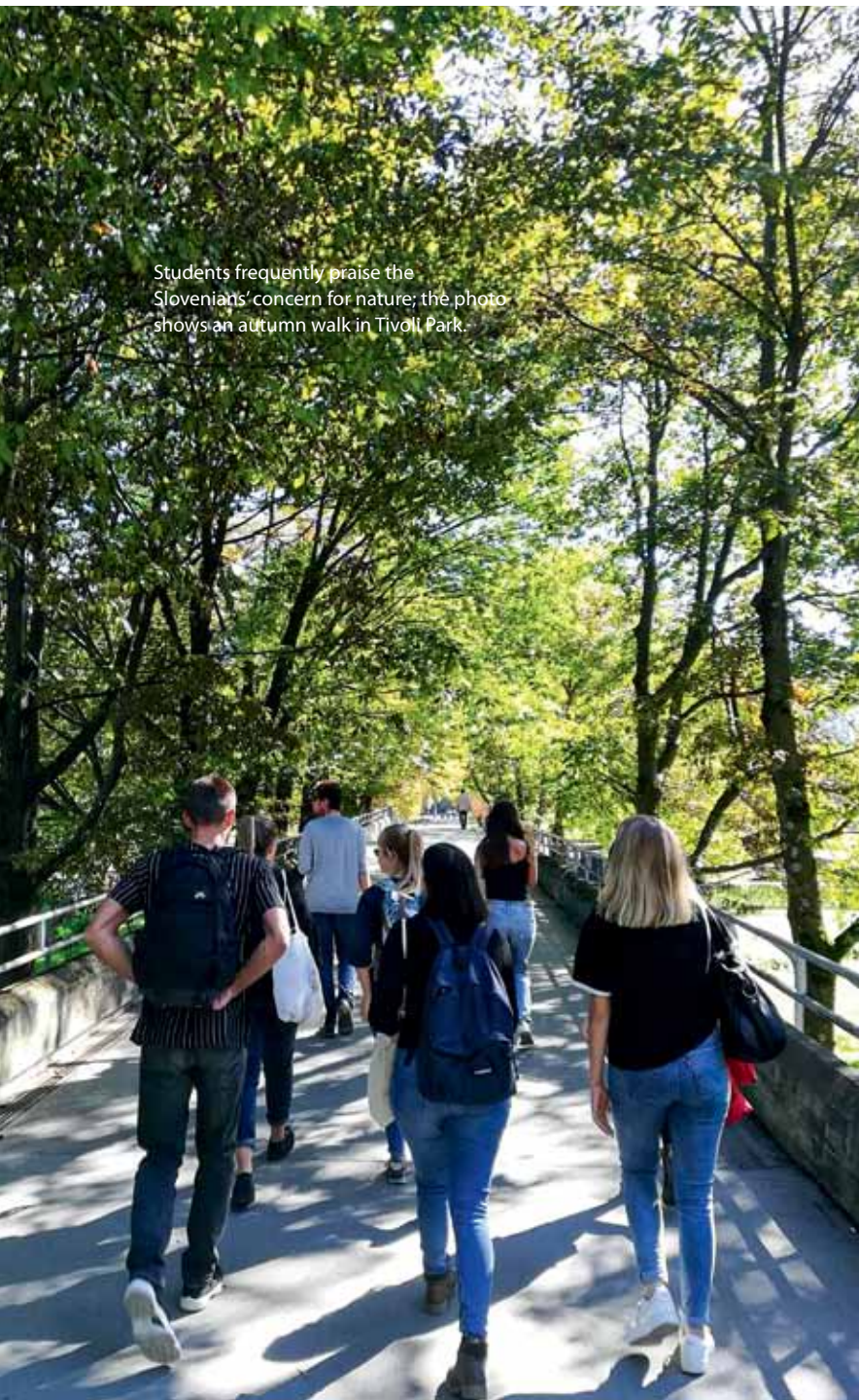
Alexia François, University of Bordeaux, France: *I chose Slovenia because I wanted to do an internship in physiology, and the Faculty of Medicine in Maribor enabled me to do this. Maribor is a small place, similar in size to my home city, so I quickly landed on my feet. I felt very good in the city, there is a good atmosphere on the streets, and the parks and nature are very nice. People were very friendly, both those in town and the students and professors in the faculty laboratory. Most of all the Slovenians seem to be very happy people, smiling, more so than in the city where I study at home.*

Camille Le Hein, UCO Angers, France: *I did not want to go too far away for Erasmus so I chose to go to Slovenia. I knew that the country was very focused on environmental matters (recycling, etc.) and that there was a lot of nature. It was also a convenient destination since it shares borders with other interesting countries. As a member of ex-Yugoslavia, the history was meant to be very rich and complete. Finally, Slovenia is in the European Union and the Schengen area, so the financial things would not be a major concern. In Ljubljana, it is particularly easy to eat any kind of food. As a vegetarian, I was happily surprised to see that the veggie and vegan options were quite diverse. The best culinary discovery I experienced was the štruklji, which are best with mushrooms or sweet bread crumbs. Another thing is that the coffee is good everywhere and very affordable. What I loved best with Slovenians was their sense of hospitality. When you become friends with them, they are always willing to invite you to their place and offer you a cup of coffee. They are also very happy to talk about their culture and traditions.*

Egert Indres, University of Tartu, Estonia: *My four months in Slovenia were really good, probably the best time in my life, because I had a chance to experience a different culture, climate and very diverse landscape, despite being twice as small by area as my home country. What I really liked about Ljubljana particularly was the Christmas market and mostly vehicle-free city centre, which under normal circumstances would be the busiest, but the Slovenian capital has proven that it can be beneficial for tourism if you have a quieter city centre. The lively Christmas market that lasts five weeks can really help take your mind of your studies (at least those the Erasmus students have). However, the landscape was probably the main reason, why I chose Slovenia in the first place. Immense karst areas, Alpine and Dinaric mountain ranges and the short, but sweet Adriatic coast. Such landscape always offered more surprises, either through my school fieldwork, by myself or with friends. I myself had a chance to conquer four peaks, the highest being Grintovec, but I'm sure to come back and take Triglav as well next time!*



The faculties organise various events and excursions for foreign students; the photo shows participants of a Ljubljana Faculty of Arts excursion to Celje in autumn 2018.



Students frequently praise the Slovenians' concern for nature; the photo shows an autumn walk in Tivoli Park.

Yarina Lyubuska, Ivan Franko National University of Lvov, Ukraine: Last year I had the opportunity to spend a semester in Ljubljana. The exchange was especially important for me since I could improve my knowledge of Slovenian, which I am studying at my university. I was coming to Slovenia for the second time, and so got more involved in the local environment and really felt the pulse of the place during the exchange. The first thing to come as a pleasant surprise was when I realised the Slovenians are very open and always ready to help. And this applies not just to the staff in the international office or the professors, but to the average Slovenians you meet on the streets, in the queue in the shops or elsewhere. It was hard for me to get used to the empty evening streets, the closed shops on Sunday and the relatively short working day. Now I miss precisely these things at home.

As for the actual studies, I have to admit that the level of education in Slovenia is truly high. It was a new thing for me that Slovenian professors have open consultation times for students, which Ukrainian universities do not have. But the thing I liked most was that Slovenian education gives students a lot of freedom. This is evident when I compare the seminar assignments I do at home and those I did in Slovenia. I really respect the fact that Slovenian professors value and encourage student creativity. I was also very happy with the accommodation Slovenia offers to foreign students.

José Roberto, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil: First things first, there I am, facing a stressful semester in my home university, and it is one of my last chances to enrol for an exchange program, for I am about to graduate. The call for application was open, I gave it try and checked on it: for that semester, the classic destinations were not available, no States, no UK, no Canada. But I quickly thought deeper in myself: is that what I want, or what people expect? I thought, WAIT, what I like is to try the different, try the novel, try the non-classical! After all, that's why I find so much pleasure in learning different languages, and picked Linguistics as my degree.

So... Hungary it is, perfect, right? I was not sure. I would be able keep on learning Hungarian, which sounded great, but wouldn't have linguistics subjects to attend, and I did want to stay somewhat loyal to my degree!

In Brazil, Slovenia is not a country you hear people talking about every day. That was enough reason to take a look at this Univerza v Ljubljani, sounds cool, sounds even like Czech (oprostitute, Slovenci!!! I was naïve back then, you rock), even better: they have Linguistics for undergraduate students. Days later, my Hungarian teacher at that time offered me a scholarship for a summer school in Hungary.

Hungarian in Hungary + Linguistics in Slovenia = perfect set, right? Yes!

Passport issued at the last possible minute for enrolment, first time abroad, first time using a language other than Portuguese on a daily basis, new people, new friends, a half year 10,000 km away from home. A perspective leading towards uncertainties. But everything ran smoothly, it couldn't have been any more pleasant. Getting to know new people, new places, in the countryside of Slovenia, with other Erasmus students, in other Balkan countries, and in Western Europe, enabled me to benefit the most in this multicultural environment.

I felt so welcomed by Slovenians, they were always cheerful and ready to help. I found it fascinating hearing that many describe themselves as adaptable people. As a matter of fact, it is definitely not a hard task to state that, for example, Ljubljana is a very English-friendly city — and not only in touristic or student-related terms. From this simple example to a greater extent shows us how important it is to be aware that as a worldwide community we must realise how understanding and cooperation play a healthy and connecting role among us all.

As for nature, oh, nature, Slovenia's landscapes are mesmerising, period. It is also heart-warming how people celebrate it — by keeping everywhere clean, by hosting a Europe green capital and the first World Bee Day. I'm not a vegan myself, but I do enjoy consuming as little animal-based foods as possible, and it is incredible the variety of (affordable!) vegan items and places here.

In Ljubljana, I was able to enjoy the great cultural life, to just name a few attractions: the small cosy SNG Opera, the Christmas market, the music in the streets, and open-air exhibitions. I think the country pleased me so much that even having to pop into the hospital was not so much of a bad experience. Ah, regarding legal matters, as a non-EEA citizen I only had to apply for a Visa D before departure, which, despite some misunderstandings with the Slovenian Embassy in Brazil, was a straightforward and quick procedure.

JOŽE KARLOVŠEK

The Slovenian ornaments – a form of beauty

KATARINA KARLOVŠEK
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES



Jože Karlovšek (1900–1963) was a tireless researcher of and expert on ornamentation and Slovenian architectural heritage, a researcher of folk art, a builder and a painter. He published numerous books and articles on Slovenian houses, ornamentation and architecture. He became one of the most prominent Slovenian researchers of folk elements in building and painting, and broke new ground in this field with his unique method of work.

He was a passionate collector of Slovenian tales and fables, and the author of the first illustrated book of Slovenian mythology. Today his granddaughter Katarina Karlovšek is developing the *Slovenian Ornament – Jože Karlovšek* brand and transferring her grandfather's designs to a range of products.

Jože Karlovšek was born on 12 February 1900 in Šmarjeta near Novo Mesto. In 1936 he moved to Domžale, where he remained for the rest of his life and where he is also buried. He was a tireless researcher of Slovenian architectural heritage and arts and crafts.

He became one of the most prominent Slovenian researchers of the use of folk elements in building and painting, and broke new ground in this field with his unique method of work.

He published several books on Slovenian houses and ornamentation. He was a passionate collector of Slovenian tales and fables.

His collected tales and fables from 1959, in which he explores Slovenian mythology, were published in manuscript form in 2016, more than half a century after his death, by the Slovenski Staroverci (Slovenian Old Believers) Association. The book is a precious document of Slovenian folk tradition. His research into ornament (in the sense of both decoration and ornamentation) led him into the world of Slovenian and Slavic fairy tales and my-

thology, and his discoveries so entranced him that he even began depicting mythological creatures in wood.

Jože Karlovšek created a remarkable body of work which, in the opinion of many, is of inestimable value but all too often forgotten and overlooked. Many of his drawings and writings have remained in their original form and are still awaiting publication.

THE SLOVENIAN ORNAMENT – JOŽE KARLOVŠEK COLLECTION

Katarina Karlovšek, Jože's granddaughter, had long admired her grandfather's ornaments, which in her opinion radiated a genuinely Slovenian beauty. In 2011, together with the calligrapher Katarina Rojc, she organised a calligraphy and drawing course based on her grandfather's work. This led to the idea of creating a range of products in which the Slovenian ornaments that Karlovšek had researched with such passion for 50 years would come to life. Last year – seven years after the original idea – the first products in the *Slovenian Ornament – Jože Karlovšek* collection appeared. The Hermagoras Society in Celje (Celjska Mohorjeva družba) published a reading diary for adults and an exercise book, both featuring Jože Karlovšek's ornaments, while the pen-maker Vivapen produced a fountain pen likewise decorated with one of Karlovšek's designs.

These first three products were well received, so Katarina was encouraged to develop new ones. A rollerball pen, calligraphy pens, a business card case, an enamelled mug, a coffee pot, chocolate and jewellery have since been added to the collection.



Son of Jože Karlovšek with wife Marija



A rollerball pen, calligraphy pens and a business card case are some first products from the collection.

New products are already in development: decorated drinking glasses that will be made by Steklarna Hrastnik, a wristwatch by Zlatarna Celje, wooden “good luck angels” and a bookmark.

A collection of jewellery featuring Jože Karlovšek’s Slovenian ornament designs has been created in collaboration with the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum, which some time ago began developing a range of products of this kind on the theme of individual exhibitions. The Slovenian Ethnographic Museum’s *Slovenian Ornament – Jože Karlovšek* collection consists of cufflinks, chains with pendants and earrings of various designs.

SLOVENIAN ORNAMENT

Slovenian ornament is something that is purely and exclusively ours, something Slovenian. It makes our hearts leap even if we do not know exactly why. We bear it in our hearts and it is in our blood.

Slovenian ornament has its own tradition and history. It has developed and grown with life in Slovenia right up to the present day. We could thus say that Slovenian ornament is the story of our nation.

