

CASE
STUDY



Fáilte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority

FOOD TOURISM
SLOVENIA

Draft in
Development

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SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 SLOVENIA AS A TOURIST DESTINATION – SHORT OVERVIEW

Slovenian tourism has gone through a remarkable metamorphosis in recent years. It has not been only about annual two-digit growth, but more so about the transformation of Slovenia into one of the leading green countries in the world.

The game-changing year was 2017, which coincided with Slovenia being declared the world’s most sustainable country by National Geographic.

Slovenia achieved an eye-opening 96 out of 100 detailed sustainability indicators (in environment and climate, culture and authenticity, nature and biodiversity, among others). And its capital Ljubljana was also anointed Europe’s Greenest Capital in 2016 by the European Union.



SLOVENIAN TOURISM IN NUMBERS (2019)

In 2019, Slovenia a country with a population of two million people, generated a total of 15.77 million visitor nights. International visitors accounted for 72% of these overnights. The average stay is 2.53 days. The main markets are Germany, Italy, Austria, followed by the Netherlands, Croatia and UK. The growth in the years 2016 to 2018 had been unsustainable, with some destination facing overtourism issues, but only in summer months.

In 2019 the growth slowed down and 2020 was expected to be a good year, but with small growth.

With Covid-19 devastating the tourism industry all over the world, Slovenia is expected to record a 40% loss in overnights (50% increase in domestic overnights and 70% drop in foreign

Picture 1: Slovenian tourism in numbers in 2019 (source: Slovenian Tourist Board)



Picture 2: Slovenian tourism in numbers in 2020 – January to October (source: Slovenian Tourist Board)

2019, THE SIXTH CONSECUTIVE RECORD YEAR FOR SLOVENIAN TOURISM

Increase in international tourist arrivals



Number and share of employees in tourism sector



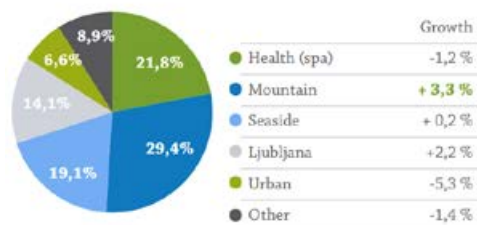
Municipalities with the highest number of overnight stays

1	Ljubljana	2.227.669
2	Piran	1.874.462
3	Bled	1.132.574

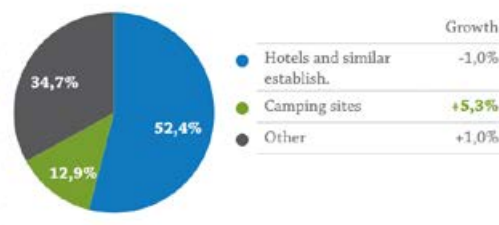
Countries with the highest number of overnight stays and growth 2019/2018

Germany	1.522.057	+11,7%
Italy	1.278.454	-4,2%
Austria	1.011.682	0%
Netherlands	583.274	-4,8%
Croatia	538.140	+2,1%

Municipality types by overnight stays and growth rate 2019/2018



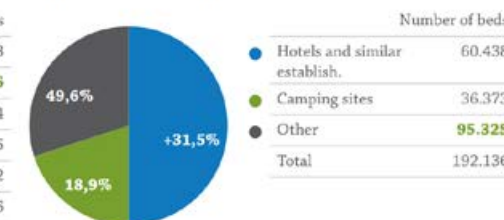
Overnight stays by type of accommodation facility and growth rate 2019/2018



Share of beds by type of municipality

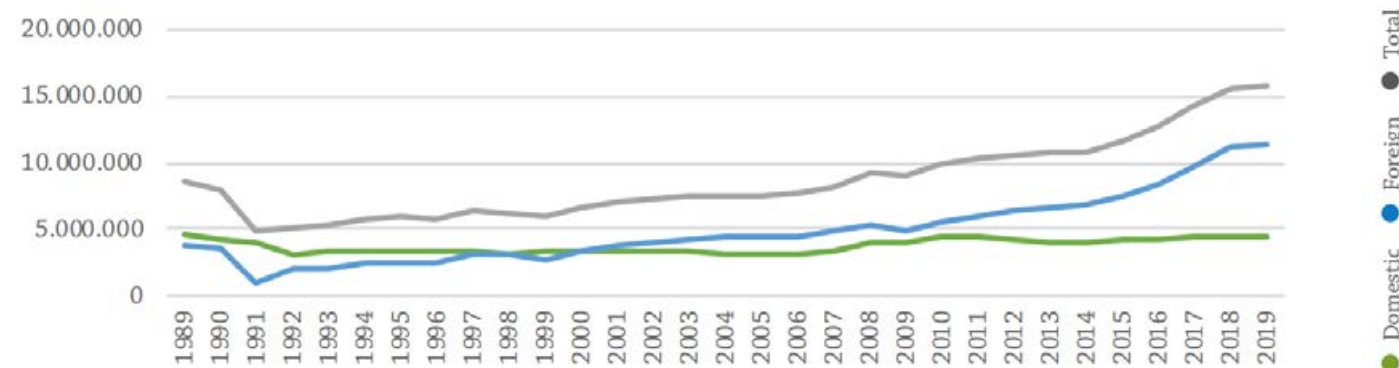


Share of beds by type of accommodation facilities



Picture 3: Slovenian tourism in numbers in 2019 in more details (source: Slovenian Tourist Board)

Overnight stays of domestic and foreign tourists 1989 - 2019



Picture 4: Growth of overnight stays from 1989 to 2019 (source: Slovenian Tourist Board)

bed nights) in 2020.



Projects

**2 AWARDS FOR INNOVATION
SNOVALEC**
**1 NEW AWARD FOR INNOVATION
SEJALEC**
12 5* EXPERIENCES
MICHELIN CAME TO SLOVENIA



Eurosport

**10,6 MILLION VIEWS OF
TOUR OF SLOVENIA RACE**
700.000 FOLLOWERS



European projects

EDEN
European Destinations of Excellence
Selected and promotional EDEN
project

Awards for Slovenian Tourist Board

Source: Eurosport 2020



Four golden and two silver Golden City Gate Awards at ITB Berlin in 2019.



Two prestigious CWT awards at ITB China.



ECTN Award: Destination of Sustainable Cultural Tourism.



Virtuoso, the leading association in the field of luxury and boutique travel industry in the world, Declared Slovenia in August 2019, for the hottest destination of the year.



Virtuoso, the leading global association in luxury and boutique travel and tourism industry, nominated STB for a tourism organization of the year.

INTERNATIONAL AWARDS IN 2019

A LOOK INTO SLOVENIAN TOURISM BEYOND NUMBERS

In its analysis, the Strategy of Sustainable Tourism Development 2017-2021 had a clear message: Slovenian tourism is not in its optimum condition. The numbers are increasing, but Slovenia is actually at a crossroads.

By means of a new vision for tourism, policies, and strategic goals, Slovenia is making efforts to significantly increase the added value of tourism and the attainment of sustainable growth, and it has a key target by 2021 – this is 3.7 to 4 billion Euro from the export of travel. This is to be achieved through measures, such as: investments in accommodation capacities (greenfield and brownfield), public tourist infrastructure and interpretation centres, the definition of special areas for tourism development, creating supportive schemes and lines of credit, re-structuring state-owned hotel companies, improving the business environment, improving accessibility by air and rail, raising the quality and innovativeness of products, legislative changes and developing human resources.

The important foundation was the establishment of a system of four macro destinations (Alpine Slovenia, Mediterranean & Karst Slovenia, Central Slovenia & Ljubljana, Thermal Pannonian Slovenia) with the purpose of:

1. communicating and promoting Slovenia more effectively at an umbrella level (the system of macro destinations emphasises the important comparative advantage of Slovenia as a destination where the Alps, the Mediterranean, the Karst, and the Pannonian Plains meet).
2. enhancing vertical connections from the umbrella level to the destination level (as well as horizontal connections within a macro destination and between macro destinations), which will serve as the basis for development and educational activities with leading destinations - focused on destination management, the management

SLOVENIA'S TOURISM 2021 GROWTH TARGETS

Key target:
to increase international
tourism receipts to EUR
3.7 – 4 billion.

Other targets:

- 5-5.5 million tourist visits;
- 16-18 million overnight stays;
- average length of stay 3.1-3.4 days;
- 18,000 to 22,000 new tourist rooms, of which 8,500 will be renovated and 6,500 will be new rooms in the hotel sector;
- to increase full-time employment in the tourism sector to 12,000 employees.

THE STRATEGIC VISION FOR SLOVENIAN TOURISM

Slovenia is a global green boutique destination for demanding guests who are seeking a diverse and active experience, peace of mind and personal benefits. *****

SHORTER VISION:
Green boutique
destination for 5-
star experiences.

of the experience in a destination, and the development and promotion of product competitiveness.

THE GREEN SCHEME OF SLOVENIAN TOURISM

Slovenia's transformation from a nice country in the heart of Europe to the world's first green destination did not happen overnight. It was the consequence of a strategic set of decisions and systematic work, recognised also by the National Geographic Legacy Awards in 2017. The holistic process, which connected all the stakeholders in tourism and considered all the four dimensions of sustainability, took Slovenia less than a decade.

Today Slovenia's vision of 100% green Slovenia is supported by a unique model of sustainability practice.

The Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism is a tool developed at a national level and a certification programme that carries out the following tasks under the SLOVENIA GREEN umbrella brand:

1. brings together all efforts directed towards the sustainable development of tourism in Slovenia.
2. offers tools to destinations and service providers that enable them to evaluate and improve their sustainability endeavours
3. promotes these green endeavours through the SLOVENIA GREEN brand.

SLOVENIA GREEN is a certification programme and a quality standard that Slovenia uses to indicate the fulfilment of the requirements for destinations and operators under the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism (GSST). At the umbrella level, SLOVENIA GREEN is used to communicate the work in operation under the GSST, and in particular to promote green destinations and operators. The label can only be used by destinations

SLOVENIA'S STRATEGIC GUIDELINES



THE GSST HAS:

-  **A MANAGER** (Slovenian Tourist Board) who actively manages and develops the scheme, offers educational support, and also establishes promotional channels in the international tourism market for the promotion of SLOVENIA GREEN destinations and service providers.
-  **AN ACCREDITED PARTNER** (Association for Sustainable Tourism GoodPlace) who has a licence to make assessments using the Green Destinations Standard and is a Green Destinations partner.

GSST LEVELS:

The levels are closely connected. The destination motivates key interested parties (service providers) to operate sustainably and carry eco-labels, since a green destination can only be credible if it has a critical mass of certified service providers.

