
Slovenia National Day Special

Castles, forests, lakes dot 'fairytale' landscape

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Slovenia celebrates its birthday today. Statehood Day marks the anniversary of June 25, 1991, when the country formally became independent. Slovenia lies in the heart of Europe on the crossroads of European routes from east to west and from north to south. It spreads across just over 20,000 square kilometers of land and has a population of 2 million people.

In the past, it was often confused with Slovakia, but this isn't the case anymore because of its growing popularity worldwide. In addition to the fact that Slovenia is the only country in the world with "love" in its name, this relative newcomer to the bucket list of European destinations to visit surprises with its landscape, rich history, culture and excellent food — all nicely packed into a tiny piece of land.

In 2017, National Geographic recognized Slovenia as the World Legacy Award Winner in the category of Destination Leadership, while HuffPost listed Slovenia among its "17 epic places you never thought to travel, but should." Harper's Bazaar included Slovenia on its list of the world's most untapped destinations, stressing that it is "an essential stop on any true European adventure."

Slovenia is best described as green, active and healthy. It is one of the greenest countries on the planet, leading the way in terms of sustainable tourism and the protection of cultural and natural heritage; forests blanket nearly two-thirds of the country. Slovenia is



Lake Bled in northwestern Slovenia. WWW.SLOVENIA.INFO/

also a nation of beekeepers and its international initiative to declare World Bee Day, adopted in the U.N., was marked for the first time all around the globe just few weeks ago, on May 20.

Slovenia is active and embraces adventure and discovery in the natural world, from the mighty Julian Alps to the sparkling Mediterranean coastline. Visit it in the winter when ski resorts offer a variety of slopes perfect for all enthusiasts, and in the summer, when the mountains are carpeted with wildflowers, one can enjoy the best hiking and biking in Europe. The Slovenian coast, rivers and lakes also offer countless water sports opportunities.

Slovenia is healthy. It's the quality of the water that Slovenia has to thank for the fertil-

ity of the landscape. The country is home to some of Europe's finest natural spas and thermal springs, with a centuries-old cultural tradition of treating both body and spirit using world-famous magnesium and calcium-rich waters. Slovenia is also safe, listed among the 10 safest countries in the world.

Visiting Slovenia, with its alpine villages, cliff side castles, emerald lakes, fields of white horses and some of most beautiful forests in the entire world, is akin to stepping into a fairytale. And, thanks to six charter flights from Japan to this earthly paradise, there's no better time to start packing for a visit than now.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.