Karlovšek’s study and research of decoration and ornamentation touches upon the most ancient cultures (from around 4000 BC), traces its development through Greek art and Roman culture and into the art of the Middle Ages, and looks at the ornamental art of the East. Karlovšek also considers the Migration Period, as reflected in ornament, and touches on Chinese and Indian styles of decoration and ornamentation and their roles in relation to Slovenian ornament.

Karlovšek was astonishingly exhaustive in his treatment of the development not only of Slovenian ornament but of ornament

in general, tracing it from its origins in the Palaeolithic more than 2.6 million years ago.

THE REMARKABLE NATURE OF JOŽE KARLOVŠEK

The retired journalist Matjaž Brojan has much to say about Jože Karlovšek’s remarkable qualities. His sheer volume of work and astonishing oeuvre have placed him, in Brojan’s view, “among the great Slovenians, who will be remembered as long as the Slovenian people exists.” He describes him as a man with a burning passion for Slovenian ornament, who created hundreds of new ornamental ideas every day and practically every night, as he sat at his drawing table.

Of her grandfather’s remarkable legacy, Katarina Karlovšek says the following: *“It is truly incredible how much he created in his relatively short life. If I succeed in my own lifetime in processing, reviewing and reading everything that Jože Karlovšek created, I will be very satisfied. I hope that I can continue to transform his ornaments into products in a sensitive manner, and hope that people will continue to like them.”*

The products can be found in various shops around Slovenia and may also be purchased in India and – shortly – in Switzerland.

With the *Slovenian Ornament – Jože Karlovšek* brand or collection, Karlovšek’s granddaughter Katarina wishes to pay homage to her grandfather, a remarkable man who loved everything Slovenian, and an especially passionate admirer of Slovenian beauty. In the age in which he lived, he certainly could not have imagined that the world would change as much as it has, nor perhaps that his work would continue to be discovered and enjoyed in the 21st century.

“I hope to succeed in making Slovenian Ornament – Jože Karlovšek such a successful and recognised brand over the next 20 years that it will continue on even when I am gone and will be my legacy,” says Katarina Karlovšek.

A collection of jewellery featuring Slovenian ornament designs has been created in collaboration with the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum.



Katarina Karlovšek

GIANTS OF SLOVENIAN IMPRESSIONISM AGAIN WIN OVER THE WORLD

Rihard Jakopič takes a prominent position among them

TANJA GLOGOVČAN

PHOTO: NATIONAL GALLERY LJUBLJANA ARCHIVES



The painter Rihard Jakopič is an exceptional figure in Slovenian art. He played a key part in the evolution of Slovenian Modernism, and was a cofounder of the National Gallery Society. This year we celebrate the 150th anniversary of his birth.

He was born in Ljubljana (1869-1943) and studied in Austria and Germany, and as an artist he was also very active in Bohemia. He finally returned to Slovenia in 1906. Together with the painter and restorer Matej Sternen, he opened a drawing and painting school in 1907, which operated up until the start of the First World War.

It was also Rihard Jakopič who hatched the idea of an exhibition pavilion. The idea came to fruition in 1909 with a building designed by the architect Maks Fabiani.

The exhibition space, which took the name Jakopič Pavilion, stood by the entrance to Tivoli Park. Within the pavilion Fabiani laid out exhibition spaces as well as a space for Jakopič's school.

Rihard Jakopič, Oddih / Rest, ca. 1905, oil on canvas, 17.5 x 24.5 cm, National Gallery, Ljubljana.

Rest is a small study in oils which, judging by its mood and the motif of the girls dressed in white – Art Nouveau fairies or nymphs – and sited in nature we can place in the period around 1905. Here in a small format and with fierce strokes, Jakopič has shaped the young female form with bravura, while problems usually arose in transferring this to a large canvas. Here again, the tone and mood entirely dominate the optical impression.

Right up until the Second World War, this place was also the main exhibition space for Slovenian fine art. Indeed, it was in that very pavilion that Rihard Jakopič organised the first historical overview of Slovenian painting. In 1918 he helped found the National Gallery Society, where in just two years they opened the first permanent exhibition.

A MAN OF IDEAS

Jakopič was a man who never stopped, and every part of his body and soul were infused with a love of art. In 1918 he also came up with the idea of a Slovenian academy of fine art, but the socio-political circumstances of the time were not conducive to its realisation.

The fact is that Rihard Jakopič was first and foremost a painter and artist, but he was also a fine theorist. He wrote about Slovenian Impressionism and established its foundations. In 1938 he was appointed a full member of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. He also gave his name to the prize for the highest achievements in fine art, which has been awarded in Slovenia each year since 1969.

It is possible to discern in his work a great love of nature and rural life, as seen in the birch trees, sun, villages and many more such motifs through which he addressed the world with the eyes of Impressionism.



Rihard Jakopič

Jakopič also frequently exhibited his work, although for the most part in group exhibitions. His work could also be admired abroad, mainly in Vienna, where he exhibited a full three times.

Jakopič also consistently encouraged young artists and helped them to show their work. He worked to ensure the existence of the pavilion, and strove tirelessly to secure financial and moral support for Slovenian art.

The website of the National Gallery writes about the artist: *"Jakopič was a particularly outstanding personality in Slovenian art. He deserves a special place in the artistic pantheon not only as an excellent painter but also as a man who integrated art into a broader social context. At his own expense he erected in 1909 the first public art gallery in Tivoli Park in Ljubljana; in collaboration with Matej Sternen, and later on his own, he led a painting school; he was among the founders of the National Gallery of Slovenia, patron of the so-called spring of Novo mesto, and a founding member of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts."*

IMPRESSIONISM FROM DAWN TO DUSK

After several decades, Prague is once again hosting a retrospective exhibition of Slovenian Impressionism and other orientations that shaped the Slovenian cultural space between 1870 and 1930.

The show *Impressionism from Dawn to Dusk: Slovenian Art 1870–1930* at Prague Castle features 474 artworks, which together represent one of the key periods in Slovenian art history. Of course this includes Rihard Jakopič, who is represented by his painting *Sončni breg* (Sunny Hillside). The Prague public has also been captivated by the paintings of Jurij Šubic (1855-1890) *Pred lovom* (Before the Hunt), Ivan Grohar (1867-1911) *Macesen as well as Rdeči parasol* (Larch and Red Parasol), Matej Sternen (1870-1949) and many others. The exhibition will be open until 16 September this year.



Ivan Grohar, *The Larch* (1904), oil, canvas, 110 x 98 cm, National Gallery, Ljubljana

ECOLOGICAL CHALLENGE

Think and reuse

TEA KNAFLIČ



The aim is to use the products again.
Photo: GettyImages/GulliverFilm&Foto/Tim Platt

"It's wonderful here" is something we often hear from foreigners who come to Slovenia. Yes, Slovenia is beautiful. It boasts green forests that cover as much as 60% of the country. Clean water for which we know all the data on its quality, and which we can drink straight from the tap. Numerous protected natural areas extend over 13% of Slovenia's surface and offer refuge to a multitude of plants and animals.

Slovenia is a clean and healthy country, yet rapid development leaves a mark. For the moment Slovenia is handling the one of the main challenges faced by all developed countries well, that of waste. Sadly the trend is one of ever increasing waste. But fortunately there is growing awareness about how to deal with this. There is encouraging information that in Slovenia we separate as much as 70% of urban waste, and this percentage is growing each year. In some regions they even separately collect as much as 77% of such waste, and each year more waste is being recycled. In 2017 a total of almost 58% of urban waste was recycled, which is four percentage points higher than the previous year.

SLOVENIA IS ABANDONING SINGLE-USE PLASTIC FASTER THAN ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE

We were very glad to read recently that the Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Simon Zajc, and the president of the Chamber of Commerce of Slovenia, Mariča Lah, signed an agreement on reducing the sale of plastic shopping bags in shops. Starting in January this year, customers had to pay for plastic bags, and a drop in the sale of these was immediately noticeable. And from 1 September retailers will remove them entirely and replace them with recycled bags.

Slovenia is one of the most environmentally friendly countries in the world. According to the Good Country Index, Slovenia is in fourth place out of 153 countries in terms of its positive contri-

bution to the planet and climate. Only Norway, Switzerland and Portugal are ahead of it.

The best solution is of course a permanent reduction of waste packaging. In Slovenia there are a number of societies that are actively involved in this issue. These are mostly young people who have a clear view of the future, and who are well aware of their responsibility towards nature. They draw attention to what our parents and grandparents knew very well. Good things can always be reused, transformed, given as gifts and so on.

ZERO WASTE IS THE LONG-TERM ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY FOR DEALING WITH WASTE

The aim is for all products to be used again. The Zero International Alliance has a definition which states that zero waste is a goal that is ethical, economical, efficient and visionary, to guide people in changing their lifestyles and practices to emulate sustainable natural cycles, where all discarded materials are designed to become resources for others to use. Zero waste means designing and managing products and processes to systematically avoid and eliminate the volume and toxicity of waste and materials, conserve and recover all resources, and not burn or bury them. Implementing zero waste will eliminate all discharges to land, water or air that are a threat to planetary, human, animal or plant health.

In Slovenia we can already boast a zero waste hotel. Hotel Ribno in Bled officially received the title zero waste hotel in May 2018,

when it succeeded in attaining a level of 92% separately collected waste. Zero waste shops are also on the rise, offering certain products for sale without packaging. You either bring your own or the packaging is returnable. Individual municipalities have already joined the zero waste project. Nine of the most aware municipalities, accounting for 17% of the population of Slovenia, have through joint efforts prevented at least 15,750 tons of mixed urban waste, and thereby saved three million euros. Numerous other municipalities have adopted the zero waste target for 2020. This is in truth the only way to keep our environment clean and healthy in the long term.

The Slovenian society Ecologists Without Borders has presented quite a few excellent ideas of how to save money and avoid unnecessary waste.

Less is more, as the overall concept is named, challenges us to repair, exchange or lend items so as to avoid purchasing a new product.

On its website they recommend skilled craftsmen who can repair faulty items, and the locations where items that you do not often need can be loaned. Reusing an item of course has an advantage over recycling, since it means saving natural resources as well as money. Meanwhile we must keep asking ourselves the question: “Do I really need this thing that I am buying?”



The main goals of the waste management policy are therefore: reduction of detrimental effects of the generation of waste and waste management for human health and the environment, and reduction of the use of resources and promotion of practical use of adequate waste management.
Photo: GettyImages/GulliverFilm&Foto/Jacobs Stock Photography Ltd.

KARST SHEPHERDS

Sons of the bora

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ
PHOTO: BLAŽ VEHOVAR



The Karst Shepherd is the oldest native Slovenian breed of dog.

The Karst is the homeland of the Karst Shepherd, a breed of dog which over the centuries the sharp bora wind has only toughened and not weakened, and which together with the herders and Karst sheep has eked out a living, while being able to maintain its noble character. Without love, mutual respect and understanding, both human and dog would lose a lot.

The Karst Shepherd (*kraški ovčar*) is the oldest native Slovenian breed of dog, recognised internationally back in 1939, under the name the Illyrian Shepherd, only taking the name Karst Shepherd in 1968. It is a breed several centuries old that was used as a sheepdog in the Karst. It is the only Slovenian native breed and one of the oldest breeds in the Balkans.

THE KARST IS ITS HOMELAND

The earliest written sources mentioning Karst Shepherds as sheepdogs date back to 1558, when the administrator of the Lipica Stud Farm, Franc Jurko, wrote that they had provided for the safety of the thoroughbred horses by purchasing the powerful and fierce dogs from the Karst.

A slightly rebellious spirit and a never quite tamed nature proved themselves to be virtues in Karst Shepherds, since they often had to demonstrate their strength, courage and resourcefulness in protecting small herd animals from predators.

This dog represents a millennia-old natural heritage, and without it our land would be poorer and robbed of animals which in several centuries of living alongside us have adapted to people, the environmental conditions and the way of life. It is in no way a servile dog, it is an intelligent and outstanding guard, meaning that it is uniquely observant. As a fine sheepdog it has exceptionally well developed senses of smell and hearing. It is infinitely loyal to

its master, and wishes always to be by their side, as it was once by the shepherd, with whom it shared a bed, food, work and all the good and bad things of life. The Karst Shepherd has long since come from the grazing lands and into towns and villages, where it has become a family member, a courtyard guard dog, a faithful and irreplaceable partner and incorruptible protector.

UNPARALLELED IN BEAUTY AND CHARACTER

Although the bustle of cities has become something ordinary for it, we should not forget that each one of our Karst Shepherds carries within it the genetic code of its ancestors, who helped shepherds defend and protect the sheep. The largest numbers of Karst Shepherds live in Slovenia, with just a handful beyond the borders.

The gene pool is therefore limited to the original environment, and it must be carefully preserved, since this is a dog unparalleled in beauty and character.

To be a successful protector of livestock, a task entrusted to them by humans, sheepdogs must be large and fearless, adapted to the circumstances in which they do their work, and practiced in regular contact with the shepherd. These dogs know that for them there exists just one flock, one leader and one objective – protect the flock, regardless of the strength of the attacker. They are prepared to spill their own blood for their family and even to give their life. We are happy to note that flocks of sheep and Karst

Shepherds are gradually returning to the Karst, so we may only hope that there will never be a repeat of the time when someone wrote: *“There are no more sheep, no more shepherds, only the wind wanders over the empty fields and plateaus; here there is no longer the dog that called the Karst home!”*

SHEEPDOGS WERE DOING THEIR WORK EVEN AMONG THE EGYPTIANS, PERSIANS, INDIANS, GREEKS, ROMANS AND OTHER PEOPLES

Although the Balkans region is a true historical treasure trove of sheepdogs, their origins extend back to Central Asia, to the



Tibetan dog. Dogs similar to them live today between East Asia and Western Europe, where they were brought by nomadic tribes to ensure protection for their livestock from predators and thieves. With the aid of humans, dogs developed adaptive mechanisms for confronting extreme circumstances such as heat, wind, cold and so forth. All livestock herders took dogs with them from the earliest times, and nowhere were they more in need than for sheep and goats, since all the other livestock out grazing could defend themselves from predators, while sheep and goats were defenceless. So a good dog is even more necessary for a shepherd than for a crop farmer or vineyard keeper, since it can keep away other harmful animals. Someone needs to be there in support of the flock, and a dog does this better than a human could.

