

Heart of Slovenia

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Velika planina

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Taste Kamnik – The Story of Trnič Hard Cheese



Photo: David Lotrič

Velika planina mountain plateau boasts centuries-old herder's tradition of producing Trnič, a pear-shaped hard cheese. The clumps of cheese made from cottage cheese, cream and salt were always produced in pairs, as they exemplified the shape of breasts. They were also carefully decorated with special ornaments stamped into the cheese with relief carved wooden sticks or strips, i.e. seals.

Although herders gradually stopped producing Trnič hard cheese and tradition has almost gone forgotten, a few individuals managed to preserve Trnič as a souvenir. What is more, Kamnik Tourism and Sports Agency together with culinary experts managed to carry out the project of reviving Trnič as a culinary specialty.

The dishes with Trnič hard cheese are served at selected local restaurants in Kamnik and at various events in Slovenia. You can also buy Trnič at the Kamnik Tourist Info Point and at some stores elsewhere in Slovenia.



Photo: Klemen Brumec

The Love Story of Trnič Hard Cheese

By tradition herdsmen would have bestowed Trnič Hard Cheese to their beloved as a proof of love and fidelity in the autumn, at the end of grazing season. They were always made in pairs – two clumps were decorated with the same ornaments. Herdsmen kept one of them and presented the other to their beloved, who kept them for several years. If she accepted his gift, this meant that she agreed to his courtship.



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Foreword

The first thing you notice is an all-encompassing green. 58% of the entire nation of Slovenia is covered in forest, and nowhere is that more apparent than at its heart. The lushest of valleys sweep across the horizon alongside undulating hills that seem to never end. Slovenia is arguably the aesthetic jewel in the European crown, undeniably gorgeous with a vast array of landscapes ready to make your jaw hit the ground. Claiming one area is prettier than another is always going to be subject to taste, but we're hard pushed to put anywhere above the region aptly named Heart of Slovenia. Seven municipalities make up our guide to the nation's beating heart, bringing sights and sounds aplenty to the Slovene touristic table.

In the Heart of Slovenia, the life of the past and life in the present side up next to each other in complete comfort. The land east of Ljubljana has been a regional crossroads for centuries, and the rivers that cross this territory pay testament to a long and storied history. Roman ruins, baroque churches, adorable villages and 21st century health centres are surrounded by views of the mountains, luscious greenery and river walks in a compact kaleidoscope of everything that Slovenia has to offer. Compact is the right word, meaning exploring this stunning region couldn't be easier.

So hop in the car, roll the windows down and take in the sumptuous beauty and tradition of the slow beating Heart of Slovenia. As always we welcome any and all feedback, through Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare, Instagram or even good old email.

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ABOUT IYP

It's now 22 years since we published the first *In Your Pocket* guide - to Vilnius in Lithuania - in which time we have grown to become the largest publisher of locally produced city guides in Europe. We now cover more than 100 cities across the continent (with **Gudauri**, in Georgia, the latest city to be pocketed) and the number of concise, witty, well-written and downright indispensable *In Your Pocket* guides published each year is approaching five million. We will be expanding even further this year, with the publication of a guide to **Johannesburg**: our first outside of Europe.

To keep up to date with all that's new at *In Your Pocket*, like us on **Facebook** (facebook.com/inyourpocket) or follow us on **Twitter** (twitter.com/inyourpocket).



INTRODUCING THE HEART OF SLOVENIA

Launched in 2008 with the aim of connecting initiatives, events and communities in the region to create unique experiences and adventures, the Heart of Slovenia brand is built on quality, courage, networking and sustainable development. Covering a heart shaped area that truly is in the heart of the country, spreading out and around its geometric centre of Slovenia in the hinterland of Ljubljana, the brand covers more than just the seven municipalities featured within, encompassing 16 unique places in total. Life moves at a different heart rate here, it marches to a different beat. Traditional characteristics flirt with modernity, all the while closely in touch with the stunning nature that flourishes. They say that your heart will draw you here, so pay close attention and discover the true pulse of your heart.

