

MEDIA SURVIVAL KIT

KIT DE SURVIE DES MÉDIAS



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

Welcoming Address by the Acting Director of the Government Communication Office and Official Spokesperson in Ljubljana during the Slovenian Presidency of the EU



Anže Logar, MA

Dear Journalist,

Welcome to Slovenia. We have six months of cohabitation ahead of us, six months’ worth of opportunities for an insight into the ‘Slovenian way’, 26 weeks of Europe with some Slovenian seasoning...

This editorial is not one of those saying: “...Slovenia will strive towards progress in all areas...” Being a journalist, you know very well (perhaps even too well) that this is simply impossible.

The following pages are a kind of survival kit, with plenty of information on how to ‘make it through’ Slovenia’s EU presidency. Ours is one of the smallest EU member states, so you would be hard pressed to get lost in the country. But just to be on the safe side, we have included a few maps. And since we have only blown out our third candle surrounded by the EU family, we have taken things a little further and set down one or two items about our pretty country, good food and kind people.

Presiding over the Council of the EU is a difficult task for all of us. Statistics speak in our favour. We were the first country from the Fifth Enlargement to adopt the euro; we did away with internal EU borders on 1 January. And this will be our first climb to the top of the EU – after a modest three-year preparation period!

Foreigners tell us that we are courageous, but fortune, as they say, favours the bold. We like to joke by saying that we are lucky primarily because we are the first to preside – and the reason is demographics. The most pessimistic projection of the Slovenian birth rate forecasts that there will be 200,000 fewer Slovenes during the next Slovenian presidency. Even now, questions of how – in terms of human resources – we will be able to pull off such an important project often seem to be imposing themselves. One cannot help wondering what questions will arise in the run-up to our eighth Presidency somewhere around the year 2100, when (according to projections), only some 200,000 Slovenes will be left.

As a nation, we Slovenes are very keen on sports. We are constantly in pursuit of various sporting feats on a global scale, trying to persuade the rest of the world that we can succeed. And we will succeed this time around, too. So let me conclude with a parable from the world of sports. This Media Guide and the entire media logistic support for the events taking place during Slovenia’s Presidency should be used like ski wax. This enables skis to glide faster down a slope, but only when the surface is as it should be. If the weather does not provide a sufficient layer of snow, no matter how well-waxed the skis, a grassy surface simply does not work. So may the weather be on our side, let the news be as abundant as snowflakes, and may you have as many readers, listeners or viewers as possible. Now that Slovenia is taking the lead...

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1. MEETINGS CALENDAR

MAIN EVENTS IN SLOVENIA
(ALL AT BRDO CONFERENCE CENTRE)

DATE	EVENT TITLE	HOST
8. January	Working Meeting of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia with the European Commission	Prime Minister Janez Janša
24–26 January	Informal ministerial meeting on Justice and Home Affairs (JHA)	Minister of Justice Lovro Šturm Minister of the Interior Dragutin Mate
30 January– 2 February	Informal ministerial meeting on Employment and Gender Equality	
	Ministerial Conference on Gender Equality	Minister of Labour, Family and Employment Marjeta Cotman
21–22 February	Informal ministerial meeting on Defence	Minister of Defence Karl Erjavec
11–12 March	Ministerial Conference on External Border Management	Minister of the Interior Dragutin Mate
16–17 March	Informal ministerial meeting on Sport	Minister of Education and Sport Milan Zver
28–29 March	Informal ministerial meeting on Foreign Affairs (Gymnich)	Minister of Foreign Affairs Dimitrij Rupel
4–5 April	Informal ministerial meeting on Finance (ECOFIN)	Minister of Finance Andrej Bajuk
11–12 April	Informal ministerial meeting on Environment	Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning Janez Podobnik
14–16 April	Informal ministerial meeting on Competitiveness	Minister of the Economy Andrej Vizjak Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology Mojca Kucler Dolinar
17–18 April	Informal ministerial meeting on Health	Minister of Health Zofija Mazej Kukovič
5–6 May	Informal ministerial meeting on Transport	Minister of Transport Radovan Žerjav
25–27 May	Informal ministerial meeting on Agriculture	Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Iztok Jarc

MEETINGS OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL
IN BRUSSELS

13–14 March
19–20 June

2. THE PRESIDENCY WEBSITE

www.eu2008.si

The Presidency website www.eu2008.si is the central information platform for the Slovenian Presidency of the EU. It is available in three languages (Slovene, English and French) and provides the latest information on the Presidency and various services for users.