STRICT HIERARCHY RULES

No matter which part of the world they inhabit, sheepdogs are similar in their behaviour and responses in performing their tasks of protecting livestock. The principles of sheepdog behaviour are also based on the rules of the flock with which they live. Where a flock is guarded by several dogs, they are ranked within the flock and work under strict hierarchical rules.

Each dog rules over a particular area being grazed by the flock or determined by the shepherd. The dogs in the group have precisely determined places and tasks. Any breach of the rules is severely punished by the lead alpha male.

Young dogs cannot ensure their status through force or power, so their life within the group begins at the bottom of the hierarchy. Their advancement depends on their individual qualities, such as stability, power, aggressiveness and more. Few dogs would dare in their adult period to challenge the alpha male. If that happens, a fierce battle for dominance flares up. If the challenger is strong and skilful enough to defeat the alpha male, the other members of the group greet it as the new leader and offer unconditional subservience. But the old alpha loses everything,

not just the battle. Loss of the throne sends it crashing to the bottom of the group. Shepherds usually return a defeated male back to the village, where it can serve as an excellent guard dog for the home.

The biggest predator in Europe, the brown bear, often likes to wander into grazing land, where it can treat itself to a quickly accessible meat dinner, albeit one that is not always easy. This is especially so when the flock is being guarded by a pair of Karst Shepherds, which are fast enough to evade the bear's deadly jaws and paws. One single blow or bite would be the end of the dog. But the two dogs can bite the bear alternately, one from in front, the other from behind, and then jump away in a flash. After a few minutes the bear has had enough and will choose to leave.

The Cinological Association of Slovenia is aware of the importance of preserving and developing the Karst Shepherd.

The Association's leaders took some important steps in securing recognition for the breed in Slovenia and internationally through their collaboration with the painter and photographer Blaž Vehovar, author of the latest monograph entitled *Kraški ovčarji – sinovi burje*, (Karst Shepherds – Sons of the bora), published by Založba Hart. With an awareness of the importance of preserving the foundations of healthy development of the breed, they added to the collaboration by setting up a joint semen bank. Moreover the Cinological Association has established a fund for financing preventive health checks for purebred males and females of this wonderful breed of Karst Shepherd, which is exclusively Slovenian.



The difference between males and females has to be obvious enough to be spotted even by casual observers.

ZALA SLABE

The Slovenian scientist who made a major discovery in the area of biopsychology

DANILA GOLOB
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES



For her doctoral thesis, Zala Slabe is also conducting research on Alzheimer's patients.

The biopsychologist Zala Slabe is the first person to have successfully proven the link between the presence of the neuropeptide PACAP in the brain and mood disturbances, especially depression and bipolar disorder.

At the age of 24 the holder of a master's degree in biopsychology went to Amsterdam to study under the world famous neuroscientist Prof. Dr Dick Swaab at the Netherlands Institute for Neuroscience, which is part of the Dutch Royal Academy of Science and Art. At the Institute, where she continues to work, she has access to one of the rare brain banks in the world, and is the only in the team of scientists analysing brain samples.

WHY BIOPSYCHOLOGY

As the young scientist explains, biopsychology is little known in Slovenia, while abroad it has been a recognised field of study and a science for years. Biopsychology is the knowledge of biological genetic predispositions which are later reflected in our behaviour, emotions and so forth.

The scientific discipline provides an answer as to why we behave in a particular way, where difficulties with mental health originate, and why there are differences between different people.

"By getting to know the biopsychological background of an individual and balancing biological functions, our contribution to public mental health would be much better," says Zala Slabe with conviction. She has always been interested in the biological and neurological parts of psychology, and in the explanation of our behaviour, emotions and psyche.

ANALYSIS OF HUMAN BRAIN SAMPLES

At the Institute in Amsterdam, where with access to a brain bank which stores 4,000 deep-frozen human brains Slabe has out-

standing conditions for research, the biopsychologist received the assignment of being the first to establish the presence of the neuropeptide PACAP in human brains.

She used post-mortem samples from patients with bipolar disorder and depression.

She also sought differences in the hypothalamus related to gender, and determined what the differences are between groups of control patients and those who suffer mental illness.

In her research she arrived at important findings, specifically that the neuropeptide PACAP is significantly expressed in women and those who have mood disorders, such as depression and bipolar disorder. *"The greater expression in women can offer us an answer to the question why there is a prevalence of mood disorders in women,"* she explains.

As is the case with serotonin and dopamine, chemical substances in the brain that are varyingly present in people and which can be balanced through medication (therapy), PACAP is also typically varied in expression, but we know nothing yet of balancing it. It is precisely PACAP that could signify the missing part in the puzzle of understanding our mental health, believes Zala Slabe.

EFFECT OF PACAP ON MENTAL HEALTH

The research being conducted by Slabe has a clear objective, which is to help people and develop appropriate therapeutic strategies. Mood disorders are a major public health issue in today's society, and her discovery could have an important effect on their treatment. Understanding the PACAP system in the human hypothalamus is key to the further development of therapeutic methods of treating mood disorders such as depression and bi-

polar disorder, and it is associated with post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychiatric disorders linked to stress.

"The higher expression of PACAP we have found in women points to them being more prone to neuropsychiatric diseases. This is caused by interaction with the hormone oestradiol, so we anticipate the development of treatment being linked to the balancing of oestradiol," explains the scientist.

RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

As her research continues, it will also include the brains of those who suffered Alzheimer's dementia. She divides these into two groups, those with Alzheimer's disease and depression, and those that did not suffer depression alongside Alzheimer's. *"Fifty per-cent of patients with Alzheimer's suffer depression, which seriously increases the burden on patients and carers and is often a reason for hospitalisation. In Slovenia, 35,000 people have Alzheimer's, and it occurs in 5.05% of the population of Europe, which represents an additional socio-economic burden. Previous pharmacological therapies with antidepressants improved the symptoms of depression in only around 50% of patients,"* says Slabe.

The neuropeptide PACAP has never yet been researched in connection with Alzheimer's disease in post-mortem human brain tissue.

The biopsychologist is convinced that further study could make a major contribution to understanding this disease.

It is known that PACAP dysregulation can cause depression. The development of specific treatments that could balance the neuropeptide PACAP could also then contribute to delaying the onset of Alzheimer's disease.

WHAT FURTHER RESEARCH PROMISES

Current pharmacological antidepressant therapies improve symptoms through complex mechanisms that are not fully understood. Research into the neuropeptide PACAP system provides a broad picture, since it enables a better understanding of the actual functioning of the neuropeptide, gender differences in the human brain and the spread of neuropeptide disorders. *"A knowledge of its functioning signifies an important contribution to the development of (gender-specific) psychopharmacological treatment,"* notes Slabe, who highlights that PACAP research also plays a vital part in controlling the onset of neurodegenerative diseases, the percentage of which in the modern world is increasing owing to the ageing of the population. With the development of treatment to regulate the PACAP system, we can ensure a lower incidence of depression, which indirectly contributes to the progress of Alzheimer's disease. And she adds: *"The population is ageing and along with this the drive to research this disease and discover medication and treatment is growing, so researchers are seeking various targets, and PACAP could be one of those."*

In the future, Zala Slabe wants this kind of research to start being conducted in Slovenia, too.

"I want to transfer the experience I am gathering abroad to Slovenia, both in terms of techniques and the founding and development of some organisation or institute that would support the storage of post-mortem brain tissue. Establishing such an organisation would enable all the neuroscientists in Slovenia to research neuropsychiatric disorders. Having the possibility of such research would be extremely useful."



In the research laboratory the biopsychologist has arrived at discoveries that can have an important influence on people's health.

PRECIOUS DISCOVERY IN CELJE

Frescoes from a luxurious Roman urban villa

DR MAJA BAUSOVAC, DR JURE KRAJŠEK



Amor – one of the motifs of the ceiling painting, which is still being assembled.
Photo: CPA ZVKDS archives

Intensive renewal of the city centre has in recent years yielded quite a number of new archaeological discoveries in Celje. The latest magnificent discovery is of frescoes from a luxurious Roman urban villa. Frescoes from Antiquity have been preserved only in very few locations across Europe, and therefore represent an exceptional historic treasure.

A few years ago in the city centre – in the main square of Glavni trg – we found Roman mosaics from an opulent Roman urban villa, which are today the main attraction presented in the Tourist Information Centre. The pavilion presenting the archaeological finds is also a recipient of the highest European prize, the Europa Nostra (European Heritage Awards) in the area of conservation work for the year 2019. But this is just one of the locations in the city where you can view the remains of Roman Celeia. Below the Prince's Palace, across around 1000 m², you can walk along a Roman urban street and view the remains of walls, houses and so forth.

VILLA WITH MAGNIFICENT FRESCOES STANDS OUT AMONG ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS

Three years ago when we stuck the first shovel into Muzejski trg square in Celje we anticipated finding well-preserved architectural remains of Roman and Late Roman Celeia, since the area had not been built upon since the Middle Ages. So during the archaeological excavations carried out by the Celje Regional Museum, under the present-day floor we immediately encountered the walls and other structures of monumental medieval buildings. Based on written sources we determined that these were administrative and economic buildings that the Counts of Celje built, and were connected to the adjacent Prince's Palace.

Beneath the medieval foundations we came across rooms of at least five Roman residential houses, as well as smaller Late

Roman public baths and part of a Roman street with an exceptionally well-preserved masonry sewer – a *cloaca*.

Particularly notable among the discoveries is one of the Roman urban villas from the 1st century AD, featuring vivid wall and ceiling paintings. Part of the paintings has been preserved on the walls in places up to a height of 1.3 m, while fragments both of the wall and ceiling frescoes and pieces of plaster almost entirely filled the space between the villa walls. Unfortunately the main and central scenes from the wall paintings have yet to be identified, because of the fragmentation and the sheer quantity of fragments. The more than 60,000 fresco fragments discovered during the investigations are currently stored in more than 1,400 crates. Meanwhile individual partly assembled scenes show us, in addition to the usual geometric composition punctuated by architectural elements, miniature plant and figural details and parts of the central, usually narrative scenes. These scenes depict architectural panoramas, fantastical scenes or painted landscapes. Wall paintings of this type are typical of what is termed the Third and Fourth Pompeian styles of Roman wall painting, examples of which have not previously been found in Slovenia.

THE OWNER OF THE VILLA WAS A TRUE ROMANTIC

In addition to the exceptional wall paintings, the find at Muzejski trg is surprising for its numerous fragments of painted vaulted ceiling discovered in one of the villa rooms. At this point, together

with experts from the Restoration Centre of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia, who came to our assistance, we have succeeded in assembling approximately 15 m² of the ceiling that had fragmented into more than 4,000 pieces. Standing out among the many plant and figural motifs with their exceptional detail, which are merely decorative in significance, are three principal narrative scenes drawn from the wealth of Greek and Roman mythology. If the central scene depicting a man and a woman in a quadriga (four-horse chariot) cannot yet be identified with certainty, the two secondary scenes that flank it are more readily identifiable: the first featuring a dancing maenad and a satyr, and the second showing the wood nymph Syrinx and Pan.

One of the partly assembled scenes depicts the sad and arrow-pierced Cupid, the Roman god of love. In all probability this is a depiction of the famous myth of

Cupid and Psyche – a story of eternal love that can conquer all evil.

The first three mentioned scenes share, in addition to their mythological origin, a connection with the literature of the day, in that all of these scenes are described in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which was written at the beginning of the 1st century A.D. The story of Cupid and Psyche is known today principally from the description in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, the only ancient Roman novel to survive in its entirety, which even back in Antiquity gained the title *Golden Ass*, and dates back to the 160s A.D.

IN THE 1ST CENTURY, CELEA ALREADY HAD A TOP-NOTCH PAINTING WORKSHOP

In terms of quality of preparation of surface and quality of painting, both the wall paintings conserved in situ and the fragments from the rubble are equal to the paintings that can be admired in



Waterside motifs which in all probability decorated the peristyle walls of the Roman villa.
Photo: PMC archives

Pompeii, Herculaneum, Stabiae and even Rome. The motifs used and the composition of the paintings themselves also show that the master artists working in first-century Celeia followed the same pattern-books as the finest workshops in Italy. Comparisons may be found not only in the luxurious urban villas of Pompeii such as the Casa del Menandro and the Casa dell'Ara Massima, but also on the walls of grandiose and opulent imperial residences such as the Villa Poppaea. This discovery is one of the few contexts to offer a picture of the high standard of living in Roman Celeia. Given the exceptional nature of the find, specifically the level of preservation and the rarity of such finds, the Ministry of Culture has recognised the Roman villa complex as a find of outstanding importance, and has ensured the necessary funds for the conservation and restoration of its remains. Funds for the construction and arrangement of the actual underground exhibition space and its connection to the lapidarium of the Celje Regional Museum, which is situated in the basement of the Old Counts Mansion, have been provided by the City Municipality of Celje.

Currently restoration work is progressing on the walls and frescoes in the future exhibition space, while the Restoration Centre of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia in Ljubljana is working on assembling the fragments of the ceiling, which following restoration will be returned to Celje and displayed in a space specially created for it in the new exhibition area.

We are planning to be able to invite you to view the new exhibition ground of the Roman villa and wall paintings at the Celje Regional Museum in 2020.



Detail of a female figure with wings and tendrils.
Photo: PMC archives

EXPANO

An opportunity to experience the Pomurje region

HELGA LUKAČ



Expano by the Sobota lake.
Photo: Željko Matulic

The Expano pavilion is conceived as Pomurje (the Mura Basin region) in miniature, and presents the region's tourism, business opportunities and principal attractions all in one place. At Expano we open the doors of the region to visitors and introduce them to our traditions and natural features, the beauty of the landscape and the tranquillity of this land by the River Mura.