LIFE AS NATURE INTENDED

Choose to rest your head at a great variety of hotels, apartments, motorhome stops and, our personal favourite, quaint tourist farms, where maximum contact with local people is guaranteed. The Heart of Slovenia is particularly well set up for those travelling by caravan, with an intricate network of stops throughout the region providing more than just a place to stop the wheels. The core of the Heart of Slovenia brand is without doubt the homemade delicacies available to taste and savour, with further examples of the preserved traditions of this most nature-friendly of regions. Taste nature's finest through a range of guesthouses, restaurants, tourist farms and more, all brimming with local cuisine that begs to be enjoyed.

UNIQUE EXPERIENCES

The Heart of Slovenia offers a whole host of activities and recreation. Accelerate your pulse by visiting the GEOSS Adventure Park, nearby to the exact geometric centre of the country. Active recreation is everywhere and anywhere, taking the form of hiking, mountaineering, cycling, walking and even horse riding. The path along the river here quickly turns into an oasis of outdoor fitness, whether it is the green axis in Domžale, the hiking trails leading to the shepherds on Velika planina or Mengeška koča on Gobavica hill, or even to the serene landscape of Gradišče lake. If walking isn't appealing, numerous bike trails take you past an array of cultural landmarks.

Discover unique stories of old markets, castles, churches and homes such as the tourist farm Pr' Krač or the Jafačnkova homestead in Trzin, not to mention the learning pathway that takes you all the way to the birthplace of the great Jurij Vega. Learn about the importance of straw hats in Domžale and much more. A year round calendar of events keeps culture vultures busy, and Terme Snovik spa near Kamnik will help restore your energy.

TRAVEL CONVENIENCE AND TRAVEL MEMORIES

The Heart of Slovenia really couldn't be better set up for aspiring visitors. A short distance from Ljubljana and Slovenia's central airport and national transport hubs, there really is no excuse for not visiting. It truly is the perfect base for exploring this magical country. Experience the different rhythm of life and the charm of rural areas intertwined with urban inspiration, and enjoy a long stay in the most local of environments.

These are adventures and encounters that you'll remember for a long time, adventures that you can take home with you in the shape of locally grown goodies, available to buy at many farms. Enjoy the mix of authenticity, quality and the melding of tradition and modernity, marvel at the skill of the craftsmen and take your pick from a unique range of souvenirs. Local creations are on display in an exhibition at the tourist information centre in Litija, where special cultural workshops also frequently take place.

RETURN WITH YOUR LOVED ONES

Once visited, there is an almost inevitability about a return. Once the region has been explored in your own individual way, the Heart of Slovenia encourages return visits with others, be it for leisure, business or celebration, to create your own unique memories.

The conference facilities in the region are exceptional, providing many scenic locations for business meetings. Why not squeeze in a round of golf with charming views of the Kamnik Alps whilst you're at it? For the more romantic among us there are many venues for unforgettable wedding ceremonies, whether at romantic castles such as Jablje castle or the serene parks at Dol pri Ljubljana. An abundance of nooks and crannies abound for picnics and social activities of all kinds, immersed in nature with chosen company.



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KAMNIK

In a country that prides itself on charming villages, elegant squares and some of the most gorgeous towns in Europe, the word 'beautiful' can perhaps be overused to the point of redundancy. When talking about Kamnik however, a medieval town some 23km northeast of Ljubljana, avoiding the word and its synonyms is high on impossible.

Crammed in an area of varied topography with dense forest sitting next to sharp mountain peaks and wooded valleys, there is an undeniable grace to its medieval city centre. The history of the town is visible to all through its varied (and well-maintained) architecture, the affluence of its history sitting quietly next to more modern times. Kamnik is all red roofs and narrow twisting streets with the always-dramatic backdrop of jagged Alpine mountaintops looming nearby. Sitting next to the Bistrica river and with castle ruins and church steeples juxtaposed against the lush greenery of the surroundings.

Kamnik itself can be explored on foot in a number of hours, making it a great day trip away from Ljubljana. However, the surrounding area demands a longer stay, and the guesthouses and hotels in the town will provide more than ample comfort to do so. It is a great base for exploring the nearby Velika planina, as well as an extended visit to Volčji Potok, Slovenia's largest arboretum. If walking amongst masses of vibrantly coloured flowers isn't quite relaxing enough then Snovik thermal spa centre will take care of the rest. Kamnik truly deserves to be described as beautiful.