Information

In the '[News and Documents](#)' section you can find the latest press releases, CFSP statements, statements in international organisations, speeches and interviews.

The [Meeting Calendar](#) is the central point of our Presidency website. It includes all relevant information on individual events, from organisational information and the media programme to press releases, meeting conclusions, and photos from the event etc.

Under the '[Policy Areas](#)' section, which is subdivided according to the Council's configurations, Slovenian ministries present their priorities for the EU Council Presidency. The European Council is a separate item in this section. Developments in the subject areas assigned to it are presented here (e.g. the Lisbon Strategy).

In separate '[Welcome to Slovenia](#)' section you can also find all necessary (travel and business) information on your host.

Services

Media representative planning to attend any meetings taking place in Slovenia can obtain their accreditation on-line through the Presidency website.

Live stream, video, audio and photo archives from ministerial events in Slovenia are also available. Anyone can subscribe to daily news alerts and the weekly newsletter.

We also provide you with easy access to hotel booking (accommodation), travel and the latest weather information.

If you need further information,
please contact:

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Mobile phone: + 386 51 371 863

E-mail: natasa.pavsek@gov.si

web.eu2008@gov.si



3. MEDIA ACCREDITATION with the POOLING REGIME

As is usual, every Presidency, and almost everything to do with media attendance at various meetings, starts with the accreditation procedure.

The link to the accreditation form for selected events during Slovenia's Presidency is available at the Presidency website at www.eu2008.si, and should be completed online. To make it easier for you, after registering and entering some valuable information about you and your media outlet (don't forget the photo in the advised format and a letter from your editor if you don't have a press card :)), you are invited to mark the events you wish to attend. These include informal ministerial meetings, selected conferences and EU-third country meetings held in Slovenia.

We ask you to apply 14 days prior to the date of the event in question at the latest. To avoid printing unnecessary badges, you'll be sent a confirmation e-mail 7 days before every selected meeting. The only thing you have to do is to click on the message sent to your e-mail and confirm your arrival.

You will be able to change and update your meeting selections at any time, and may add to or cancel the applications upon entering your password at registration.

When you arrive in Slovenia your accreditation badge will be waiting for you at the Media Accreditation Desk at Brdo Congress Centre (or at some other venue, if different from Brdo).

You are expected to collect the badge in person by presenting an official form of identification (a passport or other official photo I.D.).

The badge must be visible at all times. Please note that you must present your identity card on request.

Should you lose your badge, please notify the Media Accreditation Desk immediately.

Of course, accreditation at a meeting venue is also possible, but this may be time-consuming.

To obtain accreditation at a meeting venue, you must present a valid press card or a letter from your editor and an official form of identification (a passport or other official photo I.D.).

If you need further information
please contact:

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Important

Accreditations for meetings of the European Council are handled by the Accreditation Office of the Council of the European Union. A link to their website can be found at the Presidency Website www.eu2008.si.

Pooling Regime

Oof - this could be a tough assignment... :(

It is not that we wish to exclude you from the official programme, but...

Since space inside the Brdo Congress Centre is sometimes both limited and restricted, access to certain events, mostly photo-opportunities, will be arranged on a pre-allocated pool basis.

In the case of a Pooling Regime, full information about obtaining pool cards will be found at the Presidency Website www.eu2008.si – [Media Service of the event](#), and also at the Information Desk in the Press Centre.

Once pool cards have been distributed, journalists holding them will only gain access to the actual events in a group, accompanied by pool assistants.

Pool participants should therefore assemble punctually at the designated pool meeting point, clearly signposted next to the Information Desk in the Press Centre.

4. BRDO CONGRESS CENTRE – VENUE OF INFORMAL MINISTERIAL MEETINGS

Workdays and meetings during Slovenia's presidency can also be cheerful and enjoyable.

To get away from the fog, the heavy traffic and the grey of the city, you are more than welcome to the green surroundings of the Brdo Estate, where a Congress and Press Centre has been set up for the duration of the Slovenian Presidency of the EU.

The estate is located near Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, and is no more than a couple of kilometres from the central Jože Pučnik Airport. The Brdo Congress Centre is located within a natural park that is merely one of several parts making up the Brdo pri Kranju estate. The estate itself comprises over 500 landscaped hectares, with thousands of plant and animal species. The estate also houses the Brdo pri Kranju state protocol castle.