5 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GSST

1. A comprehensive and developmental approach
2. Of a national character
3. Internationally comparable
4. Based on global criteria (GDS)
5. A tool for positioning and promotion

THE GSST COVERS TWO LEVELS



Fundamental level:

DESTINATIONS



Fundamental unit:

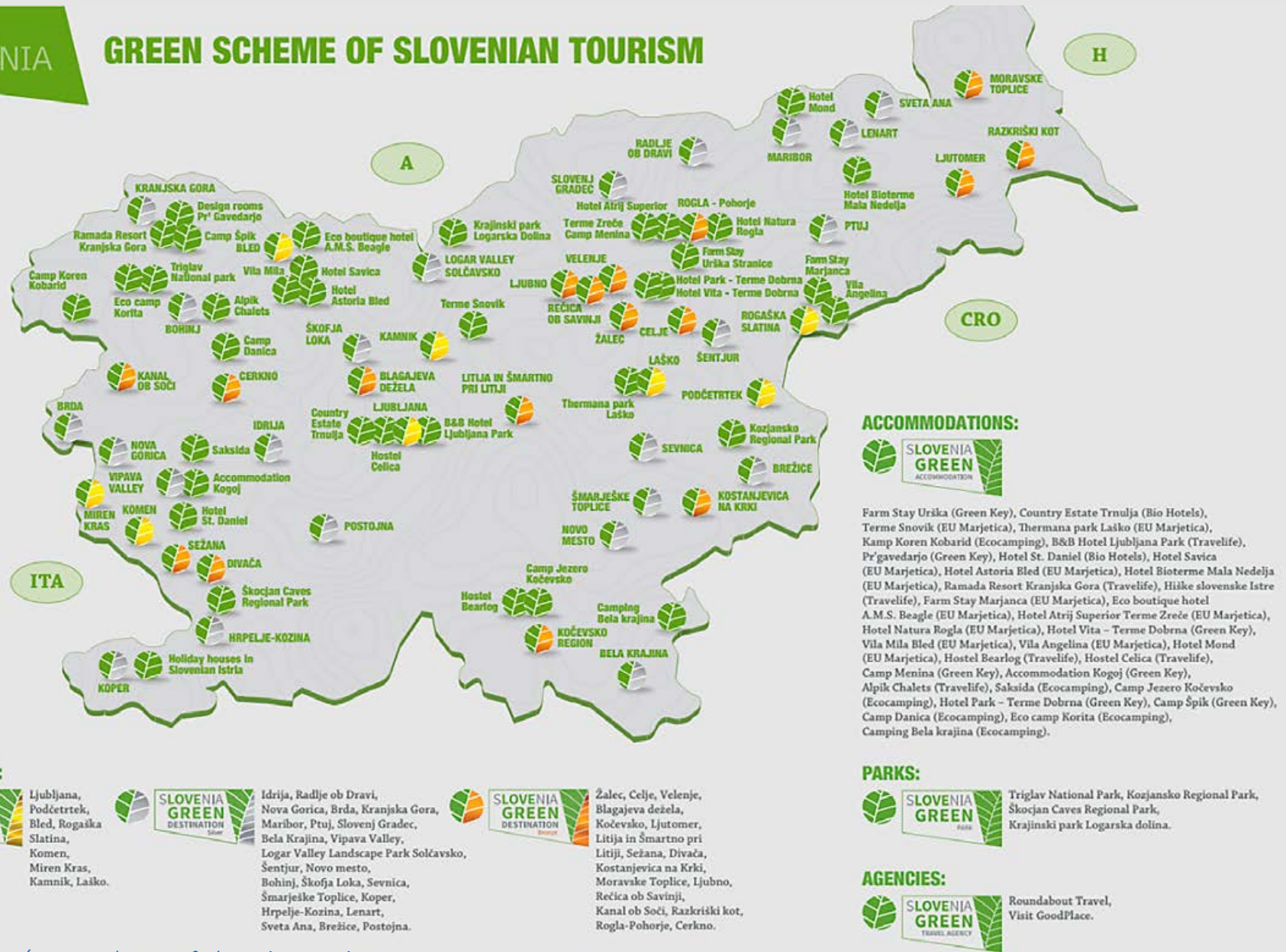
SERVICE PROVIDERS



GREEN SCHEME OF SLOVENIAN TOURISM

and operators that have joined the GSST and meet the conditions for being awarded the label.

MEMBERS OF GSST/ SLOVENIA GREEN IN 2020



www.slovenia.info/en/business/green-scheme-of-slovenian-tourism



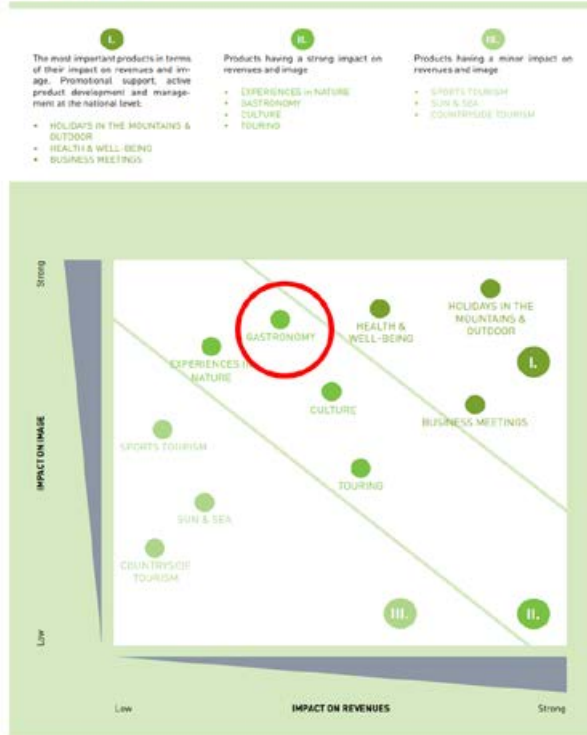
SECTION TWO

PRE-COVID19

2.1 DESTINATION TOURISM STRATEGY - MARKETS AND PRODUCT FOCUS

The main strategic tourism document (Strategy of Sustainable Development of Slovenian Tourism 2017-2021; prepared by Ministry of the Economic Development and Technology in 2017) defined the position of GASTRONOMY as shown in the picture below – in the second group of products, with strong impact on revenue and image.

THE MOST IMPORTANT TOURISM PRODUCTS IN TERMS OF THEIR IMPACT ON REVENUES AND IMAGE

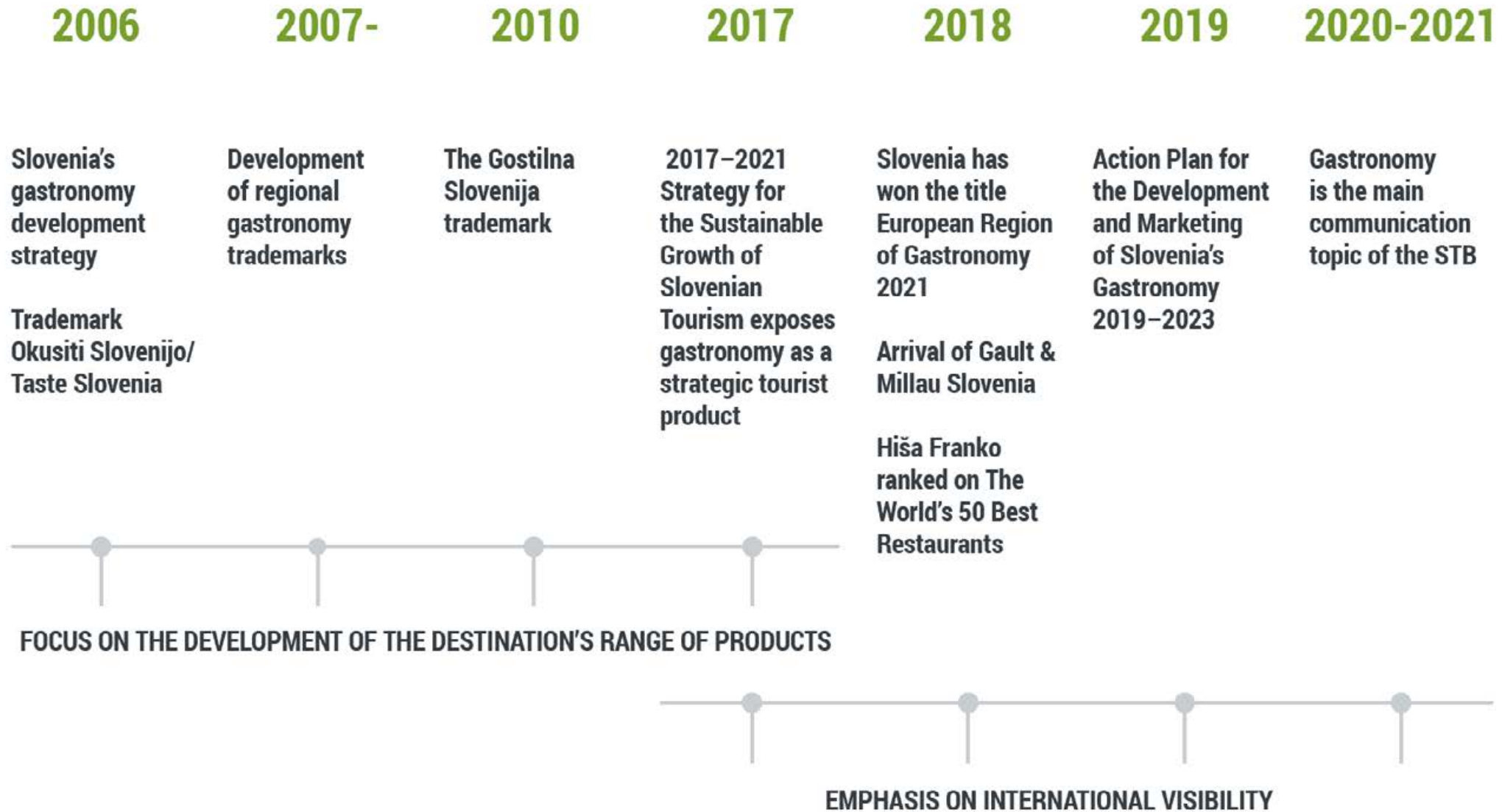


Slovenia's tourism development Strategy up until 2021 places a special Role on cuisine and gastronomy. This range of services will represent a key part of developing experiences of the highest quality which are based on principles of sustainability.

The Slovenian Tourist Board has been incorporating gastronomy in its marketing and promotional activities for over 22 years. Gastronomy is Slovenia's new 2020–2021 biannual marketing topic, which replaced the topic of culture.



KEY DEVELOPMENT MILESTONES OF SLOVENIAN GASTRONOMY



2.2 SPECIFIC FOOD TOURISM STRATEGY

THE FIRST SLOVENIAN GASTRONOMY STRATEGIC DOCUMENT, PREPARED IN 2016

In 2006 the first Slovenian Gastronomy Product Strategy in Slovenia was prepared. The strategy was at that time not so much a development or marketing strategy – since gastronomy as a product was still not considered to be an important image or revenue generator – but more of a systematic document which explained all aspects of gastronomy as a product. However, it represents the first important milestone in systematic work on the product.

At the turn of the 21st century, Slovenia's cuisine and gastronomy were relatively unknown to the world. The degree to which it was included in tourist services was rather modest. As interest in gastronomy grew on a global level, and the publication of culinary literature increased, along with culinary events, they became increasingly important elements of tourism-related and general efforts. Slovenia's gastronomy was still an undiscovered gem of food diversity, which required a systematic approach in order to become visible and promoted on an international scale. So, in 2006, the Development Strategy of Slovenia's Gastronomy was formulated and became the fundamental and guiding document for the promotion and development of Slovenia's food

and drink industry. Although its core purpose was to set up a model for the development and promotion of gastronomy to meet the needs of Slovenia's tourism, it soon became clear that it went beyond mere tourism.

