



sunny, unique, tasty

I FEEL  
SLOVENIA

# Highlights of Slovenia

# SLOVENIA IS THE REAL FEELING



Slovenia has it all – landscape, cultural heritage, countless opportunities for sports, many cultural events and excellent cuisine and wine. Small and sweet, friendly and welcoming, green, delicious and joyful – Slovenia is a country of feelings.

Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik

## IDENTITY

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

Slovenia is a small but remarkably diverse country, with pristine nature, a vibrant culture, a rich history and an enviable quality of life. Two thirds of Slovenia's territory are covered with forests, with green being the dominant colour. It is more than just a colour; it is Slovenian green, which forms the core of the I feel Slovenia brand.

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

# A TYPICAL SLOVENIAN

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

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

We have many things in common with other nations, but at the same time we have significant distinctive features. One of the most important distinctions is the Slovenian language, spoken by two million people. Slovenian is among the rare languages which, in addition to the singular and plural, still has dual forms. The majority of Slovenians are fluent in foreign languages.



Photo: Nada Žgank/www.slovenia.si

# SLOVENIAN WAY OF LIFE

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

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

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

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

# REGIONS

*Slovenia's location at the crossroads of the Alps, the Mediterranean, the Pannonian Plain and the Dinaric Mountain Range, has through the centuries enabled its regions to develop different economic activities, lifestyles and expressions of cultural creativity. Some regions are of historical origin (e.g. Gorenjska, Dolenjska, Notranjska, Primorska, Štajerska, Koroška and Prekmurje) while others were created after the Second World War by political decisions (e.g. Pomurje, Posočje and Kozjansko). Among the greatest treasures of these regions are the diversity of dialects of the Slovenian language, different housing and gastronomic traditions, popular entertainment and other aspects of the everyday life of the local population.*



Photo: Aleš Fevžer/www.slovenia.info

## LJUBLJANA

The capital of Slovenia is Ljubljana. It is the largest city and home to 280,000 Slovenians, as well as the political, business, educational, cultural and geographical centre of Slovenia.

Archaeological findings from the Bronze Age are proof that as early as 2,000 BC, fishermen and hunters lived in pile-dwellings on the lake which once covered the Ljubljana basin.

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

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

## NOTRANJSKA

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

The intermittent Lake Cerknica, Postojna Cave, the picturesque Križna Cave with its small lakes and other karst phenomena. The karst caves are also the habitat of the biggest cave-dwelling animal in the world: the olm (*Proteus anguinus*) or "human fish".

The region is also famous for carnival costumes: The Cerknica *laufarji* (Runners) and witch costumes in Cerknica.



*The town of Idrija is notable for its special Idrija-type bobbin lace, one of the finest expressions of Slovenian handicraft traditions. The town was also made famous by its mercury mine, now turned into a museum exhibiting many technical inventions and machines.*