The edifice of the Brdo pri Kranju of today was built in 1499, when the Austrian Emperor Maximilian I allowed the noble George Egkh-Hungerspach to build a dam on the Vršek stream. Three ponds were constructed, two of which, now over 500 years old, continue to adorn the castle grounds.



The first written mention of the medieval castle dates back to 1446. In 1510, it was renovated in Renaissance style. It was rebuilt in the twentieth century, receiving its current appearance. At the start of World War II, the entire estate was a mere 66 hectares, growing by 1972 to its present area.

Brdo pri Kranju is one of over 286 Slovenian Natura 2000 network areas. The Natura 2000 network aims to preserve biodiversity and protect the natural habitats of endangered species – a European Union priority. The variety of plant and animal life is especially rich at locations where different types of land meet, and there are many different types in Brdo pri Kranju.

The springs, streams, and 11 ponds are home to over 23 species of snail and clam, and a few species of dragonfly, of which the Balkan Goldenring (*Cordulegaster heros*), an endangered species on the Natura 2000 list, is especially noteworthy. The use of the stream has been specifically adapted to the needs of its larvae. The fact that the Stone Crayfish (*Austropotamobius torrentium*) flourishes in the stream is proof that the water is extremely clean.

Incidentally, the halls of the new congress centre are named after the beautiful creatures that live on the estate. The lovely sounding names include: **Grandis**, main conference hall, **Splendens**, press conference hall and **Heros**, basement conference hall.

Each of the 11 ponds is unique in both plant and animal life. The streams and ponds lend sanctuary to many passing birds, as well as to certain species that nest there. One of these is the interesting Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*). Over 70 per cent of the Brdo pri Kranju estate is covered by forest. Due to their explicitly aesthetic function, the forests of Brdo pri Kranju have been declared forests with a special purpose, and are constantly monitored as part of the EU project. The most common tree is the Scots pine (*Pinus silvestris*).

The grounds of Brdo and its series of ponds have been declared a modified natural feature of national importance.

The oldest living tree in the grounds of Brdo is probably the lime, growing near the south-west wing of the castle tower, which is estimated at 250 years old. This makes it a contemporary of Michelangelo Zois, the Baron of Edelstein who bought the castle and estate at auction in 1753. The most noted representatives of the Zois family are the brothers Carl and Sigmund.

The botanist Carl Zois (1756–1799) is believed to be one of the few people to have identified over 20 alpine plant species. Two of the alpine plants he described in the nearby Karavanke Mountains have been named after him: Zois' Bellflower (*Campanula zoysii*) – indigenous to Slovenia – and Zois' Violet (*Viola zoysii*).



Carl Zois was constantly working in the shadow of his wealthy brother, Sigmund Zois (1747–1819), who was a well-known scientist in the expert circles of Europe. Sigmund Zois collected and catalogued one of the most beautiful European mineralogy collections. A rock type which he discovered bears his name – Zoisit minera.

The Castle Park boasts 45 species of tree, which vary widely in their provenance. The walks planted with trees, islands, decorative shrubbery and flower beds, complement the promenades and castle outbuildings, such as the typical Slovenian apiary, the Kranjič Beehives, some of which have been painted by the most noted Slovenian painters. The apiary houses the indigenous Slovenian bee species, the Carniolan bee (*Apis mellifera carnica*).



The most important natural treasure is located in Brdo Castle attic, the location of the 'maternity ward' of the lesser Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*), which is protected by both national and European conservation laws. In the Congress Centre building special attention was devoted to the preservation of three extraordinary trees: an oak, a beech, and a lime. Also, on the western side, a stand of birches was preserved. In ancient times the Greeks concluded treaties under oak trees. The fact that the Congress Centre today also lies in the shade of an oak gives it a specific aesthetic value.

The Common Oak (*Quercus robur* L.)

The oak tree beside the congress centre is home to many species. The crown of the tree is a good habitat for insects, as it provides them with plenty of food. The original oak acorn, originating from a nearby forest, is believed to have been brought to the tree's present-day location by the wind in 1922. The tree stands 27m tall, its circumference is 3.6m, and the volume is estimated at between 7 and 8m³. The age of the flourishing oak was 84 years in 2007. To this day, it has stored in its trunk and branches almost 10 tonnes of CO₂ or 2.6 tonnes of carbon (C). This is a free-standing tree which has had ideal growth conditions; its growth and carbon binding capacity remain very strong.

The Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus* L.)