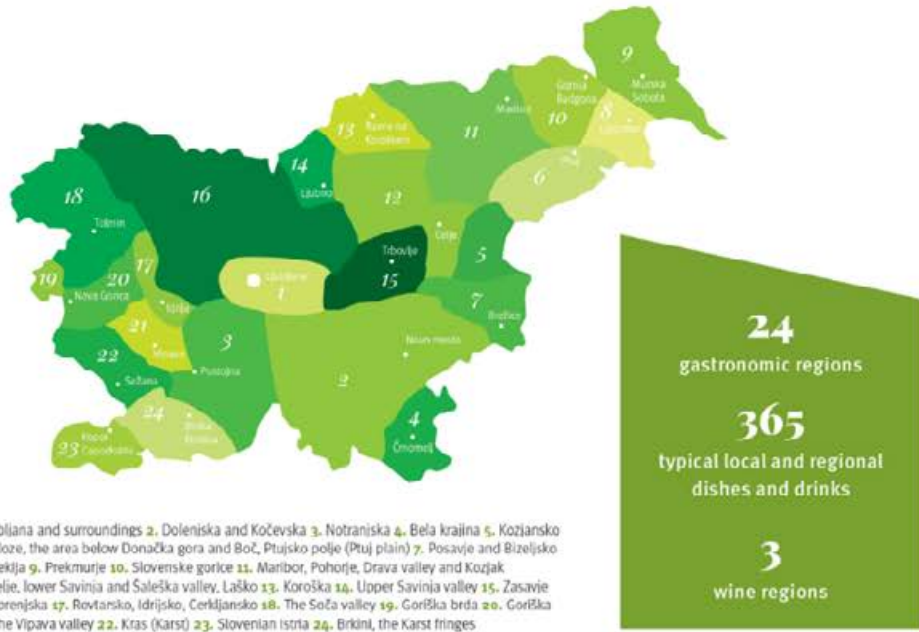
The gastronomic pyramid was determined as the foundation of gastronomic recognisability (with the most typical authentic dishes in each and every region and the top dishes at national level defined). In addition to the complete national gastronomic wealth (heritage) and modern forms, the pyramid defined as many as 24 gastronomic regions. These were defined as self-contained cultural and geographic areas, where the concentration of a certain number of dishes is highest and enables clear demarcation. After some amendments, these 24 regions now feature 365 typical, i.e. flagship dishes and drinks.

From this range, a distinct top of the gastronomic pyramid was determined, which serves as the essential starting point of Slovenia's gastronomic recognisability.

The gastronomic pyramid was instrumental in pushing the work being done at destination level – locations all across Slovenia started preparing their own destination gastronomic strategies, which defined local gastronomic brands and development activities.



24 GASTRONOMIC REGIONS, WHICH WERE RECENTLY GROUPED INTO 4, in line with the national system of tourist regions



1. Ljubljana and surroundings
2. Dolenjska and Kočevska
3. Notranjska
4. Bela krajina
5. Kozjansko
6. Haloze, the area below Donačka gora and Bož, Ptujsko polje (Ptuj plain)
7. Posavje and Bizeljsko
8. Prekija
9. Prekmurje
10. Slovenske gorice
11. Maribor, Pohorje, Drava valley and Kozjak
12. Celje, lower Savinja and Saleška valley, Laško
13. Koroška
14. Upper Savinja valley
15. Zasavje
16. Gorenjska
17. Rovtansko, Idrijsko, Cerkljansko
18. The Soča valley
19. Goriška brda
20. Goriška
21. The Vipava valley
22. Kras (Karst)
23. Slovenian Istria
24. Brijuni, the Karst fringes

Four distinct geographical worlds (Alpine and Mediterranean being the strongest European tourist regions), working as product clusters and being transformed into 4 tourist regions of Slovenia

The **FOUR** TOURIST REGIONS of SLOVENIA



The strategy also determined the central slogan of gastronomic recognisability, namely Taste Slovenia (Okusiti Slovenijo) or, alternatively, Tastes of Slovenia (Okusi Slovenije).

The Slovenian Tourist Board started using gastronomy as an important promotion tool – it introduced Slovenia’s gastronomy at a very high level, through top chefs, at numerous tourism business events all over the world and Slovenian embassies also joining in. Slovenian gastronomy became one of the strongest ambassadors (next to Slovenia’s outstanding sports achievements).

The 24 gastronomic regions are shown below (left), but the gastronomic pyramid was just recently (mid 2020) revised, in accordance with newest trends, novelties and the 24 regions were re-grouped into the four tourist macro regions of Slovenia.

CANDIDACY FOR EUROPEAN GASTRONOMIC REGION IN 2021

In early March 2018, Slovenia was confirmed as a candidate for obtaining the title European Region of Gastronomy 2021. During the process of obtaining this prestigious honour, it submitted a candidacy book titled TASTE SLOVENIA edited by Dr Janez Bogataj (prof. dr.) to the official authority which confers the title, the International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts, and Tourism (IGCAT). The honorary patron of the candidacy was the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor. Slovenia's candidacy included 16 partners whose work and programmes help create a story on the journey of obtaining this prestigious title.

In October 2018, Slovenia was awarded the title of European Region of Gastronomy (ERG) 2021, by the International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism (IGCAT), affirming its commitment to the development, inter-sectoral cooperation and promotion of Slovenia's gastronomy. It's a recognition of the efforts of local producers, chefs and tourist industry figures in working to make the country a top gastronomic destination for boutique, 5-star experiences focused on sustainability.

Being named as a European Region of Gastronomy is of incredible importance for the promotion of national cuisine and gastronomy. At the same time, its effects contribute to sustainable development, it encourages sustainable culinary tourism and local self-sufficiency, it integrates rural and urban areas, it emphasises the significance of nutrition for health, and it provides support to small and medium-sized companies.

One of the reasons that Slovenia had obtained the official candidacy first and then the title of European Region of Gastronomy 2021 was the strong commitment and wide range of 16 different stakeholders that are taking part in the project with the aim to collaborate and realise the long-term strategy with the objective of enhancing the quality of life, education in the field of healthy and sustainable living, and the sustainable development of gastronomy. The IGCAT experts that inspected Slovenia in July and met all the stakeholders were impressed by the gastronomic achievements of



Slovenia and its commitment and the implementation of various activities regarding sustainable development in cooperation with different partners and with the involvement of its inhabitants. The jury acknowledged that a lot of positive work had already been undertaken regarding the gastronomic strengths in the country and the dedication to sustainability, and that the ethos and quality of food production are very high.

It was also surprised by the pride and passion that everyone shows in the appreciation of the land and by the determination for self-sufficiency. The jury expressed its strong belief that the title of ERG 2021 will only help Slovenia in its quest to become world renowned - not just as the great green country but also for its gastronomy, sustainable tourism, food education and quality food supply.

Slovenia's bid book for the title European gastronomic region in 2021: www.slovenia.info/uploads/publikacije/taste_slovenia/taste-slovenia.pdf

THE MAIN STRATEGIC DOCUMENT FOR GASTRONOMY: ACTION PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING OF GASTRONOMIC TOURISM 2019-2023, prepared in 2018

The Action plan for the development and marketing of gastronomic tourism 2019-2023 was created with the aim of identifying the key measures and initiatives needed to position Slovenia as a unique, boutique gastronomic destination.

The document identifies five strategic areas, crucial for the successful development and marketing of Slovenian gastronomic tourism. These areas are: a) legislative framework; b) brands and quality assessment; c) promoting quality raising; d) education and e) marketing.

The three key objectives of the development and marketing of gastronomy are:

- raising international visibility
- ensuring sustainability
- creating added value

www.slovenia.info/uploads/gastronomska_regija/action_plan_for_the_development_and_marketing_of_gastronomy_tourism_2019-2023.pdf

FIRST GAULT&MILLAU SLOVENIA IN 2018

In November 2018 Slovenia got its first Gault&Millau. According to the authors, the issue of the guide "is an important step for the Slovenian cuisine and also tourism, since our country is becoming increasingly established as a culinary destination".

"I am happy Gault&Millau Slovenia confirmed how incredible the Slovenian cuisine actually is and demonstrated that we have excellent wines, which are one of the best in the world. I am convinced it will open the doors to recognition of Slovenia a bit more ajar," said Mira Šemic, Director of the Gault&Millau Slovenia.

FIRST MICHELIN STARS IN SLOVENIA IN 2020

June 16th, 2020 was the day that put Slovenia on the map of the best culinary experiences in the world. The country has been included in the 180-year-old culinary guide for the very first time - with Hiša Franko (Ana Roš) awarded an exceptional two stars, plus a 'special sustainability award'. An additional five restaurants have been awarded one Michelin star each, and there are numerous listings for Slovenian venues awarded in the Bib Gourmand and The Plate categories.

www.tasteslovenia.si/en/michelin/

UPDATES OF GREEN SCHEME OF SLOVENIAN TOURISM IN 2020/2020 - IN GASTRONOMY

The Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism is being updated at the end of 2020, to strengthen the position and quality in the field of gastronomy and to promote sustainability in gastronomy.

The Scheme is being updated on two levels:

1. TOURISM PROVIDERS LEVEL - RESTAURANTS

On the level of tourism providers (restaurants) a new product category in SLOVENIA GREEN is being added.

Next to the existing categories of SLOVENIA GREEN (DESTINATION, ACCOMMODATION, AGENCY, PARK), a new brand category is added - SLOVENIA GREEN CUISINE.

Restaurants who acquire one of two eco certificates (GREEN KEY or LEAF), will enter the GSST, sign the Green Policy of Slovenian Tourism and will be able to use the brand SLOVENIA GREEN CUISINE. This will grant them - next to the benefits from the eco sign and the process itself, also a special promotion and visibility on the level of Slovenian Tourism.

2. DESTINATION LEVEL

In the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism, a package of four new standards is being added for destinations to follow and aspire to in the field of gastronomy. Destinations are motivated to have/pursue:

- A comprehensive management of

gastronomy on destination level (= destinations have a functioning management system of gastronomy - either through the platform of gastronomy brands or quality standards; together with a clearly destination defined gastronomic pyramid, which defines what is most authentic and in line with the (gastronomic) identity of the destination; destinations are also advised to have a gastronomic strategy);

- Active work on promoting short/local/green supply chains (destinations have a functioning system of promoting short supply chains, which effectively link growers/farmers/producers with demand; focus is also on increasing local and seasonal food).
- Organisation of gastronomic events and development of gastronomic experiences (destinations organise events for promoting sustainable gastronomy and promote development of gastronomic experiences).
- Education and promotion in sustainable gastronomy (destinations work actively to educate residents and visitors about local gastronomic identity and principles of sustainable gastronomy).



These standards work on the level of guidelines.

FOR DESTINATIONS	FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS	FOR PARKS	FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS
			<p>RESTAURANTS</p>
<p>BASIS</p>	<p>BASIS</p>	<p>BASIS*</p>	
			<p>BASIS for RESTAURANTS</p>
			
			<p>ADDITIONAL STANDARDS IN GSST for GASTRONOMY for DESTINATIONS</p>

A NEW ROAD MAP FOR SLOVENIA GREEN IN 2021 AND 2022

In December 2020, Slovenian Tourist Board and Slovenia Green Consortium prepared a new SLOVENIA GREEN ROAD MAP, which prioritises three areas of intervention to address sustainable consumption and production in tourism. These are:

- eliminating single use plastic and waste reduction in tourism (together with food waste and loss).
- promoting short supply chains.
- local community engagement.

A comprehensive set of measures on a national level have been defined, which also include development of tools necessary for efficient and focused work on destination/tourism provider level. These measures will be the focus of sustainable activities in the next two to three years, all across Slovenia, on national, destination and tourism providers levels.

See the focuses and goals in the picture below:

I FEEL SLOVENIA **good place** **SLOVENIA GREEN KONZORCIJ**

'ROAD MAP' SLOVENIA GREEN 2021 & 2022

Key strategic goal:
Increasing green value through 3 key interventions to increase resilience, sustainability, added value and responsibility of tourism for sustainable future.

