

History

EARLY INHABITANTS

The area of present-day Slovenia has been settled since the Palaeolithic Age. Tools made of bone that date back to between 100,000 and 60,000 BC have been found in a cave at Mt Olševa, north of Solčava in Štajerska's Upper Savinja Valley.

During the Bronze Age (around 2000 to 900 BC), marsh dwellers farmed and raised cattle in the area south of present-day Ljubljana – the Ljubljansko Barje – and at Lake Cerknica. They lived in round huts set on stilts and traded with other peoples along the so-called Amber Route linking the Balkans with Italy and northern Europe.

Around 700 BC the Ljubljana Marsh people were overwhelmed by the Illyrian tribes from the south who brought iron tools and weapons. They settled largely in Dolenjska, built hill-top forts and reached their peak between 650 and 550 BC, during what is called the Hallstatt period. Iron helmets, gold jewellery and *situlae* (embossed pails) with distinctive Hallstatt geometric motifs have been found in tombs near Stična and at Vače near Litija; you'll see some excellent examples of these findings at both the National Museum of Slovenia (p72) in Ljubljana and the Dolenjska Museum (p203) in Novo Mesto.

In about 400 BC, Celtic tribes from what are now France, Germany and the Czech lands began pushing southward towards the Balkans. They mixed with the local population and established the Noric kingdom, the first 'state' on Slovenian soil.

THE ROMANS

In 181 BC the Romans established the colony of Aquileia (Oglej in Slovene) on the Gulf of Trieste in order to protect the empire from tribal incursions, and Julius Caesar, after whom the Julian Alps in the northwest are named, actually visited in the 1st century AD. In the next century, the Romans annexed the Celtic Noric kingdom and moved into the rest of Slovenia and Istria.

The Romans divided the area into the provinces of Noricum (today's southern Austria, Koroška and western Štajerska), Upper and Lower Pannonia (eastern Štajerska, Dolenjska and much of Gorenjska) and Histria (Primorska and Croatian Istria), later called Illyrium, and built roads connecting their new military settlements. From these bases developed the important towns of Emona (Ljubljana), Celeia (Celje) and Poetovio (Ptuj), where reminders of the Roman presence can still be seen. Some fine examples are the Citizen of Emona statue (p72) in Ljubljana, the Roman necropolis at Šempeter (p253) and the Mithraic shrines (p234) near Ptuj.

THE GREAT MIGRATIONS

In the middle of the 5th century AD, the Huns, led by Attila, invaded Italy via Slovenia, attacking Poetovio, Celeia and Emona along the way. Aquileia fell to the Huns in 452. However, Attila's empire was short-lived and was soon eclipsed first by the Germanic Ostrogoths and then the Langobards, who occupied much of the Slovenian territory. In 568 the Langobards struck out for Italy, taking Aquileia and eventually conquering the Venetian mainland.

An easy-to-read but useful introduction to Slovenian history is Janko Prunk's revised *Brief History of Slovenia*, which starts with the territory of present-day Slovenia in pre-Roman times and ends at the dawn of the new millennium.

For as much information as you'll ever need on the ancient city of Aquileia, listed as a Unesco World Heritage Site since 1998, go to www.aquileia.it.

TIMELINE 400 BC

Celtic tribes establish the Noric kingdom on Slovenian soil

2nd decade AD

Romans move into Slovenia from Italy and annex the Noric kingdom

THE EARLY SLAVS

The ancestors of today's Slovenes arrived from the Carpathian Basin in the 6th century and settled in the Sava, Drava and Mura river valleys and the eastern Alps. Under pressure from the Avars, a powerful Mongol people with whom they had formed a tribal alliance, the early Slavs migrated further west to the Friulian plain and the Adriatic Sea, north to the sources of the Drava and Mura Rivers and east as far as Lake Balaton in Hungary. Early Slavic burial grounds can be found at Kranj (p103) and Slovenj Gradec (p262).

In their original homelands the early Slavs were a peaceful people, living in forests or along rivers and lakes, breeding cattle and farming by slash-and-burn methods. They were a superstitious people who saw *vile* (both good and bad fairies or sprites) everywhere and paid homage to a pantheon of gods and goddesses. As a social group they made no class distinctions, but chose a leader – a *župan* (now the word for 'mayor') or *vojvoda* (duke) – in times of great danger. During the migratory periods, however, their docile nature changed and they became more warlike and aggressive.

THE DUCHY OF CARANTANIA

When the Avars failed to take Byzantium in 626, the alpine Slavs united under their leader, the duke Valuk, and joined forces with the Frankish king Samo to fight them. The Slavic tribal union became the Duchy of Carantania (Karantanija), the first Slavic state, with its seat at Krn Castle (now Karnburg) near Klagenfurt (Celovec in Slovene) in Austria.

By the early 8th century, a new class of ennobled commoners called *kosezi* had emerged, and it was they who publicly elected and crowned the new *knez* (grand duke) on the *knežni kamen* ('duke's rock') in the courtyard of Krn Castle. Such a democratic process was unique in the feudal Europe of the early Middle Ages. The model was noted by the 16th-century French political theorist Jean Bodin, whose work is said to have been a key reference for Thomas Jefferson when he wrote the American Declaration of Independence in 1775–76.

EXPANSION OF THE FRANKS

In 748 the Frankish empire of the Carolingians incorporated Carantania as a vassal state called Carinthia and attempted to convert the population to Christianity. The new religion was resisted at first, but Irish monks under the auspices of the Diocese of Salzburg began to preach in the vernacular and were more successful.

By the early 9th century, religious authority on Slovenian territory was shared between Salzburg and the Patriarchate (or Bishopric) of Aquileia (opposite). The weakening Frankish authorities began replacing Slovenian nobles with German counts, reducing the local peasantry to serfdom. The German nobility was thus at the top of the feudal hierarchy for the first time in Slovenian lands. This would later become one of the key obstacles to Slovenian national and cultural development.

THE CARINTHIAN KINGDOM

With the total collapse of the Frankish state in the second half of the 9th century, a Carinthian prince named Kocelj established a short-lived (869–74)

Lake Balaton in Hungary, which the early Slavs reached in their roamings, takes its name from the Slovenian word *blato* (mud).

THE PATRIARCHATE OF AQUILEIA

You'd never guess from its present size (population 3350), but the Friulian town of Aquileia north of Grado on the Gulf of Trieste played a pivotal role in Slovenian history, and for many centuries its bishops (or 'patriarchs') ruled much of Carniola (Kranjska).

Founded as a Roman colony in the late 2nd century BC, Aquileia fell to a succession of tribes during the Great Migrations and had lost its political and economic importance by the end of the 6th century. But Aquileia had been made the metropolitan see for Venice, Istria and Carniola, and when the Church declared some of Aquileia's teachings heretical, it broke from Rome. The schism lasted only a century and when it was resolved Aquileia was recognised as a separate patriarchate.

Aquileia's ecclesiastical importance grew during the mission of Paulinus II to the Avars and Slovenes in the late 8th century, and it acquired feudal estates and extensive political privileges (including the right to mint coins) from the Frankish and later the German kings. It remained a feudal principality until 1420 when the Venetian Republic conquered Friuli, and Venetians were appointed patriarchs for the first time. Aquileia retained some of its holdings in Slovenia and elsewhere for the next 300 years. But the final blow came in 1751 when Pope Benedict XIV created the archbishoprics of Udine and Gorizia. The once powerful Patriarchate of Aquileia had outlasted its usefulness and was dissolved.

independent Slovenian 'kingdom' in Lower Pannonia, the area stretching southeast from Styria (Štajerska) to the Mura, Drava and Danube Rivers. It was to Lower Pannonia that the Macedonian brothers Cyril and Methodius, the 'apostles of the southern Slavs', had first brought the translations of the Scriptures to the Slovenes six years before. And it was here that calls for a Slavic archdiocese were first heard.

THE MAGYARS & GERMAN ASCENDANCY

In about 900, the fearsome Magyars, expert horsemen and archers, subjugated Lower Pannonia and the Slovenian regions along the Sava, cutting them off from Carinthia. It wasn't until 955 that they were stopped by forces under King Otto I at Augsburg.

The Germans decided to re-establish Carinthia, dividing the area into a half-dozen border counties (or marches). These developed into the Slovenian provinces that would remain basically unchanged until 1918: Carniola (Kranjska), Carinthia (Koroška), Styria (Štajerska), Gorica (Goriška) and the so-called White March (Bela Krajina).

A drive for complete Germanisation of the Slovenian lands began in the 10th century. Land was divided between the nobility and various church dioceses (Brixen, Salzburg, Freising), and German gentry were settled on it. The population remained essentially Slovenian, however, and it was largely due to intensive educational and pastoral work by the clergy that the Slovenian identity was preserved. The *Freising Manuscripts* (p33), the oldest example of written Slovene, date from this period.

Most of Slovenia's important castles were built and many important Christian monasteries – for example, Stična (p197) and Kostanjevica (p209) – established between the 10th and 13th centuries. Towns also developed as administrative, trade and social centres.

See www.uvi.si/eng/slovenia/background-information/freising-manuscripts for more information about and links on the Freising manuscripts, the oldest known writings in the Slovenian language.

6th century

Early Slavic tribes settle in the Sava, Drava and Mura River valleys and the eastern Alps

7th century

A union of Slavic tribes establishes the Duchy of Carantania, the first Slavic state

748

Frankish empire incorporates Carantania as a vassal state called Carinthia

869–74

Carinthian Prince Kocelj rules a Slovenian 'kingdom' in Lower Pannonia

EARLY HABSBURG RULE

In the early Middle Ages, the Habsburgs were just one of many German aristocratic families struggling for hegemony on Slovenian soil. Others, such as the Andechs, Spanheims and Zoneks (later the Counts of Celje), were equally powerful at various times. But as dynasties intermarried or died out, the Habsburgs consolidated their power.

Between the late 13th century and the early 16th century, almost all the lands inhabited by Slovenes passed into Habsburg hands except for Istria and the Littoral, which were controlled by Venice until 1797, and parts of Prekmurje, which belonged to the Hungarian crown. Until the 17th century, rule was not direct but administered by diets (parliaments) of 'resident princes', prelates, feudal lords and representatives from the towns, who dealt with matters like taxation.

By this time Slovenian territory totalled about 24,000 sq km, about 15% larger than its present size. Not only did more towns and boroughs receive charters and rights, but the country began to develop economically with the opening of ironworks (eg at Kropa, p109) and mines (eg Idrija, p144). This economic progress reduced the differences among the repressed peasants, and they united against their feudal lords.

PEASANT UPRISINGS & THE REFORMATION

More than a hundred peasant uprisings and revolts occurred on Slovenian territory between the 14th and 19th centuries, but they reached their peak between 1478 and 1573. Together with the Protestant Reformation at the end of the 16th century, they are considered a watershed of the Slovenian national awakening.

Attacks by the Ottoman Turks on southeastern Europe began in 1408 and continued for more than two-and-a-half centuries, almost reaching Vienna on several occasions. By the start of the 16th century, thousands of Slovenes had been killed or taken prisoner. The assaults helped to radicalise landless peasants and labourers, who were required to raise their own defences and continue to pay tribute and work for their feudal lords.

In most of the uprisings, peasant 'unions' demanded a reduction in feudal payments and the democratic election of parish priests. The three most violent uprisings took place in 1478 in Koroška, in 1515, encompassing almost the entire Slovenian territory, and in 1573, when Ambrož 'Matija' Gubec led 12,000 Slovenian and Croatian peasants in revolt. Castles were occupied and pulled down and lords executed, but none of the revolts succeeded as such.

The Protestant Reformation in Slovenia was closely associated with the nobility from 1540 onward and was generally ignored by the rural population except for those who lived or worked on Church-owned lands. But it raised the overall educational level of Slovenes and gave them their first books in their own language, thereby lifting the status of the vernacular and affirming Slovenian culture.

COUNTER-REFORMATION & PROGRESS

The wealthy middle class had lost interest in the Reformation by the time it peaked in the 1580s because of the widening economic gap between it and the nobility. They turned to the Catholic resident princes, who quashed

Protestantism among the peasants and banished noble families who persisted in the new belief.

In the early 18th century Habsburg economic decline brought on by a series of wars was reversed, and Empress Maria Theresa (1740–80) introduced a series of reforms. These included the establishment of a new state administration with a type of provincial government; the abolition of customs duties between provinces of the empire; the building of new roads; and the introduction of obligatory elementary school in German and state-controlled secondary schools. Her son, Joseph II (1780–90), went several steps further. He abolished serfdom in 1782, paving the way for the formation of a Slovenian bourgeoisie, and allowed complete religious freedom for Calvinists, Lutherans and Jews. He also dissolved the all-powerful (and often corrupt) Catholic religious orders.

As a result of these reforms, agricultural output improved, manufacturing intensified and shipping from Austria's main seaport at Trieste increased. The reforms also produced a flowering of the arts and letters in Slovenia, with the playwright and historian Anton Tomaž Linhart (p38) and the poet and journalist Valentin Vodnik producing their finest and most influential works at this time.

NAPOLEON & THE ILLYRIAN PROVINCES

The French Revolution of 1789 convinced the Austrians that reforms should be nipped in the bud, and a period of reaction began that continued until the Revolution of 1848. In the meantime there was a brief interlude that would have a profound effect on Slovenia and its future.

After defeating the Austrians at Wagram in 1809, Napoleon decided to cut the entire Habsburg Empire off from the Adriatic. To do this he created six 'Illyrian Provinces' from Slovenian and Croatian regions, including Koroška, Kranjska, Gorica, Istria and Trieste, and made Ljubljana the capital.

Although the Illyrian Provinces lasted only from 1809 to 1813, France instituted a number of reforms, including equality before the law and the use of Slovene in primary and lower secondary schools and in public offices. Most importantly, the progressive influence of the French Revolution brought the issue of national awakening to the Slovenian political arena for the first time.

ROMANTIC NATIONALISM & THE 1848 REVOLUTION

Austrian rule, restored in 1814, was now guided by the iron fist of Prince Clemens von Metternich. He immediately reinstated the Austrian feudal system and attempted to suppress every national movement from the time of the Congress of Vienna (1815) to the Revolution of 1848. But the process of change had already started in Slovenia.

The period of so-called Romantic Nationalism (1814–48) was one of intensive literary and cultural activity and led to the promulgation of the first Slovenian political program. Although many influential writers published at this time, no one so dominated the period as the poet France Prešeren (p34).

In 1848 Slovenian intellectuals drew up their first national political program under the banner Zedinjena Slovenija (United Slovenia). In essence it called for the unification of all historic Slovenian regions within an

Ivan Cankar's *Hlapec Jernej in Njegova Pravica* (The Bailiff Verney and His Rights), a tale of the unequal relationship between servant and master, is read as a metaphor for Slovenia under Habsburg rule.

Slovenia and the Slovenes: A Small State and the New Europe by James Gow and Cathie Carmichael offers excellent analyses not just of history and politics but of culture and the arts as well.

The seventh stanza of France Prešeren's popular poem *Zdravljica* (A Toast) forms the lyrics of Slovenia's national anthem.