The story of the hornbeam at Brdo dates even further back, as the tree is one hundred years old (as of 2007). The hornbeam stands 24m tall, its circumference is 3m, and the volume is estimated at 4m³. To this day, it has stored almost 5.3 tonnes of CO₂ or 1.4 tonnes of carbon (C).

And last, but not least, let us mention another curious fact which proves that the Brdo estate is a truly 'green' environment. With a combined roof surface of roughly 1417m² due to its sunny location, the Brdo Congress Centre has excellent potential as a small solar power station. To this end, the roof has been equipped with a photovoltaic system, which transforms solar power into electricity. The station has a generating capacity of approximately 50 kW (in sunny weather, when the station is operational). Annually, this translates into approximately 51,000 kWh, the equivalent of the annual electricity consumption of fourteen average households.

By Tomaž Marolt, Andrej Bibič

More at:

www.brdo.si/en/

Tel: + 386 4 26 10 00

E-mail: brdo.recp@gov.si



5. PRESS CENTRE

As mentioned before, a permanent Press Centre for the Slovenia's Presidency is located in the former swimming pool of the Brdo Estate, a mere 200 metres from the new Congress Centre. The radio and television centre, which has a cafeteria for media representatives on the ground floor, are even closer, just 100m from the Congress Centre.

The standard equipment of the Press Centre will include 200 work stations, of which 20 are equipped by PCs with Internet access, telephones, fax machines, printers, and photocopiers. The work stations are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Stations are equipped with 220V power outlets. Laptop computers can be plugged directly into RJ 45 sockets for Internet access through high speed lines via an LAN. In addition, WiFi will also be available.

For individual events, TV and radio booths and stand-up positions are also planned.

Details about media arrangements at the relevant events (Press Centre opening hours, media programme, detailed layout, parking options etc.) can be found at the Presidency website www.eu2008.si.

And, of course, we won't let you go thirsty or hungry during Press Centre opening hours: a restaurant for media representatives is located on the first floor of the Hotel Kokra (2 minutes' walk from the Accreditation Office or Press Centre). If you are in a hurry and under deadline pressure, self-service machines with coffee, tea, water, soft drinks, snacks etc. are always at your disposal.

For further details you can always contact:

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Deputy Head of the Press Centres and Media Arrangements
Anja Otavnik
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6. HOST BROADCASTER

RTV Slovenija (the Slovenian Public Broadcaster) is the Host Broadcaster for the Slovenian Presidency of the EU, and will provide free of charge to any interested radio stations and television channels audio-visual material on informal ministerial meetings, meetings with EU institutions, meetings with third countries and individual conferences taking place in Slovenia.

The Host Broadcaster will also provide technical support. They will manage the reservation of radio and TV booths for individual events if required. All of the booths provided for booking will be fitted as standard by the Slovenian Presidency, and made available free of charge.

The standard fitting for TV booths includes one LAN access point, one digital telephone line with telephone, one CCTV monitor, 220V electricity supply, two desks and four chairs. The standard fitting for radio booths includes one ISDN access point, one LAN access point, one digital telephone line with telephone, one CCTV monitor, 220V electricity supply, one desk and two chairs.

Any additional requirements (for example, receiving a pool signal) should be notified to the Host Broadcaster and will be charged to the account of the requesting stations or channels.

Parking spaces for broadcast trucks (SNG's) will be provided at individual event venues, and allocated by the Host Broadcaster.

The EBU (European Broadcasting Union) will also be present at certain events. In this case, interested TV stations are serviced by means of cooperation between the EBU and RTV SLO. Services for radio institutions are provided exclusively by RTV Slovenija.

Contacts for the Host Broadcaster:

RTV SLOVENIJA –TELEVISION

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Mobile phone: + 386 41 697 295

E-mail: marko.petretic@rtvslo.si

RTV SLOVENIJA – RADIO

Igor Otavnik

Mobile phone: + 386 41 613 468

E-mail: igor.otavnik@rtvslo.si



CONTACT WITH THE EBU

Francesca Scott

Mobile phone: +41 79 774 8988

E-mail: bookings@eurovision.net

7. HOST PHOTOGRAPHER

Selected events of the Slovenian Presidency of the EU will be documented in photographic form by the Host Photographer. These include all informal ministerial meetings and other individual high-level events.

The digital photographs will be made available free of charge, in printing quality and IPTC compliant format, in the photo archive of the Presidency website.

All photographic material on Presidency website may be used free of charge providing the photographer is duly credited.