**Priority 1:
PLASTIC & WASTE**

Goal 1:
Slovenian tourism without single use plastics and reduced waste (also food waste)

**Priority 2:
SHORT SUPPLY CHAINS**

Goal 2:
Strengthening short supply chains in Slovenian tourism

**Priority 3:
LOCAL COMMUNITY**

Goal 3:
Engaged and responsible local community in the heart of destination

2.3 THE CHALLENGE IN SLOVENIAN GASTRONOMY

In recent years, gastronomy has become one of the key motives to travel, particularly to destinations that are believed to be culinary centres. Despite the success of individuals in Slovenia, with Ana Roš taking the lead, as well as an increased exposure of Slovenia as a new gastronomic destination and the development of local food brands, visitors to Slovenia still do not indicate gastronomic experiences as one of their main motives to visit.

This is probably also why an average tourist only spends 15.5% of their daily budget in Slovenian bars and restaurants.

The most competitive culinary destinations for Slovenia include its neighbours – Croatia (in particular Istria that celebrates its wine and individual products such as truffles); Austria with a good practice of linking nature and small-scale producers to an integrated gastronomic identity and the image of the country; Hungary as an example of a small country with a relatively difficult cuisine which has managed to climb to become one of the leading countries in this part of Europe, and which also has an increasing number of Michelin stars; and Italy, a prime example of a well set gastronomic pyramid with its exceptional trattorias.

This is what Slovenia and Slovenian restaurants and inns lack – a greater national culinary identity and self-consciousness. The advantages of Slovenia that can be underlined are its diversity in a small space, superior and original wines, the richness of pristine nature, a well-preserved culinary heritage, its boutique character and the latest success of Ana Roš on the international stage.

SHORT SUPPLY CHAINS

Many top chefs mention the issue of regular supply of local products and supply at competitive prices. In order to achieve the idea of a framework story of Slovenian gastronomy, it is necessary to subsidise producers who offer top quality products for sale in top quality and high quality HE (agreement between the Chambers of Commerce and the Ministry of Agriculture). On the other hand, it is necessary to encourage hotels, top-notch restaurants, quality HE, inns, tourist farms and other stakeholders to better integrate local food providers with the aim of increasing the proportion of those who offer at least one meal (e.g. breakfast) with local products (honey, bread, beverages, eggs, yoghurt, milk, etc.).



2.4 BRAND PROPOSITION

WHAT SLOVENIA HAS (Advantages)

The Slovenian gastronomic range of product is relatively evenly distributed between top quality restaurants and quality restaurants and inns, with the addition of wine cellars, tourist farms, mountain huts and experiences in nature, usually associated with glamping or a special/additional range of products in accommodation establishments.

One of Slovenia's advantages is the pristine nature and its diversity in a small area, which enables fast accessibility to the exceptional richness of nature (a large quantity of resources). For the development of gastronomy and top gastronomic experiences, it is also necessary to have premium wines and Slovenia has internationally visible wine producers and wines (the homeland of Rebula, local and regional wines, niche natural wines).

Slovenia takes very good care of food safety and it is therefore also recognised as a country with high standards in hygiene and sanitary standards. One of the biggest indicators of cleanliness and preservation of the natural environment is the presence of bees and the great tradition of beekeeping in Slovenia (it has one of the largest numbers of bee keepers per capita in the EU - one beekeeper per 200 inhabitants).

The relation to nature is also reflected in the tradition and relationship of local people to the production of their own food (gardening) and enjoying themselves in nature (foraging - mushrooms, herbs, berries).

In the European Union, Slovenia has protected some agricultural products and food stuffs with a protected designation of origin (Tolminc cheese, Bovec cheese, Nanos cheese and Mohant, Piran fleur de sel, Ko evje forest honey and Karst honey, Istrian Prosciutto and extra virgin oil of Slovenian Istria), protected geographical indication (Carniolan sausage,

Karst Prosciutto, Karst zašink (cured porneck), Karst pancetta, Prekmurje ham, Upper Savinja Valley stuffed pork stomach, Šebrelje stuffed pork stomach, Prleška tünka, Štajerska and Prekmurje pumpkin seed oil, Ptuj lü (red onions from Ptuj), eggs from below the Kamnik mountains, Styrian hops and Slovenian honey) and guaranteed traditional specialit (Bela Krajina flatbread, Prekmurje gibanica (Prekmurje layer cake), Idrija Žlikrofi (Idrija dough pockets) and Slovenian potica cake (procedure in progress). Last, but certainly not the least important, the main advantage of Slovenian gastronomy is represented by the people who with their knowledge (including international cuisine), diligence and hospitality offer a personal approach to tourists and due to small capacities a high degree of boutiques. Slovenia is also very rich with drinking water.

Slovenia has a big culinary diversity on just 20,273 km². There are 24 different gastronomic regions, three wine regions and an impressive range of 365 typical local and regional dishes and beverages - everything shaped and developed thanks to the geographical peculiarity. Slovenia is the only country in the world to connect the Alps, Mediterranean, Karst and Pannonian Plain. Being at the heart of Europe, it's where different cultures meet: Germanic, Romance, Balkan and Hungarian. So, different influences have shaped gastronomy, too. Slovenia didn't go through violent industrialisation, so the respect for the nature and some traditional ways of cultivating have also remained. Consequently, in Slovenia the dishes are made of fresh local ingredients that are part of green supply chains too. They can be prepared by top chefs in fancy restaurants or by grandmothers on tourist farms. Wherever visitors are in Slovenia, they can find an unforgettable culinary experience. In that, the innovative chefs who work on the basis of tradition, play a key role.

WHAT IS UNIQUE IN SLOVENIA

Slovenia is one of the greenest countries in the world, with an extremely large area of forests (mushrooms), an abundance of local foods divided among different landscapes, a first-class, unspoiled honey and three wine-growing regions with several vineyards harvesting indigenous varieties.

Slovenia's special story includes the Carniolan bee, honey, beekeeping as a symbol of preserved, unspoiled and clean nature, the right to drinking water, which is written in the Slovenian Constitution, concern for the environment, the attitude of Slovenians to nature and the characteristics of the Carniolan bee that can apply to Slovenians (resistance and diligence).

THE UMBRELLA STORY OF SLOVENIAN GASTRONOMY

Slovenia will be positioned as a country that provides the highest amount of pristine tastes of nature in a small space; a land where honey and wine are poured – the interweaving of three completely different climates; a country where the Mediterranean world meets the Alpine and the Pannonian worlds; the only country where three completely different wine regions with completely different wines can be found in such a small area and wines ranked among the best in the world and among the more sought-after among connoisseurs.

exceptional individuals + *spectacular environment* + *sustainable production* =
UNIQUE EXPERIENCE
of Slovenian gastronomy

In addition, Slovenia will offer all the gastronomic experiences through the story of the greenest destination in the world and present to the guests, how much gastronomy is intertwined with the unspoiled nature, foods and resources produced in a sustainable way, in gardens, forests and meadowland pastures.

The main advantages of Slovenian gastronomy certainly include the diversity of the gastronomic region and the rich nutritional heritage.

VISION OF SLOVENIAN GASTRONOMY

The vision of Slovenia as a gastronomic destination is to become a visible destination with a high-quality, innovative, recognisable gastronomy and an authentic culinary range of foods and wines created by a number of boutique providers of high-quality food who build their product range on local production of foods and creative dishes that reflect the natural resources, knowledge and heartiness in preparation.

SLOVENIA'S CHEFS

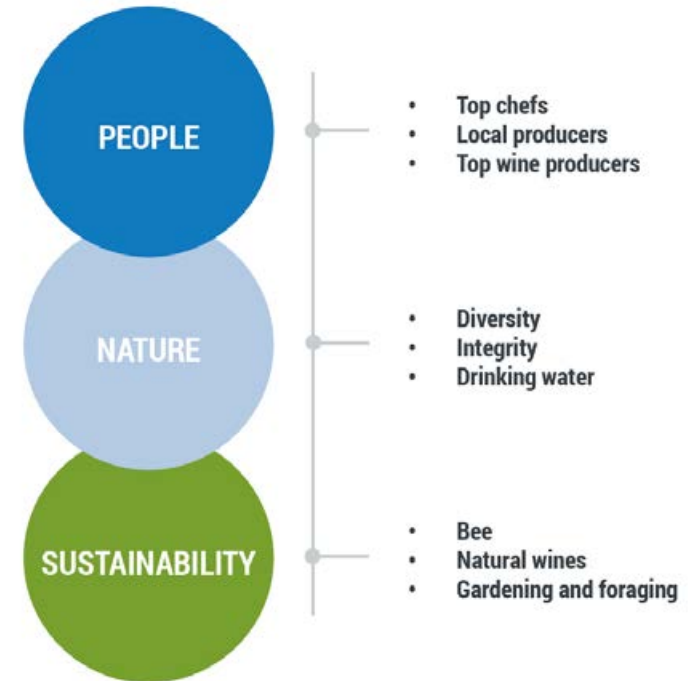
Slovenia has some chefs that have also been established abroad. Andrej Kuhar was the first Slovenian to win a Michelin star (he won it for a restaurant in Germany), Joško Sirk, a Slovenian otherwise living abroad, won a star for his restaurant Pri lovcu (Al Cacciatore) in Subida near Krmin (Cormons), Italy. Janez Bratovž with his restaurant JB in Ljubljana was the first manager to enter the San Pellegrino rankings of The World's 100 Best Restaurants (2010) and at present the only representative on the list of The World's 50 Best Restaurants is Hiša Franko (placed 48) led by Ana Roš, who won the title of the World's Best Female Chef for 2017.

Ana Roš is a member of a number of international associations and she is a regular guest at the largest international culinary congresses. Other chefs active abroad include Tomaž Kavčič, Janez Bratovž, Jure Tomič (Pasta World Champion 2016), Luka Košir and some others. The younger generation in particular, led by Bine Volčič, Jorgo Zupan, Jakob Pintar, Leon Pintarič, etc. also boasts several years of experience in foreign kitchens.



Photo above: [Ana Roš](#). National Geographic recently wrote: Among these, chef Ana Roš has become something of a de facto food ambassador for Slovenia, championing the zero-kilometre policy at which the country excels from her restaurant Hiša Franko in the Soča Valley, near the Italian border. Named best female chef by the World's 50 Best Restaurants Academy in 2017, Ana's latest creation, *Sun and Rain*, is as much a cookbook as it is a handbook for endemic produce, most of it foraged, grown or made on site at Hiša Franko.

SUMMARY – KEY POINTS OF DISTINCTIONS OF SLOVENIAN GASTRONOMY



HOW SLOVENIA IS SEEN BY TOP MEDIA

BBC travel: Slovenia, Europe's surprising new foodie hotspot

“
a melting pot of influences and flavours

Food is an essential part of travel - and that's certainly true of Slovenia.

For a small country, the variety of tastes for a foodie is incredible. Alpine dishes are a total contrast to those found along the Adriatic coast, while foods in the Karst region and Pannonian Plain offer yet more flavours and cooking techniques. In the summer months there are myriad food festivals and open kitchens celebrating food in all its glory.

And recently, with the rise of home-grown super chef Ana Roš, Slovenia is definitely the one to watch in European gastronomy.

2.5 STRONG FOOD CLUSTERS AND COLLABORATION

In recent years, several successful culinary and gastronomy brands (and activities) have been developed at destination level in Slovenia (for reference see the gastronomic pyramid prepared in 2006, which was instrumental to push destination brands and food clusters) in addition to the master brand of TASTE SLOVENIA (OKUSITI SLOVENIJO).