DOMŽALE

Established in 1925 with the merging of a few small towns, Domžale developed rapidly to the point where in the 1970s it was the richest city (per capita) in all of Yugoslavia. Thanks in part to its proximity to the Kamniška Bistrica River, industry thrived in decades past, and many businesses still prosper here today. Sport also runs big here; local football club NK Domžale won the Slovenian Prvi Liga as recently as 2008, and the basketball side KK Helios won in 2007.

The 19th century saw the development of straw-hat making, the native art of Domžale that would become an international fashion sensation, with it coming Domžale's explosion of wealth, and the straw plaiting museum is well worth a visit. Not many things represent the town as completely as the art of straw-hat making.

Not to be outdone by the urban development, Domžale is surrounded by natural beauty in the shape of the Kamniška Bistrica River (perfect for walking) and the Železna caves. Domžale is also home to the strongest, most powerful radio transmitter in all of Slovenia, built in 1927. River walks, straw hats and radio? Just a 20-minute train ride away from Ljubljana, we are in.

LITIJA

Janez Vajkard Valvesor claimed that Litija took its name from the Latin word *lithus*, meaning 'riverbank'. The positioning of the town lends credence to this claim, occupying as it does both banks of the Sava River. Believed to have

had settlements as far back as human history goes, Litija is an old mining town surrounded by unique ethnology and a vast array of fascinating sights and activities. The last mine closed its doors for the last time in 1965, and up to that point mining had been the major source of income. The 15th century town centre is partially preserved, but more modern buildings are taking over.

It is the various sights that surround Litija that are the breadwinner now. The little village of Vače sits just outside, and with it comes the site of the excavation of a 5th century BC Situla (bucket). The high energy, high activity GEOSS Pustovolski Park is nearby too. Just outside of Vače you will find the geographical centre of Slovenia, and the journey up to this monument is worth every moment. Every winding turn brings you panoramic views of lush green forests and sumptuous woodlands from your eye to the horizon. The Sopota Valley is the cherry on the top of this particularly gorgeous cake.

MENGEŠ

Neatly tucked underneath Gobavica Hill, Mengeš may be small but you will be hard pressed to find anywhere more peacefully serene. Whether you decide to increase your heart rate and jog up Gobavica taking on the challenges posted on exercise boards as you go, explore the history of Slovenia's oldest big band and Mengeš's musical history or reinvigorate yourself at the Harmonija Wellness Centre, Mengeš is perfect for getting back to the simpler things in life.

First mentioned in writing way back in 1154, Mengeš has been a settlement of some sort since way before even the Romans arrived. What began as a peasant settlement

would go on to become a crafts centre in the region, as well as the site of some of the oldest parishes in the entire country, with Mengeš parish being one of the oldest in all of Carniola.

The Pšata River dawdles through the town adding extra levels of scenic grace to an already charming little town. Mengeš might not be moving at 100 miles per hour, but sometimes time exists to be taken.

TRZIN

It may be the smallest municipality in this guide by population, but don't let that fool you. Trzin is a delightful mix of history and the modern world that is well worth a visit. Excavations point to it being inhabited since the days of the Romans, with a hatchet discovered in the town's quarry hinting at Neolithic inhabitation. The oldest preserved document of the town dates back to 1273, when Vilijem Svibenjki willing gave up the rights to six forms to those dastardly Teutonic Knights. Maybe not so willingly, we're not sure.

Trzin is famous as a town of butchers, with the famous Kranjska klobasa (sausage) having its origins in the town. Trzin finally gained independence as a municipality in 1998 but it has always been a fairly prosperous and developed area. Split into three areas as it has expanded, most of Trzin's attractions (as well as the soul of the town) are found in the old part on the slopes of Onger hill. Here you'll find the 14th century St. Florian Church as well as some aesthetically fascinating old architecture. The area around Trzin is all meadows and streams, with some great hiking spots by Dobeno and Rašica evoking emotional serenity by all possible means.



Plague memorials dot the landscape in the Heart of Slovenia



The main town square of Lukovica

DOL PRI LJUBLJANI

One of the smallest municipalities featured within this guide, Dol pri Ljubljani comprises almost some 20 villages in an area of immense greenery, wonderful cycling and influential mathematicians. Its position near the confluence of three rivers (the Sava, the Kamniška Bistrica and the Ljubljanica) made it vital on trade routes back in the day, with the Sava being the most influential waterway for this small area. It is most famous for the manor in Dol itself, built in the 16th century and blossomed in the 19th in the care of Jožef Erberg. Now only the pavilions stand of the former 'Versailles of Carniola'.