Contact person for Host
Photographer services:

Primož Lavre

Mobile phone: + 386 41 211 730

E-mail:

photo.eu2008@salomon2000.si



HOTEL RESERVATION

Since the regular transport service is not as good as for Ljubljana, a special shuttle service will be organised by the Presidency during informal ministerial meetings.

Flight information: + 386 4 20 61 981

National Carrier Adria Airways

Call Centre for Ticket Reservations

Working hours: Weekdays 8.00–19.00,
Saturdays 8.00–12.00

Toll-free telephone number: 080 13 00

Tel.: +386 1 36 91 010

E-mail: booking@adria.si

By car

You can reach Slovenia via Italy, Austria, Hungary or Croatia.

Slovenia’s spectacular landscapes and its green environment make a road trip a pleasant and relaxing way to travel. The Slovenian highway code is in line with European standards. However, there are some specific regulations a visitor should know. All motor vehicles must have their headlights on when travelling on all roads, even in daylight. Fog lights can be used when visibility is reduced to less than 50 metres. Foreign drivers are recommended to carry a spare set of light bulbs for their vehicle (compulsory for residents).

From 15 November to 15 March and beyond these dates during winter weather conditions (e.g. snow, black ice, etc.) private cars and vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes must have winter equipment, i.e. winter tyres on all four wheels, or summer tyres on all four wheels, and carry snow chains. In both cases, the minimum tyre tread depth must be 3mm.

Permissible blood alcohol levels are 0.05% for drivers of a private car or motorcycle and 0.00% for professional drivers.

By train

More info with timetables can be found at www.slo-zeleznice.si/en/.

By bus

Timetables and other information can be found at www.ap-ljubljana.si/eng/.

Visas and Schengen

Visa requirements must be met before arrival in the Republic of Slovenia. In order to arrive on time, it is advisable to apply for visas at the earliest possible opportunity.

Please note that media representatives from countries requiring a visa have to apply to a diplomatic or consular mission of Slovenia or to a diplomatic or consular mission of a member state of the Schengen Agreement that represents Slovenia and is competent to grant a visa if Slovenia does not have a mission in the applicant’s country of residence.

For further details and a list of nationalities requiring a visa please visit the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website (www.mzz.gov.si/en).

GENERAL INFORMATION

Banking, credit cards and ATM’s

As of 1 January 2007 the euro became the official currency in Slovenia for both cash and non-cash transactions.

Non-cash payments with credit or debit cards are possible anywhere through POS terminals. Cards accepted for payment are MasterCard, Maestro, Visa, Visa Electron, Amex and Diners. You can also withdraw cash from the automatic telling machines of different banks which are located across the whole country. Cash withdrawal is possible mainly with MasterCard and Visa cards. Withdrawals can also be made using Maestro, Cirrus and Visa Electron Plus, where indicated by stickers on individual machines.

Banks are open weekdays between 9.00 and 12.00 and 14.00 and 17.00, and some on Saturdays between 9.00 and 12.00. Money can also be exchanged in exchange offices, at hotel reception desks, tourist agencies, petrol stations and larger supermarkets.

Post offices

Post offices are open from 8.00 to 18.00 on weekdays and from 8.00 to 12.00 on Saturdays.

Public holidays

SLOVENIAN NATIONAL HOLIDAYS AND WORK-FREE DAYS

New Year	1 and 2 January
Prešeren Day (Slovenian cultural holiday)	8 February
Easter Sunday and Monday	23 and 24 March
Day of Uprising Against the Occupation	27 April
Labour Day	1 and 2 May
Slovenian Statehood Day	25 June
Feast of the Assumption	15 August
Reformation Day	31 October
All Saints’ Day	1 November
Christmas	25 December
Independence and Unity Day	26 December

LOCAL HOLIDAYS

Unification of the Slovenes of Prekmurje with the Homeland	17 August
Return of Primorska to the Homeland	15 September
Rudolf Maister Day	23 November

Smoking

As of August 2007, the law prohibits smoking in all indoor and work areas in Slovenia. Smokers should use outdoor areas.