Late 13th–early 16th centuries

All Slovenian lands fall under Habsburg rule

1478–1573

Peasant riots in Slovenia at their peak

1540–80

Protestant Reformation; first books in Slovene published

1782

Habsburg Emperor Joseph II abolishes serfdom

SLOVENIA'S NATIONAL ANTHEM

God's blessing on all nations,
 Who long and work for that bright day,
 When o'er earth's habitations
 No war, no strife shall hold its sway;
 Who long to see
 That all men free
 No more shall foes, but neighbours be.

France Prešeren (1800–49), A Toast

autonomous unit under the Austrian monarchy, the use of Slovene in all schools and public offices and the establishment of a local university. The demands were rejected, as they would have required the reorganisation of the empire along ethnic lines.

CONSTITUTIONAL PERIOD

The only tangible results for Slovenes in the 1848 Austrian Constitution were that laws would henceforth be published in Slovene and that the Carniolan (and thus Slovenian) flag should be three horizontal stripes of white, blue and red. But the United Slovenia programme would remain the basis of all Slovenian political demands up to 1918, and political-cultural clubs and circles began to appear all over the territory.

The rest of the 19th and early 20th centuries were marked by economic development: the railway from Vienna to Ljubljana opened in 1849, industrial companies were formed at Kranj and Trbovlje, and a mill began operating at Ajdovščina. Despite this, material conditions declined for the peasantry, and between 1850 and 1910 more than 300,000 Slovenes – 56% of the population – emigrated.

Some advances were made on the political side. Out of the influential *čitalnice* (reading clubs) and *tabori*, camps in which Slovenes of many different beliefs rallied, grew political movements. Parties first appeared toward the end of the 19th century, and a new idea – a union with the other Slavs to the south – was propounded from the 1860s onward by the distinguished Croatian bishop Josip Strossmayer. The writer and socialist Ivan Cankar even called for an independent Yugoslav ('south Slav') state in the form of a federal republic.

WWI & THE KINGDOM OF SERBS, CROATS & SLOVENES

Slovenian political parties generally tended to remain faithful to Austria-Hungary (as the empire was known from 1867). With the heavy loss of life and destruction during WWI, however, especially along the Soča (or Isonzo) Front (p139), support grew for an autonomous democratic state within the Habsburg monarchy. With the defeat of Austria-Hungary and the dissolution of the Habsburg dynasty in 1918, Slovenes, Croats and Serbs banded together and declared the independent Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, under Serbian King Peter I. The Serbian statesman Stojan Protić became prime minister, and the conservative Slovene leader of the Clerical Party, Fr Anton Korošec, was named vice-premier.

The peace treaties after the war had given large amounts of Slovenian and Croatian territory to Italy (Primorska and Istria), Austria (Koroška) and Hungary (part of Prekmurje), and almost half a million Slovenes now lived outside the borders (some, like the Slovenes in Koroška, had voted to do so, however). The loss of more than a quarter of its population and a third of its land would remain the single most important issue facing Slovenia between the wars.

The kingdom was dominated by Serbian control, imperialistic pressure from Italy and the notion of Yugoslav unity. Slovenia was reduced to little more than a province in this centralist kingdom, although it did enjoy cultural and linguistic autonomy, and economic progress was rapid.

In 1929 Peter I's son King Alexander seized absolute power, abolished the constitution and proclaimed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. But the king was assassinated five years later by a Macedonian terrorist in Marseilles during an official visit to France, and his cousin, Prince Paul, was named regent.

The political climate changed in Slovenia when the conservative Clerical Party joined the new centralist government of Milan Stojadinović in 1935, proving how hollow that party's calls for Slovenian autonomy had been. As a result, splinter groups began to seek closer contacts with the workers' movements. In 1937 the Communist Party of Slovenia (KPS) was formed under the tutelage of Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ).

WWII & THE PARTISAN STRUGGLE

Yugoslavia managed to avoid getting involved in the war until March 1941 when Prince Paul, under pressure from Berlin and Rome, signed a treaty with the Axis powers. He was overthrown in a coup backed by the British, who installed King Paul II. Paul at first attempted neutrality, but German armies invaded and occupied Yugoslavia in April.

Slovenia was split up among Germany (Štajerska, Gorenjska and Koroška), Italy (Ljubljana, Primorska, Notranjska, Dolenjska and Bela Krajina) and Hungary (Prekmurje). To counter this, the Slovenian Communists and other left-wing groups formed a Liberation Front (Osvobodilne Fronte, or OF), and the people took up arms for the first time since the peasant uprisings. The OF, dedicated to the principles of a united Slovenia in a Yugoslav republic, joined the all-Yugoslav Partisan army of the KPJ and its secretary-general, Josip Tito. The Partisans received assistance from the Allies and were the most organised – and successful – of any resistance movement during WWII.

After Italy capitulated in 1943, the anti-OF Slovenian Domobranci (Home Guards) were active in Primorska and, in a bid to prevent the communists from gaining political control in liberated areas, began supporting the Germans.

Despite this assistance and the support of the fascist Ustaša nationalists in Croatia and later the Četniks in Serbia, the Germans were forced to evacuate Belgrade in 1944. Slovenia was not totally liberated until May 1945.

The following month, as many as 12,000 Domobranci and anti-communist civilians were sent back to Slovenia from refugee camps in Austria by the British. Most of them were executed by the communists over the next two months, their bodies thrown into the caves at Kočevski Rog (p202) in Dolenjska.

Josip Broz Tito was born in 1892 in Kumrovec, just over the Štajerska border in Croatia, to a Slovenian mother and a Croatian father.

France Štiglic's 1955 film *Dolina Miru* (Valley of Peace) is the bittersweet story of two children, an ethnic German boy and a Slovenian girl, trying to find a haven during the tumult of WWII.

The Axis History Factbook website (www.axishistory.com/index.php?id=95) details the strength and leadership of the controversial Domobranci (Home Guards) during WWII.

1809–13

Ljubljana capital of the French-ruled Illyrian Provinces

1848

Slovenian intellectuals issue a national political program called United Slovenia

1918

Austria-Hungary dissolved and Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes declared

1945

Occupied Slovenia liberated (May); Slovenia included in the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (Nov)

POSTWAR DIVISION

Of immediate concern to Slovenia after the war was the status of the liberated areas along the Adriatic, especially Trieste. A peace treaty signed in Paris in 1947 put Trieste and its surrounds under Anglo-American administration (the so-called Zone A) and the Koper and Buje (Istria) areas under Yugoslav control in Zone B. In 1954 Zone A (with both its Italian and ethnic Slovenian populations) became the Italian province of Trieste. Koper and a 47km stretch of coast later went to Slovenia while the bulk of Istria went to Croatia. The Belvedere Treaty (1955) guaranteed Austria its 1938 borders, including most of Koroška.

TITO & SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA

Tito had been elected head of the assembly, providing for a federal republic in November 1943. He moved quickly after the war to consolidate his power under the strength of the communist banner. However, it soon became obvious that Slovenia's rights to self-determination and autonomy within the framework of a federal Yugoslavia would be limited beyond educational and cultural matters. Serbian domination from Belgrade would continue as before.

Tito distanced himself from the Soviet Union as early as 1948, but his efforts to create a communist state, with all the usual arrests, show trials, purges and gulags, continued into the mid-1950s. Industry was nationalised, private ownership of agricultural land limited to 20 hectares, and a planned central economy put in place.

But isolation from the markets of the Soviet bloc soon forced Tito to look to the West. Yugoslavia introduced features of a market economy, including workers' self-management. Greater economic reforms in the mid-1960s as well as relaxed police control and border controls brought greater prosperity and freedom of movement, but the Communist Party saw such democratisation as a threat to its power. A purge of the reformists in government was carried out in 1971–72, and many politicians and directors were pensioned off for their 'liberalism' and 'entrepreneurial thinking'. A new constitution in 1974 gave the Yugoslav republics more independence (and autonomy to the ethnic Albanian province of Kosovo in Serbia), but what were to become known as the 'leaden years' in Yugoslavia lasted throughout the 1970s until Tito's death in 1980. By that time, though, Slovenia was the most advanced republic economically in Yugoslavia.

CRISIS, RENEWAL & CHANGE

The economic decline in Yugoslavia in the early 1980s led to inter-ethnic conflict, especially between Serbs and ethnic Albanians in autonomous Kosovo. Serbia proposed scrapping elements of the 1974 constitution in favour of more state uniformity in economic and cultural areas. This, of course, was anathema to Slovenes, who felt threatened.

In 1987 the Ljubljana-based magazine *Nova Revija* published an article outlining a new Slovenian national program, which included political pluralism, democracy, a market economy and independence, possibly within a Yugoslav confederation. The new liberal leader of the Slovenian communists, Milan Kučan, did not oppose the demands, and opposition parties began to emerge. The de facto head of the central government in

Belgrade, Serbian communist leader Slobodan Milošević, resolved to put pressure on Slovenia.

In June 1988 three Slovenian journalists, including the current prime minister, Janez Janša, working for the weekly *Mladina* (Youth) and a junior army officer who had given away 'military secrets' were tried by a military court and sentenced to prison. Mass demonstrations were held throughout the country in protest.

In the autumn, Serbia unilaterally scrapped the autonomy of Kosovo (where 80% of the population is ethnically Albanian). Slovenes were shocked by the move, fearing the same could happen to them. A rally organised jointly by the Slovenian government and the opposition in Ljubljana early in the new year condemned the move.

In the spring of 1989 the new opposition parties published the May Declaration, demanding a sovereign state for Slovenes based on democracy and respect for human rights. In September the Slovenian parliament amended the constitution to legalise management of its own resources and peacetime command of the armed forces. Serbia then announced plans to hold a 'meeting of truth' in Ljubljana on its intentions. When Slovenia banned it, Serbia and all the other republics except Croatia announced an economic boycott of Slovenia, cutting off 25% of its exports. In January 1990, Slovenian delegates walked out on an extraordinary congress of the Communist Party, thereby sounding the death knell of the party.

INDEPENDENCE

In April 1990, Slovenia became the first Yugoslav republic to hold free elections. Demos, a coalition of seven opposition parties, won 55% of the vote, and Kučan, head of what was now called the Party of Democratic Renewal, was elected 'president of the presidency'. The leader of the Christian Democrats, Lojze Peterle, became prime minister.

In the summer, after Serbia had rejected the Slovenian and Croatian proposals for a confederation and threatened to declare a state of emergency, the Slovenian parliament adopted a 'declaration on the sovereignty of the state of Slovenia'. Henceforth Slovenia's own constitution would direct its political, economic and judicial systems; federal laws would apply only if they were not in contradiction to it.

On 23 December 1990, 88.5% of the Slovenian electorate voted in a referendum for an independent republic – effective within six months. The presidency of the Yugoslav Federation in Belgrade labelled the move secessionist and anticonstitutional. Serbia then proceeded to raid the Yugoslav monetary system and misappropriated almost the entire monetary issue planned for Yugoslavia in 1991 – US\$2 billion. Seeing the writing on the wall, the Slovenian government began stockpiling weapons, and on 25 June 1991 Slovenia pulled out of the Yugoslav Federation for good. 'This evening dreams are allowed', President Kučan told a jubilant crowd in Ljubljana's Kongresni trg the following evening. 'Tomorrow is a new day.'

Indeed it was. On 27 June the Yugoslav army began marching on Slovenia but met resistance from the Territorial Defence Forces, the police and the general population. Within several days, units of the federal army began disintegrating; Belgrade threatened aerial bombardment and Slovenia faced the prospect of total war.

Among the four dissidents arrested, tried by a military court and sentenced to prison in June 1988 was the current prime minister Janez Janša.

For more information about the life and times of the founding father of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, go to <http://josip-broz-tito.biography.ms>.

Neil Barnett's relatively slim (175 pages) new biography *Tito*, an entertaining and timely read, offers a new assessment of the limits of holding a state like Yugoslavia together by sheer force of personality.

1980

Josip Broz (Tito) dies

23 December 1990

Slovenian electorate overwhelmingly supports an independent republic

27 June–6 July 1991

Slovenia fights a 10-day war with Yugoslavia

May 1992

Slovenia admitted into the UN

The military action had not come totally unprovoked. To dramatise their bid for independence and to generate support from a less than sympathetic West, which wanted to see Yugoslavia continue to exist in some form or another, Slovenian leaders had baited Belgrade by attempting to take control of the border crossings first. Belgrade apparently never expected Slovenia to resist, believing that a show of force would be sufficient for it to back down.

As no territorial claims or minority issues were involved, the Yugoslav government agreed on 7 July to a truce brokered by leaders of what was then the European Community (EC). Under the so-called Brioni Declaration, Slovenia would put further moves to assert its independence on hold for three months provided it was granted recognition by the EC after that time. The war had lasted just 10 days and taken the lives of 66 people.

THE ROAD TO EUROPE

To everyone's surprise, Belgrade announced that it would withdraw the federal army from Slovenian soil within three months, and did so on 25 October 1991, less than a month after Slovenia introduced scrip of its own new currency – the tolar. In late December, Slovenia got a new constitution that provided for a parliamentary system of government. The National Assembly (Državni Zbor), the highest legislative authority, today consists of 90 deputies elected for four years by proportional representation; two of the deputies represent the Italian and Hungarian ethnic communities. The 40 members of the Council of State (Državni Svet), which performs an advisory role, are elected for five-year terms by social, economic, professional and special-interest groups. The head of state, the president, is elected directly for a maximum of two five-year terms. Milan Kučan, arguably the nation's most popular and respected politician to date, held that role from independence until 2002, when Prime Minister Janez Drnovšek was elected. Executive power is vested in the prime minister, currently Janez Janša of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), who heads a four-party centre-right coalition, and a cabinet of 17 ministers (two without portfolio). The judicial system consists of a supreme court, four high courts that serve as appeals courts, 11 circuit courts and 44 district courts.

The EC formally recognised Slovenia on 15 January 1992, and it was admitted to the UN four months later as the 176th member-state.

Slovenia began negotiations for entry into the European Union (EU) in 1998 and, along with nine other countries, was invited to join the union four years later. In a referendum held in March 2003, an overwhelming 89.6% of the electorate voted in favour of Slovenia joining the EU, and 66% approved its membership in NATO. In March 2004, Slovenia became the first transition country to graduate from borrower status to donor partner at the World Bank and in May of that year entered the EU as a full member. In January 2007, Slovenia became the first of the 10 new EU states to adopt the euro, replacing the tolar as the national currency.

For a portrait of how Slovenia looks to an outsider at the moment, see p20.

May 2004

Slovenia joins the European Union

January 2007

Slovenia replaces the tolar with the euro as its national currency

The Culture

THE NATIONAL PSYCHE

Slovenes are a sophisticated and well-educated people. They have a reputation for being sober-minded, hard-working, dependable and honest – a Germanic bent that is the result of 600-plus years in the orbit of the Habsburgs. But they retain something of their Slavic character, even if their spontaneity is a little more planned and their expressions of passion a little more muted than that of their Slavic neighbours to the south. Think quietly conservative, deeply self-confident, broadminded and tolerant.

If you really want to understand Slovenes and *Sloventsvo* ('Slovene-ness'), there are two Slovenian words that you should know. The first is the adjective *priden*, variously defined as 'diligent', 'industrious', 'hard-working' and – tellingly – 'well-behaved'. Erica Johnson Debeljak, in her seminal (though as yet unpublished in English) memoir *And the Distance Smells of Apples: A Story of Migration* claims that *priden* 'comes close to defining the essence of the Slovenian soul'. Doing a spot of DIY, neighbour? How *priden* of you! Expecting that second child? Aren't we *priden*!