Almost all of the villages have something to offer the prospective tourist, whether it is the aforementioned pavilions in Dol, the gostilnas of Dolsko, the life of prominent mathematician Jurij Vrga in Zagorica, castles and churches all around or just the wonderful walks amongst fabulous scenery. If that isn't relaxing enough, then get yourself a fishing permit and fish on the confluence of the three big rivers, live the life that summer was made for.

LUKOVICA

Lukovica may be in its formative years as a municipality (it gained the distinction in 1995), but its location surrounded by green-drowned valleys and village-dotted hills make it another picturesque stop in this most picturesque of regions. Lukovica has been an important transit point since forever, sitting on the Roman road from Aquileia to Emona (Roman Ljubljana) as well as the border between Upper Carniola and Styria. In modern times it is a halfway point on the road from Ljubljana to Celje. It isn't the roads that will bring you to Lukovica however, but the sheer amount of fascinating sights packed into its tiny oblong-shaped area. There are 66 separate villages here, as well as 15 churches and 11 cemeteries, all for around six thousand people. Amongst the churches you'll find St Margaret's Church in Gradišče with 360-degree views of the valleys, the site of the first Lutheran mass in Slovenia at the Catholic church of St Luke's in Spodnje Prapreče and the beautifully isolated St Agnes church near Golčaj. The settlements extend over the Črni graben (black dale) valley, surrounded by the Tuhinj valley to the north and the Moravče valley to the south, guaranteeing natural beauty all around and some great hiking trails. Bee lovers can head to the Beekeeping centre of Slovenia at Brdo pri Lukovici, just up the road from the 16th century Brdo castle.

TOP 10 SIGHTS

VELIKA PLANINA AND THE KAMNIŠKA-BISTRICA VALLEY

With over 100 shepherd huts, Velika planina is home to the highest alpine pasture in Slovenia. It also happens to be one of the oldest shepherd settlements in Europe, with well maintained hiking trails throughout. The scenic cable car ride up gives great views over the Kamniška-Bistrica valley. **Velika planina**



GEOSS AND VAČE

Who wouldn't love to say they've been to the geometric centre of Slovenia? The hills above Litija give you the chance to do so. **Litija**



ST AGNES CHURCH

The most isolated of churches, its restored 17th century coffered ceiling is just one of the jaw dropping visuals to be found here. The views are simply stunning. **Lukovica**



KAMNIK OLD TOWN

Sat at the bosom of the Kamnik-Savinja Alps, Kamnik is one of the most beautiful medieval towns in Slovenia. Above the old town we find a gorgeous small castle with a Romanesque chapel and the old legend of Countess Veronika. **Kamnik**

DOL PARK PAVILIONS

Admittedly more imagination-based than visual, the pavilions are all that is left of what was once known as the 'Versailles of Carniola'. The work of Venetian architect Francesco Colonija, statues stand for four muses: painting, architecture, poetry and music. **Dol pri Ljubljani**



VOLČJI POTOK

Whatever your stance on flowers, Volčji Potok Arboretum provides the regions most colourful sights as two million tulips blossom in the spring. **Kamnik**



STRAW HAT MAKING MUSEUM

The history of Domžale is intertwined with the history of straw-hat making, and the museum in town is the perfect place to find out more. **Domžale**



BEEKEEPING CENTRE OF SLOVENIA

A world without bees means a world without life, so now is as good a time as any to learn about the vital insects. There's no better place than Brdo pri Lukovici to do so. **Lukovica**

JABLJE CASTLE

An old medieval castle near the village of Loka pri Mengšu, Jablje Castle plays host to many prestigious events throughout the year. It is open for visitors every other Saturday. **Mengeš**



MENAČENK HOMESTEAD

Ever wondered how people in Domžale lived in the 19th century? The Menaçenk Homestead paints the perfect picture of a tough but fulfilling life. **Domžale**