Useful facts

Full name	Republic of Slovenia (Republika Slovenija)
Population	2,010,377
Capital	Ljubljana (population 258,873)
Area	20,273 km²
Official languages	Slovene; also Hungarian and Italian in nationally mixed areas
Other languages	English, German, Croatian, Serbian
Largest cities	Ljubljana, Maribor, Kranj, Celje, Koper, Novo mesto, Velenje
Religion	Roman Catholic
Climate	Alpine, Continental, Mediterranean
Currency	Euro
Country Dialling Code	+386
Time zone	GMT/UTC +1
System of measurement	Metric
Electricity	220V – 50 Hz
Electrical connection	European round plug with two circular metal pins
Bank opening times	Monday–Friday 9.00–17.00
Post Office opening times	Monday–Friday 8.00–18.00; Saturdays 8.00–12.00

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Ambulance	112
Police	113
Fire Service	112
Road Assistance	080 1987

Other important phone numbers

Hospital

Klinični center
Zaloška cesta 2
1000 Ljubljana
Tel: + 386 1 522 50 50

Emergency room:

Tel: + 386 1 522 84 08

Ljubljana taxis

Taxi Metro

Tel: +386 1 544 11 90

Taxi društvo Ljubljana

Tel: +386 1 234 90 00

Taxi Turist

Tel: 080 21 30

Rumeni taxi

Tel: +386 41 731 831

Taxi Intersiti

Tel: +386 1 54 15 800, +386 41 445 406

Taxi Intertours

Tel: +386 31 311 311

Taxi Ronda

Tel: +386 1 200 09 90

Bled taxis

Štefan tours Bled

Tel: +386 41 633 772

Mery Potočnik

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General traffic information

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Ljubljana Tourist Board

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Bled Tourist Board

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9. IMPORTANT CONTACTS

THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA TO THE EU

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10. MAPS

Slovenia



Ljubljana



Bled



11. SLOVENIA - THE NEW HEART OF EUROPE

If you ask a tourist where Slovenia is, they may tell you it lies somewhere between Venice and Vienna. And if you know that Venice is just a three hour drive from Ljubljana, that Vienna is just one hour more, and that Munich lies some five hours away, then we can indeed affirm that Slovenia lies at the very heart of Europe.

Could you believe that the population of an entire country could populate only a suburb of one of the larger cities of the world? If you asked the majority of the many visitors who come to Slovenia each year what they liked most, they may well answer, 'The wonderful countryside you just cannot see such unspoilt beauty in Europe anymore!' Besides the beautiful natural sights, a foreigner in this country on the sunny side of the Alps will soon notice the kind people, numerous tourist farmhouses, excellent inns, thermal spas, and the majesty of the two-thousand-metre mountains of the Julian and Kamnik Alps.

The east and north-east of the country is a world of plains, a fertile farming region. The special wealth of that part of the country lies in its spas and mineral waters. The hills around the plains are an important wine region, which produces world-famous wines.

Half of Slovenia's surface area is forested (10,124 km²). Within Europe, only Finland and Sweden have more extensive forests.

In the south-western part of the country the unique Karst region begins. Its underground world hides some of the most magnificent underground caves in Europe. Within Postojna Cave, Škocjan Caves and Vilenica, carved out of the rock by underground waters, there are beautiful stalagmites and stalactites, which is why the caves are UNESCO cultural and natural heritage sites. To the west, the Karst gives way to Slovenia's 46.6 km long Adriatic coastline. Thus Slovenia is a combination of Alpine, Mediterranean and continental climates, with an average winter temperature of -2°C and summer, 21°C.

A brief history

In 1990, as the political and economic crisis in Yugoslavia deepened, Slovenia held its first free elections. At the plebiscite in December of the same year, a large majority voted for an independent state. Thus on 25 June 1991 Slovenia declared its independence. The unity that Slovenes showed at the time of the plebiscite and six months later, at the actual independence event, was unique. That was reason enough for

parliament to change the name of the holiday (26 December) to Independence and Unity Day. On 15 January 1992 Slovenia was formally recognised by the European Union, and in May 1992 it became a member of the United Nations. On 1 February 1999 an Associative Agreement with the EU came into force. On 1 May 2004, Slovenia became a member of the European Union, and on 28 June 2004, Slovenia entered the Exchange Rate Mechanism ERM2; Slovenia adopted the common European currency on 1 January 2007; the country will join the Schengen area of free movement in 2008.

The history of the Slovenian nation begins in the 6th century, when the region was settled by the ancestors of modern-day Slovenes. In the 7th century, Carantania, the first free Slavic principality, was formed. We know today that it was organised democratically, had an established legal system, and that Dukes were chosen by voting. From the 13th century until 1918 Slovenes were ruled by the Habsburgs, except for a short period from 1809 to 1813, when Slovenia was part of the Illyrian Provinces within the French Empire and enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy. More than a thousand years ago, the ancestors of today's Slovenes lived together with Franks, Bavarians, and the inhabitants of Venetia and Friuli and later with other central European nations. After 1918 Slovenia became part of Yugoslavia and had considerable autonomy in cultural, social, political and economic affairs. After 1945 the new Yugoslavia was highly centralised, which did not allow room for the realisation of the aspirations of Slovenian statehood.