The second word is the noun *hrepnenje*, which expresses a more complicated concept. The dictionary says it means 'longing' or 'yearning' but that's only half the story. In truth it's the desire for something seemingly unattainable and the sorrow that accompanies it. '*Hrepnenje* is the exclusive property of the dispossessed,' writes Johnson Debeljak, citing 'the country's agonising history of border changes, emigration, alienation and powerlessness within a larger unit.' The medieval tale *Lepa Vida* could be seen as the very embodiment of this 'melancholy yearning'.

Luckily, Slovenes are gifted polyglots, and almost everyone speaks some English, German and/or Italian. The fact that you will rarely have difficulty in making yourself understood and will probably never 'need' Slovene – aside from those two words! – shouldn't stop you from learning a few phrases of this rich and wonderful language (which counts a full 34 dialects). Any effort on your part to speak the local tongue (p299) will be rewarded 100-fold.

LIFESTYLE

The population of Slovenia is divided almost exactly in half, between those who live in towns and cities and those who dwell in the country. But in Slovenia, where most urban folk still have some connection with the country – whether it's a village house or a *zidanica*, a cottage in one of the wine-growing regions, the division is not all that great. And with the arrival of large malls on the outskirts of the biggest cities and a Mercator supermarket in virtually every village in the land, the city has come to the country in Slovenia.

Most Slovenes believe that the essence of their national character lies in nature's plentiful bounty. For them a life that is not in some way connected to the countryside is inconceivable. At weekends many seek the great outdoors for some walking in the hills or cross-country skiing. Or at least a spot of gardening, a favourite pastime.

With farmhouse stays a popular form of accommodation in Slovenia, it's relatively easy to take a peek inside a local home. What you'll see generally won't differ too much from what you'd see elsewhere in Central and Western Europe, though you may be surprised at the dearth of children. Slovenes don't have many kids – the nation has one of Europe's lowest rates of natural population increase (8.98 per 1000 population, with a population

An excellent source book for all things cultural in Slovenia is the weighty, 520-page *Slovenia Cultural Profile*, published by the UK-based Visiting Arts in association with the British Council and the Slovenian Ministry of Culture.

The French novelist Charles Nodier (1780–1844), who lived and worked in Ljubljana for a couple of years in the early 19th century, called Slovenia 'an Academy of Arts and Sciences' because of the people's flair for speaking foreign languages.

growth of -0.05%) – and women usually give birth on the late side. Most families tend to have just one child and if they have a second it's usually a decade later.

ECONOMY

A largely heterogeneous and highly adaptable economy, and a very hard-working people have always been central to Slovenia's prosperity. The country's accession with nine other nations to the EU in 2004 also opened up a vast market for the country's goods. Slovenia was the first of these 10 nations to be allowed to adopt the euro as its national currency, when its average annual inflation rate had reached 2.5%. Overall unemployment remains a relatively high 10.4%.

The picture is not altogether rosy. Much of the economy remains in state hands and foreign direct investment in Slovenia is one of the lowest in the EU on a per-capita basis. Ljubljana is responsible for as much as 25% of the country's GDP, primarily thanks to industry (pharmaceuticals, petrochemicals and food-processing), retailing, transport, communications, and financial and other business services. Agriculture accounts for only 6% of all economic activity.

POPULATION & MULTICULTURALISM

According to the most recent census figures, about 82% of the population claims to be ethnic Slovene, descendants of the South Slavs who settled in what is now Slovenia from the 6th century AD.

There are 6243 ethnic Hungarians and 3246 Roma (Gypsies), largely in Prekmurje, as well as 2258 Italians in Primorska. 'Others' and 'unknown ethnic origin', accounting for about 16% of the population, include ethnic Albanians, Bosnians, Croats, Serbs, those who identify themselves simply as 'Muslims' and many citizens of former Yugoslav republics who 'lost' their nationality after independence for fear that Slovenia would not grant them citizenship.

The Italians and Hungarians are considered indigenous minorities with rights protected under the constitution, and they have special deputies looking after their interests in parliament. Although some members of the other groups have lived and worked in Slovenia for many years, most are relatively recent arrivals – refugees and economic immigrants from the fighting in the former Yugoslav republics. Their status as noncitizens in Slovenia is extremely controversial, and many Slovenes have very racist feelings about them.

Ethnic Slovenes living outside the national borders number as many as 400,000, with the vast majority (almost 75%) in the USA and Canada. In addition, 50,000 or more Slovenes live in the Italian regions of Gorizia (Gorica), Udine (Videm) and Trieste (Trst), another 15,000 in Austrian Carinthia (Kärnten in German, Koroška in Slovene) and 5000 in southwest Hungary.

SPORT

Slovenia – a land where *smučanje* (skiing) is king – has produced many world-class ski champions, including Roman Perko in cross-country racing, Mitja Dragšič in men's slalom and Špela Pretnar in women's slalom. But the national heroes in recent years have been Primož Peterka, the ski-jumping World Cup winner in 1996–97 and 1997–98, extreme skier Davo Karničar, who made the first uninterrupted descent of Mt Everest on skis in 2000, and new kid on the block Rok Benkovič, who took gold at the Nordic Ski World Championship at Oberstdorf in Germany in 2005.

Until recently Slovenia was one of the few countries in Europe where *nogomet* (football) was not a national passion, but interest in the sport increased following the national team's plucky performance in the 2000 European Championship, and again in 2004 when they finished second in their group, behind mighty France. In the 2006 FIFA World Cup qualifiers, Slovenia beat Moldova 3-0 at the new Športni Park stadium in Celje, and a shock 1-0 success against favourites Italy propelled them to the top spot in their group. But they failed to qualify as they had in 2002. There are 10 teams in the First Division, with HiT Gorica of Nova Gorica the champions for the past three years.

In general *kosarka* (basketball) is the most popular team sport here, and the Union Olimpija team reigns supreme. Other popular spectator sports are ice *hokej* (hockey) and *odbojka* (volleyball).

Slovenia punches well above its weight when it comes to winning Olympic medals, regularly claiming more gold medals per head of population than Russia or the USA. At the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Slovenia won a silver in men's double sculls and three bronzes in the women's 800m, judo and laser sailing. More impressively they walked away from the 2000 Sydney Olympics with two golds: in the men's double sculls and the 50m rifle shooting. The Slovenian ski-jumping team, which includes Damjan Fras, Primož Peterka, Robert Kranjec and Peter Zonta, took a bronze medal at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, but no medals came back to Slovenia from the winter games in Turin in 2006.

RELIGION

Although Protestantism gained a very strong foothold in Slovenia in the 16th century, the majority of Slovenes – just under 58% – identified themselves as Roman Catholic in the most recent (2002) census. The primate of Slovenia is Cardinal France Rode, based in Ljubljana. There are bishoprics at Maribor and Koper and, from 2006, at Celje, Novo Mesto and Murska Sobota.

Other religious communities in Slovenia include Muslims (2.4%), Eastern Orthodox Christians (2.3%) and Protestants (1%). Most Protestants belong to the Evangelical (Lutheran) church based in Murska Sobota in Prekmurje.

Jews have played a very minor role in Slovenia since they were first banished from the territory in the 15th century. In 2003 the Jewish community of Slovenia (www.jewishcommunity.si; population about 100) received a Torah at a newly equipped temporary synagogue in Ljubljana, the first since before WWII.

WOMEN IN SLOVENIA

Women enjoy equal status with men under Slovenian law but, despite all the work done to eliminate discrimination against women, bias remains. The share of women in government positions of power is low: at present 12 members of parliament – just over 13% – are women. It's a little better in business, with about 20% of directorial posts filled by females.

ARTS Literature

Slovenia is a highly educated society with a literacy rate of virtually 100% among those older than 15 years of age. Indeed, being able to read and write is ingrained in the culture. 'What is your surname?' in Slovene is '*Kako se pišete?*' or 'How do you write yourself?'

The oldest example of written Slovene (or any Slavic language for that matter) can be found in the three so-called *Freising Manuscripts* (Brižinski Spomeniki) from around 970. They contain a sermon on sin and penance

Some 3500 sport societies and clubs count a total membership of 400,000 – 20% of the population – across the nation.

Maja Weiss's *Varuh Meje* (Guardian of the Frontier, 2002), the first Slovenian feature film directed by a woman, follows the journey of three young women on break from college. They take a perilous journey down the Kolpa River, crossing national, political and sexual boundaries.

Slovenia is the third-smallest literature market in Europe and a fiction 'bestseller' in this country means 500 to 800 copies sold.

Cleveland, Ohio, in the USA is the largest 'Slovenian' city outside Slovenia.

See www.eurobasket.com/slo/slo.asp for more about Union Olimpija and Slovenian basketball.

Valvasor's explanation of how the water system in Lake Cerknica worked earned him membership in 1697 in the Royal Society in London, the world's foremost scientific institution at the time.

Visit www.preseren.net /ang for English translations of the works of national poet France Prešeren.

and instructions for general confession. Oral poetry, such as the seminal *Lepa Vida* (Fair Vida), a tale of longing, homesickness and nostalgia, flourished throughout the Middle Ages, but it was the Reformation that saw the first book in Slovene, a catechism published by Primož Trubar in 1550. A complete translation of the Bible by Jurij Dalmatin followed in 1584, and in the same year Adam Bohorič published a grammar of Slovene in Latin, with the evocative title *Spare Winter Hours*. Almost everything else published until the late 18th century was in Latin or German, including Janez Vajkard Valvasor's ambitious account of Slovenia, *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola* (1689), from which most of our knowledge of Slovenian history, geography, culture and folklore before the 17th century comes. Not only did Valvasor (1641–93) map huge areas of Carniola and its towns for the first time, he also explained the mystery of disappearing karst lakes and rivers, 'discovered' the unusual amphibian *Proteus anguinus*, introduced the world to Erazem Lueger, the 15th-century Robin Hood of Slovenia, and catalogued early Slovenian folk tales and dress. *Die Ehre des Herzogthums Crain* (as it was called in German) ran into four volumes, containing 3500 pages with 535 maps and copper engravings.

The Enlightenment and the reforms carried out under Habsburg rulers Maria Theresa and Joseph II raised the educational and general cultural level of the Slovenian nation. In large part due to the support and philanthropy of Baron Žiga Zois (1747–1819), Slovenia gained its first dramatist (Anton Tomaž Linhart), poet (Valentin Vodnik) and modern grammarian (Jernej Kopitar) at this time. But it was during the so-called National Romantic period that Slovenian literature truly came of age and gained its greatest poet of all times: France Prešeren (below). Although many influential writers published at this time, including his friends and associates Matija Čop and Andrej Smole, no one so dominated the period as Prešeren. His bittersweet verse, progressive ideas, demands for political freedom and longings for the unity of all Slovenes caught the imagination of the nation and simply has never let it go.

FRANCE PREŠEREN: A POET FOR THE NATION

Slovenia's most beloved poet was born in Vrba near Bled in 1800 and educated in Ribnica, Ljubljana and Vienna, where he received a law degree in 1828. Most of his working life was spent as an articulated clerk in the office of a Ljubljana lawyer. By the time he had opened his own practice in Kranj in 1846 he was already a sick and dispirited man. He died three years later.

Although Prešeren published only one volume of poetry during his lifetime (*Poezije*, 1848), which sold a mere 30 copies, he left behind a legacy of work printed in the literary magazines *Kranjska Čbelica* (Carniolan Bee) and the German-language *Illyrisches Blatt* (Illyrian Sheet). His verse set new standards for Slovenian literature at a time when German was the literary language, and his lyric poems, such as the masterpiece 'Sonetni Venec' (A Garland of Sonnets, 1834), are among the most sensitive, original and eloquent works in Slovene. In later poems, such as his epic 'Krst pri Savici' (Baptism by the Savica Waterfall, 1836), he expressed a national consciousness that he tried to instil in his compatriots.

Prešeren's life was one of sorrow and disappointment, which he met with stoicism and resignation. The sudden death of his close friend and mentor, the literary historian Matija Čop, in 1835 and an unrequited love affair with an heiress called Julija Primic brought him close to suicide. But this was when he produced his best poems.

In reality, Prešeren was a drunkard, a philanderer, a social outcast and maybe even a tad vain. He refused to have his portrait done and any likeness you see of him was done from memory after his death. But Prešeren was the first to demonstrate the full literary potential of the Slovenian language, and his body of verse – lyric poems, epics, satire, narrative verse – has inspired Slovenes at home and abroad for generations. And will do so for generations to come.

ANDREJ BLATNIK: FIRST PERSON SINGULAR

Andrej Blatnik (www.andrejblatnik.com), who started his artistic career in the early 1980s playing bass guitar in a punk rock band, has published two novels and four collections of short stories, including *Menjave Kož*, translated into English as *Skinswaps* and available from Amazon. Here are some of his views on:

Art in the previous regime 'Art was viewed as something high-class and intellectual. Punk rock brought art to street level in Slovenia.'

Censorship before independence 'By the 1980s things were very open here, even local communist cells were lenient. They'd call you in and say "It's OK if you think that, but do you have to write it?" The state was more interested then in what we were doing!'

Literature in Slovenia 'Literature has always had other duties in Slovenia beyond just art. Writers drew up early nationalist programs, the nation's constitution, they were the first to open up parts of our hidden history, putting the torture and the trials after WWII subtly in their novels. In a small country everything has a bigger effect, a greater echo. [Today] literature has become more a personal task than one of team work. Once we used it to foster our identity and feed our pride. Now we have other successes and can rely on things like football. No one can rely on the previous experience of literature today.'

Themes in Slovenian writing '*Hrepenenje* [p31], the desire for something uncertain perhaps linked with the lack of independence over the centuries, is very prominent in the work of Prešeren and Cankar. Urban themes are few and far between as there is no real city life as such here. Most people in Ljubljana are only first or second generation. There are exceptions [for example, Andrej E Skubic's *Fužine Blues*], with some young writers focusing on what is an increasingly multi-ethnic society. But most urban novels have been traditionally written abroad and end with the protagonist coming back to Slovenia and the countryside – usually to their mother's burial in the mud and the rain.'

Being a writer in Slovenia 'Between 60 to 70 novels are published a year and 200 books of poetry. There is some funding from the state and also a certain amount of prestige. You can make a living as a writer in Slovenia. State grants help as do public readings but it is a very, very modest living.'

In the latter half of the 19th century, Fran Levstik (1831–87) brought the writing and interpretation of oral folk tales to new heights with his *Martin Krpan*: legends about the eponymous larger-than-life hero of the Bloke Plateau in Notranjska. But it was Josip Jurčič (1844–81) who published the first full-length novel in Slovene, *Deseti Brat* (The 10th Brother, 1866).

The period from the turn of the 20th century up to WWII is dominated by two men who single-handedly introduced modernism into Slovenian literature: the poet Oton Župančič (1878–1949) and the novelist and playwright Ivan Cankar (1876–1918). The latter has been called 'the outstanding master of Slovenian prose'. His works, notably *Hiša Marije Pomočnice* (The Ward of Our Lady of Mercy, 1904) and *Hlapec Jernej in Njegova Pravica* (The Bailiff Yerney and His Rights, 1907), influenced a generation of young writers.

