

The Country and the People

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Area: 20,273 km²

Length of borders: 1,370 km

with Austria: 318 km; with Italy: 280 km

with Hungary: 102 km

with Croatia: 670 km

Length of coastline: 46.6 km

Population: 2,001,114 (30 June 2005)

Population density: 98.7 inh. per km²

Nationalities (2002 census):

Slovenian 1,631,363; Italian 2,258;

Hungarian 6,243; others: 149,259;

unknown: 174,913

Language: Slovene; in nationally mixed areas also Italian and Hungarian

Source: Statistical Office of the RS

The land and its location

Between the Alps, the Adriatic and the Pannonian Plain

Slovenia covers 20,273 square kilometres stretching between the Alps, the Adriatic and the Pannonian Plain. In spite of its geographically small size, it is a convergence point of a range of different landscapes: Alpine and Mediterranean, Pannonian and Dinaric, each of which has its own characteristics and unique features.

The foothills of the Alps cover almost a third of Slovenia. From Mount Triglav, the highest peak (2,864 metres) the view stretches as far as the sea.





At the heart of Europe, between Austria to the north, Italy to the west, Hungary to the east and Croatia to the south, Slovenia has always been a crossroads of trans-European routes.

The port of Koper is one of the most important Central European gateways to the world. The still developing railway links, which from 1857 connected Vienna and Trieste, now link the Danube region

Medieval Piran, situated on the peninsula between the bays of Piran and Strunjan, is an attractive Adriatic coastal resort.



with the Mediterranean. Roads running from the north-east to the south-west perform a similar function, whilst those running from the north-west to the south-east link Central Europe with the Balkans. Historical tradition and strong economic ties with Europe and the world, together with its geographical location, provide Slovenia with great potential for development.

Population Town and countryside

Slovenia has a population of 2 million, of which 83.1% (census 2002) are Slovenes. The official language is Slovene.

There are also two national communities of Italians and Hungarians. Italian and Hungarian are, in addition to Slovene, official languages

Slovenian towns, 2002 census

Ljubljana	260,543
Maribor	108,241
Kranj	38,840
Celje	38,030
Velenje	26,742
Koper	23,726
Novo mesto	22,415
Ptuj	18,339
Jesenice	17,233
Nova Gorica	16,763
Trbovlje	16,290
Murska Sobota	14,178
Škofja Loka	14,028
Kamnik	13,690
Domžale	13,223

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia

in these two ethnically mixed areas. In addition to these national communities, there are also 123,872 members of other ethnic groups, mainly immigrants from the territory of the former Yugoslavia, who came to Slovenia primarily for economic reasons. On average, the population density is 98.7 people per square kilometre, which is much lower than in the majority of other European states (460 in the Netherlands, 240 in Great Britain, 195 in Italy). People have mainly settled the river valleys and transport routes, where long ago Slovenian towns began to emerge, whilst the mountainous and forested areas remain unpopulated.

Approximately 34% of the population live in towns with more than 10,000 inhabitants, whilst the rest live in nearly six thousand smaller towns and villages.

The capital, Ljubljana, is the largest city as well as the political, administrative, economic, educational and cultural centre of Slovenia. Ljubljana's history goes back several thousand years. Archaeological findings from the Bronze Age are proof that as early as 2000 BC there were pile-dwellings of fishermen and hunters on the lake which once covered the Ljubljana basin. Prior to the Roman colonisation, Roman legionaries erected fortresses alongside the River Ljubljana, which subsequently grew into the walled Roman settlement of Julia Emona. The city, with its castle originating in the 12th century and its old city centre, also boasts a rich medieval heritage, as well as numerous Renaissance, Baroque and Secessionist buildings.



Robba's Fountain in Ljubljana, erected in 1751, symbolising the Sava, Krka and Ljubljana rivers.



Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, with the castle in the background.

Ptuj, first mentioned in 69 AD, is considered the oldest town in Slovenia. It received its town privileges around 1250.



In the 20th century the works of the architect Jože Plečnik gave the city a new character. He designed the Three Bridges spanning Ljubljanica River, Tivoli Park, Žale Cemetery, market place, sports stadium and many other buildings - the most famous among them being the National and University Library.

There are numerous museums, galleries, theatres and other cultural establishments in Ljubljana. The city also stages many performances of international importance.


Other Slovenian towns also have a rich history and a lively pulse: from Maribor, with the oldest vine in the world; to Celje, from where the only Slovenian counts ruled in the 15th century; from Ptuj, the oldest Slovenian town; to Nova Gorica, which was built after the Second World War; from sunny Koper, the most important sea port; to Murska Sobota in the Prekmurje region.

Minorities in Slovenia, Slovenes across the border Internationally recognised rights to the preservation of national identity

Because of its geographical position, the territory of the present Slovenia has throughout history been an important transit area, where varied influences and interests have mixed. From the first settlements in the 6th century onwards, Slovenes have constantly struggled for territory, fighting Germanic, Romanic, Hungarian and other Slavonic nations in the process.

They lost a lot of their original territory along the way - hence the Slovenian minorities in Italy, Austria and Hungary which, according to international agreements, have a right to use their own language and preserve their culture. Conversely, there are Italian and Hungarian national minorities in Slovenia.

The Slovenian constitution and numerous legal acts of the Republic of Slovenia guarantee the minorities their fundamental



and special rights - using their own language, expressing and developing their culture, forming their own organisations with this purpose in mind, as well as using their own national symbols. Moreover, the Italian and Hungarian minorities each have one democratically elected representative in the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia.