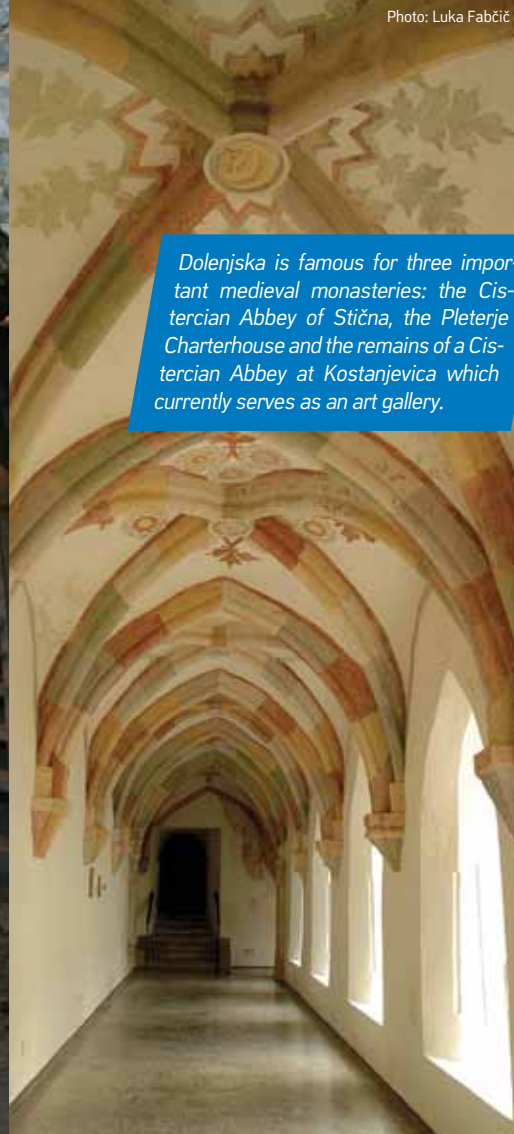
## DOLENJSKA AND BELA KRAJINA

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

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

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

The Kočevje area is covered by vast forests, the largest primeval woodland in Europe and a protected area since 1888, where many wild animals live, including the brown bear, wolf and lynx.



*Dolenjska is famous for three important medieval monasteries: the Cistercian Abbey of Stična, the Pleterje Charterhouse and the remains of a Cistercian Abbey at Kostanjevica which currently serves as an art gallery.*



*The wine-producing districts of Slovenske gorice and Prelekija are a picturesque land of rolling hills and plains between the rivers Mura and Drava. Radenci is an important local centre due to its springs of Radenska mineral water and health and spa tourism.*

## ŠTAJERSKA

Maribor is the second largest city in Slovenia, lying between wine-producing hills and the forested slopes of the Pohorje. The symbiosis of the city and the vine is affirmed by the 400-year old vine of the local *žametovka* variety. It is the oldest vine in the world.

Celje, once the seat of the Counts of Cilli, an influential aristocratic dynasty from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, is today one of Slovenia's most dynamic and rapidly developing towns. Celje is not far from the Savinja and Šaleška valleys. The former is known for hop cultivation. The Štajerska and Dolenjska regions meet in Posavje and Bizeljsko where you can relax in one of the many thermal spas.

The unspoiled landscape of Kozjansko offers quality produce, such as old apple varieties grown in orchards surrounded by meadows, characteristic sights in the Kozjansko Regional Park.

Ptuj is one of Slovenia's oldest towns. The most prominent features of the town are its medieval castle and the oldest wine cellar in Slovenia.

The health resort town of Rogaška Slatina has a mineral water therapy tradition spanning 400 years. It has developed into a modern health and wellness centre. The town also has a rich glassmaking tradition.



## PREKMURJE

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

In the village of Bogojina, a famous church was built between 1925 and 1927. It was designed by the architect Jože Plečnik, who decorated its interior with local pottery items.

Prekmurje is famous for its cuisine. Traditional dishes include Prekmurje layer cake (*prekmurska gibanica*), Prekmurje ham, Prekmurje stew (*bograč*), potato mush (*dödöll*), strudels (*retaši*) and cakes (*zlevanke*). The culinary delights are served with quality wines, spirits and liqueurs. Prekmurje is also famed for its home-made jam.

## KOROŠKA

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

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

Slovenj Gradec, Ravne na Koroškem and Dravograd are its biggest towns. Slovenj Gradec is an important business and cultural centre of the region famed for its fine art galleries and biennial exhibitions of handicrafts. It was also proclaimed a Peace Messenger City by the United Nations.

In the Mežica Valley lies the well-known Ravenska železarna ironworks. At Mežica, the disused lead mine has been preserved and converted into an exceptional museum, which is a cultural attraction popular with visitors.

*Koroška is rich in forests – dark green spruce forests with an increasing number of larches at higher elevations. It is also a habitat of capercaillies, an endangered bird species.*



## GORENJSKA

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

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

Kranjska Gora has for many years hosted Men's Alpine Ski World Cup races. Slalom and giant slalom events on the slope of Vitranc are legendary. Planica is a cradle of ski jumping that is visited every year by the very best athletes. World Cup competitions in the biathlon are organised every year at Pokljuka.

Lake Bled with its picturesque island is a unique attraction.