Slovenian literature immediately before and after WWII was influenced by socialist realism and the Partisan struggle as exemplified by the novels of Lovro Kuhar-Prežihov Voranc (1893–1950). Since then, however, Slovenia has tended to follow Western European trends: late expressionism, symbolism (poetry by Edvard Kocbek, 1904–81) and existentialism (novels by Vitomil Zupan, 1914–87, and the drama of Gregor Strniša 1930–87).

The major figures of Slovenian post-modernism since 1980 are the novelist Drago Jančar (1948–) and the poet Tomaž Šalamun (1941–). Important writers born around 1960 include the poet Aleš Debeljak (1961–) and the writer Andrej Blatnik (1963–). Young talent to watch out for includes Andrej E Skubic (1967–), whose 2004 novel (and now play) *Fužinski Bluz* (Fužine Blues) is set in one of Ljubljana's less salubrious neighbourhoods on 13 June 2002, the day of the very first football match between independent Slovenia and Yugoslavia. A personal favourite is Boris Pahor (1913–), a member of the Slovenian minority in Trieste whose books – including *Nekropola*

(Pilgrim among the Shadows), a harrowing memoir of time spent in the Natzweiler–Struthof concentration camp at the end of WWII – are now being translated into English.

Architecture

Examples of Romanesque architecture can be found in many parts of Slovenia, including the churches at Stična Abbey in Dolenjska, at Muta and Dravograd in Koroška, and at Podsreda Castle in Štajerska.

Much Gothic architecture in Slovenia is of the late period; the earthquake of 1511 took care of many buildings erected before then (although both the Venetian Gothic Loggia and Praetorian Palace in Koper date back a century earlier). Renaissance architecture is mostly limited to civil buildings (eg the town houses in Škofja Loka and Kranj, and Brdo Castle in Gorenjska).

Italian-influenced baroque of the 17th and 18th centuries abounds in Slovenia, particularly in Ljubljana (eg the Ursuline Church of the Holy Trinity and the cathedral, p72). Classicism prevailed in architecture here in the first half of the 19th century; the Kazina building in Ljubljana's Kongresni trg and the Tempel pavilion in Rogaska Slatina in Štajerska are good examples.

The turn of the 20th century was when the Secessionist (or Art Nouveau) architects Maks Fabiani and Ivan Vurnik began changing the face of Ljubljana (Miklošičev Park, Prešeren monument, the Cooperative Bank on Miklošičeva cesta) after the devastating earthquake of 1895. But no architect has had a greater impact on his city or nation than Jože Plečnik (p76), a man who defies easy definition.

Postwar architecture is generally forgettable but among the most interesting contemporary architects working today are the team Rok Oman and Špela Videčnik, who designed the extraordinary new extension to the City Museum (p72) in Ljubljana.

Music

As elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, music – especially the classical variety – is very important in Slovenia and attendance at concerts and recitals is very high in cities and towns.

The conversion of the Slavs to Christianity from the 8th century brought the development of choral singing in churches and monasteries; the oldest Slovenian spiritual song dates from 1440. The most important composer in the late 16th century was Jakob Gallus (1550–91), who wrote madrigals and choral songs as well as 16 sung masses.

Baroque music had gone out of fashion by the time the Filharmonija was founded in Ljubljana in 1701, and classical forms had become all the rage. *Belin*, the first Slovenian opera, was written by Jakob Francisek Zupan in 1780, and Janez Novak composed classical music for a comedy written by Slovenia's first playwright, Anton Tomaž Linhart. The 19th-century Romantics, like Benjamin Ipavec, Fran Gerbič and Anton Foerster, incorporated traditional Slovenian elements into their music as a way of expressing their nationalism. Perhaps Slovenia's best-known composer at this time was Hugo Wolf (1860–1903), born in Slovenj Gradec.

Slovenian music between the wars is best represented by the expressionist Marij Kogoj and the modernist Slavko Osterc. Contemporary composers whose reputations go well beyond the borders of Slovenia include Primož Ramovš, Marjan Kozina, Lojze Lebič and the ultramodernist Vinko Globokar, who lives in Paris. Opera buffs won't want to miss out on the chance to hear Marjana Lipovšek, the country's foremost mezzo-soprano. There are a total of five professional orchestras and two operas in Slovenia.

Architectural Guide to Ljubljana by Janez Koželj and Andrej Hrausky is a richly illustrated guide to 100 buildings and other features in the capital, with much emphasis on architect extraordinaire Jože Plečnik.

Popular music runs the gamut from Slovenian *chanson* (eg Vita Mavrič) and folk to jazz and mainstream polka best exemplified by the Avsenik Brothers Ensemble (www.avsenik.com). However, it was punk music in the late 1970s and early 1980s that put Slovenia on the world stage. The most celebrated groups were Pankrti, Borghesia and Laibach, and they were imitated throughout Eastern Europe. The most popular rock band in Slovenia today remains Siddharta, still going strong after almost a decade. The most popular solo musician is Magnifico (aka Robert Pešut), who combines Balkan, funk, pop and electronic music, to reasonable degrees of success. New talent to watch out for is the versatile musician and singer Neisha.

FOLK MUSIC

Ljudska glasba (folk music) in Slovenia has developed independently from other forms of music over the centuries, and the collection and classification of children's songs, wedding marches and fables set to music began only in the National Romantic Period of the 19th century. Traditional folk instruments include the *frajtonarica* (button accordion), *cymbalom* (a curious stringed instrument played with sticks), *bisernica* (lute), *zveгла* (wooden cross flute), *okarina* (clay flute), *šurle* (Istrian double flute), *trstenke* (reed pipes), Jew's harp, *lončeni bajs* (earthenware bass), *berdo* (contrabass) and *brač* (eight-string guitar).

Folk-music performances are usually local affairs and are very popular in Dolenjska, Bela Krajina and even Bled (especially during the August Okarina Etno Festival, p115). Črnomelj and especially Adlešiči in Bela Krajina are centres of Slovenian folk music, and as many as 50 bands are active in the area.

There's been a folk-music revival in recent years, and two groups to listen for include Katice and Katalena, who play traditional Slovene music with a modern twist. Terra Folk is the quintessential world-music band.

Visual Arts

There are 45 permanent art museums and galleries in Slovenia and another 800 temporary exhibition spaces, which will give you a rough idea of the role that visual arts play in the lives of many Slovenes.

Examples of Romanesque fine art are rare in Slovenia, surviving only in illuminated manuscripts. Gothic painting and sculpture is another matter, however, with excellent works at Ptujška Gora (the carved altar in the Church of the Virgin Mary; p237), Bohinj (frescoes in the Church of St John the Baptist; p101), and Hrastovlje (Dance of Death wall painting at the Church of the Holy Trinity; p163). Important painters of this time were Johannes de Laibaco (John of Ljubljana), who decorated the Church of the Assumption in Muljava (p196); Jernej of Loka, who worked mostly around Škofja Loka; and Johannes Aquila of Radgona, who did the frescoes in the magnificent church (p267) at Martjanci.

For baroque sculpture, look at Jožef Straub's plague pillar in Maribor, the golden altar in the Church of the Annunciation (p101) at Crngrob or the work of Francesco Robba in Ljubljana (Carniolan Rivers fountain in Mestni trg; see Robba Fountain p72). Fortunat Bergant, who painted the Stations of the Cross in the church at Stična Abbey (p197), was a master of baroque painting.

Classicism prevailed in Slovenian art in the first half of the 19th century in the works of the painter Franc Kavčič, and the Romantic portraits and landscapes of Josip Tominc and Matevž Langus. Realism arrived in the second half of the century in the work of such artists as Ivana Kobilca, Jurij Šubic and Anton Ažbe. The most important painters of that time, however,

The leader of celebrated punk band Laibach, Tomaž Hostnik, died tragically in 1983 when he hanged himself from a *kazolec*, the traditional Slovenian hayrack.

The colourful tome *Handicrafts of Slovenia* by leading ethnographer Janez Bogataj takes a close look at Slovenia's rich tradition of folk craft, with everything from ceramics and lace to woodcarving and painted beehive panels.

were the impressionists Rihard Jakopič, Matija Jama, Ivan Grohar and Matej Sternen, who exhibited together in Ljubljana in 1900.

In the 20th century, the expressionist school of Božidar Jakac and the brothers France and Tone Kralj gave way to the so-called Club of Independents (the painters Zoran Mušič, Maksim Sedej and France Mihelič) and later the sculptors Alojzij Gangl, Franc Berneker, Jakob Savinšek and Lojze Dolinar. The last two would later create 'masterpieces' of socialist realism under Tito without losing their credibility or (sometimes) their artistic sensibilities. Favourite artists to emerge after WWII include Janez Bernik, Rudi Španzel and, from Slovenj Gradec, Jože Tisnikar.

Since the 1980s postmodernist painting and sculpture has been more or less dominated by the artists' cooperative IRWIN, part of the wider multimedia group Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK). Among notable names are that of the sculptor Marjetica Potrč and the video artist Marko Peljhan.

Theatre & Dance

Slovenian attendance of theatre productions is close to 900,000 a year, evidence that this art form is a vital and popular discipline.

The exact birth date of Slovenian theatre is considered to be 28 December 1789, as it was on that night that Anton Tomaž Linhart (1756–95), Slovenia's first playwright, staged the inaugural performance of his comedy *Županova Micka* (Micka, the Mayor's Daughter). In 1867 a Dramatics Society was founded in Ljubljana and a national theatre founded in 1892. Today Ljubljana and Maribor enjoy a vibrant theatre scene. Experimental theatre, best exemplified by Grejpfrut and director Dragan Živadinov, is particularly interesting. The Ana Desetnica International Festival of Street Theatre (p78) is organised by the Ana Monro Theatre in Ljubljana in early July.

Much of Slovenian dance finds its origins in folk culture, and *ljudski ples* (folk dance) has a long tradition in Slovenia, including polkas, circle dances and Hungarian-style czardas. The first ballet group was established in 1918 as part of the National Theatre, and a ballet school was set up. The Ljubljana Ballet now performs at the Opera House and there's another company in Maribor. Avant-garde dance is best exemplified by Betontanc, a dance company established by Matjaž Pogrejc, which mixes live music and theatrical elements – called 'physical theatre' – with some sharp political comment, Iztok Kovač's EbKnap troupe and Tomaš Pandur.

Cinema & TV

Slovenia was never on the cutting edge of film-making as were some of the former Yugoslav republics (eg Croatia). However, it still managed to produce about a dozen full-length features annually, some of which – like Jože Gale's *Kekec* (1951) and France Štiglic's *Dolina Miru* (Valley of Peace, 1955) – won international awards. Today that number has dropped to between four and six.

Only two films were produced in Slovenia between the wars. In the 1950s Slovenian film tended to focus on subjects like the Partisan struggle – eg Štiglic's *Na Svoji Zemlji* (On Their Own Land, 1948) and *Akcija* (Action, 1960) by Jane Kavčič – and life among the Slovenian bourgeoisie under the Austro-Hungarian empire (eg Bojan Stupica's *Jara Gospoda* or *Parvenus*, 1953). The 1960s brought a new wave of modernism, best exemplified by the work of the late Boštjan Hladnik (*Ples v Dežju* or *Dance in the Rain*, 1961) and Matjaž Klopčič (*Na Papirmatih Avionih* or *On Wings of Paper*, 1967).

What is now touted as the 'Spring of Slovenian Film' in the late 1990s was heralded by two films: *Ekspres*, *Ekspres* (Express, Express, 1997) by Igor Šterk, an award-winning 'railroad' film and farce, and *Autsajder* (Outsider,

1997) by Andrej Košak, about the love between a Slovenian girl and Bosnian 'outsider'. Subsequent successes were Sašo Podgoršek's *Sladke Sanje* (Sweet Dreams, 2001) and *Kruh in Mleko* (Bread & Milk, 2001) by Jan Cvitkovič. Damjan Kozole's *Rezervni Deli* (Spare Parts, 2003) won international acclaim for its almost brutal treatment of the trafficking of illegal immigrants through Slovenia, from Croatia to Italy, by a bunch of embittered misfits. Up for a Foreign Language Oscar in 2007 was Cvitkovič's *Odgrobadogroba* (Grave Hopping), a tragicomedy about a professional funeral speaker. The Slovenian Film Festival takes place in Celje in September.

Radiotelevizija Slovenija (RTV SLO) broadcasts on two channels: SLO 1, which has everything from children's programs to news and films, and SLO 2, which shows mostly sporting events. A subsidiary called TV Koper-Capodistria broadcasts in Italian on the coast, and there is a regional station in Maribor. The top two private commercial channels are the immensely popular Pop-TV and Kanal A, which often show films and other programmes in English with Slovene subtitles, and there are about 30 regional cable stations. Locally produced public TV is not very good in Slovenia – you may have noticed all those satellite dishes on the rooftops pulling in Sky, BBC World and CNN.

Check out www.ljudmila.org/nsk/1.html to learn more about what the Neue Slowenische Kunst and IRWIN are up to.

The website of the Slovenian Film Fund (Filmski Sklad Slovenije; www.film-sklad.si) can tell you everything you need to know about films and filming in Slovenia.

The first film shot in Slovenia was a documentary called *V Kraljestvu Zlatoroga* (In the Realm of the Goldenhorn) in 1931.

Environment

THE LAND

Slovenia is a Central European country with a surface area of only 20,273 sq km – about the size of Wales or Israel. It borders Austria for 318km to the north and Croatia for 670km to the south and southeast. Shorter frontiers are shared with Italy (280km) to the west and Hungary (102km) to the northeast.

The terrain is predominantly hilly or mountainous: about 90% of the surface lies more than 300m above sea level at an average elevation of 557m. Forest, some of it virgin, and woodland cover 57% of the country. Land under agricultural use is rapidly diminishing and now accounts for just under a quarter of the total.

Geographers divide the country into as many as a dozen different areas, but there are basically four topographical regions. The Alps, including the Julian Alps, the Kamnik-Savinja Alps, the Karavanke chain and the Pohorje Massif, are to the north and northeast. Spreading across their entire southern side are the pre-Alpine hills of Idrija, Cerklno, Škofja Loka and Posavje. The Dinaric karst lies below the hills and encompasses the ‘true’ or ‘original’ Karst plateau between Ljubljana and the Italian border. The Slovenian littoral follows its small 47km of coastline along the Adriatic Sea, and the essentially flat Pannonian plain spreads to the east and northeast of the country.

Much of the interior of Slovenia is drained by two rivers – the Sava (221km) and Drava (144km) – both of which flow southeastward and empty into the Danube. Other important rivers are the Soča to the west, which flows into the Adriatic, the Mura in the northeast, the Krka to the southeast and the Kolpa, which forms part of the southeastern border with Croatia. There are several ‘intermittent’ rivers (eg the Unica, Pivka and Reka), which disappear into karst caves and potholes, only to resurface elsewhere under different names. Slovenia’s largest natural lakes are Cerklnica in Notranjska, which is dry for part of the year (usually July to September or later), and Bohinj in Gorenjska.