TOP 10 ACTIVITIES

TERME SNOVIK

Located in a picturesque valley, Snovik is the highest sitting spa in the Heart of Slovenia. Could there be a better location for a wellness centre? In a word, no. A thermal oasis surrounded by greenery, attractive pools, saunas and great apartments complement the many hiking and cycling trails through the valley and the mountains. **Kamnik**



TUNJICE HEALING RESORT

Close to the scenic St Anne's church, Tunjice is a natural healing resort with many energy springs rising from under the ground. Improve your physical, psychological and mental state with a glass of live water. **Kamnik**



KAMNIŠKA-BISTRICA GREEN AXIS

In the green corners of Domžale is this attractive recreational axis along the Kamniška-Bistrica River. Exercise accompanied by glorious views of the Alps is definitely our kind of exercise. **Domžale**

GOLF ARBORETUM

What isn't there to love about a golf course with views of the Kamnik-Savinja Alps? Offering a diverse and demanding set of holes, this is a must for all golf lovers. **Kamnik**



TOURIST FARM PR' KRAČ

A homestead surrounded by darling orchards, Pr' Krač harks back to a somewhat lost way of life. A former Blacksmiths shop can be found, as well as frequent exhibitions and concerts at Gallery 19. **Dol pri Ljubljani**



GEOSS ADVENTURE PARK

Five treetop climbing routes designed to challenge all ages, this park is hidden away in dense forests. Perfect for those blistering summer days. **Litija**



MENGEŠKA KOČA ON GOBAVICA

Mengeš is an excellent outpost for hiking trips, and the Trim trail is arguably the finest activity in town. Full of signposts offering a number of different physical exercises, the views offered of the Alps are spectacular. **Mengeš**

LEVSTIK'S TRAIL

This 22km hike in November through the hills of Dolenjska from Litija to Čatež follows in the footprints of Mr Fran Levstik himself. An event not-to-be missed. **Litija**



FISHING AT GRADIŠČE LAKE

A man-made lake just outside of Lukovica, Gradišče is the dictionary definition of serene nature. Get yourself a fishing permit and enjoy a day on its shore. **Lukovica**

JURIJ VEGA EDUCATIONAL PATH

More than 250 years old, hit the road frequently walked by the world-famous mathematician Jurij Vega. Learn about the great mans life, starting at Dolsko and finishing at his family home in Zagorica. **Dol pri Ljubljani**



TOP 10 RESTAURANTS



GOSTILNA NAROBÉ

In a most beautiful building, Narobe is the perfect place to tuck into traditional Slovene foods, complete with one of the regions best wine selections. **Trzin**

GOSTILNA REPNIK

On the side of the road between Kamnik and Terme Snovik, Repnik takes old-fashioned hospitality to its pinnacle, with an unbeatable selection of food to boot. Beautiful accommodation is now also available. **Kamnik**



GOSTILNA S PRENOČIŠČI VEGOV HRAM

Four generations of the Zupančič family have led to this, homely atmosphere, exemplary service and excellent food in the village of Dolsko.

Dol pri Ljubljani



GOSTIŠČE TROJANE

More than 200,000 visitors every year can't be wrong. Famous for its doughnuts, Trojane also provides excellent meals at this pilgrim's paradise. **Lukovica**



PR' KRAČ TOURIST FARM

The most genuine traditional experience in the region, 300 years of history bleeds into quality food and a splendidly friendly atmosphere. **Dol pri Ljubljani**

GOSTIŠČE IN PENZION KEBER

Perfect ambience in the shade of nine chestnut trees, Keber is the ideal place for an afternoon lunch, a romantic dinner or just for hanging out with friends. It also has a newly renovated pizzeria next door. **Domžale**



ECO-TOURIST FARM PR' LAVRIČ

Far away from anything approaching hustle and bustle, enjoy some of the finest fresh lamb we've ever tasted. **Litija**

PARK RESTAVRACIJA

By the stadium in Domžale, the interior manages to get the perfect balance with its decoration, whilst serving some of the best food in town. **Domžale**



GOSTILNA PRI PLANINSKEM ORLU

In the village of Stahovica close to Kamnik, this family run inn is a spot where travellers, hikers and lovers of good food collide to enjoy a wealth of domestic and hunting specialties. **Kamnik**



MENGEŠKA KOČA

400m up on Gobavica hill, excellent soups and stews plus a playground for the kids. What more do we want on a sunny afternoon? **Mengeš**