We offer visitors suggestions that encourage them to explore the Pomurje region further and in greater depth: by visiting farm stays and thermal spas, discovering our hill vineyards and the beauties of our towns and villages, sampling our wines and traditional dishes. That is why Expano is the promoter, generator and integrator of Pomurje tourism. We bring Pomurje closer to visitors from near and far, while at the same time working together to develop new content so that Pomurje will continue to offer the world inspiring, unforgettable and unique experiences.

As a regional promotion centre, Expano not only plays a part in creating, connecting and promoting tourism products that visitors can experience with the help of modern technologies, it also works hard to foster business opportunities and ensure an enterprising future for the Pomurje region through the activities of the Expano Business Centre.

The story of the Expano pavilion began at Expo 2015 in Milan, where it proudly represented Slovenia. Even when building the pavilion for the first time at the expo, the architects followed sustainable guidelines with a view to the future recycling of the structure. It was designed in such a way as to allow it to be transported to Slovenia after the event and re-erected in the most suitable location. Today the pavilion stands on the shore of Sobota Lake (*Soboško jezero*) and offers a comprehensive overview

of the Pomurje region. Expano is an excellent example of the so-called circular economy, where the re-use of an existing structure relieves the burden on the environment. By siting the pavilion next to Sobota Lake, on a brownfield site that was part of a former gravel pit, we are at the same time revitalising the surrounding area. Construction of the pavilion was followed by landscaping of the site and the lake shores. New features include a multi-purpose events venue, an exercise park, picnic areas and others for outdoor gatherings. We bring together a wide range of activities on and in the water, in the lake and on its shores, from fishing to sailing, rowing, diving and swimming. All our activities are aimed at realising our vision of creating here, in the middle of the Pannonian Plain, a first-class centre for active experiences that will attract visitors from near and far, fill them with enthusiasm and accompany them on their further journeys of discovery around the Pomurje region.

INTERACTIVE ADVENTURE PARK

Expano, which brings together all the beauty and uniqueness of Pomurje in one place, also includes the interactive adventure park Pomurje in Miniature. The contents of this park are tied to the five pillars of tourism in the region – treasures of nature, thermal experiences, cultural heritage, active breaks and cuisine – and present them to visitors through a unique multimedia experience that involves all five senses. It is designed with creativity and innovative approaches that bring the region closer to visitors through a range of modern technology platforms.

Visitors discover the region's natural beauty and features, its history and



Panoscope – exploring the Pomurje region through panoramic photography and 360-degree views.
Photo: Matjaž Očko



Local cuisine and wines.
Photo: Matjaž Očko

cultural heritage, its thermal waters and the many activities it has to offer through modern technologies that ensure that a visit to the interactive adventure park is an entertaining experience while at the same time stimulating visitors' curiosity to explore further.

The properties of thermal waters can be discovered with the help of neuroscience technologies that measure our concentration, which is a special experience in itself. A virtual reality balloon flight can help you overcome your fear of heights or fulfil a long-held wish to view the region from a bird's perspective. In an enchanting forest clearing you can encounter holograms of animals and, with the help of motion-sensing technology, have a go at *Panno-yoga* – a special type of yoga inspired by the rich fauna of the Pannonian Plain. Touchscreens make discovering the region's history fun, and you can even try virtual farming, where you tend your own little plot of land and observe the fruits of your labour.

POMURJE CUISINE

When it comes to food and drink, Expano offers visitors all the flavours of the region. We aim to use exclusively local or regional products and ingredients in the preparation of the typical dishes we serve. Like the interactive adventure park, the gastronomic experience offered in the pavilion encourages visitors to continue their discovery of the region – and its cuisine – by visiting various producers and restaurants. The produce of the region, with the seasonality and freshness guaranteed by short supply chains, offers up constant surprises in the form of new dishes and combinations of flavours.

EXPANO BUSINESS CENTRE

The Expano Business Centre offers information about opportunities for businesses in the Pomurje region. It acts as an

information hub for foreign and domestic investors and a space for business meetings and events. We also offer local businesses information about opportunities to internationalise their operations. We provide consultancy services and create a motivational environment to foster enterprise and establish new partnerships and cooperations.

A wide range of workshops, seminars, meetings, forums and round-table dis-

cussions offer ample occasions for local and foreign businesses to compare good practices and serve to present opportunities and advantages for new investors.

We believe that art and creativity are the motors of development, which is why the Business Centre also hosts small exhibitions designed to inspire and encourage reflection outside the everyday context.



Virtual reality flight over Pomurje.
Photo: Matjaž Očko

MATEJA BENEDETTI

Designer and costume maker who creates eco fashion

TANJA GLOGOVČAN



Mateja Benedetti
Photo: Tomi Lombar

Mateja Benedetti attended the Secondary School for Design in Ljubljana, then later studied at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering in Ljubljana. After her studies in Slovenia she enhanced her skills at the Utrecht School of the Arts in the Netherlands. There she became familiar with conceptual design, which was one of the turning points in her creative process.

She is a designer and costume maker. Her clothes are unique items made of ecological or nature-friendly materials. The approach behind her creations inspires people in Slovenia and is winning over the world.

And this very mixture of originality, excellence, environmental awareness and style has also aroused our curiosity.

Mateja Benedetti is different, and more audacious than many in the fashion industry and world of the performing arts. This likeable Primorska woman is never short of ideas.

What combination of knowledge did you acquire with your education in Slovenia and later abroad?

In the nineties there was little grasp in Slovenian circles of conceptual design as something vital to the development of collections, while in Belgium and the Netherlands that style of creating collections was a well-established and essential approach prior to actual designing. In Slovenia I acquired all the essential knowledge in the areas of technology, modelling and design, while abroad I started thinking about design and the idea itself and to research much more deeply. In percentage terms we gave conceptual thinking the same weight as actually producing clothes.

Something special is that you are a designer and costume maker. Is that combination a common one?

Quite a few good fashion designers in the world are also costume designers, and this can be seen very clearly in the collec-

tions themselves; personally I immediately recognise a designer if they have experience in the costume design world, and vice versa. Most often this is evident in details, forms and ultimately the presentation itself, since costume designers are familiar with the entire process of creating shows, and when you have been part of that world for so many years you can't get around the fact that at fashion shows you are most drawn to the process of presenting the collection through maximum expressiveness, which is reflected in the direction, set design, choreography, lights and music. I myself aspire to making fashion shows more like theatre than simply striding along a catwalk.

You are also a passionate advocate for the environment, and even back in 2014 Vogue Italia ranked you among the 20 most promising eco brands in the world, and this year on the centenary of Rolls Royce and Bentley you appear in the book *Exploring Extraordinary*. What makes you so different in this regard?

People were talking about environmental changes even back when I was a student, 25 years ago. Back then I already knew that I would contribute something, but I didn't have the faintest idea that the whole thing would obsess me so much, in a good way.

I actually found my mission, which I pursue with all my heart, and you can feel this in my work. The whole team are on the same page as me, since we believe that a lot of things can be improved in the fashion industry.

Six years ago, luxury brands were still blind to the consequences of the fashion industry. At that time I decided that I would introduce changes in the area of luxury fashion, since there were incomparably more eco brands at the middle and lower levels. I sought out exclusive, new, innovative materials in the eco area, such as apple and pineapple leather. In this way I drew the attention of the world media and all those who recognise high-quality products and new features in the industry. In the cases of *Vogue*, Rolls Royce and Bentley, it was about finding brands that combine luxury, ecology and innovation.

Everything I design is ready-to-wear, in other words an industrial product prepared for series production, and consequently for the buyer. The collection includes both day and evening wear, alongside knitwear and fashion accessories.

Within each collection there are always one or two pieces that are highly fashionable stylings, intended exclusively for shows and the image of the brand, and they are priced in the haute Couture garment class. These are bought most often by collectors, VIPs or those who love the brand.

How do you get fabric from these waste materials, and who do you collaborate with?

All the innovative materials included in one or more seasons are the result of in-depth analysis of the world market or of collaboration with factories.

A while ago some factory actually asked me if I could create clothes from apple leather for them. This is made from by-products of the food industry, and involves a mixture of waste and binder.

Apple leather is waste apple from the production of apple juices and marmalade, while the binder used is polyurethane, which is an oil derivative, so recycling is problematic. In contrast to apple, pineapple leather uses PLA, which is biodegradable in nature, since it is a natural starch.



Her latest venture, Benedetti Life, has now launched both an online store and showroom in Ljubljana.
Photo: Julio Barcena

Your design therefore combines beauty, luxury and the innovation of sustainable fabrics, certified and biodegradable or recycled.

That's right, and it's animal-friendly fabric.

What is the concept of your latest collection and where will it be on sale?

The brand Benedetti Life has been created right from the start with extremely strict environmental protection criteria. This year we also included care for animals, meaning that in addition to ecologically certified textiles that do not pollute water and the ground, where transport of the product is controlled, in production we use no textiles of animal origin. We stick to the rules of being natural and ecological. We only use recycled textiles when it's essential, since we cannot guarantee renewed recycling. We would like to create an ideal model for producing clothes, where in addition to pure repurposing without toxic substances there will be no problems with waste. This in fact means that we are aiming for a product that is 100% biodegradable in nature, or can be repeat recycled without difficulty and intervening stages of separation, in the case of patches and garment care labels.

Your products have been shown in various European fashion capitals as well as in Los Angeles and elsewhere.

Yes, in Los Angeles I was at the first vegan Fashion Week, which I regard as a historic turning point in the fashion world. All the global media were writing about this important event a month before it happened. I myself had numerous ovations at the Natural History Museum, and The New York Times, NYLON, Vogue and more wrote about my work – it was amazing.

Do you like to work with other Slovenian designers, and if so, who?

In Slovenia we have unbelievable talent and designers, including for jewellery. I work a lot with brands such as Olgafacesrok, Niiro, Dalija Segar and Petra Bole, and this year we concluded a fabulous collaboration with Wood Stock Eyewear, where I designed an eco line of parrot-themed glasses especially for them.

You have received numerous prizes for your creations. Are any of them especially important for you?

I will never forget the prestigious Green Carpet Awards, which are awarded each year at the Milan theatre La Scala, during Milan Fashion Week. This is an elite event with global names in the fashion industry, where a bright future is celebrated and environmentally oriented fashion companies are rewarded.



Benedetti Life uses only non-toxic and organically grown textile materials, makes its clothes locally and guarantees no animals were abused in the process of garment creation.
Photo: Rok Petelin

BLED WATER FESTIVAL

Enriching cuisine with a selection of water

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ

PHOTO: BLED WATER FESTIVAL ARCHIVES



Bled Water Festival is the leading platform for water innovations in the region.

The fourth Bled Water Festival, which was held on 13 and 14 June, again introduced a number of new developments this year. The special part of the festival included water tasting with a water sommelier, who is convinced that, in the future, a selection of water could be offered to restaurant guests in Slovenia, as is already done elsewhere in the world.

The certified water sommelier Hanuel Kim came to Bled from South Korea, where there are already more than 400 certified water sommeliers. According to him, Koreans are very interested in health and, as a result, in the quality of water, too. Water sommeliers put together water lists and recommend water to guests depending on its characteristics, just like is done with wine lists and wine recommendations with food. According to the organisers, this could be introduced into the Slovenian hospitality industry, enriching cuisine with a water selection, so hospitality experts were invited to this year's festival.

Slovenia is very rich in water resources, and the water provided by these has very diverse characteristics and effects on people. After tasting Slovenian water, Hanuel Kim made a general evaluation that the water is excellent, and very different from Korean water, which is soft and light, while the Slovenian water contains more minerals.

Some Slovenians are already being trained abroad to be water sommeliers, and as of this year, training for water sommeliers will also take place in Slovenia in cooperation with a Korean organisation.

In this way Slovenia will become a trailblazing country in this area.

THE BLED WATER FESTIVAL IS BECOMING A LEADING PLATFORM

The festival is a platform for innovations regarding clean water and sustainable solutions for water resource management, which consequently raise the quality of life. It also gives awards for the best original ideas, projects, and films on ecological topics, and shares best practices with politicians, experts, the business sector, and the general public. According to Marko Gajič, the organiser and member of the Bled Water Festival team, this was initially a small event, but today ministries from six countries are involved. This year's festival focused on exchanging best practices with regard to current issues related to water resources, such as digitising their management, cyber security, and environmental health.

Within the festival, representatives from the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning and the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, as well as from the companies Pivovarna Laško Union, Petrol, Steklarna Hrastnik, Park Škocjanske jame, Turizem Bled, and the Bled Water Festival, signed a commitment to meet the goals of the United Nations recorded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The commitment refers to the specific goals of guaranteeing access to clean water and sanitation and ensuring sustainable water management by 2030.

Gajić explained that the commitment is used to build a bridge between the business sector and politics, so that communication regarding all major investments in this area is enhanced.

THE BLEDED WATER FESTIVAL PROJECT ALSO NOTICED ABROAD

The project of the members of the Bled Water Festival has also been noticed in the Republic of South Africa, which is much more limited with regard to water resources than Slovenia. Therefore, this year's international event attracted foreign experts and representatives of organisations in the fields of business and politics. Organisers held roundtables, showed documentaries and had conversations with all participants to emphasise the value of water as a vital natural resource, and one which should not be taken for granted. The activist Mrs Kühn Heather Phigeland, who attended the festival for the second time, wishes to take this idea to South Africa. She would like to introduce people in her country, mainly young people, to the conviction that water is a valuable resource and should be managed economically.



DRINK TAP WATER

Slovenia is among the 15% of the world's countries which have an abundance of water. In order to ensure that this does not change, the meeting participants emphasised that water must be managed in a sustainable and responsible manner. For example, visitors to Bled are encouraged to drink tap water, so fountains have been installed in multiple locations where they can pour some excellent water from the Gorenjska region.

The vision and the goal of the festival is to stress the value of natural resources, particularly water, and the main purpose of the event is to raise the awareness of the general public regarding the various pressing problems related to water, in Slovenia as well as in other parts of the world, and to offer solutions and work on development.