These destination food clusters were built on local brands (all developed by Destination Marketing Management Organisations – public bodies, with the goal to push the development of local gastronomy and to work on quality) – a similar approach was used throughout Slovenia.

The rights to use the brand and market products can be acquired through a detailed certification system, which includes professional evaluation and verification of quality. The number of growers and producers is on the rise, and the systems are becoming interesting to farmers – but still a lot of work needs to be done in promoting and enabling short supply chains.

These brands have encouraged growers and producers to become more confident to produce local food. At the same time, they have served as development and marketing platforms for all endeavours in the field of gastronomy at destination level.

The following destination brands/food clusters stand out the most and are evidence of strong networking, food producers' network, delivery of added value experiences in food and with accommodation.

LJUBLJANA – THE CAPITAL

OKUSI LJUBLJANE (TASTE LJUBLJANA)

Within the framework of the Taste Ljubljana project, selected restaurants offer the traditional dishes of Ljubljana, which are made from local ingredients and prepared by using modern cooking methods. It was developed by Tourism Ljubljana (destination DMO).

The author of the project, renowned ethnologist Janez Bogataj, selected dishes which were popular among Ljubljana's citizens in the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th, but which were later increasingly replaced by international cuisine in restaurants. Local chefs, including internationally recognised names such as Janez Bratož, Igor Jagodic and Andrej Kuhar, have followed his instructions and adapted these dishes to modern times.

The selected restaurants which choose to preserve the culinary tradition bear the Taste Ljubljana Mark and, of course, offer traditional dishes on their menus.

THE OPEN KITCHEN - ODPRTA KUHNA

Odperta Kuhna (the Open kitchen) started in Slovenia's capital Ljubljana (at Pogačar Square in the very centre of the city, next to its famous open food market), in 2013 and has since then spread all over Slovenia.

Every Friday, from March to October, food is offered and prepared on the square, turning the heart of Ljubljana into an extremely popular open-air restaurant. With its high-quality offerings of food from different Slovenian gastronomic regions, the Open Kitchen is a big hit with both locals and tourists. There are around 40 market stalls serving national and international delicacies.

'The Open Kitchen, as a tourist product, has exceeded all expectations and put Ljubljana and Slovenia on the world tourist map'.

The Open kitchen is a plastic-free market, offering food and beverages only in biodegradable materials. They provide guests with useful recycling tips and encourage them to visit the market on foot, bikes or LPP buses.



LJUBLJANA'S FOOD, WINE AND BEER TOURS

In Ljubljana several food, wine and beer tours have developed and are commercially very successful.

Ljubljana Tourism was among the first to offer taste Ljubljana tour, a guided city tour including tasting sessions of traditional Ljubljana dishes, which gives visitors an opportunity to explore the city's culinary offerings and learn about its culinary traditions, which come alive through the dishes brought together under the Taste Ljubljana brand. This guided culinary tour including anything from a visit to the Central Market to tasting sessions of typical local dishes, experiences that offer an insight into Ljubljana's culinary diversity.

The tour comprises of a visit to five different styles of restaurants to taste five different dishes and drinks. To learn about their ingredients and their source, visitors are brought to the Central Market and take a good quarter of an hour's easy walk to Krakovo, an area of gardens traditionally occupied by the local vegetable growers. The guide will also bring visitors to the historical city centre's locations where food trading and culinary-related activities used to take place in the past.

LJUBLJANA QUALITY MARK

As part of the Ljubljana Quality project, Ljubljana Tourism verifies the quality of the tourism offering and promotes the best that Ljubljana has to offer. Since 2019 the project has been run in conjunction with prestigious gastronomic guide Gault&Millau.

www.visitljubljana.com/en/about-us/projects/gault-and-millau-ljubljana-quality-mark/

GOURMET LJUBLJANA - THE GASTRONOMIC TRADEMARK BY LJUBLJANA TOURISM, with traditional NOVEMBER GOURMET LJUBLJANA FESTIVAL

GOURMET LJUBLJANA is a relatively new brand developed by LJUBLJANA TOURISM to join all activities in the field of gastronomy in the capital.

gourmet-lj.si/en

November Gourmet Ljubljana festival brings out the best of both worlds, the traditional and the one of modern culinary fusion. It has incorporated two traditional events, Ljubljana Wine Route and Ljubljana Wine and Culinary Festival, both marking the culinary Autumn season, when at St. Martin's Day, according to Slovenian tradition, grapes officially turn to wine.

Selected restaurants offer special November Gourmet menus. Cooking and educational workshops for adults and children take place. The festival also includes a contest for a new taste of Ljubljana, which is chosen from the recipes provided by locals. Culinary tours of the city are offered at the promotional festival prices.

www.visitljubljana.com/en/visitors/stories/what-is-november-gourmet-ljubljana-and-how-to-get-a-taste-of-it/

EUROPEAN FOOD SUMMIT IN LJUBLJANA

The European Food Symposium 2019 left a mark across the entire Europe. The message of the symposium was very clear: It is important to understand that sustainability is not a value in itself, but a motto that must be taken into account in all Slovenia's actions. The Sustainability approach is also not the goal of culinary creativity, but the path which leads them to the same goal - the ultimate culinary experience. Sustainability must become a part of the culinary world from the source of food, all the way to the plate. At this point, the science with its discoveries, which are becoming increasingly embedded in the culinary world, could help us. But not only the culinary science, also the engineering science. The speakers highlighted another interesting paradox which is increasingly affecting the world of not only fine cuisine, but gastronomy in general. The opening or closing of borders has a major impact on the development of gastronomy in the world, where moderation and exploitation of the positive potentials of both extremes are crucial.

The European Food Summit 2020 has been postponed to 2021.

DESTINATION QUALITY BRAND BOHINJSKO (FROM BOHINJ)

This brand's solid selection of high-quality products from Bohinj (Alpine lake destination, positioned in Triglav National park) features Bohinj cheeses and other dairy products, cured meats, non-alcoholic and alcoholic drinks, mountain teas, etc. The brand also includes a range of local and regional dishes in food service establishments in the Bohinj area, as well as various handicraft products in the souvenir range and experiences.

TASTE RADOL'CA

A destination Radovljica, a historical town, whose neighbouring destination is the iconic world-famous Alpine location Lake Bled, has positioned itself as a culinary destination and works extensively in this field.

They developed the quality brand TASTE RADOL'CA and work with local restaurants, local producers, organize culinary events.

Taste Radol'ca chefs take their inspiration from the environment in which they grew up. In places the traditional method of preparation has been preserved, whilst elsewhere traditional dishes are given a make-over and are revived in a unique way.

Taste Radol'ca unites nine restaurants and inns in the Radol'ca area. They have vowed not only to take part in group promotions but also, above all, to co-operate and connect - amongst each other and with local producers.

In 2017 Taste Radol'ca restaurants invited two of Slovenia's most respected food critics to carry out an evaluation of each participating restaurant and inn. Following their visit, each restaurant was awarded a rating from 1-6 in the form of 'suns'. All the participating Taste Radol'ca restaurants received a minimum rating of 3.

Participating Taste Radol'ca restaurants offer dishes prepared using seasonal ingredients year-round. Every November they come together to produce special dishes and culinary events. At the opening event at the end of October, the chefs and waiting staff unite to host an exceptional culinary experience.

Taste Radol'ca offers street food at selected events in Radovljica's old town centre. At July's concert evenings, visitors can listen to music whilst enjoying tasty street food, as well as at the switching-on of the Christmas lights in December and other occasions.

For larger events themed culinary offers are prepared, such as in April for the Chocolate Festival, when chocolate-based menus are offered, and in September for the Honey Festival, when honey-based menus are available.

issuu.com/turizemradovljica/docs/kulinaricna_brosura_2017



GORIŠKA BRDA

Another destination standing out in the field of food and wine is Goriška Brda – often referred to as the Slovenian Tuskany, know for top quality wines, fruit and olives. It's one of the smallest wine-growing regions in Slovenia, but what it lacks in size, it more than makes up for in quality. Brda is home to award-winning vineyards like Simičič Marjan and Movia, and also Klet Brda, the largest wine cellar in Slovenia.

RESTAURANT WEEK - TWICE A YEAR, ACROSS SLOVENIA

Twice a year, in the spring and in the autumn, visitors can set off on a 10-day culinary journey where top Slovenian chefs shower them with their creativity and knowledge by serving at least three courses. Only restaurants approved by the discerning food critic Uroš Mencinger may participate in Restaurant Week.

Most restaurants offer their three-course menus for the uniform price of €19. However, restaurants rated with three or more hearts may opt to offer their menus at a price of €25.

Restaurant Week also features restaurants whose quality has been recognised by the prestigious Michelin world gastronomy guide. This week in autumn also features 30 restaurants that have attained the Michelin Bib Gourmand, Michelin Plate and the Michelin Sustainability Award.

The event is very well positioned in Slovenia – among Slovenes and reservations need to be made well in advance. It has proven to be a great promotion event and a great incentive to bring top cuisine to people.

vivi.si/en/

SOME INSPIRING INDIVIDUAL PRODUCTS, PEOPLE AND STORIES OF SLOVENIAN GASTRONOMY

Mlekarna Planika

Anka Lipušček, director of Mlekarna Planika, milks cows every morning before leaving for the office and spends her summer vacation as a shepherdess and cheesemaker. The understanding and responsibility for the environment she grew up in is the reason she's been successfully managing the Mlekarna Planika dairy since 2008. The dairy only sources milk from Slovenian farmers, who are also co-owners of the factory, and provides the local Tolminc cheese to the biggest culinary stars of the region.

Fish Farm Four

Fonda is a story about a family of biologists, who decided to farm the best fish in the world. It has enriched its fish farm in the Sečovlje Salina Landscape park and the bay of Piran with its unique offer. Sea and seafood lovers can take a tour through Fonda's sea world by solar-powered boat, kayak, canoe or paddle board and see how the world famous Piran sea bass grows from fingerlings to mature fish. Learn why, from an economic perspective, everything is done 'incorrectly' at the Fonda Fish Farm - fish are kept in the water for too long, they are fed overly expensive food, the best fingerlings are farmed, everything is done by hand, chemicals are not used, and there are ten times fewer fish in the nets, considering the volume, than what is usual. However, this is the price that they pay in their strong desire to farm the best reared fish in the world.

CABLE CAR DINER

Jezeršek Gostinstvo (the biggest Slovene catering business - with the capability of serving 15,000 people - who some years ago launched the concept of Culinary Center "Taste Slovenia" near the airport Ljubljana, and runs a restaurant also at Bled Castle, at Ljubljana Castle and Pivnica Ljubljana Beer House) has a truly unique offering - dinner in a cable car.

Seven local partners work together providing mini restaurants which are set up in the cable cars at Krvavec. Two to four people per cable car are served dinner during a two circuit journey. The dessert is served on the ski slope. The marketing of this new product is also innovative. Dinners are sold to various target groups as a gift for special occasions. The seven partners created their unique culinary offer in a short time and have shown that, through cooperation and fresh ideas, it is possible to make appealing and unusual experiences with diverse products.