Trzin's Florian fair in May celebrates all things Trzin

The Heart of Slovenia provides an almost year-round calendar of events covering a wide area of themes and interests. Unsurprisingly Kamnik leads the way, with a variety of festivals to appeal to all ages. **The Arboretum Spring Flower Show (Volčji Potok)** is traditionally at the end of April and beginning of May, and sees the famous tulips of Volčji Potok blossom in a cacophony of effervescence. They say there are two million, but with colourful flowers covering almost 50% of the park the number is irrelevant, the visual is more than enough. The **Festival of Countess Veronika** follows this on the third Friday of May, a child-centric festival in the town centre.

On every last Saturday in Kamnik between September and June, the town marketplace becomes an hotbed of nature and flavour. From eight in the morning until one in the afternoon, a diverse range of locally grown organic food is available to buy, as well as delicious recipes cooked straight from the Taste Kamnik book. **KamFest Summer Festival** takes place in the middle of August at Mali Grad, an explosion of performance art. **The National Costumes and Clothing Heritage Festival** (second weekend of September) is the real jewel in Kamnik's festival crown however.

Mengeš under the Umbrella takes place in February at the Špas Teater Hall, and it proudly shows off the long musical heritage of Mengeš with all sorts of local talent featured. In the last week of September Mengeš also plays host to **St Michael's Fair**, where homemade crafts are shown off and music and food are gorged on in a tent. Kranjska Klobasa is one of the many traditional Trzin items showcased at the annual **St Flo-**

rian Fair (first weekend of May), where the achievements of Trzin are brought to the fore. Trzin also plays host to **TRZNFEST** towards the end of May, featuring workshops, live music, theatre productions and even speed dating.

Over the course of the first three seasons of the year Dol pri Ljubljani has a fair in homage to all three, with winter being left out because of the less-than-agreeable weather.

Spring, Summer and Autumn fairs focus on the development and maintenance of local cultural and cuisine, by spreading the word across generations. Litija specializes in organized hiking days. The second Saturday of May is usually the time for the **Charcoal Path Hike**, a four-hour hike through the land of charcoal burners that takes place in the evening. Educational as well as intriguing, it is well worth a visit. The major hiking event of the region (as well as one of the most popular in Slovenia) takes place at the beginning of November on St Martin's Day, in the shape of **Levstik's Trail**. A 22km hike through the hills of Dolenjska, it follows the trail put to paper by Fran Levstik in the imaginatively titled 'The Journey from Litija to Čatež'. Information boards dot the route containing passages from the book. The trail is open all year round, but this event is not to be missed.

Lukovica hosts a number of culinary festivals such as the **St Peregrine Fair** at the end of April. Domžale plays host to an **International Mountain Film Festival** (spring time), showcasing the finest films made about mountaineering. Domžale's main festival is the **Studenec Summer Theatre**, which takes place in the middle of July and sees thousands descend upon the town to feast on a variety of live art.

CULTURAL CENTRES

FRANCE BERNIK CULTURAL CENTRE

The spiritual centre of Domžale's thriving cultural scene, the France Bernik Cultural Centre has an almost constant program that quite literally has something for everyone. Opened in 1998 in a building constructed in 1910, the centre showcases everything from theatre performances to puppet shows to live music, including everything and anything in between. Program aside, the building is a very interesting example of Art Nouveau architecture in the region. It also runs the nearby Domžale Gallery (Mestni Trg 1) and was influential in the putting together of Menačenk's Homestead. ▶ **Ljubljanska 61, Domžale, tel. +386 (0)1 722 50 50, info@kd-domzale.si, www.kd-domzale.si.**

IVAN HRIBAR CENTRE

For decades, Trzin lacked a centre, something to anchor the rapidly developing town. The Ivan Hribar centre has slowly began to provide this, becoming the cultural and tourist centre of Trzin. The centre is named after Ivan Hribar, the mayor of Ljubljana between 1896 and 1910 who was born in Trzin in the mid 19th century. Inside is a bust of the man himself, as well as various exhibitions showcasing the craft abilities of the town through history. Standing proud out in front of the centre is the Spring Fountain, two stones breaking apart with a centerpiece to remember lost lives all over the world. ▶ **Ljubljanska 12f, Trzin, tel. +386 (0)1 564 47 30. Open 08:00-13:00, 14:00-19:00. Tues, Fri only 08:00-13:00. Closed Sat, Sun.**