The festival stressed that water is a natural resource, the value of which people are not sufficiently aware of. We live in a world which is increasingly endangered, polluted and at risk every day. We are not sufficiently conscious of this, as we take for granted the things provided to us by nature: drinking tap water, the lawn in front of our home, a wonderful waterfall on our Saturday day trip, and many other things that depend on a clean and reliable water supply.



Haneul Kim, a certified water sommelier, led water tasting of six samples of both spring water and water from a water supply system from Slovenia, which were competing for the award.

BELA KRAJINA

A beautiful region in the far south of Slovenia

DANILO GOLOB

The hilly landscape enchants from first sight. The green stands of silver birches, the gleaming river Kolpa, the vineyards with their idyllic cottages and paths that lead you to interesting places with a fascinating history.



Jurjevanje in Bela krajina.
Photo: Andrej Tarfila

Bela krajina attracts visitors with its glorious countryside and tranquillity, yet its charm also lies in a rich and varied cultural heritage.

Črnomelj, Metlika and Semič are places you must visit if you wish to see the principal sights of the region and experience the authentic character of Bela krajina.

BELA KRAJINA'S BIGGEST TOWN

Črnomelj is Bela krajina's biggest town and its centre. The origins of the town date back to antiquity. The old town centre stands on a river bend where the Dobličica meets the Lahinja. Notable buildings include the medieval castle, the former commandry of the Order of Teutonic Knights and the former savings and loan bank. Also of interest is the Primožič House, which has been proclaimed a cultural monument of local significance. Today, local arts and crafts products are sold here, and the house hosts frequent crafts workshops and exhibitions.

Črnomelj is also the start of the Bela krajina wine and tourism route. As well as enjoying the marvellous natural surroundings, visitors should be sure to visit the region's vineyard cottages and sample the local wines and characteristic dishes.

JURJEVANJE – THE OLDEST FOLKLORE FESTIVAL IN SLOVENIA

Jurjevanje in Bela krajina, a festival that has taken place regularly since 1964, is based on the folk tradition of Bela krajina and other regions of Slovenia and helps conserve the area's heritage of dance, song and music.

The festival runs for five days in June and every year hosts international folklore groups and other cultural groups from all over the world. In this way it passes from the local level to the global, and creates a vibrant and varied intercultural space

where the traditional interweaves with the modern.

The always interesting festival programme takes place at various venues around Črnomelj and offers something for all generations. The festival also gives visitors the opportunity to sample gastronomic specialities and fine wines, and of course the chance to meet the mythological hero of spring, Green George himself.

MEDIEVAL METLIKA

Metlika boasts a varied and diverse natural and cultural heritage. Once a true crossroads of cultures, nations and religions, it was for 200 years the capital of the Habsburg military frontier zone known as the *Militärgrenze*. The town began to flourish in the late nineteenth century, a period that saw the establishment of the first organised firefighters 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. In the summer months the castle courtyard hosts a series of international cultural events under the banner *Pridi zvečer na grad* (Come to the Castle Tonight), with a high-quality programme of music, poetry, dance and theatre, featuring top local and foreign performers. An unforgettable experience in the wonderful atmosphere of the castle.

WINE SPRING – THE BIGGEST WINE FESTIVAL IN SLOVENIA

For three days in May, Metlika hosts a festival known as *Vinska vired* (Wine Spring). This traditional event based around winemaking and local culture takes place in the three squares of the old town centre. During this time, the region's wines are judged and placed on display. The event also includes a flatbread competition and the coronation of the wine queen. Visitors have the chance to discover local customs and traditions, enjoy a varied cultural programme featuring folklore groups, tamburitza ensembles, choirs and wind bands. They can also visit the town's museums, sample local Bela krajina specialities and award-winning wines and dance to music performed by local groups.

THE UNSPOILT NATURE OF THE RIVER KOLPA

Metlika is bounded to the south by the river Kolpa, one of the cleanest rivers in Slovenia. The Kolpa is very well stocked with fish and other aquatic species, many of them rare and protected. In 2010 the Kolpa was awarded the prestigious title of European Destination of Excellence (EDEN).

The river Kolpa and its banks offer many opportunities to spend free time in an active way. Swimming, fishing, rafting, kayaking and canoeing, walks on marked

trails and relaxation in wonderful natural surroundings.

If you would like to spend more time by the Kolpa, you can stay at one of the area's farm stays or campsites. Big Berry, a modern campsite in the little village of Primostek, where guests stay in one of seven mobile homes, is particularly attractive.

The Kolpa Nature Park is a protected landscape extending along the Kolpa in the area between Stari Trg and Dragoši, entirely within the municipality of Črnomelj. The park also preserves and sustains the area's rich cultural heritage. Castles, mills and sawmills



Feel the river Kolpa
Photo: Big Berry archives



Pulling flax by hand.
Photo: Kolpa Landscape Park archives

on the Kolpa adorn the landscape, while farms of the *dvor* type represent a particularly interesting feature. Built around a central courtyard that is enclosed on all four sides, a *dvor* usually consists of a farmhouse, a barn and a stable. Within the Kolpa Nature Park, Šokec Farm (Šokčev dvor) in Žuniči is a protected cultural monument that is open to visitors and represents a form of rural dwelling characteristic of this part of Bela krajina. Within the farmhouse, which has been fully restored, you can see a typical farm room with antique furniture, a baby's cradle, old farming clothes, home-made linen, and so on. Another room is arranged as a dining room with an old bread oven.

LAHINJA NATURE PARK

Another enchanting river, besides the Kolpa, is the Lahinja, which boasts a naturally conserved headwaters area. Woods, marshes and wet meadows line the river. Various karst landforms and botanical curiosities may be found in the Lahinja Nature Park, which has a rich natural and cultural heritage. The park contains eight protected natural monuments, six cultural monuments and two nature reserves: Nerajski Lugi (marshy meadows at the point where the Nerajčiča stream flows into the Lahinja) and Lahinjski [Lahinja] Lugi. Among the fauna of the Mlaka marsh, we even find the European pond turtle. In the sixteenth century a castle was built on a bend of the Lahinja but later abandoned. A church stands above the bend, with the year 1638 inscribed over its stone doorway. Next to the river stand a sawmill and mill, today operated as tourist attractions. Marked themed trails lead visitors around the park on foot (a circuit of the park takes around three hours) or by bicycle. The Lahinja is also suitable for fishing and boating.

BY TRAIN TO SEMIČ

The municipality of Semič covers the area between the foot of the forested plateau of Kočevski Rog and the slopes of the Gorjanci. Travelling to Semič by train offers the most beautiful view of this corner of Bela krajina: green hills and vineyards with white houses and cottages dotted among them; below the vineyards, the market town of Semič with its parish church dedicated to St Stephen, in the baroque classical style. Semič still conserves part of the defensive enclosure or tabor built to protect the settlement against the Turks. The tabor house, which stands inside the defensive walls, today hosts exhibitions of paintings and cultural events. Semič is also known for beekeeping and honey.

Bela krajina offers something for every visitor. Tranquillity and relaxation in beautiful natural surroundings, merriment and enjoyment of typical Bela krajina dishes and local wines, adrenaline on the rivers, dancing and socialising, or, last but not least, a chat with the friendly and hospitable inhabitants of the region.



Local gastronomy
Photo: Uroš Raztresen

Flavours of Bela krajina

Bela krajina cuisine is extremely rich and includes a number of excellent dishes that may be sampled in select restaurants in the region. The Tastes of Bela krajina project aims to present the full variety of Bela krajina cuisine, by focusing on ten characteristic dishes chosen through a series of workshops led by acclaimed Slovenian chef Tomaž Vozelj, president of the Association of Chefs and Pâtissiers of Slovenia. Visitors can sample the famous *belokranjska pogača* (a leavened flatbread sprinkled with caraway and coarse salt), *belokranjska povitica* (rolled filo pastry with a curd cheese and cream filling), *belokranjsko cvrtje* (mince and bread patties), *belokranjski nadev* (bread, eggs and ham stuffing in a casing) also known as *semiško fulanje* with horseradish, buckwheat povitica with raisins, *belokranjska šara* (a vegetable and bacon stew), cereal sausage (made with millet and pork), mutton and cabbage stew, *belokranjski žlinkrofi* (pasta dumplings filled with bread and calf's lung), and – an absolute must – spit-roasted suckling pig or lamb. Taste Bela krajina!



LURES FOR THE CURIOUS

Lesser known, less accessible, magical Slovenian locations

TANJA GLOGOVČAN

Slap Virje is a nice waterfall located at Plužna, west of Bovec in the region Goriška – Tolmin, Slovenia.
Photo: Boris Pretnar/www.slovenia.info

Slovenians often boast that the country is a place where in a single day you can experience and see everything that elsewhere in the world would not be possible in one country. We have mountains, plains, the sea, rivers, forests, wine growing areas and much more. Despite the natural and cultural wealth, all too often we go to those places that are most attractive in tourist terms, and consequently the most easily accessible.

Bled, Bohinj, Portorož, Piran, Postojna Cave, Lipica, Kranjska gora – these are the mainstays of Slovenian tourism. But that selection is narrow, and Slovenia has countless other beautiful locations.

We Slovenians love to travel the world, but when are we going to see our own country? And why not also open up the curtain for foreign guests and offer them a look at the hidden gems of Slovenia?

Slovenia has nearly 90 waterfalls, 34 gorges, virgin forests, 67 rivers and 200 streams, and more than 10,000 karstic caves, and according to some data even three times that.

TREES SPEAK WITHOUT WORDS, BUT THEIR MESSAGES ARE CLEAR

Approximately 60% of Slovenia is covered in forest. We also have not just one, but several ancient virgin forests. Slovenia has 14 virgin forests with an overall surface area of 540 ha. These are: Krok, Prelesnikova koliševka, Pečka, Strmec, Kopa, Rajhenavski Rog, Bukov vrh, Ždrocle, Gorjanci - Trdinov vrh, Ravna gora, Krakovo, Belinovec, Donačka gora and Šumik. Soft moss, tall trees, their interweaving branches, multi-coloured crowns and their diverse energy. The soft mossy ground is touched by the tiny foot of Snow White hurrying away from the wicked step mother and hunter there somewhere in the depths of the forest. You can conjure up in your imagination this very scene depicted in a children's book. This mystic and mysterious energy has been a property of trees since time immemorial.

In Slovenia there are also some trees that particularly stand out, both for their natural features and for the historical events associated with them.

These include the Črmošnjice Fir or *Kraljica Roga* (Queen of Rog), which with a circumference of 6 m is the second thickest fir tree in Slovenia, and measures 44.7 m in height. It is estimated to be around 280 years old (1918). Its girth is exceeded only by the Marolt Fir in the Pohorje mountains, which had a circumference of 6.05 m, and stood 43.86 m tall. The *Gašper Chestnut* in Močilno pri Radečah is around 300 years old, and it has a circumference of 10.93 m, standing 18 m tall. After three centuries it still produces abundant chestnuts, from which a delicious preserve is made. The

The Kamniška Bistrica Valley boasts a number of natural attractions, the most popular being the main source of the river Kamniška Bistrica, the smaller Mali Izvirek source, the Veliki Predaselj and Mali Predaselj gorges, and the Orglice waterfall. Photo:Nea Culpa d.o.o./www.slovenia.info



Gašper Chestnut is a natural feature of special interest. The *Najevska lipa* is a linden with the biggest trunk of any tree in Slovenia, once measuring 11.24 m around, but now 10.70 m. It is a linden that is thought to have grown from seven separate trunks. It is 24 m tall, and its age estimated at 700 years. It has been associated with legends of King Matjaž and the Turks. More recently it has come to be a symbol of the creation of the Slovenian state, for in 1991 the Najevska linden was the setting for the first meeting of Slovenian state leaders, which has since become a traditional event. The tallest tree in Slovenia is the *Sgerm Spruce*, which stands 62 m high in the Pohorje range. The oldest tree in Slovenia is the larch in the *Mala Pišnica* valley in the Upper Sava river area. It is 22 metres tall and has a girth of 4.22 metres. The larch used to be much taller, but the wind broke its top off. It is supposedly between 800 and 1,000 years old.

BETWEEN TWO NATURAL VAULTS

Among the locations where visitors or residents of Slovenia rarely set foot are the Savica canyon in Ukanc, the Bistrica gorge, the Pokljuka canyon near Bled, the canyon of the Bistrica river, the Predaselj canyon and numerous smaller ones.

Even the best known river gorge in the Ljubljana area, Iški vintgar, is not that frequently visited.

A particular feature is the very deep and narrow canyons cut into the limestone rock, called trenches. The most distinctive of such trenches are along the River Soča and its tributaries (Koritnica, Mlinarica, Tolminka, Moznica, Zadlaščica), where they can get up to 70 metres deep.

REFLECTION OF SUN IN WATER

This is a characteristic of waterfalls, of which Slovenia has a multitude. The most popular waterfalls are Peričnik in Kranjska Gora, and another famous one is the Savica waterfall in Bohinj. Yet the lesser known ones are not less striking in their beauty. The Škofjeloško – Cerkljansko range of hills boasts the Davča waterfalls, while the Podljubelj area has the Tominc falls. In the Štajerska region there is the magnificent Sedel-



The Najevska linden tree belongs to the tree species of national importance. The linden tree is of large dimensions and grows at the Narovnik's farm. Photo:Tomo Jeseničnik/www.slovenia.info

nik waterfall at Muta, and on the border with the Kozjansko area is the Ubijavnik waterfall on Bohorje. Stranice waterfall below Trebeše has a drop of around 20 metres, making it the highest waterfall in Slovenian Istria.

For those whose main motivation in hidden locations is superlatives, they will certainly be fascinated by Kloma waterfall, which has an overall height of a full 186 m. This is the first in a series of cascades along the seasonal flash flood stream of Kloma in Trenta.