GARDEN VILLAGE

The Garden Village Bled is an innovative and ecologically designed tourist complex, built over an abandoned garden. The village offers tree houses, tents pitched on a pier above the pond, glamping tents, two decadent apartments, an organic store, a restaurant with a stream flowing between tables with fresh herbs growing on them, a swimming pond that cleans itself with the help of aquatic plants, a sauna in a tree, a massage area in the treetops and much more. Guests are encouraged to pick the vegetables, herbs, fruits, and shrubs growing on the property. The resort was opened in June 2014 and is open from March to October, while the restaurant and the store are open all year.

TRNIČ CHEESE

The Trnič Cheese on Every Dining Table project has revived the legacy of Trnič cheese. The cheese regained its original purpose as a delicacy and a way to preserve the surplus milk on the mountain. People can taste Trnič at certain restaurants in Kamnik, buy it from the mountain huts on Velika planina, the shepherd's village at Gradišek farm and at TIC Kamnik. Trnič is a pear-shaped, hard cheese produced on Velikoplanina in the Kamnik-Savinja Alps. Made from cottage cheese, cream and salt, Trnič is decorated with special ornaments. It is a part of the daily diet of the locals, usually as an extra treat. Traditionally, herdsmen would give Trnič cheese to their beloved as a token of fidelity and love in the autumn, at the end of grazing period, which also meant a promise of marriage.

The key to success for the clusters from a commercial point of view has been the following:

1. Gastronomy becoming one of the hottest topics and strategic priorities in Slovenia – a conscious decision, with all necessary strategic documents produced to support this.
2. Systematic and extensive work on the development and promotion of the product on the national level (by Slovenian Tourist Board and the Ministry of the Economy – for Gault&Millau, Michelin, European Gastronomy Region 2021 etc).
3. Taste Slovenia brand, through which local/destination brands were promoted and developed.
4. Pursuing the sustainability efforts also in gastronomy – green boutique gastronomy, with strong emphasis on local sourcing.
5. Development of strong gastronomic events – at destination levels, in destinations with strong food clusters.
6. Top Slovene chefs highly engaged in promoting Slovenia as a gastronomic destination (as ambassadors sharing very inspiring stories).
7. The definition of gastronomic administrator (project manager) at the Slovenian Tourist Board, whose main task is the responsibility for continuous development and promotion of Slovenian gastronomy.

8. Coordination with sectoral organisations in the field of gastronomy (Tourism and Hospitality Chamber of Slovenia, Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia, JRE Slovenia, etc.).
9. Development of all necessary marketing infrastructure to promote Slovene as a gastronomic destination (top visuals, web portals) and its inclusion into communications.
10. Highly developed domestic market of foodies, appreciating top cuisine and top local ingredients.

Pre-Covid, the most dynamic segment in Slovene gastronomy in terms of big private investments made in recent years has been the wine-making segment (and to a lesser extent restaurants also, but on a smaller scale).

Many investments were made into upgrades or expansion of wine cellars, using top-notch technology, often accompanied with accommodation and seminar space.

Often these are true architectural gems, sensibly placed into natural environment, with true sense of place, and offering 5-star service, and the wines rank among the best in the world.

Below are just a few of the images.

www.slovenia.info/en/stories/slovenia-s-best-wine-stories-and-experiences







Doppler Wines, Zgornja Kungota



Zlati Grič, Slovenske Konjice



Zlati Grič, Slovenske Konjice



Edi Simčič, Goriška Brda



Doppler Wines, Zgornja Kungota



2.6 ROLE OF FOOD IN THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

“All the tourists eat” is common knowledge. But it is important what they eat. Gastronomy is definitively one of the most important elements in what a country has to offer to its guests as well as the locals.

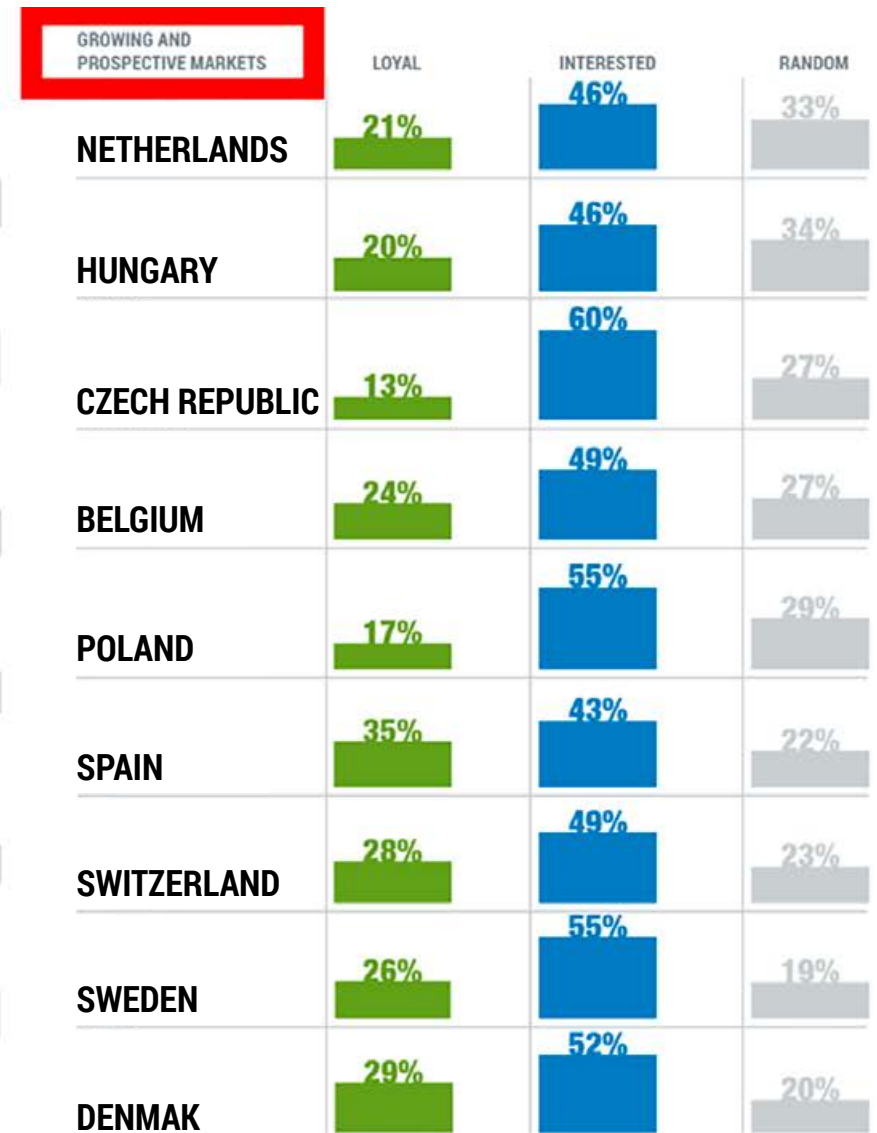
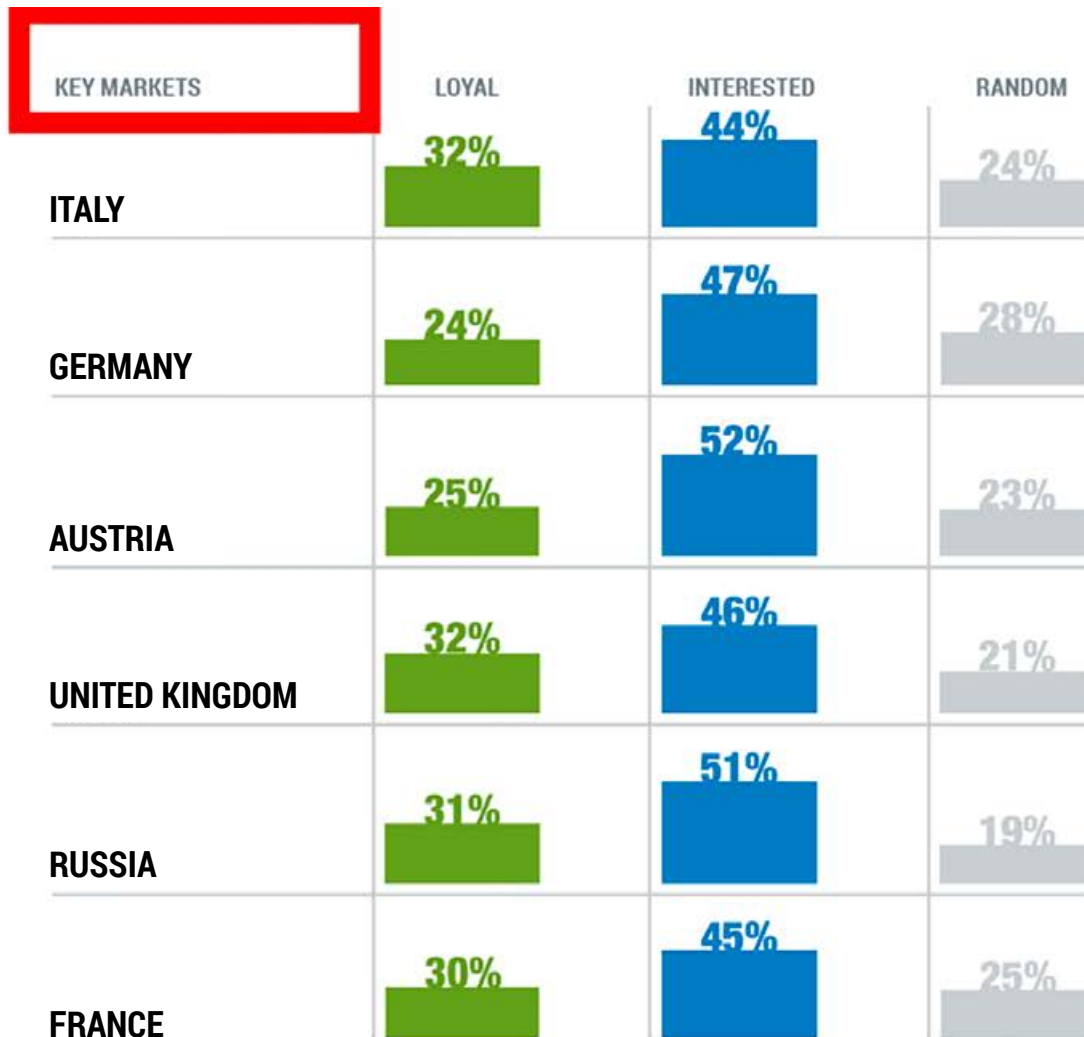
Gastronomy has been defined as one of the ten leading products of the Slovenian tourism. It has been incorporated in various marketing and promotional activities by the Slovenian Tourist Board for over 22 years. Gastronomy can contribute a great deal to the promotion, visibility and reputation of the country and its tourism. Slovenian tourism is developing 5-star experience products, based on the principles of sustainability and a concerted effort to be and stay sustainable. Gastronomy plays a key part in that.

In early December 2017, Slovenia completed an extensive online research survey entitled Market Potential Identification, which was conducted in six key and two promising markets for Slovenian tourism (Italy, Germany, Austria, France, United Kingdom, Russian Federation, the Netherlands and Poland). According to the research

results, the segment of tourists who consider themselves to be foodies is the fourth largest segment in terms of size; the estimated size of this segment is 9.5 million individuals. Foodies usually travel with a partner or family which makes them, together with their travel companions (factor 2.5), a 24-million potential in all markets. The research also showed that enjoying good food and drink is the main motive when choosing a holiday destination for 31% of Austrians, 29% of British, 23% of Germans and 21% of the Dutch and Russians.

