

A Voyage Through Slovenian Arts and Culture

Discover Europe's Green Heart



Slovenian Tourist Board Photo Library

Slovenia is an “emerald in Europe’s jewellery box, glittering green and turquoise with natural forests, rivers, and famous lakes”, to quote the BBC. It is strategically located in Central Europe and boasts an exceptional diversity, both in terms of nature and culture. This green land, with over 60% of its area covered in forests, uniquely brings together the Alps, the Mediterranean, the Karst and the Pannonian Plain, making it the only European nation with such a remarkable geographic variety. This results in vibrant arts and culture, the main communicational theme promoted by the Slovenian Tourist Board for 2024-2025. Visitors can explore historic towns and sites, attend world-class performances and festivals and engage with local artists and craftsmen who keep Slovenia’s rich traditions alive.

What ties all these thrilling experiences together is a commitment to sustainability. This dedication is evident in the country’s care for the environment and the preservation of tradition, as well as in its support of the well-being of both locals and visitors. Let us embark on an inspiring journey through the highlights of Slovenian arts and culture.

Slovenia’s Timeless Artefacts from Prehistoric Flutes to Ancient Grapevines

Some of the world’s most remarkable artefacts have been discovered in Slovenia, from ancient musical instruments and historic tools to the world’s oldest grapevine. These findings, each with its own story, paint a vivid picture of the region’s deep and diverse heritage.



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One of the most extraordinary discoveries is the 60,000-year-old flute, located in the Divje Babe Archaeological Park on the Šebrelje Plateau. This ancient musical instrument, carved from a young cave bear’s thighbone by a Neanderthal, is now on display at the National Museum in Ljubljana.



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Equally impressive is the 30,000-year-old needle found in the Potočka Zijalka Cave on Mt Olševa. This decorated bone needle, discovered among the remains of Ice Age fauna and tools, is now displayed at the Celje Regional Museum, providing insights into the life and creativity of Ice Age people.

Continuing this journey through ancient history, the Ljubljana Marshes Landscape Park is home to a 5,200-year-

old wooden wheel with an axle, the oldest known of its kind. Unearthed from a pile-dweller culture, this artefact showcases early technological ingenuity and is exhibited at the Ljubljana City Museum.

In addition to these technological marvels, Slovenia boasts a 450-year-old grapevine in Maribor, known as the Žametovka or Modra Kavčina variety. Recognized as the world’s oldest grapevine, it still bears fruit and is celebrated annually at the Old Vine Festival. Throughout the year, the Old Vine House in Maribor offers wine tastings and an insight into Slovenia’s rich viticultural heritage.

Invaluable UNESCO’s World Heritage Treasures in Slovenia

Slovenia also boasts numerous treasures under UNESCO’s auspices. With two natural and three cultural sites on the World’s Natural and Cultural Heritage list and seven unique features on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Slovenia is a gem for those seeking both natural wonders and cultural treasures. The country also participates in UNESCO’s World Network of Biosphere Reserves, the Global Network of Geoparks, and the UNESCO Memory of the World List, highlighting its commitment to preserving its invaluable heritage.

Let us begin the UNESCO journey through Slovenia with the mysterious

Škocjan Caves, nestled in Slovenia’s karst region. Here, Europe’s largest underground canyon awaits exploration, while the surrounding regional park offers educational and biking trails.

If you want to venture further into Slovenia’s natural splendour discover the Krokav and Snežnik-Ždrolce primal beech forests, part of UNESCO’s heritage of primal beech forests, which showcase the development of beech



ecosystems since the last glacial period 12,000 years ago.

As you shift from natural wonders to cultural heritage, the historic town of Idrija beckons you with its rich mercury mining legacy. Alongside Spain's Almaden, Idrija's significance is immortalized as a UNESCO site. Explore Anthony's Underground Mining Tunnel, one of Europe's oldest mine entrances, and delve into the traditional mining methods that shaped the town's history.