The rivers in Slovenia fall within the drainage basins of the Black Sea and Adriatic Sea. With the exception of the Soča basin, the streams along the Koper coast (Rižana, Reka and Dragonja) and those in the Karst, which drain into the Adriatic, all other watercourses drain into the Drava or Sava, right-hand tributaries of the Danube. At 940 kilometres the Sava is the longest river with a basin originating in Slovenia. A quarter of the river's stream is in Slovenian territory. One branch, the Sava Dolinka, rises between the Karavanke and the Julian Alps at Zelenci, between Rateče and Podkoren. Another branch rises as the major tourist attraction of the Savica waterfall, flows into the country's biggest permanent lake, Bohinj, and flows out of the lake as the Sava Bohinjka. The River Mura flows in from Austria and at first is a more than 30 kilometre-long border river. In contrast to the Drava and Sava rivers, throughout its course in Slovenia it is a lowland river. The emerald beauty of the Soča rises in the very heart of the Julian Alps, in the glacially transformed valley of Trenta. In its upper reaches the River Soča is one of the five naturally most preserved rivers in the Alps. Its waters are known worldwide for the endemic Soča trout and for their blue-green colour. The upper course of the river is especially popular among whitewater rafting enthusiasts and sports fishermen. Riding the whitewater stream in a canoe, kayak, raft or small boat is a unique experience. Counted among the larger rivers in Slovenia are three Sava tributaries: the Ljubljanica, Krka and Savinja. The River Savinja is known principally for one of the most beautiful Alpine glacial valleys in Europe, Logarska dolina, where the headwaters of the river

are above the Rinka waterfall. The Ljubljanica is an intermittent and abundant karstic river, which appears several times on the surface under a variety of names: Loški Obrh, Trbuhovica, Pivka, Rak, Stržen, Ljubljana and Unica. Before its confluence with the Sava, it flows through Ljubljana, Slovenia's capital city, giving it a special charm that draws many foreign visitors throughout the year. The Krka, which has a karstic source, is a recreational and angling gem in the Dolenjska region. In its upper reaches, near the settlement of Žužemberk, the numerous barriers of tufa rock have given rise to picturesque waterfalls, pools and rapids. A long section of the Slovenian-Croatian border runs along the Kolpa and Sotla rivers. The Kolpa is known for being the warmest Slovenian river in the summertime. Rafting and boating once flourished along the Savinja, Sava, Mura, Drava and Ljubljanica rivers.

»WITH A SHEPHERD'S CROOK IN MY HAND

...under my belt a posy of flowers, when as king in the mountain high, I wander after my flock of sheep,« is a sentence from the poem *Veseli pastir* (The Happy Shepherd) by poet Simon Gregorčič. The text of the poem, which speaks of freedom of the spirit and the virtues of the non-material world, echoes the feeling visitors also experience on the mountains, hills and foothills. The view is the gift you receive in the mountains.

The finest viewing points in the Julian Alps include: Mala Osojnica (691 m) and Velika Osojnica (756 m), Viševnik (2050 m), Visoki Mavrinc (1562 m) and Slemenova špica (1911 m). And the finest viewing points in the Kamnik – Savinja Alps are: the peaks of Korena (1999 m) and Kompotela (1989 m), Kamniški Dedec (1583 m), Velika planina (1666 m) and Strelovec (1763 m).

"No, I shall not trade my shepherd's crook for a king's sceptre, and rather than an imperial crown I have flowers on my head!"

VIEW THROUGH GLASSES OUTSIDE THE BOX

So let us take a look at Napoleon's Bridge on the Nadiža, Javor summit on Pokljuka, the Linden at Rut, the source of the Črna in Logarska dolina, wine-growing Haloze, the Ormož lagoons, Tomaž's stone table at Žiri, the castle of Medijski grad at Izlake, the shell beach at Ankaran, Črni Kal castle, the stone table at Lipica, the lake of Petelinje jezero at Pivka, the source of the Ribnica at Ribnica, the marker for the 15th meridian at Vrhtrebnje, the source of the Krupa in Bela krajina, the Tisa in Strane, and many more such hidden gems.

It might be true that you can drive across Slovenia in one day, but

that is primarily a lure for tourists and will not offer you any deep satisfaction.

To really experience Slovenia, you need to discover what it conceals. The little pools, streams, mighty trees and natural features, to enjoy the vivid colours of rare flowers and hike over rocks.

All of this is Slovenia – infinite in its beauty. You can't see it and feel it in a single day. The right thing is to take time and step outside the box.



Castle Črni kal
Photo: Vojko Rotar

IN THE HEART OF TRIGLAV NATIONAL PARK

Pri Plajerju farm in Trenta brushes off European competition

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ
 PHOTO: PRI PLAJerJU FARM ARCHIVES



Stanka and her husband Marko are raising the next generation of Pretners.

The website of British media giant The Guardian published the readers’ choice of the 20 best farm stays in Europe. Pri Plajerju farm in Trenta was the winner.

“This country is dotted with amazing organic farm stays,” notes the report. “But we love Pri Plajerju in the Trenta valley. There’s something pure and timeless there. It has self-catering apartments, but we sleep in the hayloft – it’s incredibly good value. The hay beds are warm and cosy and it’s magical after a day walking the Soča trail. The mountain scenery is mind-blowing; you can help feed the animals in the morning, and the home-cooked food is fresh, filling and always served with a smile. It almost makes me want to move to the country,” says the commentary on the first-place winner.

Readers of The Guardian gave the people in Trenta a fine compliment with this award, and they also ranked among the 20 best farm stays the Francinovi Tourist Farm in the Karst, Pr’ Povšin in Bled and Lešnik Tourist Farm above Šmartno pri Slovenj Gradcu.

GUESTS WHO KNOW WHAT THEY WANT

Tourist farm guests are not exactly random tourists, but rather visitors who know what they want. *“The majority of our guests are regulars,”* confirms Stanka Pretner, who more than two decades ago left her native area of Ormož and settled in an Alpine valley.

She and her husband Marko are now raising the next generation of Pretners, three sons and a daughter. The family gained experience with tourism back in the 1980s renting out rooms, and soon after the new century began the couple upgraded everything into a full tourist farm. Without tourism, the Trenta valley would seem empty today. With six camp sites, all the apartments and weekend cottages there are more than 3,000 tourist beds available, generating income for around 200 local people proudly working away below the Alpine peaks.

In the entire Soča valley there are currently 600 accommodation units, including 12 tourist farms. They are all thriving. Demand for accommodation on tourist farms is three to five times greater than for other facilities. Farm stay tourism is certainly one of Slovenia’s biggest under-developed areas, with the potential to produce more five-star experiences.

Today the Pretners take care of 40 sheep, the mare Pika and Jaki the donkey, along with their faithful old dog Medo. Sometimes they get to enjoy the company of some Krško polje pig and some poultry.

The farm is situated in the heart of Triglav National Park, in the Trenta valley. It is located at the end of a secluded road, close to the forest and the River Soča.

The house has three apartments, with two separate cottages in the courtyard, children’s play equipment, sports equipment and a vegetable garden. The bottom level rooms of the organic tourist farm have been converted into a small wellness centre. It has an infrared sauna, shower and wooden massage pool, where guests can relax after an arduous day and enjoy the bubbling water. The younger members of the family – Matevž, Jakob, Gregor and the youngest Maruša – are happy to show the magic of life on a mountain farm, where there is room for Jaki the donkey, Pika the mare, sheep and lambs, pigs, egg-laying hens and broiler chickens, Medo the dog and the cats.

EXCLUSIVE SERIES

"It isn't just food, it's exclusive food that's the most important thing to offer," point out the Pretners.

More than half the meat offered to guests is game, which they hunt or buy only in this part of the Soča valley. The rest is for the most part their own lamb, and pork appears in their dried meat products.

They have observed that attitudes to food are improving, with guests paying a lot of attention to the origin and traceability of food. They eat less meat than in previous times. *"Even vegetarians have said they will eat some meat because they know it's really ours,"* adds Marko. They buy milk and dairy products from local organic farms. Since the youngsters of the family can now already handle most of the responsible work, the family will in future once again offer their own cheese and similar products, as they did before. Breakfast and dinner are high points of the hospital-

ity: homemade bread, rolls, cured mutton and pork products from meat produced on the farm and game meat, minced pork mash, cheese, quark with local Trenta potatoes, homemade pastries, vegetables and fruit served in the parlour, where a little library has been set up along with a play area for children.

The Pretner children are involved in everyday work, especially in summer during the holidays. In the autumn, when they return to school, the couple are left to themselves. The oldest son is studying for a zoological technology career, the middle son aims to continue the hunting tradition and is attending a gunsmith school in Austria, while the youngest son is at the grammar school in Tolmin.

The farm with its arrangement of facilities can accommodate 17 people, with a few extra sleeping spaces in the hayloft. Pri Plajerju farm hosts guests for at least 150 days a year, and spoils them with breakfast and dinner. *"We don't ask what they want to eat. We just cook for them,"* says Stanka. On average they stay in Trenta for five days, and some for as much as three weeks. The animals are of course a major attraction, and some guests come just because of them, with children especially interested in this part of farm life.



Sleeping spaces in the hayloft are specially attractive for the visitors.

PERSONAL CONTACT AND WARM HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Today Slovenia has more than 800 tourist farms, and although they differ from each other, they all have a single goal – to open up for the visitor an environment in which the idea of the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature is very real. In close contact with nature, with farming people and their culture, wisdom, habits and customs, guests once again feel themselves. At least that is how they respond when you ask them why they go to such farms.

In contrast to those abroad, which for the most part just offer overnight accommodation, guests in Slovenia are provided with a wealth of food and, importantly, a chance to spend time with the hosts.

Guests should feel welcome, that they have arrived among people who like them, emphasise the Pretners. They want to experience and feel as much as possible the life of the local people, which is especially interesting for those who live in the city. Such people make up the majority of visitors who come to Slovenia to spend their summer holiday on a tourist farm. They do not come just for the natural beauty, but most often and particularly for the personal contact, for a warm human experience. *"Here they experience a completely different world from the one they are used to at home,"* confides Matija Vimpolšek, President of the Association of Tourist Farms. Each year their numbers grow, and they are especially inspired and pleasantly surprised by the natural and cultural heritage they find, which is so diverse in Slovenia. The heritage, friendliness of the hosts and good food are what guests keep coming back for, as well as the tranquillity, birdsong, and greenery everywhere in a small area. They are most amazed at the fact that in the same day they can enjoy the mountains and the sea. On a global scale that is very rare.

Normal tourist farms must supply 50% of their own raw materials, while they can buy 30% from other farms and 20% in shops. The farms with the highest quality of accommodation and the best selection of gastronomy, wine and other attractions should become more well known in 2021, when Slovenia becomes a European Region of Gastronomy. The Association is making efforts to get mainstream restaurants and hotels to source more of their food from local Slovenian farms. The Ministry of Agriculture is also pursuing rural tourism as one of its ten principal products in the strategy of Slovenian tourism.



Homemade bread



Even vegetarians eat their dried meat products.



ISTRIAN CUISINE

A rich cultural heritage

Istrian cuisine has a special place in Slovenia's culinary wealth.
Photo: Matevž Kostanjšek, Gruša Zorn

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ

Slovenian Istria stretches from the Karst Rim in the east, the Adriatic Sea in the west, the border with Italy in the north to the River Dragonja in the south. The landscape of Istria is a very diverse overlapping of the sea, sunny hills and fertile valleys. And Istrian cuisine has a special place in Slovenia's culinary wealth.

Original local dishes and products often come from an ancient tradition linked to special events, holidays, religious and ethnic influences. This involves an interweaving of the traditional flavours of olives, seafood, wine, spices, fruit and vegetables. Everything comes with a flavour conjuring up the sun and sea.

SO MANY INCREDIBLE TASTES

Among Istria's protected trademark products are olives and olive oil. Back in the past, too, every Istrian village had its own mill, where olives were pressed with stones and oil was squeezed from the pulp. Grape growing is another important farming tradition that dates back to Roman times. Grapes ripen on south-facing terraced slopes and yield high-quality wine, including Refošk and Malvasia. And back in the beginning of the 19th century farmers were planting potatoes, tomatoes, garlic, onions, peas and beans on terraces and fields in the valleys. Later on they added Swiss chard, spinach, Savoy cabbage, aubergines, courgettes, artichokes, fennel and various types of lettuce. The forest undergrowth yielded an abundance of asparagus, which is typical of Istrian cuisine.

A highly prized and expensive variety of truffle, also named *diamond of the kitchen*, grows in the Koper hinterland.

Truffle foragers or hunters collect up to 250 kg of the white ones and from 150 to 200 kg of black truffles each year. Since the earliest times, Istria has been rich in fruit trees. Typical local trees in-

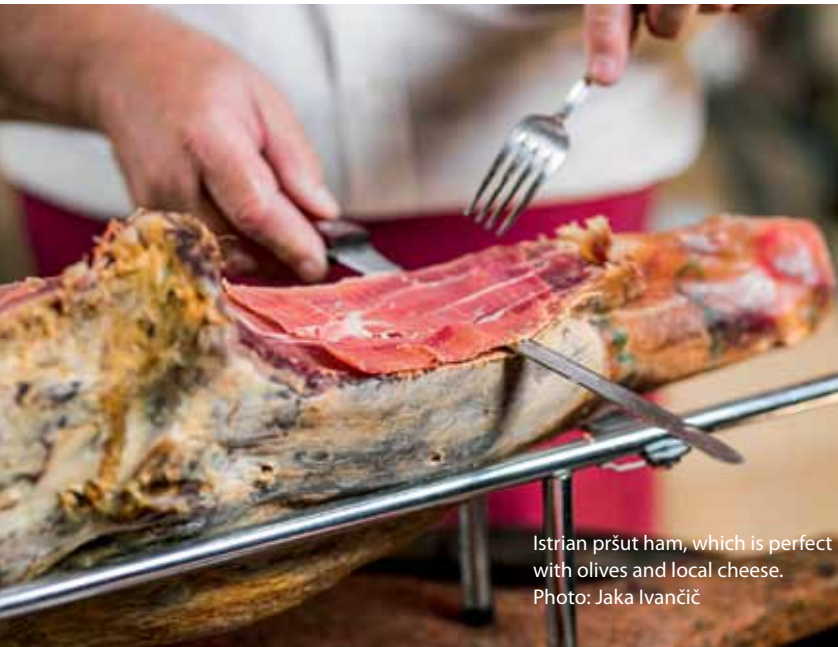
clude cherry, fig, pear, peach, apricot, persimmon and plum, as well as the service tree (which has a small pear-like fruit), medlar, jujube and almond. The local people prize early strawberries and autumn persimmons.