EVENTS

FLORIAN FAIR

Usually taking place over the first weekend in May, the Florian Fair in Trzin is a celebration of all things Trzin. With programs covering sport, education and music plus much more, the Florian Fair takes special focus to celebrate and show off the achievements and abilities of its citizens. The children take centre stage on a number of occasions, with a variety of performances and sports tournaments going on throughout the weekend. There is also plenty of live music, and the fair is a great opportunity to sample the famous local sausage, the Kranjska Klobasa. ▶ **Trzin.**

THE NATIONAL COSTUMES AND CLOTHING HERITAGE FESTIVAL

It really doesn't get much more family-friendly. First held all the way back in 1966, the National Costumes and Clothing Heritage Festival takes place in the centre of Kamnik. Taking place on the second weekend of September, the costumes take centre stage, showcasing the colourful wares worn by people through the centuries. All the regions of the country are featured, as well the traditional attire of other nations. Dress makes up quite a big part of a nation's heritage, and this festival goes all out in order to pay its respects to this. Musical entertainment is provided by a variety of folk bands, brass ensembles and vocal groups, with folk dancing groups providing some eye-catching distractions. The Costume Festival is a colourful fun-packed weekend of joy for all ages. ▶ **Kamnik.**

STUDENEC SUMMER THEATRE

Every summer, thousands of people descend on Domžale in anticipation of a feast of art of all kinds. Now in its 14th year, the Spring Summer Theatre in Domžale is a celebration of all things creative, be it live music, theatre or art exhibitions. The program has managed to expand every single year, becoming more varied and more accessible all the time. The 2014 edition takes place on the third weekend of July, so head to the website to check out the program and enjoy the show. ▶ **Domžale, tel. +386 (0)51 61 41 41, www.studenec.net.**

THEATRES

ŠPAS THEATRE

After running their first show in 1997, Špas Teater has gone on to become the most visited theatre in all of Slovenia. Not bad for a theatre working out of a little town like Mengeš. Focusing mainly on comedic performances, it has created a program aimed at both old and young viewers, theatre suitable for the widest of audiences. In younger generations theatre has arguably been replaced with movies and video games, and Špas are doing all they can to reverse this trend by making the theatre a viable free-time option for young people. It must be doing something right, as the shows frequently sell out and the theatre has been the recipient of numerous awards. Shows take place at the Mengeš cultural house, which sits over 400 people. To catch a show or just see what they've got coming up, head to the website listed below. ▶ **Slovenska 32, Mengeš, tel. +386 (0)1 729 12 34, info@spasteater.com, www.spasteater.si.**



Litija carnival: Not your average carnival



A linden tree-lined walk leads to the gorgeous church in Groblje

CHURCHES

CHURCH OF ST ANDREW

Vače really is a village full of sights, and the church of St Andrew is yet another fascinating thing to view when in the hills outside of Litija. First mentioned in the 13th century, its current incarnation was put together in 1844 after the earlier building was destroyed by fire. The shining (quite literally) glory of the church is its Holy Tomb, a beautiful 19th century piece made at a glassworks in Ostrava (Czech Republic) in 1864. When the light shines from behind the tomb it is undeniably stunning. The church has a number of other interesting aspects, such as a 17th century vestry bell and some safely stored soil, soil that was kissed by Pope John Paul II on a visit to the country. ▶ **Vače, Litija.**

CHURCH OF ST CATHERINE

Merely a stones throw outside of Dol itself lies the tiny village of Zaboršt. Now, we're not going to tell you to set aside a day for Zaboršt, as lovely as it is it has a population of around 200 and not much else. Its church is definitely worth a look though. It has but a fragment of a fresco of St Christopher preserved on one wall and a bell tower dating back to 1689, but the surrounding greener than green scenery makes this adorable church impossible to ignore. ▶ **Dol Pri Ljubljani.**