In the heart of Slovenia, the Ljubljana Marshes unveil a treasure trove of prehistoric secrets. Renowned for its ancient pile dwellings, this intriguing area offers a captivating glimpse into early human life. Among its most notable archaeological finds is the world's oldest wooden wheel with an axle, a remarkable artifact we highlighted earlier.

The charm of Ljubljana is further enhanced by the architectural genius of Jože Plečnik. His transformative works, including the Central Market, the Triple Bridge, and the National and University Library, are celebrated as part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site list.

Slovenia's intangible heritage is equally captivating. Beekeeping, a tra-

dition deeply ingrained in Slovenian culture, is celebrated with nationwide enthusiasm. Notably, Slovenia was the visionary country that proposed the establishment of World Bee Day.

At the historic Lipica Stud Farm, the centuries-old tradition of breeding Lipizzan horses continues. Recognized on the UNESCO list and shared with seven other countries, this heritage underscores the profound bond between humans and these majestic creatures.

Also featured on the list is the Škofja Loka Passion Play, Slovenia's oldest theatrical tradition. This remarkable performance unfolds every six years, with the next one scheduled for 2026. The play enchants audiences with its vibrant costumes and immersive historical reenactments, offering a truly unforgettable experience steeped in tradition.

In February, the traditional rounds of door-to-door Kurenti announce the arrival of spring. Rooted in Slavic mythology, these vibrant celebrations bring the Slovenian towns to life with colorful costumes and the ringing of cowbells, the most traditional and exuberant Kurenti celebration being held in the ancient town of Ptuj.

Bobbin lacemaking, an intricate and artistic craft, symbolizes Slovenian

identity. This age-old tradition of braiding and twisting threads into delicate lace is nurtured through dedicated lacemaking schools, ensuring its continued vibrancy.

In the Karst region and Istria, the art of dry-stone walling showcases traditional construction techniques that rely on the careful stacking of stones with-

out any binder. This skill connects eight European countries.

Lastly, Slovenia's commitment to midwifery highlights the enduring value of traditional knowledge and skills. With the first midwifery school dating back to 1753, Slovenia champions this practice, advocating for its inclusion in the UNESCO list. ■

Slovenia. It's All in Our Nature.

As you embark on your voyage through Slovenian arts and culture, you'll discover a nation that harmoniously blends natural beauty with cultural richness. This is also very well illustrated in the Slovenian Tourist Board's most recent promotional campaign, "Slovenia. It's All in Our Nature". The campaign utilizes the dual meaning of 'nature' as a lens to explore both the landscape and the character of the Slovenian nation. It combines Slovenia's breathtaking sites with the country's top athletes, showcasing the country as not only a travel destination, but also as a place where sport, healthy living and sustainable values are celebrated.



Nova Gorica and Gorizia: A Cross-Border Celebration as European Capital of Culture 2025

Nova Gorica and Gorizia will unite as the European Capital of Culture 2025, celebrating their rich cultural heritage and artistic vibrancy. As Slovenia's youngest city, Nova Gorica and its Italian neighbour Gorizia are set to highlight their unique fusion of history, creativity, and vision on the global stage. This special designation will spotlight Slovenia's diverse culture and creativity through a year-long celebration of the arts.

The European Capital of Culture initiative, supported by the European Union, showcases selected cities each year, with Nova Gorica and Gorizia sharing this honour with Chemnitz, Germany, in 2025. This marks the second time Slovenia has held the title, following Maribor's recognition in 2012.

The two cities, deeply interconnected through history and culture, will present their combined stories through the GO!2025 program, emphasizing their cross-border synergy. Central to this will be the ECoC district, a revitalized area along the former customs strip designed for eco-friendly and sustainable use, set to become a vibrant hub for events and social activities.

The cultural program will be extensive, ranging from fashion and art to sports and ecology, offering a diverse array of experiences. Venues across both cities, including cycle tunnels and mobile train carriages, will host unique events and exhibitions, reflecting the rich cultural panorama that stretches from the Alps to the Adriatic Sea.