*The Alpine world of Gorenjska covers 20% of Slovenia's territory. Mountain trails are well marked and maintained, as mountaineering is one of the popular pastimes in Slovenia.*



# GASTRONOMY OF SLOVENIA



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

## PRIMORSKA

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

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

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

The world-famous white Lipizzaner horses were named after the village of Lipica in Kras. For some these are the best riding horses in the world.

Kras is famed for its cured ham or prosciutto (*kraški pršut*). It also gave its name to karstology, the science investigating karst phenomena. Seemingly uninteresting on the surface, the karst underground world is extraordinary and mysterious. The Škocjan Caves are a registered UNESCO World Heritage Site.

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

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

Primorska, Posavje and Podravje are the three wine-producing regions of Slovenia, each offering a wide range of outstanding wines. Typical, native wines deserve special mention: *šipon*, *ranina*, *cviček*, *teran*, *grganja*, *klarnica*, *rebula* and *zelen*.



Photo: UKOM Archive

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

*Protected Designation of Origin: Nanoški sir (Nanos Cheese), Mohant (Mohant Cheese), prekmurska šunka (Ham of Prekmurje), Ekstra deviško oljčno olje Slovenske Istre (Extra virgin olive oil from Slovenian Istria), Kočevski gozdni med (Kočevje forest honey)*

*Protected Geographical Indication: Kraški pršut (Karst prosciutto), Kraška panceta (Karst pancetta), Kraški zašink (Karst pork meat product made of neck), Prleška tunka, Štajersko prekmursko bučno olje (Styrian-Prekmurje pumpkin seed oil), Ptujski luk (Ptuj onion), Slovenski med (Slovenian honey)*

*Protected Specialty Guaranteed: Prekmurska gibanica (Prekmurje layer cake), Idrijski žlikrofi (Idrija dumplings), Belokranjska pogača (Bela Krajina cake)*

# NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY

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

One tenth of Slovenia's territory is protected under nature conservation laws. The first natural park in Slovenia was established in 1888 – the forests of Kočevje are the only preserved primeval woodland in Europe. The Triglav National Park, at 83,807 hectares, is the biggest Slovenian park. It was named after Slovenia's highest summit, Triglav (2,864 m). Three regional parks (Kozjansko, Notranjska and Škocjan Caves) and 44 landscape parks are intended for the protection of heritage and diversified landscape, forests and native plant and animal species.

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

Slovenia is the habitat of 140 animal and plant species out of 900 protected species which are rare or threatened in the European Union. In other words: as many as 15% of these plant and animal species are present on 0,5% of the European Union's territory. Among them is the brown bear – the largest animal (it weighs more than 300 kilograms) protected in the European Union within the Natura 2000 Network. The banks of Slovenian streams are home to the smallest animal on this list – the minute land snail of the *Vertigo* genus.

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

## FOREST

*Slovenia is a heavily forested land (58% of its territory is covered by forests), ranking 3<sup>rd</sup> in Europe.*

## SLOVENIA HAS MANY THERMAL AND MINERAL SPRINGS:

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

## WATER

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

## SPECIFIC FEATURES

Slovenians have made significant contributions to the world's treasure chest of knowledge. To name just a few: the theory of space travel (Herman Potočnik Noordung), logarithmic tables (Jurij Vega) and the physical law of thermal radiation (Jožef Stefan).

Slovenians pursue many hobbies. Gardening is a popular pastime and home grown vegetables a special feature.

Hiking has traditionally been one of the favourite leisure-time activities in Slovenia.

Our skiing tradition is a longstanding one, and Slovenia is actually home to the oldest pair of skis in Central Europe.

The Logar Valley is one of the most beautiful Alpine valleys in Europe. Shaped like an amphitheatre, the peaks of the Kamnik and Savinja Alps rise high above the majestic forests and lush meadows. It is situated between 730 and 1,000 m above sea level and measures 10 km in length and 250 metres in width. Its jewel in the crown is the Rinka Waterfall (80 m high).

*Slovenian hayracks are one of the most prominent and recognisable elements of our cultural heritage. The hayrack is by definition an interdependently standing construction, fixed, mainly of wood, open but covered with a roof, designed for storage and drying hay. The roof of this type of hayrack is double-sided, covered with different materials, from hay, to brick and cement, and today with sheet metal.*

*I feel green.*