



Slovenia profusion for all the senses

20,000 km² of diversity: from the Alps to the sea, from the Pannonian Plain to the Karst

Slovenia, the fourth smallest member of the European Union in terms of area, boasts an extraordinary diversity of landscapes in a relatively small territory.

Easy access to this diversity is a particular advantage: it is possible to start the day in the mountains, with their sports and recreation centres, continue it on a farm in a green mountain pasture or valley, or perhaps on the Adriatic coast, and before it gets to evening allow yourself to be pampered at a top-flight thermal spa centre offering a sophisticated range of health and wellness services. You can taste Slovenia in 24 distinct gastronomic regions and 14 wine districts. Relaxation, entertainment and culture are provided by internationally famous festivals and other events – 365 days a year. Slovenia is an attractive blend of urban sophistication and rustic warmth in a green environment of incredible diversity.

VIEWS: DIFFERENT IN EVERY DIRECTION

The north of Slovenia offers mountainous and hilly landscapes. In the north-west of the country are the JULIAN ALPS with their highest peak, the 2,864-metre TRIGLAV, surrounded by 880 square kilometres of protected area in one of the oldest national parks in Europe. Here, too, is the unmissable resort town of Bled with its legendary island in the middle of the lake and its cliff-top castle, hot springs and pleasant climate. Bled has been attracting cosmopolitan visitors for centuries.

North of Bled are the KARAVANKE mountains, with their flora (including wild daffodil meadows) and their ironworking tradition. Central Slovenia has the forest-covered KAMNIK-SAVINJA Alps, with their still-active mountain pastures, for example VELIKA PLANINA with one of the best-preserved groups of herdsmen's huts in Europe.

In the north-east of the country, hilly POHORJE with its wetlands flirts with the Alpine world, whose unique features Slovenia protects in accordance with the international Alpine Convention.

Over 10,000 kilometres of marked walking and climbing trails lead to high-altitude views. Along them you will find 170 mountain huts and around 40 hotels catering for hikers and hill walkers.

The south of Slovenia includes, at the westernmost tip of the country, the ADRIATIC coast with its ancient salt-works, picturesque, typically Mediterranean PIRAN and cosmopolitan PORTOROŽ. A wealth of natural and cultural features of interest means that a fifth of Slovenia's coast enjoys protected status!

The south of Slovenia is full of curious karst phenomena and vineyard-covered hills. The Karst region is one of Slovenia's most famous features – karst features around the world in fact derive their name from the eponymous region of Slovenia. Of particular interest to visitors are POSTOJNA CAVE, the most visited karst cave in Europe, and the ŠKOCJAN CAVES, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Other attractions of the Karst region include LIPICA, the birthplace of the famous white Lipizzaner horses, medieval ŠTANJEL with its castle and the park designed by renowned architect Max Fabiani, and many other cultural, traditional and gastronomic features of interest.

South-east Slovenia in particular is characterised by thermal springs and vineyard-covered hills, continuing on into the east of the country – to the Pannonian Plain.

The hills and fertile plains of the east of Slovenia extend along the rivers Drava and Mura. Besides thermal water, mineral water and excellent wines, this part of Slovenia has its own distinct local cultural and gastronomic traditions.

Yet there is no need to choose between the different regions of Slovenia – you can travel from one end of the country to the other in just a few hours, since the whole of Slovenia fits into an area of just over 20,000 square kilometres, and the length of the longest diagonal is only around 350 kilometres.

EXPLORING: TOWNS AND CULTURE, COUNTRY AND CUISINE

Slovenia has a population of 2 million with roughly a third of the population living in cities or towns with over 10,000 inhabitants. Even Slovenia's biggest cities appear small in global terms, but this does not prevent them from astonishing visitors with their architecture, their rich history and, last but not least, their connection with the green hinterland. Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, lies on a river below a hilltop castle, like the majority of the country's historic towns. It is famous for the architectural creations of Jože Plečnik, who was also responsible for notable buildings in Prague and Vienna. Also worth visiting are towns and cities of particular cultural interest such as MARIBOR with the oldest vine in the world, PTUJ with its unique carnival traditions, NOVO MESTO at a bend of the river Krka, ŠKOFJA LOKA, with the traditions of the oldest dramatic work in Slovene, IDRIJA with the technical heritage of its famous mercury mine, and many more.

Particularly in summer, Slovenia's towns give themselves over to festivals, attracting visitors from near and far. In 2010 Ljubljana was the World Book Capital. In 2012 Maribor, along with its partner towns, will be the EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE.

The markets of towns around Slovenia offer local produce of the kind that can be enjoyed throughout the country. Traditional hospitality is offered by over 300 farm tourism establishments, which are an excellent starting point for getting to know the different regions of Slovenia, not to mention its 24 gastronomic regions. Typical local dishes are accompanied by fine wines from Slovenia's three wine regions, divided into 14 separate wine districts and crisscrossed by 20 wine routes. The winemaking

tradition in Slovenia dates back to Roman times, and interesting wine cellars well worth a visit are a testament to medieval traditions.

ACTIVITIES: RECREATION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, SPA BREAKS

Slovenia is a country of green breaks, and recreation in the countryside all year round. In winter there are dozens of winter sports centres catering for Alpine and Nordic skiers, ski tourers, snowboarders, tobogganers, snowshoeing enthusiasts and other winter recreation-seekers.

In summer Slovenia is popular with lovers of water sports on rivers and lakes and in the sea. Slovenia has 10 golf courses set in a variety of different landscapes.

There are also adrenaline parks, riding centres and horse-riding trails, and paragliding and ballooning centres.

A particular feature of Slovenia, and its strongest tourism trump card, is its thermal springs, around which 15 accredited spa health resorts have developed over the centuries and an even greater number of thermal wellness centres. Health and beauty programmes are based on pampering with many different natural resources and also include opportunities for active leisure. Wellness facilities are available throughout Slovenia – it is not only the country's famous spas (some with a tradition dating back several centuries) that offer wellness breaks, they are also available at top-category hotels. Another good starting point for adventures in Slovenia is well-managed campsites attached to thermal spa centres and in other locations around Slovenia.

Slovenia is committed to the development of sustainable forms of tourism. The remarkable level of conservation of the natural environment is in fact one of Slovenia's recognisable advantages in Europe. An impressive 60% of the country is covered by forest, while 36% of Slovenia is included in the Natura 2000 biodiversity conservation network. Slovenia has around 10,000 registered karst caves and is one of the richest countries in Europe in terms of quantity of (fluvial) water per inhabitant. The best examples of the sustainable development of tourism in Slovenia are offered by the EDEN destinations (European Destinations of Excellence). To date these are the Soca Valley, Solcavsko and the River Kolpa.

For more information:

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