Research show that from the point of view of gastronomy tourism, the most important markets to Slovenia include Italy, Austria, Germany as well as France, Great Britain and some Scandinavian countries. Slovenia’s objective is to attract loyal gastronomic tourists who consume a lot and who are also interested in learning about the traditions and culture of their destination and this is why Slovenia concentrates on many special experiences and as many things that make Slovenia and its range of gastronomic products as different from competitor countries as possible.





Vir: obdelava avtorjev po podatkih Valicon in SURS.

MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS & DIGITAL PRESENCE

THE Slovenian Tourist Board has been using inspiring stories of Slovene gastronomy for years in its communication strategy. From 2018/2019 these has been made even stronger, with all the necessary marketing infrastructure developed.

Gastronomy is one of Slovenia's key products in tourism and has been its focal point for 2020 and 2021 (a concept of a two-year promotion topic; previously it was culture).

NEW VISUALS PROMOTING GASTRONOMY AND ITS UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION



A NEW WEB PORTAL FOR TASTE SLOVENIA

In 2020, Slovenian Tourist Board launched a new Taste Slovenia portal (previously it did not have a dedicated gastronomy portal) that tells the full story of gastronomy in Slovenia, based on the philosophy “from garden to plate”, local suppliers, high-quality ingredients and tradition enhanced by Slovenian chefs’ modern approaches to authentic culinary experiences.

Furthermore, it significantly contributes to the implementation of the Slovenian tourism strategy, deseasonalisation and dispersed tourist flows, increases the added value and attracts guests with higher purchasing power.

The content of the new tasteslovenia.si portal was prepared by the STB in cooperation with experts in gastronomy and marketing in order to attract visitors whose main reason for coming to Slovenia is gastronomy. The portal highlights the sustainability of Slovenian tourism, presenting Slovenia as a unique culinary destination.

“The Taste Slovenia portal is an important step in the promotion of Slovenia as a green gastronomic destination that is well-known for its high-quality and authentic culinary products. The portal’s attractive content, aesthetic visuals and modern design create an excellent user experience,” stressed Ms Maja Pak, STB Director, adding: “This portal is an important contribution to the further positioning of Slovenia as a destination that, also in gastronomy, places an emphasis on sustainable and responsible development, uniqueness, quality, creativity, innovation and excellence. The launching of the portal coincides with another milestone in Slovenian gastronomy – a long-awaited event. The results of the first Michelin Guide inspection of Slovenian restaurants provide an excellent opportunity to promote Slovenia as a gastronomic destination, since Michelin is the strongest and most prestigious brand of gastronomic guides with exceptional global reach.”

The visitors of the portal can explore the gastronomy in Slovenia in a modern and user-friendly manner, ranging from its rich culinary tradition to contemporary creations of Slovenian chefs. In addition to culinary experiences, the portal includes sections on culinary events, producers, products and cooperation with chefs. A special section of the portal is dedicated to boutique stories presenting and linking individual unique culinary experiences. As the portal targets both domestic and foreign visitors, its content is available in both the Slovenian and English languages.



KOVARID
Meal of peace at the front



VELENJE
Dinner at 160 metres below ground



BRDA
To Brda region visiting world renowned wine makers



KOPER
Taking an old-timer to discover the story of istrian olive trees



SECA
A boat ride to the sustainable fish-farm with the best sea bass



METLIKA
A visionary from Bela krajina
Less beaten wine tracks that will fascinate you.



BLED
Gardening under a tree house



MARIBOR
For passionate wine lovers



GASTRONOMY STORIES FROM SLOVENIA

All the tastiest news in one place!



Subscribe to the Gastronomy Stories from Slovenia newsletter and receive a **free copy of the award-winning Taste Slovenia e-guide**, full of great tips for exploring Slovenian gastronomy.

First name* E-mail*

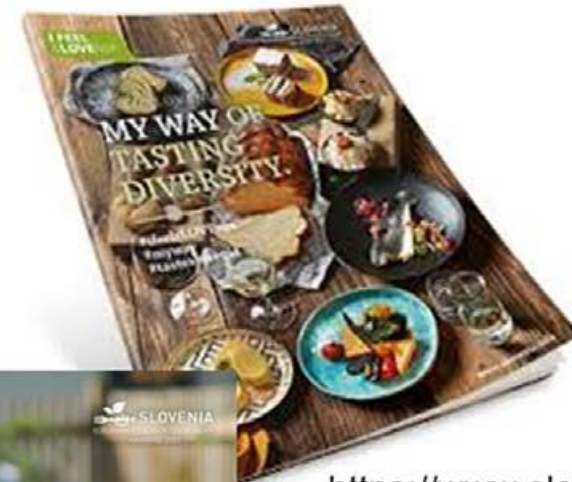
I wish to receive the Slovenian Tourist Board's »Gastronomy Stories from Slovenia« newsletter about gastronomic innovative offerings of Slovenian tourism. [More](#)

SUBSCRIBE

AN EXAMPLE OF ADVERTISEMENT



PRODUCT BROCHURE



https://www.slovenia.info/uploads/vdm/publikacije/taste_slovenia_en.pdf

Restaurants and chefs presented on the tasteslovenia.si portal were selected on the basis of their listings in international gastronomic guides. The portal currently presents Slovenian chefs with four toques (chef's hats) in the Gault&Millau 2020 Guide and those with prestigious international ratings in gastronomy. It also includes restaurants with four or three Gault&Millau 2020 toques.

Unique stories of Slovene chefs and locations are also featured. www.tasteslovenia.si/en/unique-stories/

A special focus is on boutique gastronomic experiences and stories – below; some of them bear the quality mark of the signature collection Slovenia Unique Experiences. www.tasteslovenia.si/en/experiences/

The following is the story of Luka Košir (Restaurant Grič), featured in the sustainability section of Michelin Slovenia.

His story best describes what Slovenia gastronomy is about: about inspiring chefs, who source their inspiration from nature and source all ingredients locally, with great dedication and passion.

Luka is presently planning to expand his restaurant and strengthen his short supply chains, through starting three farms of his own: goats, a special breed of pigs (Krškopolje Pig) and vegetables – to make it available when and in quantities he needs them.

Read the story here: www.tasteslovenia.si/en/unique-stories/culinary-magic-deep-in-the-forests-of-horjul/

More stories of inspiring Slovene chefs: www.tasteslovenia.si/en/chefs/





SECTION THREE

CURRENT SITUATION
DURING COVID-19

3.1 BUSINESS SUPPORTS AVAILABLE

Similar to the challenges facing the hospitality industry all over the world, the Slovene hospitality sector suffered tremendously because of the lockdown. As the numbers in Slovene tourism show for the period of January to October, Slovenia is expected to record a 40% loss in overnights in 2020 (50% increase in domestic overnights and 70% drop in foreign bed nights) – which means some six million less overnight stays.

TOURISM VOUCHERS

The drop was substantially lessened by the measure taken by the Slovene government, with introduction of so called “Turistični boni” or Tourist Vouchers in the form of a credit on eDavki - the information system of the Financial Administration of the Republic of Slovenia - to every person who permanently resided in Slovenia on March 13th, 2020. The vouchers are valid for qualified accommodation with or without breakfast in Slovenia. Vouchers cannot be used to pay for other supplementary costs such as tourist tax or cleaning fees.

An adult beneficiary, a person who is 18 years old or over in the year 2020, is entitled to a voucher of €200. A person who will not reach the age of 18 in 2020 or minor beneficiary is entitled to a voucher of €50.



Vouchers are transferable between family members, exempt from taxation and may be used in one go or in parts. Tourist vouchers were valid from June 19th until December 31st, 2020 (last possible overnight stay with the voucher is from the 30th to 31st of December 2020). Because only some 50% of the value was used in 2020 (a limited time and over-occupied facilities and still many Slovenes travelling to Croatia in summer 2020), the Government is considering to prolong their use into 2021.

These vouchers were only allowed to be used in accommodation sector (and not in restaurants; also, in hotels/accommodation facilities only for breakfast) – the idea was that Slovenes will then spend also money in restaurants, attractions, for experiences etc, which was not so much the case. Furthermore, they were not evenly used across products/destinations, with destinations such as the capital Ljubljana suffering most.

The sector that has suffered most, has been restaurants, bars, cafes (and the MICE segment – where many catering business have incurred severe losses and reduced the number of staff) – so many are on the verge of survival, and many going already bankrupt, despite other instruments from the Government (who just launched their sixth package of help) such as partial compensation for the wages during the Spring and Autumn lockdowns.

SUBSIDIES

The government adopted the sixth legislative package in mid-November 2020, valued at around one billion Euro, in an effort to alleviate the impact of the coronavirus on businesses and residents, extending once more the furlough scheme subsidies, measures to help liquidity and help with funding of fixed expenses.

Most of the measures that are being extended or introduced anew remained in force until the end of the year with the possibility of a further extension. Some will be in place until mid-2021 or even until the end of the year.

The pay subsidies for furloughed workers, which have been in place since the spring, have been extended until the end of January. No extension is foreseen after that for now, but the subsidies are to be higher than at present.

The government also extended subsidies for pay of workers in part-time employment, a measure that has been in place since June. Pay compensation for those in quarantine and parents looking after a quarantined child are being extended until the end of June 2021.

One of the most awaited measures in this package, and one that Economy Minister Zdravko Počivalšek highlighted as the key measure, was the compensation of fixed expenses to businesses whose revenue declined significantly due to the epidemic. For the last three months of 2021, companies with a revenue decline of over 70% were eligible for compensation equaling 1.2% of their annual income per month; those whose revenue declined by between 40% and 70% received 0.6% per month.

Overall, compensation will be capped at €1,000 per employee per month or €3 million total for the three-month period. For companies incorporated after October 1st, 2019, the cap is €800,000.

Rent was partially or entirely waived for those renting real estate owned by the state or local communities for the period since October 19th until the end of the year.

A one-year moratorium on loan repayments was also extended until the end of 2020. New loans taken out in 2020 are also eligible.

A measure was also reintroduced which allowed taxable persons to put off tax payments for two years or pay tax in instalments if their income was lost due to the epidemic. This was already in place during the first wave of the coronavirus but was reinstated until the end of the year. After that the measure could get extended until mid-2021.



PREPARING FOR THE NEW NORMALITY – HEALTH & SAFETY

Slovenia is a green and safe country located in the heart of Europe. Slovenian destinations are placed among the most sustainable and trustworthy destinations in the world.

Due to the global epidemic that seriously devastated tourism, Slovenians must believe more than ever before that they are worthy of trust because of their commitment to sustainability, natural and cultural sights that do not attract masses, a clean and preserved nature, and because they care for the well-being of local inhabitants and visitors. The Slovenian Tourist Board believes that the the industry can address new challenges in tourism better if they are connected and harmonised, with common standards and good communication about their safety, sustainability and boutique character. Now is not the time to interpret measures as an obligation, but rather as an opportunity and a common mission. The responsible travel standards of Slovenian tourism that will be communicated under the GREEN & SAFE label represent an upgrade of Slovenia's sustainable practices with new responsibilities towards local communities and everyone coming for a visit. They should be the common key to improved reputation and competitive

advantages of Slovenia as a tourist destination.

In planning and tackling new challenges, the hospitality sector can help themselves by means of the content, solutions, and tools provided by the Manual on Responsible Travel Standards of Slovenian Tourism.