Main Regions

Although Slovenia is divided up into 194 *občine* (municipalities or administrative communes), this doesn’t help when travelling. Instead, Slovenia is best viewed as a country with a capital city (Ljubljana) and eight traditional *regije* (regions): Gorenjska, Primorska, Notranjska, Dolenjska, Bela Krajina, Štajerska, Prekmurje and Koroška.

Greater Ljubljana, by far the nation’s largest city, is pinched between hills to the west and east and the nonarable Ljubljana Marsh to the south.

Gorenjska, to the north and northwest of the capital, is Slovenia’s most mountainous province and contains the country’s highest peaks, including Triglav (2864m) and Škrlatica (2740m). The landscape is Alpine and the provincial centre is Kranj. Primorska, a very diverse region of hills, valleys, karst and a short coastline on the northern end of the Istrian peninsula, forms the country’s western border, and the countryside feels Mediterranean on the whole. It has two ‘capitals’, Nova Gorica and Koper, and Slovenia’s Italian minority is concentrated here. Notranjska, to the south and southeast of Ljubljana, is an underdeveloped area of forests and karst – Slovenia’s ‘last frontier’. Its main towns are Cerklnica and Postojna.

Dolenjska lies south of the Sava River and has several distinct areas, including the Krka Valley, the hilly Kočevje and also the remote Posavje

regions. Novo Mesto is the main city. Bela Krajina, a gentle land of rolling hills and birch groves south of Dolenjska, is washed by the Kolpa River. Its most important towns are Metlika and Črnomelj.

Štajerska, by far Slovenia’s largest region, stretches to the east and northeast and is a land of mountains, rivers, valleys, vineyards and ancient towns. Maribor and Celje are the centres, and Slovenia’s second- and third-largest cities respectively. Sitting north of Štajerska is little Koroška, with its cultural heart at Slovenj Gradec.

Prekmurje, which roughly translates as ‘beyond the Mura River’, is basically a flat plain in Slovenia’s extreme northeast, although there are hills to the north. Most of Slovenia’s Hungarian minority lives within its borders, and the capital and administrative centre is Murska Sobota.

WILDLIFE

Slovenia, a small republic in the heart of Central Europe, is not the obvious place to view wildlife. However, common European animals abound and its forests, marsh areas and short coast attract a tremendous amount of birdlife. There are upwards of six dozen types of plants that you’ll find only in Slovenia.

Animals

While Slovenia counts some 15,000 animal species, most are common European varieties such as deer, boar, chamois, wolves and lynx, all of which live here in abundance, especially in the Alpine areas and the Kočevje region of Dolenjska. The latter is also home to Europe’s largest population of brown bears (*Ursus arctos*), which currently numbers between 500 and 700 and has to be culled annually. There are also much rarer species such as the moor tortoise, cave hedgehog, scarab beetle and various types of dormice. Two species unique to Slovenia are the marbled Soča trout (*Salmo trutta marmoratus*) and *Proteus anguinus*, a blind salamander that lives in karst cave pools (p185) and is the only exclusively cave-dwelling vertebrate in the world.

Plants

Slovenia is home to 3200 plant species, and about 70 of them – many in the Alps – are unique to Slovenia or were first classified here. Triglav National Park is especially rich in endemic flowering plants, including the Triglav ‘rose’ (actually a pink cinquefoil), the blue Clusi’s gentian, yellow hawk’s-beard, Julian poppy, Carniola lily and primrose, tufted rampion and the purple Zois bellflower.

NATIONAL PARKS

About 8% of the countryside is protected under law at present. Further statutes have already been approved by parliament, and eventually more than a quarter of the territory will be conservation land of some kind.

There is one national park – the 83,808-hectare Triglav National Park (p128), which encompasses almost all of the Julian Alps – although proposals have been made to set aside others in the Kamnik Alps, the Pohorje Massif, the Karst and the Kočevje-Kolpa regions. There are three regional parks – in the Kozjansko region (p228) of southeast Štajerska, the area around the Škocjan Caves in Primorska (p151) and in Notranjska (p188) – and 44 areas designated as country (literally ‘landscape’) parks. There are also about 50 protected nature reserves, including 200 hectares of primeval forest in Kočevski Rog region (p202) of Dolenjska, and some 623 natural heritage sites, such as tiny Divje Jezero (Wild Lake; p147) at Idrija in Primorska.

The National Atlas of Slovenia, produced by a team of geographers, historians and social scientists to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Slovenia’s independence, looks at the country’s geography, settlement, emigration and environment and has over 100 maps.

Because the Karst region, a limestone plateau in Primorska, was the first such area to be described, it is also called the ‘classic’, ‘real’, ‘true’ or ‘original’ Karst and always spelled with an upper-case ‘K’.

Slovenia ranks 150th in size out of a total 190 nations on earth.

There are more Parisians (2.14 million) in central Paris than Slovenes (2 million) in all of Slovenia.

www.gov.si/zgs/medved has information about the conservation of large carnivores in Slovenia, including brown bears.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

The rules and regulations in most protected parks and nature reserves are fairly obvious: no littering, no picking flowers, no setting fires except in designated areas and so on. But also remember that certain landscapes, Triglav National Park in particular, are very fragile, and there is no wild camping and mountain bikes are banned from trails.

Minimise the waste you must carry out by taking minimal packaging and bringing no more food than you will need. Don't use detergents or toothpaste in or near watercourses, even if they are biodegradable. Bear in mind that sensitive biospheres, for both flora and fauna, may be seriously damaged if you depart from designated paths in protected areas.

Traffic congestion on Slovenia's roads is a problem in peak season, and visitors will do themselves and residents a favour if they forgo driving and use public transport. You can also do your bit by resisting the temptation to drive your own or a rental car in fragile areas, like the Logarska Dolina and Robanov Kot in Štajerska, and go instead by bicycle or on foot. Use the recycling banks on the streets of larger towns or the litter bins at the very least.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Although Slovenia is a very green country, pollution is a problem here, and it is now being tackled by the National Environment Protection Program, a seven-year plan approved by parliament in 2005, and the Environmental Agency of Slovenia (Agencija za Okolje), a branch of the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning.

Over the past two decades the biggest concern has been air pollution. Climatic change is particularly worrying in a country that calls itself 'the garden of Europe', and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is a primary objective.

In particular, nitrous oxides emitted by cars on the highway connecting Gorenjska with the coast are hurting the pine forests of Notranjska and damaging buildings, outdoor sculptures and other artwork in many historical cities. Sulphur dioxide levels are especially high in cities and towns like Šoštanj, Trbovlje and Ljubljana where coal was the main fuel. The nation's sole nuclear power plant (at Krško in Dolenjska) provides about 40% of electric power, but half of it is owned by Croatia, and Slovenia plans to stop using it altogether in 2023.

From 1990 to 2000, steps taken to clean up the mess – including the construction of water-purifying plants, the monitoring of companies discharging waste, the installation of filters on power plants and the introduction of gas heating – saw sulphur dioxide emissions fall by almost two-thirds and nitrogen oxide levels reduced by just over 10%.

In the past several years Slovenia has also introduced a series of environmental taxes, including a waste-disposal and water-pollution tax, in a bid to hit the biggest abusers in the pocket. The Sava, Mura and lower Savinja Rivers are especially vulnerable, though the quality of water in most Slovenian rivers is acceptable. Even so, rain has washed underground all sorts of filth dumped in the Karst region, and waste carried by the 'disappearing' Unica and Ljubljanica Rivers could threaten the Ljubljana Marsh. Slovenia produces almost 4.7 million tonnes of waste a year, 61% of which is now recovered and 27% disposed.

To learn more about the Environmental Agency of Slovenia, visit www.arso.gov.si.

Slovenia Outdoors

Slovenes live very active, very outdoorsy lives, and it won't be long before you're invited to join in the fun. Indeed, these are the people who invented skiing almost four centuries ago, and hiking and climbing clubs across the country count some 55,000 paid-up members. And according to local tradition, Slovenes can't even describe themselves as such until they have reached the top of Mt Triglav (p128). It is a tradition in Slovenia to greet everyone you pass while hiking or climbing. Generally a simple 'Dober dan' (Hello) and/or a smile will suffice.

As a result of all this enthusiasm, the choice of activities and range of facilities available are endless. From skiing and climbing to caving and cycling, it's all on offer and very affordable compared with other parts of Europe. The **Slovenian Tourist Board** (www.slovenia.info) publishes specialist brochures and maps on skiing, hiking, cycling, golfing and horse riding, as well as one on the nation's top spas and health resorts.

You'll find these activities available throughout the country, and most described below are cross-referenced to the appropriate sections under individual towns. You can always go it alone, but if you really want to be in safe, experienced hands, engage the services of any of the travel agencies specialising in adventure sport. These are usually found in this book's Information section of each town or city.

HIKING & WALKING

Slovenia has an excellent system of trails – 7000km of them – almost all of which are marked by a red circle with a white centre. At crossings, there are signs indicating distances and walking times. The Julian Alps, the Kamnik-Savinja Alps and the Pohorje Massif are the most popular places for hiking, but there are some wonderful trails in the lower hills and valleys as well.

The 350km E6 European Hiking Trail running from the Baltic to the Adriatic Seas enters Slovenia at Radlje ob Dravi in Koroška and continues for 280km to a point south of Snežnik in Notranjska. The 600km E7 European Hiking Trail, which connects the Atlantic with the Black Sea, crosses into Slovenia at Robič in Primorska, runs along the Soča Valley and then continues through the southern part of the country eastward to Bistrica ob Sotli in Štajerska before exiting into Croatia. Both are marked by a red circle with a yellow centre.

The Slovenian Alpine Trail, which opened in 1953 and was the first such trail in Europe, runs for 500km from Maribor to Ankaran on the coast via the Pohorje Massif, the Kamnik-Savinja Alps, the Julian Alps and the Cerklno and Idrija hills. It too is marked with a red circle with a white centre.

Slovenia has joined Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Italy, France and Monaco to develop **Via Alpina** (www.via-alpina.com), a 161-stage long-distance trail of two parts (Red Trail: 220km, Purple Trail 120km) that follows the entire arc of the Alps from Trieste to Monaco. Some 22 stages pass through Slovenia.

The Ljubljana-based **Alpine Association of Slovenia** (Planinska Zveza Slovenije, PZS; Map pp62-3; ☎ 01-434 56 80 general info, 434 56 90 huts info; www.pzs.si; Dvorčakova ulica 9; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon, 8am-3pm Tue-Fri), the umbrella organisation of 248 local hiking and climbing clubs, which has 55,000 fully paid members, is the fount of all information and can also organise mountain guides. It publishes hiking maps and a very useful list of mountain huts, refuges and bivouacs throughout Slovenia. This association provides information about specific trails in Triglav National Park and elsewhere as well as huts.

According to a government survey, every third Slovene takes part in active leisure pursuits.

For more on the E6 and E7 European Hiking Trails, see www.wandertheglobe.com/trekking/europe.shtml.

All but one of the Category I mountain huts in Slovenia are in the Alps.

SLEEPING IN THE MOUNTAINS

A *bivak* (bivouac) is the most basic hut in the mountains of Slovenia, providing shelter only, whereas a *zavetišče* (refuge) has refreshments, and sometimes accommodation, but usually no running water. A *koča* (hut) or *dom* (house) can be a simple cottage or a fairly grand establishment like some of those close to Triglav.

A bed for the night runs from €10 to €20 in a Category I hut, depending on the number of beds in the room, and from €7.50 to €13.35 in a Category II. Category III huts are allowed to set their own prices but usually cost less than Category I huts.

A hut is Category I if it is at a height of over 1000m and is more than one hour from motorised transport. A Category II hut is within one hour's walking distance from motorised transport. A Category III hut can be reached by car or cable car directly.

Ten of the highest huts, including most of those around Triglav, are Category I huts. Members of the PZS, along with visitors holding a UIAA-affiliated club membership card, get a 50% discount.

Food prices at PZS huts are regulated as well. A simple meal should cost between €3 and €5 in a Category I hut and €2.50 and €3.75 in a Category II hut. Tea is €0.85 to €1.25 and 1.5L of mineral water are €1.25 and €2.50.

There are some 56 mountain huts (42 of them Category I huts) in the Julian Alps, most of them open at least between June and September; some huts at lower altitudes are open all year. Huts are never more than five hours' walk apart. You'll never be turned away if the weather looks bad, but some huts on Triglav can be unbearably crowded at weekends – especially in August and September. Try to plan your hikes for midweek if possible, and phone or even email ahead – most huts now take bookings.

Of the 167 mountain huts and other accommodation maintained by the Alpine Association of Slovenia across the country, some are very basic indeed whereas others come close to hotel-style accommodation (above).

The Slovenian Tourist Board publishes the excellent (and free) *Hiking in Slovenia* pamphlet with suggested itineraries. More comprehensive sourcebooks and guides include *Walking in the Julian Alps* (Cicerone) by Justi Carey and Roy Clark, with 50 walking routes and short treks, as well as *A Guide to Walks and Scrambles in the Julian Alps* (Zlatorog Publications) by Mike Newbury. Several shorter treks are outlined in the *Sunflower Guide Slovenia* (Sunflower Books).

SKIING

Skiing is by far the most popular recreational pursuit in Slovenia, and why not? On the basis of written references that go back to the 17th century, many people believe that skiing was born on the slopes of the Bloke Plateau in Notranjska. Today around 300,000 people – 15% of the population – ski regularly. Just about everyone takes to the slopes or trails in season (mainly December to March), and you can too on some 40 ski grounds and resorts of varying sizes across the country. They're most crowded over the Christmas holidays and in early February.

Most of Slovenia's ski areas are small and unchallenging compared to the Alpine resorts of France, Switzerland and Italy, but they do have the attraction of lower prices and the scenery is lovely. The latest weather and snow reports are available on the website www.smucisca.7-s.si, or you could call the **Snow Hotline** (Snežni Telefon; ☎ 041-182 500, 031-182 500). Both are in Slovene only, however.

The biggest downhill skiing area in Slovenia is Maribor Pohorje (p245) at altitudes of 336m to 1346m in the hills immediately south of Maribor in Štajerska, with 80km of linked pistes suitable for skiers of all levels. It offers

a ski and snowboard school, equipment rental and floodlit night skiing, as well as being a good starting point for ski touring through the forested hills of the Pohorje.

Kranjska Gora (p124), at 810m to 1570m in Gorenjska, has 20km of pistes, but the skiing here is fairly dull and suited mostly for beginners and intermediates. Nevertheless, for foreign visitors, it is probably Slovenia's best-known and most popular ski resort, being easily accessible from Austria and Italy.

Krvavec (p105), at between 1450m and 1970m in the hills northeast of Kranj in Gorenjska, is one of the best-equipped ski areas in the country, with ski (alpine and telemark) and snowboard schools, equipment rental, a good variety of piste and off-piste skiing, a freestyle mogul course, a speed-skiing track, a half-pipe and snowboard cross trail, a ski shop and some good restaurants and bars. However, as it's only an hour's drive from Ljubljana, it's best avoided at the weekends unless you like long queues.

Many Slovenian skiers think that the Cerklje Ski Centre (p149), at between 900m and 1290m north of Idrija in Primorska, offers some of the country's best downhill skiing. There are only 18km of marked pistes and 5km of cross-country trails served by six modern (and covered) chairlifts and two tows, but all are covered by snow cannon, which guarantee adequate snow cover throughout the season.