Salt has always played an important part in Istrian food. Sometimes it was used abundantly as a food preservative. The salt pans were first mentioned in the 13th century, and they flourished three centuries later. Today only a part of the remaining Sečovlje salt pans are still operating, and among them thrive protected halophyte plants, which the salt pan workers once used as food.

COPIOUS SPICES AND SEASONINGS

In the pleasant climate a range of spices and seasonings can grow. Closely integrated into Istrian cuisine, they enrich and enhance the flavour of every dish. Particular favourites are bay, marjoram, thyme, savory, oregano, sage, rosemary, basil, dill, coriander, capers, juniper berries, saffron, fennel, celery, parsley, onion and garlic. The region's often cold starter dishes include cured Istrian pršut ham, which is perfect with the addition of olives and local sheep's or cow's cheese. Local sausages and bacon can be accompanied by regional štorte preserved olives. Preserved aubergines and courgettes and bread with olives are a fine complement to meat dishes.

Of the fish dishes the Istrians offer cold starters of salt cod spread and salt cod with tomato sauce, various oily fish in onion



Istrian pršut ham, which is perfect with olives and local cheese.
Photo: Jaka Ivančič



Flour-based dishes play an important part in meals.
Photo: Jaka Ivančič

vinaigrette, cuttlefish, octopus, shellfish and crab salad and oysters with lemon.

Hot entrees include egg dishes or omelettes made with asparagus, local sausages, porcini mushrooms, truffles, tomatoes, radicchio and fresh garlic shoots. Alongside various omelettes, this group of dishes includes fried pršut with polenta, pršut in wine sauce, pršut in white wine with truffles, bacon and tomato, polenta and rocket, risotto and tagliatelle noodles with seafood, mussels in wine, shrimp in tomato sauce with Malvasia. Specialities include black squid ink risotto and truffles with Istrian fuži pasta, tagliatelle and gnocchi.

BEAN AND CORN STEW AND BEAN PASTA

Everyday dishes include minestrone. The pride of the minestrone dishes are bean and corn stew and bean and pasta stew (*paštafažoj*). There are many different kinds of minestrone, such as summer vegetable, barley, risotto-based minestrone and jota sauerkraut bean soup made without potatoes. Minestrone made in the old way is seasoned with pesto, which is made with finely diced bacon, garlic and parsley. Nowadays minestrone is more commonly seasoned with olive oil. In the past, Sundays and holidays were marked with beef, chicken and fish soup. Apart from the fact that they are enjoyed more frequently now, not much has changed.

Flour-based dishes play an important part in meals. Bread made from various flours and enriched with a range of added ingredients is popular.

Local maize, fig, milk and rye bread and bread with olives are very tasty. A special place among Istrian flour-based dishes is given to *nakelda*.

The basic ingredients are old breadcrumbs and savory, and the rest differ by location. Pasta made from wheat flour, eggs and water is one of the traditional staples. *Blečići*, macaroni, tagliatelle and *fuži* pasta are offered with a variety of sauces. Although gnocchi are Austrian, the Istrians have made them their own. They make potato, flour-based, bread, cheese and wheat grit gnocchi.

There are also plenty of Istrian dishes that are simply unimaginable without polenta, be it maize or wheat-based. The popular dumplings, made for the most part of phyllo dough stuffed with cheese, quark, spinach, *pršut* ham, potato, apple, walnuts and herbs, were once mainly holiday food in Istria.

TOMATO SAUCE OR ŠALŠA

From the earliest times, the inhabitants of Istria have been aware of the importance of vegetables and their health effects. Tomatoes are used as an addition to minestrone, soup, goulash, vegetable dishes and can be stuffed, baked or stewed. Surplus produce is turned into tomato sauce, or what they call *šalša*. Rocket is at

the same time a vegetable and healing herb. It is prepared with pasta, rice, potato, as a salad and a pizza topping. *Peski* (fresh garlic shoots) and asparagus, both wild and cultivated, are prepared with omelettes, salad and risotto. Artichokes are a Mediterranean plant, and are prized in Slovenian Istria for their therapeutic effects and special flavour. Courgettes are excellent fried, sautéed, stewed, stuffed, in salad and as fritters. Local Swiss chard is the perfect accompaniment to potato.

Spinach has also established its place in Istrian cuisine, boiled and prepared in salads, omelettes and wraps.



Salt has always played an important part in Istrian food.
Photo: Matevž Košanjšek, Gruša Zorn

Biži, or peas, originally from Asia, are used stewed or boiled as an accompaniment to meat dishes, in minestrone and mixed into a risotto known locally as riži-biži. Fennel is excellent boiled, drizzled with Béchamel and baked in the oven, pan-baked with pesto or butter and as a salad. Cabbage, cauliflower and Savoy cabbage are prepared in minestrone, as a vegetable side dish or as a stand-alone dish. Krodigini sausages or beans are good in minestrone, salads, with turnip and sausages and with cabbage. The Istrians like to make salad with lamb's lettuce, radicchio and dandelion. Potatoes are a staple among side dishes or as a dish on their own.

FISH – IMPORTANT PART OF THE CULTURE AND FOOD

Slovenia has predominantly oily fish, such as pilchards, sardines, mackerel, anchovies, jack mackerel and herring. The premium quality white fish sold most commonly in Slovenian restaurants are sea bass, gilthead, John Dory, sole and dentex. Lesser quality fish include hake, grey mullet, red scorpionfish, whiting and cod, of which the most prized is salt cod.

Fishmongers often sell mixed fish caught as bycatch under the names brodet or škrapunada. This group includes fish, crabs, cartilaginous fish and molluscs that do not reach the prescribed weight.

Lobster, crawfish, langoustine, prawn, *maja* crabs and *prugi* are the most prized local crayfish. In restaurants mussels, Noah's Ark shell, date mussels, scallops and oysters are very popular.

DOUGH DESSERTS

As in other places, desserts are the icing on the cake, so to speak. Most commonly desserts are prepared from phyllo, leavened, shortcrust, pasta and batter dough. Phyllo dough is used to make dumplings and strudels with apple, cherry, tarragon and quark filling. Leavened dough is used to make potica roll with apples, walnuts and pine nuts, Easter sweet bread, leavened pastries and *kiflji* croissants. Frittole doughnuts are made from leavened and unleavened dough; some contain raisins, others apple and raisins, others still have apple and fig. The richest of them are the Piran-style frittole. They are made with yellow squash, apples, dried figs, almonds, pine nuts, raisins, walnuts, hazelnuts, chocolate, sugar, rum or spirits, flour, eggs and vanilla.

MALVASIA – THE MOST TRADITIONAL GRAPEVINE

The Istrian climate is very favourable for grapevines, so the Istrians can make good wines that perfectly complement their food. Malvasia is the most traditional grape variety. It produces a white wine that goes well with dishes of fish, crayfish, molluscs and shellfish. It is served with bean, barley and other minestrone, risotto, pasta, vegetables, omelettes and white meat. Sweet Malvasia, which is typically produced where the grapes have over-ripened on the vine and therefore retain some unfermented sugar, is served with desserts such as Easter sweet bread, frittole, homemade biscuits and croissants. *Refošk* (Refosco) is the local red wine. Owing to its ruby red colour with tinges of purple, the local people refer to it as black wine. It is the perfect complement to Istrian pršut ham, homemade sausages, bacon, jota, minestrone with turnip and cabbage, omelette with *pršut*, bacon and asparagus, blood sausage or sweet mulca blood sausage and game dishes. Plenty of people also like to have Refošk with oily fish, especially if it is grilled. In the past the people of Izola also had a variety of sweet *Refošk*. They cultivated it on frames, like tomatoes. Its sweetness makes it the ideal accompaniment to cherry pie and apple strudel. Yellow Muscat is a white aromatic wine, with golden, almost bronze hues. It can come as a dry or sweet wine with low acidity. It is often served at the end of a meal.

It goes well with Easter sweet bread, deep fried *hroštula* pastries, frittole and strudel. Dry Yellow Muscat complements the flavours of pasta, mussels and saffron risotto strongly spiced with Mediterranean seasoning.

In addition to excellent wines, the inhabitants of this area are known for various spirits. Since the earliest times they have most commonly distilled spirits from the wine press residue, called *tropinovec*. They also distil spirits from mulberries, figs, service fruit, persimmon and plums. They add to tropinovec spirits young green walnuts, common rue and juniper berries, thereby producing the local spirit varieties of orehovec, ruda and brinovec respectively. *Ruda* and *brinovec* are used to ease stomach complaints, and are also drunk after a large meal.

Yes, without evening mentioning the many other delights that await you, the food and wine are reasons enough to visit Slovenian Istria. We look forward to seeing you there!



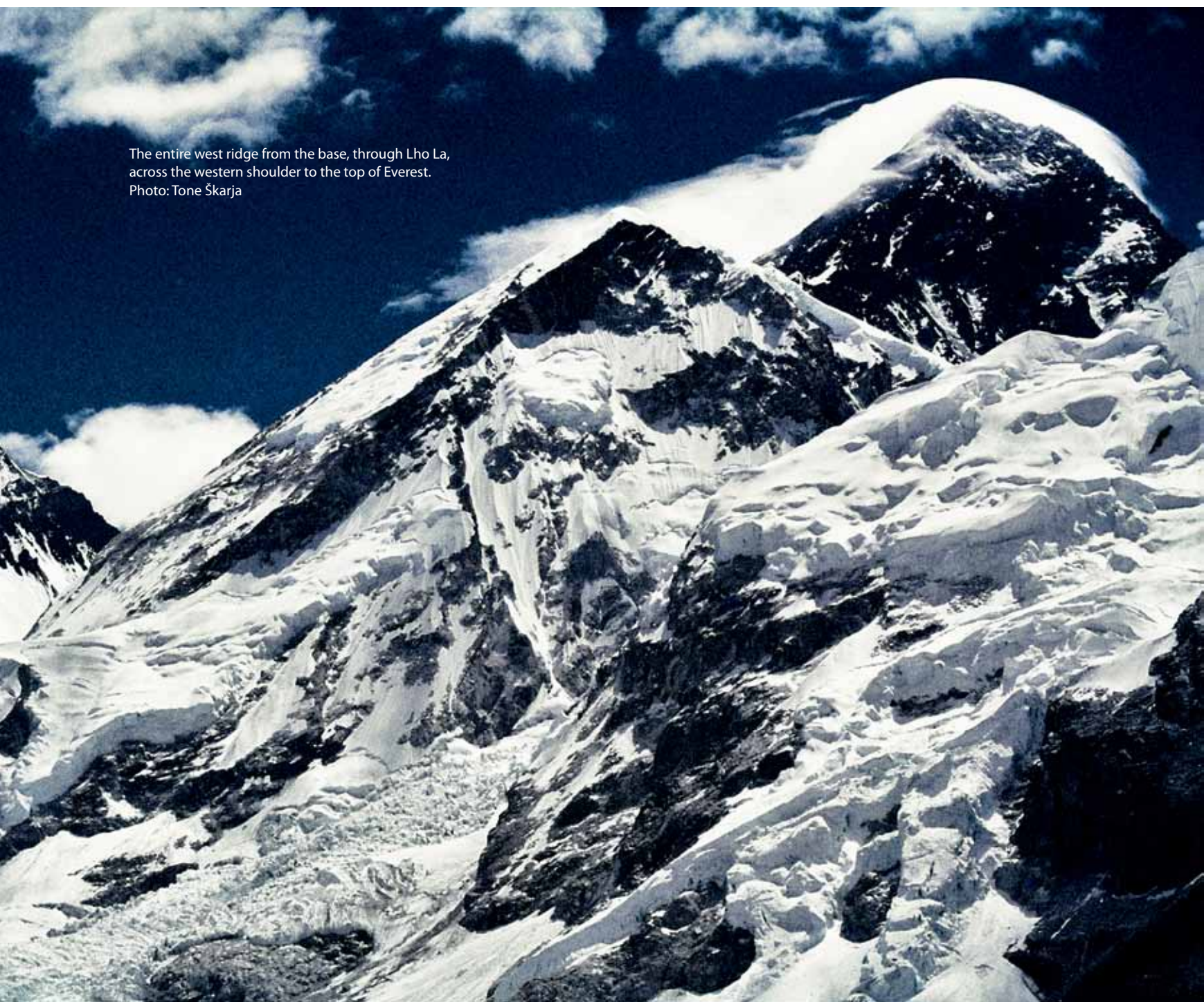
Everyday dishes include *minestrone*.
Photo: Matevž Kostanjšek, Gruša Zorn

A HISTORIC ACHIEVEMENT

40 years of Slovenes on Everest

ANA KRAŠEVEC

The entire west ridge from the base, through Lho La, across the western shoulder to the top of Everest.
Photo: Tone Škarja



In May of this year we marked the 40th anniversary of the first Slovenian ascent of the 8848-metre high Mt Everest. This success was also a final confirmation that Slovenes, at the time formally still Yugoslavs, are among the world's elite Himalayan climbers. The 25-member expedition made history by conquering a new primary route along the hitherto unclimbed west ridge of the world's tallest mountain.

The 25-member 1979 expedition included 21 Slovenes, two Croats and two Bosnian climbers. They were accompanied by a support crew of six people, including two doctors and a reporter from the Slovenian newspaper Delo. They brought 20 tons of equipment, and were joined by 25 porters in Nepal.

They left in March and were finally able to depart for their eagerly awaited goal after a long wait for a permit in Kathmandu.

They had to bring in all of their equipment, which was a major logistical challenge. During the long weeks of waiting for the climb, which was also delayed by bad weather, snow and strong winds, their only contact with home was letters and postcards – they wrote around 7,000 of them – and amateur radio links.