In the ethnically mixed areas, bilingualism is guaranteed, there are nurseries and schools for the minorities, and their languages are used by the local media.

The language and its meaning

The preserved dual form and an exceptional diversity of dialects

The Slovene language has played a special role throughout Slovenian history and it is still considered one of the foundations of national identity. Slovenian is a South Slavonic language, spoken by only two million people. In spite of various, in particular Germanic influences, it has preserved its special features. The most notable of them is the dual form, the grammatical number used for two people or things in all the inflected parts of speech. In the past, a number of languages had a dual form, but nowadays it is very rare.

The development of the Slovene language and its public use have been linked to the religious sphere of life. From an early date, Slovene was used in prayers and confessions. This is also the subject matter of the oldest known written record in Slovenian, the *Brižinski spomeniki* (The Freising Manuscripts), which date from the beginning of the 10th century. The development of a unified written language was, in the 16th century, influenced by the great social changes taking place in Europe and by the Reformation. In 1550, to meet the needs of the spreading Protestantism, Primož Trubar published in Germany his *Katekizem in Abecednik* (Catechism and Abecedary); the latter was the first Slovenian textbook. In schools, Slovene began to be used mainly during the 18th and at the beginning of the 19th century. With such a history, the varied relief of the territory and the various influences coming from neighbouring non-Slavonic countries, many dialects developed alongside the standard language. According to some classifications, there are 36 separate dialects in Slovenia. Slovene is also taught at approximately 50 universities around the world, with more than 1,500 students studying Slovene. A Slovene studies programme can be found in almost every European country. Nineteen universities offer students the option of obtaining a degree in Slovene. Teaching Slovene abroad is

included in the programme implemented by the Centre for Slovene as a Second/Foreign Language, which operates under the auspices of the Department of Slovene Studies at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana.

Freedom of belief Between Catholicism and Evangelism

The early Gothic (1260) cloister in the Stična monastery, the oldest and best-preserved foundation of its kind in Slovenia, which is also famous for its illuminated manuscripts.



Like the guaranteed right of the preservation of national identity, all the people of Slovenia have a right to their own religious beliefs. As the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia states that no-one is obliged to declare their religious or other beliefs, there are no exact figures on numbers within various religious groups. But according to public surveys, most Slovenes are Catholic (around 60 %) and the Roman Catholic Church is certainly the biggest and most visibly active in public life. Its significance and the regard in which it is held have been confirmed

by the two visits made by Pope John Paul II to the country. There are 38 other religious communities, spiritual groups, societies and associations registered in Slovenia. Among the oldest is the Evan-

Population by religion, census 1991 and 2002

	1991*	2002
Roman Catholic	71.6	57.8
Orthodox	2.4	2.3
Islam	1.5	2.4
Evangelical	0.7	0.8
Other	0.3	0.3
Unknown	14.6	7.1
Unbeliever, atheist	4.4	10.1
Did not want to reply	4.2	15.7
Believer but belongs to no religion	0.2	3.5

** Data recalculated according to the 2002 Census methodology.
Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia*

gelical Church, which has its roots in the Reformation and is most widely spread in the eastern part of Slovenia.

Population and other trends

Fewer marriages and births

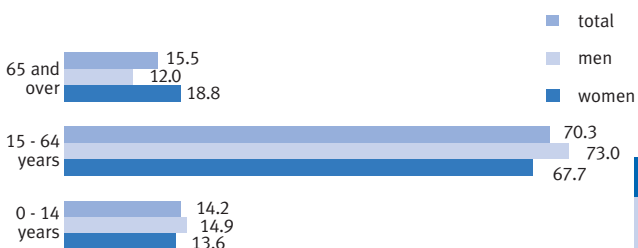
Slovenia's population is slowly declining. Sadly, Slovenia is the country with one of the lowest birth-rates in Europe. Just as in other modern societies, the average number of people per household is decreasing (in the last census in 2002 it was only 2.8) and the number of marriages is also falling, whilst the average age of mothers having their first child is increasing - it was 27.5 in 2004. In 2004, Slovenian women had on average only 1.25 children.

But those children who are born have a promising future: the infant mortality rate is among the lowest in Europe and the world (3.7 per 1000 live-born in 2004). In 2003- 2004 life expectancy for men was 73.48 years and 81.08 for women, which is approximately 3 years longer than in the middle of the previous decade. People living in Slovenia have good education and employment opportunities, and are well educated by all the usual indicators. According to 2002 census 26.1% of people aged 15 years or over have basic education, 54.1% have upper secondary education, 13% short-term tertiary and higher education, 6.3% have incomplete basic education, 0.7% of them have no education.

In Slovenia, the unemployment is below the EU average, its rate according to ILO standards decreased from 6.7% in 2003 to 5.8% in 2005.

More than 60% of people in Slovenia read at least one book a year, which puts Slovenia near the top of reading ratings in Europe. Museums in Slovenia register approximately 2.1 million visitors a year, approximately a million and a half people visit cinemas every year, whilst nearly half a million go to the theatre. More than a hundred thousand people, mostly the young, take part in amateur cultural activities.

Population by age groups, June 2005, in %



Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia

Information

www.mnz.si
(Ministry of the Interior)

www.stat.si
(Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia)