For spectacular scenery, you can't beat Kanin (p136), which perches above Bovec in Primorska and at 1600m to 2300m is by far Slovenia's highest ski resort, and Vogel (p121), some 570m to 1800m above shimmering Lake Bohinj in Gorenjska. Both resorts enjoy stunning views north to Triglav and the Julian Alps, and from the top station at Kanin you can even see the Adriatic. Vogel is more suited to experienced skiers and has great opportunities for off-piste and ski-touring.

Snowboarders can find fun parks at Krvavec (p105) and Stari Vrh (p100), at 580m to 1210m near Škofja Loka in Gorenjska, and there are also half-pipes at Vogel and Rogla (p247), at 1517m near Zreče, north of Celje in Štajerska.

There are marked cross-country ski trails at most Slovenian resorts, but the major ones are at Kranjska Gora (40km), Maribor Pohorje (36km), Rogla (18km), and Logarska Dolina (15km).

SPAS & HEALTH RESORTS

Taking the waters is one of the most enjoyable ways to relax in Slovenia, especially after a day on the slopes or mountain trails. Slovenia has 15 thermal spa resorts – two on the coast at Portorož and Strunjan and the rest in the eastern half of the country in Štajerska, Dolenjska and Prekmurje. They are excellent places not only for 'taking the cure' but also for relaxing and meeting people. Many resorts use the Italian *terme* for 'spa' instead of the proper Slovene word *toplice* (thermal spring) or *zdravilišče* (health resort).

Only three towns – Dolenjske Toplice (p200) in Dolenjska, Rogaska Slatina in Štajerska (p224) and Radenci (p268) in Prekmurje – are really spa towns as such, with that distinctive *fin-de-siècle* feel about them. Others, such as Terme Olimia in Štajerska and Terme Čatež in Dolenjska, are loud, brash places dedicated to all the hedonistic pursuits you care to imagine, complete with swimming pools, waterslides, tennis courts, saunas, beauty parlours and massage services. The Banovci spa (p267) near Veržej, about 13km south of Murska Sobota in Prekmurje, is reserved for naturalists.

The Slovenian Tourist Board publishes a useful brochure entitled *Wellness – Tailor-made for You*, which describes the spas as well as wellness centres throughout the country.

Website www.slo-skiing.net is the best single source for information on Slovenian skiing grounds and centres.

The hottest thermal water in Slovenia is at Moravske Toplice, with an egg-boiling temperature of 72°C at source.

MOUNTAINEERING & ROCK CLIMBING

The foothills of the Alps cover almost a third of Slovenia.

The principal rock- and ice-climbing areas include Triglav's magnificent north face – where routes range from the classic Slovene Route (Slovenski Pot; Grade II/III; 750m) to the modern Sphinx Face (Obraz Sfinje; Grade IX+/X-; 140m), with a crux 6m roof – as well as the impressive northern buttresses of Prisanek overlooking the Vršič Pass. The best mountaineering guidebook readily available is Tine Mihelič's *Mountaineering in Slovenia* (published by Sidarta), which describes more than 80 tours in the Julian Alps as well as the Kamnik-Savinja Alps and the Karavanke.

Športno plezanje (sport climbing) is very popular here too. *Slovenija Športnoplezalni Vodnik* (Sport Climbing Guide of Slovenia; Sidarta) by climber Janez Skok covers 70 sport-climbing crags in the country, with good topos and descriptions in English, German and Italian as well as Slovene. The closest sport-climbing crags to Bled are only a few kilometres away at Bohinjjska Bela and Bodešče.

CYCLING & MOUNTAIN BIKING

Slovenia is a wonderful country for cycling and mountain biking; the Slovenian Tourist Board publishes a cycling map-brochure called *Biking in Slovenia* that introduces dozens of road- and mountain-bike trails. Places where you can rent bicycles and/or mountain bikes are listed in the Activities or Getting Around sections of each town.

The uncrowded roads around Bled and Bohinj are a joy to cycle on. Other excellent areas for cycling are the Upper Savinja Valley in Štajerska, the Soča Valley in Primorska, the Drava Valley in Koroška and especially the Krka Valley in Dolenjska, which has become something of a cycling centre.

Mountain-bike enthusiasts should make tracks for Notranjska Regional Park (p186), southwest Koroška (p262), the Maribor Pohorje (p245) and/or the Central Pohorje Region (p246) in Štajerska. Please note that mountain bikes are banned from the trails in Triglav National Park.

KAYAKING, CANOEING & RAFTING

River sports are hugely popular and practised anywhere there's running water in Slovenia, particularly on the Krka River in Dolenjska (for example at Žužemberk and Krka, p199), the Kolpa in Bela Krajina, especially at Vinica (p221), the Sava River in Gorenjska (Bohinj, p121), the Savinja River at Logarska Dolina (p256) in Štajerska, the Drava River near Dravograd (p258) in Koroška but especially the Soča River at Bovec (p136) in Primorska.

The Soča is famed as one of the best white-water rafting and kayaking rivers in Europe, and it is one of only half-a-dozen rivers in the European Alps whose upper waters are still unspoiled. Agencies offering rafting and canoeing trips are detailed in the relevant regional chapters, especially under the Bovec section of the Primorska chapter.

CAVING

It is hardly surprising that the country that gave the world the word 'karst' is riddled with caves – around 8100 have been recorded and described. There are about 20 'show caves' open to visitors, most of which – Škocjan (p151), Postojna (p183), Križna (p189), Planina (p185), Pivka (p185), Predjama (p187) – are in the karst areas of Primorska and Notranjska.

The main potholing regions in Slovenia are the Notranjska karst, centred on Postojna, and the Julian Alps of Gorenjska and Primorska. For more information, club contacts and expeditions, contact the **Speleological Association of Slovenia** (Jamarska Zveza Slovenije; ☎ 01-429 34 44; www.jamarska-zveza.si; Lepi pot 6) in Ljubljana.

The deepest cave in Slovenia – Čehi II on Jelenk peak northwest of Bovec – goes down 1380m.

SAILING & WINDSURFING

Sailing is big on the Adriatic, but most yachties prefer the delights of Croatia's island-studded Dalmatian coast to the strictly limited attractions of Slovenia's 47km littoral. The country's main marinas are at Izola and Portorož (p177), where you can charter yachts and powerboats.

FISHING

Slovenia's mountain streams are teeming with brown and rainbow trout and grayling, and its lakes and more sluggish rivers are home to pike, perch, carp and other coarse fish. The best rivers for angling are the Soča, the Krka, the Kolpa, the Sava Bohinjka near Bohinj and the Unica in Notranjska. As elsewhere, angling is not a cheap sport in Slovenia – a permit at the more popular rivers will cost from €55 to €95 a day and €275 to €470 a week. Catch-and-release permits are cheaper.

For information on licences and seasons, contact the **Slovenian Fishing Institute** (Zavod za Ribištvost Slovenije; ☎ 01-244 34 00; www.zzrs.si; Župančičeva ulica 9) in Ljubljana.

HORSE RIDING

Slovenia is a nation of horse riders. The world's most famous horse – the Lipizzaner of the Spanish Riding School in Vienna – was first bred at Lipica in Primorska. About a dozen riding centres registered with the Ljubljana-based **Equestrian Association of Slovenia** (Konjeniška Zveza Slovenije; ☎ 01-434 72 65; www.konj-zveza.si in Slovene; Celovška cesta 25) rent horses and offer lessons. There are just as many smaller stables and ranches renting privately.

Among the best and most professional places to ride in Slovenia are, of course, the Lipica Stud Farm (p162) in Primorska and the Novo Mesto Sport Equestrian Centre (p204) in Dolenjska.

PARAGLIDING, BALLOONING & FLYING

Paragliding has really taken off in Slovenia, especially in Gorenjska around Bohinj (p121) and at Bovec (p136), where you can take a tandem flight from the upper cable-car station on Kanin peak and descend 2000m into the Bovec Valley.

The tourist information centre in Ljubljana organises hot-air balloon (p76) flights around the year.

Every self-respecting town in Slovenia seems to have an airstrip or aerodrome, complete with an *aeroklub* whose enthusiastic members will take you 'flight-seeing'. The Ljubljana-based **Aeronautical Association of Slovenia** (Letalska Zveza Slovenije; ☎ 01-422 33 33; www.lzs-zveza.si in Slovene; Tržaška cesta 2) has a complete list.

GOLF

There are 18-hole golf courses at Bled and Volčji Potok (both Gorenjska), Mokrice Castle (Dolenjska), Ptuj (Štajerska) and Moravske Toplice (Prekmurje). Nine-hole courses can be found at Bled and Brdo near Kranj (both Gorenjska), Lipica (Primorska) and Podčetrtek and Slovenske Konjice, southeast of Zreče (both Štajerska). The newest course in the country is the nine-hole one at Otočec in Dolenjska.

The best links in Slovenia are the par 73 King's Course in Bled at Bled Golf & Country Club (p114), which opened in 1937, and the par 71 Golf Course Ptuj (p235).

For information, contact the **Slovenian Golf Association** (Golf Zveza Slovenije; ☎ 01-585 17 53; www.golfportal.info in Slovene; Šmartinska cesta 152) in Ljubljana. The Slovenian Tourist Board publishes the useful *Golf Courses in Slovenia* brochure.

The cobalt-blue Soča River in Primorska is recognised as offering some of the finest trout fishing in all of Europe.

If you'd like to see yourself mounted on a proud Lipizzaner, see www.lipica.org.

BIRD-WATCHING

Although many Slovenes don't realise it, Slovenia has some of the best bird-watching in Central Europe. At least 375 species have been sighted here, 220 of which are breeders and 11 of which are under threat. The Ljubljana Marsh (Ljubljansko Barje), south of the capital, Lake Cerknica (p188) in Notranjska and the Sečovelje salt pans (p180) in Primorska are especially good for sighting water birds and waders, as is the Drava River and its reservoirs in northeast Slovenia. An especially wonderful (though messy) sight is the arrival of the white storks in Prekmurje (p270) in April. Other important habitats are the Julian and Savinja Alps, the Karst area and the Krakovski forest north of Kostanjevica na Krki in Dolenjska.

For more information, contact the Ljubljana-based **Bird Watching & Study Association of Slovenia** (Društvo za Opazovanje in Proučevanje Ptice Slovenije; ☎ 01-426 58 75; www.ptice.org in Slovene; Tržaška cesta 2), a member of Bird Life International.

There's no guidebook devoted specifically to the birds of Slovenia but Gerard Gorman's **Birding in Eastern Europe** (www.pbirdr.com) published by **Wildsounds** (www.wildsounds.com) contains a section on the country.

See www.fatbirdr.com/links_geo/europe/slovenia.html for more information on bird-watching in Slovenia.

DIVING

You can dive in all Slovenian rivers, lakes and of course the sea, with the exceptions of the fish hatchery in Lake Bohinj and the shipping lanes and harbour areas. The sport is popular in Lake Bled, in the Kolpa River in Bela Krajina and at Ankaran, Portorož and Piran (p174) on the coast, and you can even take lessons and qualify at the last. For more information, contact the **Slovenian Diving Federation** (Slovenska Potapljaška Zveza; ☎ 01-433 93 08; www.spz.si in Slovene; 25 Celovška cesta) in Ljubljana.

Cave diving is a popular sport in Slovenia but is permitted only under the supervision of a professional guide. Cave diving has been done at Postojna, Škocjan and in the tunnel at Wild Lake (Divje Jezero) near Idrija.

HUNTING

We don't like it either, but hunting is big business in Slovenia, and many Europeans (especially Italians) will pay big – um – bucks to bag a deer, a brace of grouse, a boar or even a bear, which now number up to 700 in Slovenia (p41) and need to be culled. The **Slovenian Hunting Association** (Lovska Zveza Slovenije; ☎ 01-241 09 10; www.lovska-zveza.si in Slovene; Župančičeva ulica 9) in Ljubljana can provide more information.

Food & Drink

Little Slovenia can boast an incredibly varied cuisine, with many different regional styles of cooking. Unfortunately, except for a few national favourites such as *žlikrofi* (stuffed pasta) from Idrija and *brodet* (fish soup) from the coast in Primorska, the distinctive *bučno olje* (pumpkinseed oil) from Štajerska and an incredibly rich dessert called *gibanica* from Prekmurje, you're not likely to encounter many of these regional specialities on restaurant menus. This is home-cooking at its finest, and you should do everything within your charm-the-socks-off-them power to wangle an invitation to a Slovenian home, where food is paramount.

There are several truisms concerning Slovenian cuisine. In general, it is plain and simple, pretty heavy and fairly meaty. The most important thing to remember about it, however, is that it is heavily influenced by its neighbours' cuisines. From Austria, there's *klobasa* (sausage), *zavitek* (strudel) filled with fruit, nuts and/or *skuta* (curd cheese), and *dunajski zrezek* (Wiener schnitzel). The ravioli-like *žlikrofi*, *njoki* (potato dumplings) and *rižota* (risotto) obviously have Italian origins, and Hungary has contributed *golaž* (goulash), *paprikaš* (piquant chicken or beef 'stew') and *palačinke* (thin pancakes filled with jam or nuts and topped with chocolate). From Croatia and the rest of the Balkans have come such popular grills as *čevapčiči* (spicy meatballs of beef or pork) and *pljeskavica* (meat patties)

STAPLES & SPECIALITIES

Bread

Nothing is more Slovenian than *kruh* (bread), and it is generally excellent, especially (*kmečki temni kruh*) (whole wheat bread). Real treats are the braided loaves made around Christmas not dissimilar to Jewish *challah* and *pisan kruh* ('mottled bread') in which three types of dough (usually buckwheat, wheat and corn) are rolled up and baked.

Soup

Most Slovenian meals start with *juha* (soup) – of which there are said to be a hundred different varieties – year-round but especially in winter. As a starter, this is usually chicken or beef broth with little *kokošja* or *goveja juha z rezanci* (egg noodles). More substantial varieties include *jesprenj* (barley soup); *jota*, a very thick potage of beans, potatoes, sauerkraut and smoked pork or sausage; and *obara*, a stew, often made with chicken or veal.

Meat & Fish

For most Slovenes, a meal is incomplete without a *meso* (meat) dish. The pig is king in Slovenia; in these parts the favourite flesh is *svinjina* (pork), although *teletina* (veal), *govedina* (beef) and, in season, *divjačina* (game), such as *srna* (deer) and *fazan* (pheasant), are also eaten. Indeed, even *konj* (horse) finds its way to the Slovenian table.

Some excellent prepared meats are *pršut*, air-dried, thinly sliced ham from the Karst region that is related to Italian *prosciutto*, and *divjačinska salama* (salami made from game). For some reason, *piščanec* (chicken) is not as common on a Slovenian menu as *puran* (turkey), while *gos* (goose), *jagjnetina* (lamb) and *koza* (goat) are seen but rarely.

Slovenes are big eaters of *riba* (fish) and *morski sadež* (shellfish) even far away from the coast. *Postrv* (trout), particularly the variety from the Soča River, is superb.

The Cuisine of Slovenia: Four Seasons of Culinary Masterpieces by Janez Bogataj et al is a richly photographed tome that follows Slovenian cuisine through the year, introducing both traditional and new dishes.

You'll find up to 274 recipes from around Slovenia at www.kulinarika.net/english/cook.asp.