The most successful economy in Central and Eastern Europe

Slovenia, being a small country, can only develop successfully if it has an open, outward-looking economy. Most of Slovenia's balance of trade is with the European Union, particularly with Germany, Italy, Austria, France, the Netherlands and the UK, as well as with Croatia and the former Yugoslavia republics, the USA, the Russian Federation, and Hungary.

Slovenia's key development objectives include exceeding the average level of economic development in the EU (measured by GDP per capita in purchasing power parity), increasing employment in line with the goals of the Lisbon Strategy, improving the quality of life and welfare, and becoming a recognised and esteemed country through its example of development, cultural identity and active participation in the international community.

Slovenia is an economically successful and stable country, which in the period 1995-2005 enjoyed average economic growth of about 4 per cent. In 2005 direct foreign investment totalled 5,976 million euros, with the largest investments coming from Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, France,

Germany, Italy, Croatia and Belgium. Foreigners have invested most in financial services (excluding insurance and capital funds), various business activities, the production of paper and paper products, wholesale trading, the production of chemicals and chemical products, making and selling motor vehicles, the production of rubber and plastic products, machinery and equipment. Slovenia is the third safest country in Europe for foreign investors, according to a rating from a human resource perspective conducted by the Federation of European Employers (FedEE), in an evaluation of investment risks for foreign investors in 31 European countries.

Arts and culture hold a special place in the history of the Slovenian nation

The Slovenes, like other Central European peoples, made up for the lack of their own national or political institutions through their language and culture, which for centuries managed to preserve their national identity. Slovenia has therefore always invested a great deal of its moral and political energy in culture. The result is a rich cultural life and a far-reaching network of institutions, organisations, and cultural societies which are comparable to the most developed European countries. Libraries, museums, galleries and professional theatres are found throughout the whole country. The central cultural event is the Ljubljana International Summer Festival, which takes place in Ljubljana throughout the summer.

The first Slovenian book was printed over 450 years ago. In 1550 the Protestant reformer, Primož Trubar (1508-1586), published the first two Slovenian books Catechismus and Abecedarium. The oldest writings in the Slovenian language are the Freising manuscripts, which date from the second half of the 10th century.

Architecture has a special place in Slovenia's cultural heritage, and the most famous Slovenian architect is Jože Plečnik (1872-1957), Otto Wagner's student, and a pioneer of Slovenian and European modern architecture. Numerous exhibitions abroad have attracted considerable interest in Plečnik, a true cosmopolitan. A reproduction of Plečnik's long-case clock will stand in front of the Presidency Room in the Justus Lipsius Building.

The most prized cultural or natural wealth of Slovenia is its natural heritage. There are also numerous picturesque medieval castles scattered across Slovenia's diverse landscape. The Gothic and Baroque styles dominated architecture, as may be seen in the majority of Slovenia's churches.

12. SOMETHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW, BUT YOU DIDN'T ASK

The Typical Slovene

With a population of no more than two million we often joke that in this country everybody knows everybody. Geographic, historical and cultural circumstances have surely played a significant role in shaping our national character. Therefore, allow us to introduce the typical Slovene.

What do the statistics say?

Let us begin with the ladies. According to data from the Statistical Office, Slovenian women will most often introduce themselves as Marija Novak. Every 13th female in Slovenia is called Marija, and every 173th's last name is Novak. She is probably 42 years old and has 1.2 children. She will most often reply that she had her first child at the average age of 28, and that she was 27.4 years old when she married.

The female student will proudly proclaim that she is one of almost 60 per cent of women to attend university during the past academic year, with every second female student studying social sciences, economics or law. Slovene women most commonly suffer from vascular diseases and live to an average age of around 80. Female representation in the National Assembly is relatively low - in the most recent elections held in autumn 2004, only eleven made it into the National Assembly (which has ninety members), occupying 12.2 per cent of all seats.

