

Slovenia national day

Slovenia: a small country holding uncountable possibilities

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On June 25, Slovenia celebrates the 23rd anniversary of its declaration of independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, known also as Statehood Day.

Slovenia's declaration jump-started the Ten-Day War with Yugoslavia, which it eventually won. Since then the young Republic of Slovenia has come a long way in terms of interna-

tional recognition. In 2004 it entered NATO and the European Union; in 2007 it was the first country in transition that accepted euro as its currency; in the first half of 2008 it was the first post-socialist country that was trusted with the Presidency of the Council of the European Union; and in 2010 Slovenia joined the OECD, a global association of developed countries.

Slovenians celebrate Statehood Day on the evening of June 24. The official celebra-

tion in the capital city Ljubljana this year will include a speech by President Borut Pahor, followed by an artistic performance created by the internationally known choreographer Edward Clug and composer Milko Lazar. Beside the official celebration organized by the Ministry of Culture, there are many unofficial celebrations across the whole country organized by different groups, political parties, towns and associations.

The hot and dry summers in Slovenia are the peak season for tourism and many festivals are taking place all over the country. The Lent International Summer Festival is not only the largest Slovenian outdoor festival, but it is one of the biggest in Europe. It is held in Maribor, the second largest city in Slovenia and this year it will take over the city from June 20 to July 5 at 40 different locations. The vigorous entertainment will include dance performances, concerts, street theater, comedy, food, sports

and other types of creative interaction. Besides the diversity of visual entertainment, one can enjoy listening to anything from folklore or jazz to classical music and more. Visitors can experience anything from dancing until the morning light to an intimate performance in a medieval synagogue. With great local food and wine, this festival with a 22-year tradition is truly a wonderful opportunity to spend a unique summer holiday, which will satisfy all your senses.

One of the best known tourist attractions of Slovenia is Bled, which is sometimes called the Pearl of the Alps. Bled lake lies in the midst of the Slovenian Julian Alps with a small church nestled on the green island in the center of the lake. Bled provides summer entertainment for both tourists and locals, reaching a peak between July 19 and 21, when Bled Days take place. On those days visitors can enjoy a fair of Slovenian traditional crafts alongside excellent local



The Lent International Summer Festival is a major arts festival annually held in June in Maribor, Slovenia.

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food while listening to live music. Visitors can see the national competition of acrobatic aircraft flying, listen to old fairytales, join dance parties in the evenings and much more. The festival will reach its peak on Saturday, July 20, when local people will float about 15,000 candles on the lake, followed by fireworks at 11 p.m.. This annual tradition results in a magical night when dreams

seem to come true.

Many Slovenian towns and cities have a long history and were built at different times in that history. Ljubljana, the capital was first built in Roman times and is celebrating its 2000th anniversary this year, but it is not the oldest Slovenian city. Ptuj dates back to the late stone age and in Roman times it was even bigger than London or Vienna were at that



Bled is an Alpine town on the shore of glacial Lake Bled and a popular tourist destination. FRANCI FERJAN/WWW.SLOVENIA.INFO

time. Since medieval times, Celje is called "the city of counts," because of the important family making its home in Celje castle. Still today we can get the glimpse of former glory every year on the last Friday and Saturday of August, when the medieval times come to life again with an outdoor market, jugglers, medieval dances and music, fire performances, knights and fencing. The best

way to know history is to see it with one's own eyes.

Slovenia is a small, but very diverse country with almost unlimited options of things to see, do and experience. Anyone can find something of interest, may that be sea or mountains, small old towns or nature, traditional crafts or modern art. Come and experience it yourself and come and feel Slovenia!

Congratulations on the 23rd Anniversary of the Republic of Slovenia

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