It's the fiercely cold northeast wind in the Karst region called the *burja* that gives *pršut* its distinctive taste.

TRAVEL YOUR TASTEBUDS

Slovenes don't eat a lot of offal and won't tempt you with an eye of newt or even a frog's leg. But they do eat something nobody else does: dormouse or *polh* (loir), a tree-dwelling nocturnal rodent not unlike a squirrel that grows to about 30cm long and sleeps through several months of the year. But unless you are in Notranjska, where it was once a staple, during the loir-hunting season (late September) and have friends there, it's unlikely you'll get to try the incredible edible varmint.

Like the French, Slovenes have a taste for horseflesh – literally – and are especially fond of *žrebe* (colt). They like the taste (it's sweeter than beef or mutton), the low fat and the deep, almost ruby-red colour. You can try it at one of two fast-food outlets called Hot Horse (p84) in Ljubljana.

Groats

Distinctively Slovenian dishes are often served with *žganci*, groats made from barley or corn but usually *ajda* (buckwheat). A real rib-sticker is *ajdovi žganci z ocvirki*, a kind of dense buckwheat porridge with the savoury addition of pork crackling or *ocvirki* (scratchings).

Dessert

Slovenian cuisine boasts two unique and very different desserts. *Potica*, a national institution, is a kind of nut roll (although it's often made with savoury fillings too) eaten after a meal or with coffee or tea during the day. *Prekmurska gibanica*, from Slovenia's easternmost province, is a caloric concoction of pastry filled with poppy seeds, walnuts, apples and/or sultanas and cheese and topped with cream.

DRINKS

Nonalcoholic Drinks

Most international brands of soft drinks are available in Slovenia, but *mineralna voda* (mineral water) is the most popular libation for teetotalers in pubs and bars. *Sok* (juice) is more often than not boxed fruit drink with lots of sugar.

Italian espresso is the type of *kava* (coffee) most commonly served, but thick, sweet Turkish-style coffee is also popular, especially at home. If you don't want it too sweet, say: '*Ne sladko, prosim*'.

Local people drink lots of *čaj* (tea) made from herbs, berries, blossoms or leaves but seldom what they call 'Russian' (ie black) tea. It is still difficult to find black tea in the shops, so bring your own supply of tea bags if you need that morning cuppa.

Alcoholic Drinks

WINE

Wine (*vino*) has been made in what is now Slovenia since Roman times, and many of the country's wines are of a very high quality indeed. Unfortunately, most foreigners know Slovenian wine – if at all – from the cheap bottles of dull and unmemorable white Laški Rizling served at college parties; a trip to Slovenia will convince travellers that the best wines stay at home. Be warned, though, that cheaper 'open wine' (*odprto vino*) sold by the decilitre (0.1L) in bars and restaurants are usually pure rot-gut. For more detailed information, contact the **Commercial Union for Viticulture & Wine of Slovenia** (Poslovna Skupnost za Vinogradništvo in Vinarstvo Slovenije; ☎ 01-24 4 18 04, 244 18 00; www.slovino.com/psvs; Kongresni trg 14; 1000 Ljubljana).

Slovenian wine counts around 10 distinct wine-growing districts, though there are really just three major regions you should be concerned about. Podravje

(literally 'on the Drava') extends from northeast Štajerska into Prekmurje and produces whites almost exclusively, including Laški Rizling (Welschriesling) and Renski Rizling (a true German Riesling), Beli Pinot (Pinot Blanc), Traminec (Gewürtztraminer) and Šipon (Furmint).

Posavje is the region running from eastern Štajerska across the Sava River into Dolenjska and Bela Krajina. This region produces both whites and reds, but its most famous wine is Cviček, a distinctly Slovenian dry light red – almost rosé – wine with a low (8.5% to 10%) alcohol content.

The Primorska wine region excels at reds, the most famous being Teran, a ruby-red, peppery wine with high acidity made from Slovenian Refošk (Refosco) grapes in the Karst region. Other wines from this region are Malvazija (Malvasia), a yellowish white from the coast that is light and dry, and red Merlot, especially the ones from the Vipava Valley (Vipavska Dolina) and the Brda Hills (Goriška Brda).

On a Slovenian wine label, the first word usually identifies where the wine is from and the second the grape varietal: Vipavski Merlot, Mariborski Traminec etc. But this is not always the case, and some wines bear names according to their place of origin, such as Jeruzalemčan, Bizeljčan or Haložan.

There is no *appellation contrôlée* as such in Slovenia; *zaščiteno geografsko poreklo* is a trademark protection that usually – although not in every instance – suggests a certain standard and guarantees provenance. When choosing wine, look for the words *vrhunsko vino* (premium wine) and a gold label and *kakovostno vino* (quality wine) and a silver one. *Namizno vino* means ordinary 'table wine'. They can be red, white or rosé and dry, semidry, semisweet or sweet. Very roughly, anything costing more than €4.50 in the shops is a serious bottle of wine; pay more than €8.50 and you'll be getting something very fine indeed.

One excellent Slovenian sparkling wine that employs the demanding *méthode classique* is Zlata Radgonska Penina from Gornja Radgona, which is based on Chardonnay and Beli Pinot. The award-winning No 1 Cuvée 1 Spéciale from Janez Istenič's winery in Bizeljsko is another. Kraška Penina, a sparkling Teran, is unique. Late-harvest dessert wines include Rumeni Muškát, a 'Yellow Muscat' from Kamnica near Maribor and from Haloze southeast of Ptuj.

Slovenes usually drink wine with meals or socially at home; it's rare to see people sit down to a bottle at a café or pub. As elsewhere in Central Europe, a bottle or glass of mineral water is ordered along with the wine when eating. It's a different story in summer, when *brizganec* or *špricar* (spritizers or wine coolers) of red or white wine mixed with mineral water are consumed in vast quantities. Wine comes in 0.75L bottles or is ordered by the *deci* (decilitre, 0.1L). A normal glass of wine is about *dva deci* (0.2L), but no-one is going to blink an eye if you order three or more.

A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN

The pairing of food with wine is as great an obsession in Slovenia as it is in other wine-producing countries. Most people assume *pršut* with black olives and a glass of ruby-red Teran is a match made in heaven, and it is. But what is less appreciated is the wonderful synergy other wines from the Karst – red Rebula, even white Malvazija – enjoy with these two foodstuffs. With heavier and/or spicier meat dishes such as goulash and salami, try Cviček. Malvazija, a yellowish white from the coast, is also good with fish, as is Cabernet Sauvignon and even Laški Rizling. And with sweet food such as strudel and *potica*, it's got to be a glass of late-harvest Rumeni Muškát.

Of those polled, some 92.5% of Slovenes said that Slovenian wine is the best in the world (though the industry is braced to lose a 20% share of the market to cheap EU imports over the next five years).

A total of 24,500 hectares is under vine cultivation, producing an annual 100 million litres of wine (of which the average Slovene drinks 40).

The oldest vine in the world, planted more than four centuries ago and still producing grapes and wine, is in Maribor.

The Wines of Slovenia by Julij Nemanič and Janez Bogataj is currently the best single source book on viticulture and wine in Slovenia.

Most of the wine-producing districts have a *vinska cesta* (wine route) or two that you can follow in a car or on a bicycle. Many are outlined in the free *Next Exit: Byways are More Attractive than Highways* by the **Slovenian Tourist Board** (Slovenska Turistična Organizacija, STO; www.slovenia.info). Along the way, you can stop at the occasional *klet* (cellar) that offers wine tastings or at a *vinoteka* in wine towns or in such cities as Maribor, Metlika, Ptuj, Črnomelj and Dobrovo near Nova Gorica.

BEER

Pivo beer is very popular in Slovenia, especially outside the home and among younger people. Štajerska *hmelj* (hops) grown in the Savinja Valley are used locally, and are also widely sought by brewers from around the world. They have been described as having the flavour of lemon grass.

Slovenia has two major breweries: Union in Ljubljana, and Laško in the town of that name south of Celje. Union is lighter-tasting and sweeter than Zlatorog, the excellent and ubiquitous beer brewed by Laško, which also makes Laško Club. Union produces an alcohol-free beer called Uni, a decent stout called Črni Baron (Black Baron) and a low-alcohol (2.5%) shandy called Radler. Smile, also produced by Union, is consumed with a slice of lemon like Corona.

Laško's alcohol-free brew is called Gren, and its shandy is called Roler (Bandidos throws in tequila and lemon). It also makes a light beer called Lahko Laško and a dark lager called Laško Temno.

In a *pivnica* (pub), *točeno pivo* (draught beer) is drunk in *veliko pivo* (0.5L mugs) or *malo pivo* (0.3L glasses). Both locally brewed and imported beers are also available at pubs, shops and supermarkets in 0.5L bottles or 0.3L cans.

SPIRITS

An alcoholic drink as Slovenian as wine is *žganje*, a strong brandy or *eau de vie* distilled from a variety of fruits. Common types are *slivovka* (made with plums), *češnjevec* (with cherries), *sadjevec* (with mixed fruit) and *brinjevec* (with juniper). Another type is *medeno žganje* (or *medica*), which is flavoured with honey. One of the most unusual (if not the best) is Pleterska Hruška, a pear brandy (also called *viljamovka*) made by the Carthusian monks at the Pleterje monastery near Kostanjevica na Krki (p211) in Dolenjska.

Many Slovenes enjoy a *špička* – slang for a little glass of schnapps – during the day as a pick-me-up. You'll probably receive the invitation '*Pridite na kupico*' ('Come and have a drop') more than once.

CELEBRATIONS

Like most people in this increasingly globalised world, Slovenes mark things like birthdays in the indistinguishably developed-world Hallmark kind of way. But at Easter there's always a ham cooked with herbs and decorated Easter eggs. And a Slovenian Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without a *potica*.

Although it's not a public holiday, St Martin's Day (11 November) is important, as on this day, the winemakers' *mošt* (must), which is essentially fermenting grape juice, officially becomes wine and can be sold as such. In the evening families traditionally dine on goose and drink new wine, and some restaurants offer a special *Martinovanje* dinner accompanied by folk music. According to the legend, St Martin hid himself in a flock of geese when the faithful were looking for him to tell him he'd just been made a bishop.

You'll learn lots more about Slovenian viticulture, regions and wine labelling by visiting www.matkurja.com/projects/wine.

SLOVENIA'S TOP FIVE

Aska in Volk (p82) In the capital, 'The Lamb and Wolf' is a very stylish place for Bosnian and other South Slav specialties, including roast lamb.

Lovenjak (p267) This *gostilna* northwest of Murska Sobota serves Prekmurje specialties in upmarket but comfortable surrounds.

Oštarija Peglez'n (p116) Bled's new 'Iron Inn' has interesting retro décor and serves some of the best fish dishes in town.

Ribič (p236) The 'Angler' faces the Drava River in Ptuj and the speciality here is – not surprisingly – fish, especially trout.

Topli Val (p140) One of Slovenia's finest restaurants, the 'Warm Wave' in Kobarid serves superb fish and seafood fishes and boasts an enviable wine card.

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

Restaurants go by many names in Slovenia, but the distinctions are not very clear. At the top of the heap, a *restavracija* is a restaurant where you sit down and are served by a waiter. A *gostilna* or *gostišče* has waiters too, but it's more like an inn, with rustic decor and usually (but not always) traditional Slovenian dishes. A *samopostrežna restavracija* is a self-service establishment where you order from a counter and sometimes eat standing up. An *okrepčevalnica* and a *bife* serve simple, fast food such as grilled meats and sausages. A *krčma* may have snacks, but the emphasis here is on drinking (usually alcohol). A *slastičarna* sells sweets and ice cream whereas a *kavarna* provides coffee and pastries. A *mlečna restavracija* (milk bar) sells yogurt and other dairy products as well as *krofi* – tasty, jam-filled doughnuts.

Almost every sit-down restaurant in Slovenia has a menu with dishes translated into English, Italian, German and sometimes French and Russian. It's important to note the difference between *pripravljene jedi* or *gotova jedilna* (ready-made dishes) such as goulash or stew that are just heated up and *jedi po naročilu* (dishes made to order). Lists of *danes priporočamo* or *nudimo* (daily recommendations or suggestions) are frequently in Slovene only.

Many restaurants and inns have an inexpensive *dnevno kosilo* (set lunch menu). Three courses can cost less than €6.

It's important to remember that not many Slovenes eat in city-centre restaurants, unless they have to because of work or because they happen to be entertaining after work. At the weekend, most will head 5km or 10km out of town to a *gostilna* or *gostišče* that they know will serve them good, home-cooked food and local wine at affordable prices. See the Directory (p274) for opening hours.

Quick Eats

The most popular street food in Slovenia is a Balkan import called *burek* – flaky pastry sometimes stuffed with meat but more often cheese or even apple – that is not unlike Turkish *börek*. It's sold at outdoor stalls or kiosks and is very cheap and filling. Other cheap *malice* (snacks) available on the hoof are *čevapčiči*, *pljeskavica* (spicy meat patties), *ražnjiči* (shish kebab) and pizza (which sometimes appears spelled in Slovene as *pica*).

VEGETARIANS & VEGANS

Slovenia is hardly a paradise for vegetarians, but there are a couple of meat-free eateries in Ljubljana and you're sure to find a few meatless dishes on any menu. *Štruklji* (dumplings made with cheese) often flavoured with chives or tarragon are widely available, as are dishes like *gobova rižota* (mushroom risotto) and *ocvrti sir* (deep-fried cheese). Another boon for vegies is that

Slovenian Cookery: Over 100 Classic Dishes (Založba Mladinska Knjiga) by Slavko Adamlje is a practical illustrated guide to Slovenian cuisine.

Mushroom-picking is almost a national pastime in the hills and forests of Slovenia in autumn.

ORGANIC GROWTH

The number of organic farms in Slovenia has mushroomed over the past decade – from a mere 41 in 1998 to 1400 by the time Slovenia joined the EU in 2004. The farms raise and process everything from cereals, dairy products and meat to fruits and vegetables, oils, nuts and wine. Only products inspected and certified by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food may bear the government's *ekološki* label or the organic farmers' union logo 'Biodar'.

Slovenes love fresh *solata* (salad) – a most un-Slavic partiality – and you can get one anywhere, even in a countryside *gostilna*. In season (late summer and autumn) the whole country indulges in *jurčki* (wild cep mushrooms) – in soup, grilled or in salads.

EATING WITH KIDS

Although Slovenia has one of the lowest birth rates in the world and the average Slovenian family numbers just three – well, actually 2.8 – people, Slovenes love children, and it is a very child-friendly country. The family goes everywhere together, and you'll see youngsters dining with their parents in even the most sophisticated restaurants here.

HABITS & CUSTOMS

On the whole, Slovenians are not big eaters of breakfast (*zajtrk*), preferring a cup of coffee at home or on the way to work. Instead, many people eat a light meal (*malica*) at around 10.30am. Lunch (*kosilo*) is traditionally the main meal in the countryside, and it's eaten at noon if *malica* has been skipped. Dinner (*večerja*) – a supper, really – is less substantial when eaten at home, often just sliced meats, cheese and salad at 7pm or 8pm.

EAT YOUR WORDS

For pronunciation guidelines see p299.