Viki Grošelj, a member of the expedition and a legend of Slovenian climbing, said: *"The team was big and strong, but the mountain was powerful and demanding. It hit us with storms, strong winds, difficult terrain and low temperatures, and steadily decimated the team. Fewer and fewer of us were able to continue. But we had to keep going higher and higher, and in worse and worse conditions."*

STANDING ON TOP OF THE WORLD

After huge amounts of effort, difficulties and frostbite – they were climbing in temperatures of -40 °C – the expedition achieved its much desired success on 13 May 1979. Andrej Štremfelj and Nejc

Zaplotnik managed to reach the summit. At 1.51 pm Nepalese time, Zaplotnik reported the good news to expedition leader Tone Škarja. *"Tone, we're on the top. We're sitting by the Chinese pyramid, and we don't know what to do with ourselves!"* Štremfelj still recalls those historic moments. After a 45-day battle with the difficult west ridge, intense cold, strong winds and lack of oxygen, they could take in the emotion of the occasion only for a moment, slapped each other on the back and cried a few tears of joy, but soon they had to pay attention to getting down the mountain.



Andrej Štremfelj on the summit.
Photo: Nejc Zaplotnik

Štremfelj, who reached the top of Everest at barely 22 years of age, attributed his success to Zaplotnik's steadiness and support. In comparison with the amount of work they had done transporting their equipment and food and setting up their tents, the climbing was a relatively easy task. Although their team of Sherpas was top-notch, after two months they were exhausted, but motivation worked its magic. In Štremfelj's opinion, reaching the summit was a success for the entire expedition, which had breathed as one to arrive at their common goal.

THE MOUNTAIN GIVES, AND THE MOUNTAIN TAKES AWAY

Two days later, Stane Belak, Stipe Božić and lead Sherpa Ang Phu reached the summit. They were caught by nightfall and had to bivouac at 8300 metres. On their way down the next morning, Ang Phu lost his footing on the steep ice. He fell more than two

thousand metres to his death. The accident strongly affected the team. There was no celebration for reaching the summit, recalls Štremfelj. The Sherpas and Ang Phu's family were extremely upset by the loss of their leader, and the team still had a lot of work to do, as everything still had to be packed and carried down into the valley.

Unfortunately, less than four years after his historic summit of Everest, Nejc Zaplotnik died in an avalanche on the slopes of the 8125-metre Himalayan peak Manaslu.

AN INCOMPARABLE SUCCESS

History has shown what the Slovenian expedition actually achieved. Over the next few years numerous expeditions attempted to repeat their route, but to this day only a Bulgarian

expedition (in 1984) managed to repeat their exact route across the entire west ridge, unfortunately with high numbers of casualties. Today, sixteen different primary routes have been climbed up the world's tallest mountain. In the unanimous opinion of the world's climbing authorities, our route, at the time known as the Yugoslavian route, remains the most difficult of all the routes up Everest.

The magnitude of their success thus only became clear later on, as the route has gained additional respect among the climbing community.

On the 40th anniversary of the climb, expedition leader Tone Škarja commented that *"the crowds that reach the peak nowadays don't really touch the mountain except at the summit."*

Today, climbing Everest is a completely different story compared to how it once was, and it can be conquered by more or less anyone who has around 60,000 euros to spend on it. *"Our only worry was overtaking the Austrians on the glacier in setting up our tents, and we had to set up around 20 of them. Now there are 500 of them there at the same time,"* said Štremfelj. When the weather conditions are good, the great majority of climbers, which can mean up to 450 people a day, climb up the same route in tightly packed columns. The other 15 routes, including ours, are left untouched.

"It's only when we look at the climbing equipment used by that expedition that we realise how far away those times already are and what was needed to succeed at that time," says president of the Slovenian Alpine Association Jože Rován. Our climbing successes have gradually brought us to the point where we are rubbing shoulders with nations with great mountaineering traditions. Our reputation in the climbing world is proof of this, as well as the numerous Slovenian recipients of Golden Pitons and other international awards.

To date, 18 Slovenes have conquered the 8848-metre peak on three different routes. Slovenian climbers can pride themselves on a primary route, a female ascent, an ascent without supplemental oxygen and the first descent from the summit on skis. These enviable statistics rank Slovenia at the very top of the Himalayan superpowers.



Leader of the expedition Tone Škarja at Base Camp.
Photo: Tone Škarja's archive



Andrej Štremfelj, Nejc Zaplotnik and Marko Štremfelj before leaving Camp 1 on their way to the summit.
Photo: Tone Škarja



Marko Štremfelj and Nejc Zaplotnik on their way to Camp 5 (Camp 4 visible below).
Photo: Andrej Štremfelj



Stane Belak, Jože Zupan and Bojan Pollak in the ice underground of Camp 1.
Photo: Tone Škarja



Camp 2.
Photo: Vlado Mesarič

ANŽE KOPITAR AND TOMAŽ RAZINGAR HOCKEY ACADEMY

Let's play the game!

POLONA PREŠEREN



Tomaž Razingar and Anže Kopitar are two of Slovenia's best ice hockey players of all times. Photo: Polona Prešeren

The tradition of Slovenian ice hockey is a very long and rich one. It is one of the traditional sports in which our athletes have achieved exceptional results. The Slovenian ice hockey team has twice qualified for the Winter Olympics – it thrilled the audience in Sochi 2014 and again in PyeongChang 2018. This achievement is even more remarkable if we consider that Slovenia only has around 150 professional players.

Part of the Slovenian ice hockey fairy tale in Sochi 2014 was played by Anže Kopitar and Tomaž Razingar. Anže is undoubtedly the best Slovenian ice hockey player of all time, captain of the LA Kings team and a star player of this NHL franchise. Razingar has been the captain of the Slovenian national team for many years, and is the player with the highest number of appearances for the country.

Kopitar and Razingar are also two old friends who joined their knowledge and forces in the Ice Hockey Academy, which they have been organising for young ice hockey players since 2016.

Matjaž Kopitar, Anže's father and coach, and the man behind the Slovenian national ice hockey team's biggest successes, also contributes his expertise to the Academy. While Anže Kopitar continues his career in the USA, Razingar is now a retired ice hockey player who found new challenges in the business sector. He said: *"Towards the end of my ice hockey career I thought a lot about my life after my last game. I managed to take care of many things even before that happened; I've started a food service business and I rent apartments. But I could never completely write off ice hockey. It's simply a part of me and it will always remain so; after all, I've dedicated a large part of my life to that particular sport. It seems right to me to share the experience and knowledge that I've gained in Slovenia and abroad with younger generations."*

The Academy, aimed at athletes aged 7 to 16, is certainly very popular among

young players, who see it as a great opportunity to learn from the NHL star player and the legend of Slovenian ice hockey.

Amateur ice hockey players, whose number is increasing in recent years, also have a chance to improve their skills. Such players are well organised in clubs, and even have their own league.

The Ice Hockey Academy employs 16 coaches, mainly from Slovenia, in cooperation with experts from Canada, Finland and Austria. Since the Academy is held in Bled, there also are plenty of possibilities for the young participants to spend quality free time, from swimming in the lake to summer sledding and visiting an adrenaline park. Last year, the Academy's special guests were the girls who play top-level ice hockey in Slovenia. Perhaps the knowledge and motivation they gained at the Academy helped them achieve one of the biggest successes yet seen in Slovenian women's ice hockey, as they were promoted to a stronger division this year. The Academy is thus delighted to invite back again for more training.

A PLACE WHERE EXPERIENCE MEETS YOUTH

The Academy also invites special guests who always delight young players. Thus it has been visited by many famous faces from the Slovenian national ice hockey team, including Robert Kristan, Andrej Tavželj, David Rodman, Žiga Pavlin and Žiga Jeglič. The Academy also provides a separate programme for promising goalkeepers, which involves working with specialised goalkeeping coaches. In charge of this programme is Klemen Mohorič, the

only Slovene who works as a coach in KHL, the second best ice hockey league in the world.

Most of the Academy participants come from Slovenia, but there are also lots of young players from Austria and Croatia and, to a lesser extent, from Serbia, Macedonia, Slovakia, Canada, the USA,

Sweden, Belgium, Russia, and even from the United Arab Emirates and China.

“There were some training camps when I was young, but it’s impossible to compare those with the opportunities that are available today. Training sites for young athletes are at a very high level now and, looking back, I would be very happy to have had the chance to get advice from an older and more experienced player when I was a kid,” added the now experienced and very successful Kopitar.



Tomaž Razinger played 212 games for Slovenian national team.
Photo: Hockey Academy archives



Anže Kopitar won Stanley Cup twice with his team the LA Kings.
Photo: Hockey Academy archives

Anže Kopitar is also the ambassador of the LIFE Lynx project, whose aim is protecting the lynx population from extinction and the long-term conservation of the species in the area of the Dinarides and the South-Eastern Alps. The lynx population is currently extremely small and isolated, with the remaining individuals closely related to each other. This degree of genetic affinity should therefore be decreased by the introduction of healthy specimens from another population that is not endangered. A lynx called Goru from the Romanian Carpathians was accordingly recently released into this area. His mission is to prevent the extinction of the Slovenian lynx population.

“It’s a new chance for our lynx. With this first Romanian lynx we made a major step towards the conservation of the species in Slovenia,” said Kopitar. But perhaps you are wondering what the connection is between ice hockey and this animal? The answer is simple – lynx is the symbol of Slovenian national ice hockey team.

GO ROGLA!

Primož Roglič – a sportsman who motivates and inspires

TEA KNAFLIČ
PHOTO: STA ARCHIVES



For sure he is an inspiration for many young cyclists.

I myself am not a passionate sports fan. But some sports people simply move you. They inspire admiration. For a moment you stop, drop all thoughts and simply observe. In the moment when an athlete gives everything of themselves, you see the warrior that resides in the person. You see power, you see determination. And at the end of the battle, the face reflects satisfaction.

Primož Roglič tells his story by being who he is. He tells his story of courage, perseverance and great love of sport. As a lively child he started out kicking a football. After that, his enthusiasm shifted to ski jumping. Evidence of his determination can be seen in the successes he notched up as a jumper. In 2006, together with his teammates he jumped to a silver medal in the youth world championship. Along with the other lads he reached one step higher on the podium the very next year, becoming a youth world champion in Italy. He can also boast two victories in the Continental Cup. The first was won at Planica and the second at Westby. In March 2007, even after a horrific fall on the Planica Giant, he lost neither his will nor his courage. He continued training, but since he achieved none of the results he was targeting he switched his jumping skis for a bicycle.

IN 2012 HE ENDED HIS CAREER AS A SKI JUMPER AND TOOK UP CYCLING

He fell in love with cycling when he started doing duathlons, which are a combination of running and cycling. First comes a running leg, followed by cycling and then another running leg. Primož ran well but was not happy with his cycling. As a true fighter, cycling then became a challenge for him. With several thousand kilometres behind him, he started showing some interest in professional cycling. He began making enquiries among Slovenian cycling clubs as to how he might join them. His only response was from the Radenska Cycling Club, where he received his first training programme. Soon he was offered a chance with

the Adria Mobil cycling team, and from 2013 to 2015 he rode as an Adria Mobil team member. Since 2016 he has been a member of the Dutch team Lotto Jumbo, for which he still rides today.

Primož has admitted that at the beginning it was very tough, and he keeps reiterating that with every race he learns something new. Cycling is a very specific sport.

At first glance it might appear to be an individual sport, but that is not the case. The winner's victory in the majority of cases is made possible by his team. From the first kilometre the team is playing out tactics, and leaving nothing to chance.

The roles of individuals in the team are clearly defined, with one common goal – team victory. The teammates act as assistants trying to keep the team leader as rested as possible up to the moment when he can show all his ability and get a good result for the team. This means that during the race they need to ensure that the team leader has enough food and drink. The assistants thus frequently return to the back-up vehicles and bring energy bars and drinks. In the event of a fall or technical problem, the assistants also help the team leader get back into the peloton. Sometimes you will see one of the assistants lending their bike to the team leader. They all work for the good of the team.



His goal is always a victory.

The cyclists have assigned roles in the team according to the abilities they have. Some of them are outstanding sprinters, while others are good on climbs. Sprinters are extremely explosive and fast, so they are great for the sprint finish to a race. But they have slightly greater body mass, so are not so good on inclines. Others, meanwhile, are outstanding in time trials. This, of course, includes Primož.

It is especially interesting to watch a bicycle race where a small group, or more rarely an individual, decides on a breakaway. Usually breakaways do not just happen by chance. Teams have their tactics on how to snatch victory. You have to attack at just the right moment, in the right place. Right when it starts, the breakaway is powerful enough to generate a major advantage in a short time. Riders make a breakaway for two reasons: they want to ease the work of their teammates, or this is the only way they can secure a good result, since not all teams have equally good sprinters. Breakaways are common, but they rarely succeed. In any event, they make the race more exciting.

As you can see, cycling is a team sport, so the mood in the team is important. Cooperation among the teammates is vital. Primož, as his colleagues describe him, is fun, relaxed and knows what he's doing on a bicycle. His colleagues love him. They are a very closely knit team, which you can tell by the team performances.

To date Primož has notched up more than 30 wins. Each year he adds several new ones to the list. These are victories in the biggest, hardest and most famous races. Giro d'Italia, Tour de France, Vuelta al Pais Vasco, Tour de Romandie, Tirreno – Adriatico, Tour d'Azerbaidjan... his success is huge.

We should also mention the Tour of Slovenia, which Primož first won in 2015. The 22nd Tour of Slovenia produced once again a Slovenian champion, who experienced his win very emotionally. Sports fans were amazed at his incredible transformation from a ski jumper to a top professional cyclist. He repeated his victory in the Tour of Slovenia in 2018. Despite the stiff competition, before the Tour of Slovenia he stated his clear goal – victory. Just like his own ambitions, those of the entire Slovenian public were high. Richer for the experiences he had accumulated from race to race, he also fulfilled his expectations.

In all the races where the competition is fiercest, Primož Roglič can measure up to the best. He has secured for himself a winning mindset. Now he knows that an individual from a small country can also win the biggest race. The biggest victory is knowing that you can do it. Bravo Primož!



In the company of the best.