The manual provides information on:

- Hygiene standards, measures and recommendations of the National Institute of Public Health that are applicable to the tourism industry in Slovenia.
- Opportunities that Slovenia, as an already well-established green, active and healthy destination, can provide at a time when tourists around the world are paying special attention to the choice of safer, customised and boutique tourist accommodations, programmes and experiences.
- Communication tools that under the general promise of Slovenia as a green and safe country highlight ten key content areas that can also be used in its communications.

www.slovenia.info/uploads/poslovno/poslovno/greenandsafe/responsible_travel_standards_green_safe_en_oct.pdf

3.2 ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY GROUPS

Momentarily, responseS from The Chamber of Commerce and Industry (and its section for tourism), as well as the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia, have been limited by what the Government is preparing/doing for the business sector in general and for the hospitality sector in particular.

The Chambers (with its various subsections – for tourist guides, camps etc) have been really very active since March – trying to get suggestions for more specific measures to help the hospitality industry. However, to date no additional hospitality recovery initiatives (other than tourism vouchers) have been introduced by the public sector.

At local level, the rents (when these are collected by public bodies) have been cancelled – but this did not apply to premises that are privately owned.



3.3 NEW INCENTIVES DEVELOPED LOCALLY

There were no visible local incentives to attract visitors to the destination that includes food, but there was a very visible and strong national campaign to motivate Slovenes to travel and holiday in Slovenia – which was:

- Carried also at local destination level.
- Included culinary experiences (depending on the destination profile).
- Was financially supported by Slovenian Tourist Board – who had for the year 2020 (before the pandemic happened) dedicated €1.2 million to 35 Slovene destination partners (who have the status of a “leading destination). This budget was used by destinations when the first lockdown was finished and travelling started in June – mostly in Slovenia.
- Also, tourism industry used the visuals and message of the campaign.

More about the campaign:

On May 14th 2020, the Slovenian Tourist Board (STB) presented the Slovenia-wide promotional campaign ‘The Time is now. My Slovenia’. The aim of the campaign was to invite and encourage Slovenians to spend a short or long holiday at their nearest local destination while discovering its hidden nooks and crannies and experiencing exceptional adventures, food and the hospitality of domestic tourism service providers.

The campaign was carried out in cooperation with many partners: the tourism industry, destinations, key institutions of Slovenian tourism, product associations, ambassadors and influential individuals, the media and other institutions.

To make it easier, the STB prepared a number of communication tools on the ‘I Feel Slovenia’ social networks, on a special landing page of the

slovenia.info website and in dedicated newsletters – and gave the tools with the brand identity to all partners, so the campaign worked as one campaign.

Slovenians were also invited to spend their holiday in and explore Slovenia by the promotional video ‘Now is the time for you, my Slovenia’ which brings Slovenia closer to its people as a land of unspoiled nature and unique experiences. It was a call for optimism, for the care for the local and domestic, and for mutual solidarity. The tourism sector also prepared tourist packages as part of the campaign, in addition to offering many attractive prizes.

See the video: www.slovenia.info/en/business/the-time-is-now-my-slovenia-promotional-campaign



A special element of the campaign is the friendly videos of famous and welcoming faces of Slovenian tourism, which reveal hidden corners and lesser-known reasons for visiting their destinations. Many Slovene chefs joined.

The campaign also aroused the interest of Slovenian media companies; many reported on it, and some media also actively joined the campaign and offered a lot of free media space. During the campaign, they addressed their audience with interesting content, while readers, viewers and listeners were able to compete for appealing holiday packages in prize contests.

JOINT MARKETING AND COLLABORATION

The retailer Tuš and Michelin-starred chef Ana Roš teamed up in the summer of 2020 in a project that fostered the sale of locally sourced food products with help of Roš's recipes.

Roš, who was recently awarded two Michelin stars, and the director of the Kobarid-based dairy Mlekarna Planika, Anka Lipušček Miklavič, said the idea matured during the lockdown when Slovenia had to deal with surpluses of milk and dairy products. Roš emphasised that this was not about haute cuisine, but rather about food that buyers would also be able to prepare at home. The surpluses, being too big to be handled by restaurants, saw Roš approach the Slovenian retail chain, and a new line of products quickly took shape that brought local produce to consumers with the help of creativity and food technologists.

Culinary products that combine fine dining and local ingredients with Slovenian food producers and processors were manufactured for sale by the autumn. Due to the exceptional combinations and innovative approach to the final customer, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the Republic of Slovenia also supported this unique project.

The first product, which hit the shelves in October in Tuš shops, was ricotta gnocchi (the ricotta is produced by the dairy Mlekarna Planika) with poppy seeds and tarragon, and pumpkin gnocchi made from Slovenian pumpkin.

Next in line are filled pasta, spelt sourdough bread with whey and hay, and ice-creams. The range is instantly recognisable by the Tuš logo and two stars (in honour of the two Michelin stars).

"I am happy that we are starting to create something new, different, something that will be able to get close to anyone in everyday life, something that will bring familiar contents but in a completely different way," emphasised Ana Roš, who will conceptually monitor the preparation of new products.

Otherwise, across Slovenia restaurants/bistros started offering on-line menus and deliveries, some developed cooking classes and sought for new innovative products, local food platforms increased their coverage and delivery frequency etc.

USE OF PUBLIC SPACE AND PLACEMAKING TO SUPPORT THE FOOD INDUSTRY

Gastronomic experiences have been a very important part of Slovene gastronomy. The ones that are showcased below are predominantly new (2019-2020), but were not directly developed as a post Covid-19 response. However, they are good examples of innovative use of public spaces and nature.

VELENJE UNDERGROUND – A GASTRONOMIC ADVENTURE 160 METRES BELOW THE SURFACE

Experience a world-class gastronomic adventure in Slovenia's deepest dining room. Enter a time machine and become a part of an underground adventure on one of the thickest layers of coal in the world.

The course of the experience:

- Upon meeting their guide in front of the Coal Mining Museum of Slovenia, visitors receive a helmet and a headlamp for their descent into the mine tunnel. After a welcome drink and a miners' welcome from the kitchen, they head into the mine.



VELENJE UNDERGROUND





A SOLDIER'S STORY FROM THE SOČA (ISONZO) FRONT



- After a descent in the oldest still operational lift in Slovenia, they tour the most interesting underground locations and learn about the story of mining.
- In the deepest dining room in Slovenia, participants are served a 'Štajgerjeva južna' four-course meal prepared by the Villa Herberstein restaurant. The culinary specialities will be accompanied by world-class wines and a music programme.
- After the final underground train ride, there's a visit to the Black Changing Room where a glass of world-class sparkling wine is served.

www.slovenia.info/en/slovenia-unique-experiences/velenje-underground-a-gastronomic-adventure-160-metres-below-the-surface

AN INTIMATE STORY OF CHEESE WITH A PEACE MISSION

100 years after the World War I ended, these rocky mountains are still home to living alpine pastures, authentic outdoor museums, and breathtaking views in the middle of the fantastic nowhere. An unforgettable experience for all lovers of history who seek human stories of soldiers and personal memories of relatives who fought on the Soča Front. This experience has added value because it very subtly connects historical tourism with the 1,000 year tradition of cheese-making in Alpine pastures, once a war-torn landscape, but today a valley of incredible natural beauty.



3.4 CHANGING / EMERGING DOMESTIC CONSUMER HABITS AROUND FOOD

There has definitely been a strong shift towards appreciating everything that is local. It must be stressed that the local has been always a strong part of Slovene identity. Most Slovenians are very active in nature – they spend afternoons after work and at weekends on trips, walks, bike rides, skiing in the winter; they love to garden and balconies of Slovenian houses are always full of flowers; they follow the philosophy of seasonal and local food in their everyday lives; they preserve customs and traditions; they are very attached to the local environment and their roots etc., and responsible care for the environment (care for clean environment is part of Slovenian upbringing from nursery – in addition to family and health, responsibility (to the environment, themselves, other people) is stated as one of their main values). It is safe to say all this has strengthened even further due to the impact of the pandemic in 2020.

Further changes include:

- Turning more to local restaurants for delivery.
- When the first lockdown ended, the motivation to visit a restaurant was instant – even increased.
- Appreciation of good quality food has increased.
- People are aware of the dire straits that the hospitality industry is in and feel the need to support them.



3.5 USE OF GUIDELINES / TOOLKITS DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT THE FOOD INDUSTRY

The aforementioned:

- Green and Safe toolkit.
- Now is the time' Slovenia campaign.
- Platform to promote development and promotion of unique experiences, also gastronomic: Slovenia Unique Experiences (two calls per year by Slovenian Tourist Board, with extensive promotion support).



SECTION FOUR

KEY LEARNINGS



4.1 KEY LEARNINGS

The top five learnings identified in the context of the destination approach to how the destination and businesses adapted to Covid-19 are:

1: WORKING ON THE TRUST OF THE VISITORS – GUARANTEEING SAFE HOLIDAYS (GREEN & SAFE STANDARDS)

Slovenia (through the Slovenian Tourist Board) was quick in Spring 2020 to develop its own GREEN & SAFE standards, which were among the first destinations also approved by WTTC Safe Travels. The standards offered, among basic hygiene and Covid-19 protocols, an upgrade of Slovenia's sustainable practices with a new responsibility to local communities and guests.

The standards were widely adapted across the hospitality industry (a nation-wide distribution of the manual "Responsible Travel Standards in Slovenian Tourism", with communication tools, ready to use. The approach also highlighted opportunities that Slovenia, as an already well-established green, active and healthy destination, can provide at a time when tourists around the world are paying special attention to the choice of safer, customised and boutique tourist accommodations, programmes and experiences.

Individual businesses (bigger hotels) not only embraced those standards, but went considerably further (contactless menus, contactless check ins in hotels and additional hygiene measures), to make their value proposition even stronger in these times – mostly in hotels, whereas restaurants started using Pick-Up, Delivery and Click-And-Collect options.



2: COLLABORATION, NEW BUSINESS MODELS & NEW REVENUE STREAMS

Partnering across sectors to create unique new gastronomic products and business models. It is a new revenue stream, but above all it's about coming together and doing something positive for local communities, local producers and top restaurants inspiring people at home. All these new models need to have “a face” – a strong and established leader, to represent the values through his/her personal story.

3: “PUSHING” THE TOPIC OF BOUTIQUE SUSTAINABLE GASTRONOMY ON A NATIONAL LEVEL

In Slovenia it has been very much about the work done on a national level: the Slovenian Tourist Board offering a very visible communication and marketing platform to highlight top gastronomic stories, Michelin coming to Slovenia, promoting events such as Restaurant week so that everybody hardly waits when restaurants are open to make a reservation. The results of the summer show how sought after top quality boutique accommodation providers with high-quality cuisine were (customers were already booking in summer for the end of 2020). 2020 has been a great confirmation that this is the way forward.

4: TRYING TO BE SUSTAINABLE – ALL THE WAY, EVEN MORE SO IN NEW NORMALITY

Despite the hard times, Slovenians need to pursue their values and work on them even harder, for example Green Slovenia and the country's dedication to sustainable development. The new normality requires that Slovenians not only need to work on recovery (re-establishing the commercial sector and the economy), but even more so on resilience – to be more sustainable and less fragile in the new normality, which will inevitably bring its own new challenges. There is also the need to bring attention to problematic areas, such as increase of the single use plastic because of Covid-19.

5: FOSTERING LOVE FOR LOCAL

The demand for 'local' food is growing all across the globe, but it needs to be fostered, promoted, developed and incentivised on all levels. With people seeing global business collapsing due to various reasons, more and more consumers are forgoing big brand stores for smaller businesses in their communities and this 'love local' movement means that an increasing number of people are looking to invest in their communities, supporting the restaurants, shops, and bars that bring colour to their neighbourhoods and strengthen their local economy. In Slovenia, it is believed that this is a way forward for all.