The top five most common male names are Jožef, Franc, Janez and Štefan, and surname combinations contain the surnames Novak and Horvat. Therefore, according to of the laws of probability, the male Slovene would introduce himself as Janez Novak; however, the official statistics say that the most common name among Slovenian men is Jožef Horvat. On average, Slovenian men are around 39 years of age. They will have walked down the aisle and said their vows at 30, and fathered their first child soon after. Only 7 per cent of males were young fathers below the age of 25. On average, the Slovenian male lives to see 73 springs.

Sociologists, demographers and other demographic experts point out another interesting fact about Slovenia: that children are leaving homes later and later in life. One-half of all people aged 25 to 29 are still living at home with their parents; of this number, more are male than female, as women tend to start their own families at an earlier age.

Following the 1970s boom, the natural increase in population has been steadily falling and so, since 1993, Slovenia's population has been increasing only due to positive net migration. This natural increase has been constantly negative since 1997. Over the past five years, the population of Slovenia has increased only by 0.1 per cent, or 2000 persons per year. In 2006, 18,932 children were born; in comparison with previous years this means a 4.3% increase in live births. Demographic trends are thus improving.

Slovenes are industrious and disciplined.

The average Slovene is conscientious, hardworking and industrious with well-established working habits. In this respect we are similar to the Germans, yet distinct in one important characteristic: some say that the Germans have an innate sense of community and collectivism, while Slovenes are much more individualistic.

Slovenes are not a submissive and subservient nation.

The perception of subservience perhaps originates in the literary works of the celebrated national writer Ivan Cankar and other realists who described the tragedy of Slovenes living under the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Studies show that compared to other nations we do not appear to be a particularly submissive nation, and moreover, we are blessed with adventurousness and ambition. Generally, Slovenes describe themselves as industrious, honest, and good singers who enjoy a good glass of wine, and are perhaps a bit on the melancholy side.

Things one should know about Slovenes

Have you noticed that every single Slovene carries love inside? Well, the Slovenian language is a unique language for true lovebirds. It is one of very few languages that has dual grammatical forms in addition to the singular and the plural. Although this makes it particularly difficult for foreigners, it does not stop increasing numbers of them from enrolling for Slovenian language classes. Slovenes are also very proud that their language and culture have been preserved through the centuries even without national sovereignty. The ability to speak foreign languages is another Slovenian virtue: everyone speaks at least one foreign language, and the younger generation even speak two or more!

Slovenes have also made evident contributions to the world scientific endeavour. To name a few: a theory of space travel (Herman Potočnik Noordung), logarithmic tables (Jurij Vega) and the physical law of thermal radiation (Jožef Stefan - the Stefan's law).

If we were to ask a Slovene about their national sport, the unhesitating reply would be 'Skiing.' The skiing tradition in Slovenia is a long one, as the oldest skis in Central Europe originate from these parts. Incidentally, alpine skier with the most world cup victories, Ingemar Stenmark, skied on Slovenian, Elan skis. And there is also the legendary Slovenian skier, Bojan Križaj. Even though we Slovenes like to describe ourselves as calm and reserved, we will quickly open up with good food and drink, and good company, and even start singing. We should also mention the premium wines produced in the vine-growing hills found across Slovenia. Almost every Slovenian region has its own local wine varieties. We are a small nation that lives on a relatively small territory, so it is no wonder that we all know each other. We are one great family and it is no rare coincidence that you might know the President personally, or at least someone who knows him personally. Perhaps even if they do not actually know him, then they may at least know the former President, or someone who knew him.

Culture is an important part of our lives. Publishers will tell you that most contemporary Slovenian authors publish collections of poetry. Judging from that, we are also a nation of poets. Generally, Slovenes are very interested in culture and many practice various cultural activities as a hobby. Another traditionally popular way of spending leisure time is mountaineering. There are ample opportunities for various kinds of mountain conquests. The mountain hiking trails are well-tended and marked. There is a saying that you're not a true Slovene if you have never climbed Slovenia's highest mountain, Mount Triglav (2,864 meters or 9,396 feet). Triglav has been a source of inspiration for many Slovenian poets, writers, painters and politicians, and has become a symbol of Slovenehood.

Many Slovenes practice extreme sports – alpinism (Tomaž Humar, Davo Karničar), ultra-marathon swimming (Martin Strel), endurance cycling (Jure Robič), ultra triathlon (Uroš Velepec).

And some jokes you might have already heard about Slovenia – they are more or less true...

If you open an umbrella in a street in Ljubljana, be careful not to hurt somebody's eye in Maribor.

Why don't the ski-jumpers in Planica do more than 250 meters? Because they would fly to Italy.

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



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