Useful Phrases**Do you have a menu in English?**

Ali imate jedilni list v angleščini? a-lee ee-ma-te ye-deel-nee list v an-glesh-chee-nee

Is service included in the bill?

Ali je postrežba vsjeta v ceno? a-lee ye pos-trezh-ba vshte-ta v tse-no

I'm a vegetarian.

Vegetarijanec sem. ve-ge-ta-ree-ya-nets sem

I don't eat (meat/chicken/fish).

Ne jem (meso, piščanca, ribo). ne yem (me-so, pish-chan-tza, ree-bo)

Do you have some typical Slovenian dishes?

Ali imate kakšne pristne slovenske jedi? a-lee ee-ma-te kak-shne preest-ne slo-ven-ske ye-dee

What is the house speciality?

Kaj je domača specialiteta? kay ye do-ma-cha spe-tsee-a-lee-te-ta

I'm hungry/thirsty.

Lačen/žejen sem. la-chen zhe-yen sem

I'd like the set lunch, please.

Rad bi menu, prosim. rad bee me-nee pro-seem

I'd like some ...

Rad bi nekaj ... rad bee ne-kay ...

Another, please.

Še enkrat, prosim. she en-krat pro-seem

The bill, please.

Račun, prosim. ra-choon pro-seem

Diners at the same table wish one another 'Dober tek!' (Bon appetit!) before starting a meal.

Food Glossary**JUHE (SOUPS)**

čista juha	<i>chis-ta yoo-ha</i>	clear soup, bouillon
dnevna juha	<i>dnev-na yoo-ha</i>	soup of the day
gobova kremna juha	<i>go-bo-va krem-na yoo-ha</i>	creamed mushroom soup
goveja juha z rezanci	<i>go-ve-ya yoo-ha s re-zan-tsee</i>	beef broth with little egg noodles
grahova juha	<i>gra-ho-va yoo-ha</i>	pea soup
paradižnikova juha	<i>pa-ra-deezh-nee-ko-va yoo-ha</i>	tomato soup
prežganka	<i>pr-zhgan-ka</i>	toasted rye-flour soup thickened with cream
zelenjavna juha	<i>ze-len-yav-na yoo-ha</i>	vegetable soup

HLADNE ZAČETNE JEDI/HLADNE PREDJEDE (COLD STARTERS)

domača salama	<i>do-ma-cha sa-la-ma</i>	home-style salami
francoska solata	<i>fran-tzos-ka so-la-ta</i>	diced potatoes and vegetables with mayonnaise
šunka z hrenom	<i>shoon-ka s hre-nom</i>	smoked/boiled ham with horseradish
kraški pršut z olivami	<i>krash-kee pr-shoot s o-lee-va-mee</i>	air-dried Karst ham (prosciutto) with salted black olives
narezek	<i>na-re-zek</i>	smoked cold meats
prekajena gnjat	<i>pre-ka-ye-na gnyat</i>	smoked ham
riba v marinadi	<i>ree-ba v ma-ree-na-dee</i>	marinated fish

TOPLE ZAČETNE JEDI/TOPLE PREDJEDI (WARM STARTERS)

drobnjakovi štruklji	<i>drob-nya-ko-vee shtraok-lee</i>	dumplings of cottage cheese and chives
omlet z sirom/šunko	<i>om-let s see-rom/shoon-ko</i>	omelette with cheese/ham
ocvrti sir s tartarsko omako	<i>ots-vr-tee sir s tar-tar-sko o-ma-ko</i>	deep-fried cheese with tartar sauce
rižoto z gobami	<i>ree-zho-to s go-ba-mee</i>	risotto with mushrooms
špageti po bolonjsko	<i>shpa-ge-tee po bo-lon-sko</i>	spaghetti Bolognese
žlikrofi	<i>zhlee-kro-fee</i>	'ravioli' of cheese, bacon and chives

PRIPRAVLJENE JEDI/GOTOVA JEDILNA (READY-MADE DISHES)

bograč golaž	<i>bog-rach go-lash</i>	beef goulash served in a pot
jota	<i>yo-ta</i>	beans, sauerkraut and potatoes or barley cooked with pork in a pot
kuhana govedina z hrenom	<i>koo-ha-na go-ve-dee-na s hre-nom</i>	boiled beef with horseradish
kurja obara z ajdovimi žganci	<i>koor-ya o-ba-ra s ay-do-vee-mee zhgan-tsee</i>	chicken stew or 'gumbo' with buckwheat groats
pečen piščanec	<i>pe-chen peesh-cha-nets</i>	roast chicken
prekajena svinjska rebrca z kislim zeljem	<i>pre-ka-ye-na sveen-ska rebr-tza s kees-leem ze-lyem</i>	smoked pork ribs with sauerkraut
ričet	<i>ree-chat</i>	barley stew with smoked pork ribs
svinjska pečenka	<i>sveen-ska pe-chen-ka</i>	roast pork

JEDI PO NAROČILU (DISHES MADE TO ORDER)

čebulna bržola	<i>che-bool-na br-zho-la</i>	braised beef with onions
ciganska jetra	<i>tsee-gan-ska yet-ra</i>	liver Gypsy-style
dunajski zrezek	<i>doo-nay-skee zre-zek</i>	Wiener schnitzel (breaded cutlet of veal or pork)
kmečka pojedina	<i>kmech-ka po-ye-dee-na</i>	'farmer's feast' of smoked meats and sauerkraut

kranjska klobasa z gorčico	<i>kran-ska klo-ba-sa s gor-chee-tso</i>	Carniolan sausage with mustard
ljubljski zrezek mešano meso na žaru	<i>liob-lian-skee zre-zek me-sha-no me-so na zha-roo</i>	breaded cutlet with cheese
ocvrti piščanec	<i>ots-vr-tee peesh-cha-nets</i>	mixed grill
pariški zrezek	<i>pa-reesh-kee zre-zek</i>	fried chicken
puranov zrezek z šampinjoni	<i>poo-ra-naw zre-zek sham-pee-nyo-nee</i>	veal cutlet fried in egg batter
		turkey cutlet with white mushrooms

RIBE (FISH)

brancin z maslom	<i>bran-tseen s mas-lom</i>	sea bass in butter
kuhana/pečena postrv	<i>koo-ha-na/pe-che-na pos-trv</i>	boiled/grilled trout
lignji/kalamari na žaru	<i>leeg-nyee/ka-la-ma-ree na zha-roo</i>	grilled squid
ocvrti oslič	<i>ots-vr-tee os-lich</i>	fried cod
orada na žaru	<i>o-ra-da na zha-roo</i>	grilled sea bream
morski sadež	<i>mor-skee sa-dezh</i>	shellfish
morski list v belem vinu	<i>mor-skee list v be-lem vee-noo</i>	sole in white wine
pečene sardele	<i>pe-che-ne sar-de-le</i>	grilled sardines
ribja plošča	<i>reeb-ya plosh-cha</i>	seafood plate
škampi na žaru	<i>shkam-pee na zha-roo</i>	grilled scampi (prawns)
školjke	<i>shkol-ke</i>	clams

SOLATE (SALADS)

fižolova solata	<i>fee-zho-lo-va so-la-ta</i>	bean salad
kisla rdeča pesa	<i>kees-la rde-cha pe-sa</i>	pickled beetroot (beets)
kisle kumarice	<i>kees-le koo-mar-tse</i>	pickled gherkins
kumarična solata	<i>koo-mar-chna so-la-ta</i>	cucumber salad
paradižnikova solata	<i>pa-ra-deezh-nee-ko-va so-la-ta</i>	tomato salad
sezonska/mešana solata	<i>se-zon-ska/me-sha-na so-la-ta</i>	seasonal/mixed salad
srbiska solata	<i>srb-ska so-la-ta</i>	‘Serbian salad’ of tomatoes and green peppers
zelena solata	<i>ze-le-na so-la-ta</i>	lettuce salad
zeljnata solata	<i>zel-na-ta so-la-ta</i>	coleslaw

SLADICE/SIRI (DESSERTS/CHEESES)

jabolčni zavitek	<i>ya-bol-chnee zvee-tek</i>	apple strudel
krofi	<i>kro-fee</i>	jam-filled doughnuts
orehova potica	<i>o-re-ho-va po-tee-tsa</i>	Slovenian nut roll
palačinke z marmelado/orehi/čokolado	<i>pa-la-cheen-ke z mar-me-la-do/o-re-hee/cho-ko-la-do</i>	thin pancakes with marmalade/nuts/chocolate
prekmurska gibanica	<i>prek-moor-ska gee-ba-nee-tsa</i>	layered pastry with fruit, nut, cheese and poppy-seed filling and cream
sadna kupa	<i>sad-na koo-pa</i>	fruit salad with whipped cream
sirova plošča	<i>see-ro-va plosh-cha</i>	cheese plate
sladoleđ	<i>sla-do-led</i>	ice cream
torta	<i>tor-ta</i>	cake

MALICE (SNACKS)

burek	<i>boo-rek</i>	pastry filled with meat, cheese or apple
čevapčiči	<i>che-vap-chee-chee</i>	spicy meatballs of beef or pork
pica	<i>pee-tsa</i>	pizza
pljeskavica	<i>plyes-ka-vee-tsa</i>	spicy meat patties
pomfrit	<i>pom-freet</i>	chips (French fries)

ražnjiči	<i>razh-nyee-chee</i>	shish kebab
vroča hrenovka	<i>vro-cha hre-nov-ka</i>	hot dog

BASICS

hrana	<i>hra-na</i>	food
delikatesa	<i>de-lee-ka-te-sa</i>	delicatessen
jajca	<i>yay-tsa</i>	eggs
jedilni list	<i>ye-deel-nee list</i>	menu
kosilo	<i>ko-see-lo</i>	lunch
kozarec	<i>ko-za-rets</i>	glass
krožnik	<i>krozh-neek</i>	plate
kruh	<i>krooh</i>	bread
maslo	<i>mas-lo</i>	butter
menu	<i>me-nee</i>	set menu
natakar/natakarica	<i>na-ta-kar/na-ta-ka-ree-tsa</i>	waiter/waitress
nož	<i>noz</i>	knife
poper	<i>po-per</i>	pepper
restavracija	<i>res-tav-ra-tsee-ya</i>	restaurant
samopostrežna trgovina	<i>sa-mo-pos-trezh-na tr-go-vee-na</i>	grocery store
sir	<i>seer</i>	cheese
sladkor	<i>slad-kor</i>	sugar
sol	<i>saw</i>	salt
steklenica	<i>stek-le-nee-tsa</i>	bottle
topel/hladen	<i>to-pel/hla-den</i>	hot/cold
tržnica	<i>trzh-nee-tsa</i>	market
večerja	<i>ve-cher-ya</i>	dinner, supper
vilica	<i>vil-tsa</i>	fork
vinska karta	<i>veen-ska kar-ta</i>	wine list
z/brez	<i>z/brez</i>	with/without
zajtrk	<i>zay-trk</i>	breakfast
žlica	<i>zhlee-tsa</i>	spoon

MEAT & FISH

govedina	<i>go-ve-dee-na</i>	beef
meso	<i>me-so</i>	meat
piščanec	<i>peesh-cha-nets</i>	chicken
puran	<i>poo-ran</i>	turkey
riba	<i>ree-ba</i>	fish
svinjina	<i>sveen-ye-e-na</i>	pork
teletina	<i>te-le-tee-na</i>	veal

VEGETABLES & SIDE DISHES

ajdovi/koruzni žganci	<i>ay-do-vee/ko-rooz-nee zhgan-tsee</i>	buckwheat/corn groats
bučke	<i>booch-ke</i>	squash or pumpkin
cvetača/karfijola	<i>tsve-ta-cha/kar-fee-yo-la</i>	cauliflower
grah	<i>grah</i>	peas
korenje	<i>ko-ren-ye</i>	carrots
kruhovi cmoki	<i>kroo-ho-vee tsmo-kee</i>	bread dumplings
mlinci	<i>mleen-tsee</i>	pancakes
pire krompir	<i>pee-re krom-peer</i>	mashed potatoes
pražen krompir	<i>pra-zhen krom-peer</i>	fried potatoes
riž	<i>rzh</i>	rice
špināča	<i>shpee-na-cha</i>	spinach

stročji fižol	<i>stroch-ye</i> fee-zhaw	string beans
testenine	tes-te-nee-ne	pasta
zelenjava	ze-len-ya-va	vegetables
FRUIT		
ananas	<i>a-na-nas</i>	pineapple
breskev	<i>bres-kav</i>	peach
češnje	<i>chesh-nye</i>	cherries
češplja	<i>chesh-plya</i>	plum
grozdje	<i>groz-dye</i>	grapes
hruška	<i>hroosh-ka</i>	pear
jabolko	<i>ya-bol-ko</i>	apple
jagode	<i>ya-go-de</i>	strawberries
kompot	<i>kom-pot</i>	stewed fruit (many types)
lešniki	<i>lesh-nee-kee</i>	hazelnuts
maline	<i>ma-lee-ne</i>	raspberries
marelica	<i>ma-re-lee-tsa</i>	apricot
orehi	<i>o-re-hee</i>	walnuts
pomaranča	<i>po-ma-run-cha</i>	orange
višnje	<i>veesh-nye</i>	sour cherries (morellos)
NONALCOHOLIC DRINKS		
brezalkoholne pijače	<i>brez-al-ko-hol-ne pee-ya-che</i>	soft drink
čaj	chai	tea
kapučino	<i>ka-poo-chee-no</i>	cappuccino
kava	<i>ka-va</i>	coffee
kava z smetano	<i>ka-va z sme-ta-no</i>	coffee with whipped cream
limonada	<i>lee-mo-na-da</i>	lemonade
pomarančni sok	<i>po-ma-ranch-nee sok</i>	orange juice
sok	sok	juice
tonik z ledom	<i>to-nee-k z le-dom</i>	tonic water with ice
zeliščni čaj	<i>ze-leesh-chnee chai</i>	herbal tea
WINE		
belo vino	<i>be-lo vee-no</i>	white wine
brizganec (špricar)	<i>brez-ga-nets (shpre-tsar)</i>	wine cooler (spritzer)
črno vino	<i>chr-no vee-no</i>	red (literally black) wine
peneče vino	<i>pe-ne-che vee-no</i>	sparkling wine
rose	<i>ro-ze</i>	rosé wine
sladko (desertno) vino	<i>slad-ko (de-zert-no) vee-no</i>	sweet (dessert) wine
vino	<i>vee-no</i>	wine
BEER & SPIRITS		
brinjevec	<i>breen-ye-vets</i>	juniper-flavoured brandy
češnjevec	<i>chesh-nye-vets</i>	cherry brandy (kirsch)
hruškovec	<i>hroosh-ko-vets</i>	pear brandy
jabolčnik	<i>ya-bolch-nik</i>	apple cider
medica	<i>me-dee-tsa</i>	honey-flavoured brandy
pivo	<i>pee-vo</i>	beer
slivovka	<i>slee-vov-ka</i>	plum brandy
sadjevec	<i>sad-ye-vets</i>	fruit brandy
svetlo pivo	<i>svet-lo pee-vo</i>	lager
temno pivo	<i>tem-no pee-vo</i>	dark beer/stout
viljamovka	<i>vil-ya-mov-ka</i>	pear brandy
žganje	<i>zhgan-ye</i>	fruit brandy

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