CHURCH OF ST CUNEGUNDE

Rebuilt in the 18th century with baroque style replacing the original gothic grace, the church of St. Cunegunde was the site of a 16th century defensive wall. The Turks were rampant at this time, and the church and wall provided a rare place of refuge and safety during their attacks. The wall began to

decay with the beginning of the renovations, but a visit is still recommended. Viewings of the church are available by prior appointment only. ▶ **Domžale, tel. +386 (0)1 724 85 55.**

CHURCH OF ST HERMAGORAS AND ST FORTUNATUS

First mentioned in 1526, this church in the village of Groblje is dedicated to the two patron saints of Aquileia with absolutely fantastic names. That isn't the only fantastic thing about this however, as the baroque style in which it is built is glorious. The current incarnation replaced the late Gothic style in the late 18th century, when the church was used to worship the patron saint of peasants. The interior is covered in fine frescoes painted by Franc Jelovšek. Our favourite aspect however is the 200m linden tree-lined walk to the church. We're romantics at heart ▶ **Domžale, tel. +386 (0)1 721 29 63.**

CHURCH OF ST LEONARD

Atop a steep hill above the village of Krtina we find the church of St Leonard, and it is one of the more fascinating churches in the heart of Slovenia. With its stand-alone bell tower and strange lack of presbytery, the church is a place of history and artistic value. Turkish marauders burned down the original in 1471, but within 30 years it was rebuilt. This time it came with a defensive wall and a number of watchtowers, providing extra security against future attacks. Inside the lack of presbytery lends to the altar being raised by two steps, but it is the frescoes that truly are the main event here. The depiction of the Last Judgement is simply one of the best we have seen in the entire country. Visit by prior appointment only. ▶ **Krtina, Domžale, tel. +386 (0)1 729 20 24.**

CHURCH OF ST MARGARET

The heart of Dol is undoubtedly its church, dedicated to St Margaret. First mentioned in 1262, its current baroque incarnation dates to 1753 and it is quite the looker. A respectfully elegant cemetery surrounds it, containing the grave of Janko Moder. Moder was a celebrated Slovene editor and translator who spent nine months in prison at the end of World War Two after falling foul of the government. The church grounds also houses a number of monuments to lives lost in numerous wars. In order to visit the inside of the church you must ring ahead. ► **Dol 1f, Dol Pri Ljubljani, tel. +386 (0)1 563 90 96.**

FRANCISCAN MONASTERY AND CHURCH OF ST JAMES

Whilst not entirely open to the public, the Franciscan Monastery is well worth a visit when in Kamnik. The monastery and church truly pay homage to the history of this town, be it the periods of upheaval in the 16th century or the horrors of World War Two. There is a monastic chapel dedicated to the memory of the lives lost in the First World War, as well as the Holy Grave, designed by ultra-architect Jože Plečnik. In fact the renovation in 1956 was one of his final works. The library might be the standout however, founded in 1627 but containing books published way before then. ► **Frančiškanski trg 2, Kamnik, tel. +386 (0)1 831 80 37, franciskani.kamnik@rkc.si.**

ST AGNES CHURCH

Not the easiest to get to, admittedly. A village or a town surrounds most churches in the region, despite them almost universally being built on hills. This isn't the case with St Agnes Church near Golčaj, as the only villages visible here are the ones that dot the beautiful landscape on the way up. The oldest church in the Črni graben valley, it also has the oldest church bell (built in 1423) in the Ljubljana diocese. The ruins of a Sacristan's house stand solemnly in front, adding yet more feelings of isolation to this gorgeous little church. The 17th century (restored at the beginning of the 1990s) coffered ceiling inside is also every bit as stunning as it is unique. To have a look around the interior you must call ahead, or turn up on one of a number of religious ceremonial days. ► **Golčaj, Lukovica.**

ST FLORIAN'S CHURCH

Erected in the 14th century but not written of until 1526, St Florian's Church has been through its fair share of changes in the almost 500 years since. It didn't become an independent parish until 1974, and will celebrate 40 years of independence this year. In the multiple remodeling and renovation that has happened since, the church has completed an almost 180 degree turn from the original form. Where we now find the bell tower originally stood the entrance, and the alter previously stood near where the entrance now is. Many relics from long ago have sur-



The isolated church of St. Agnes near Lukovica is one of our favourite spots



St Michael's Church Tower, Mengeš

vived however, such as a 15th century sandstone statue of the very St Florian it is named after. It also has a cross and chandelier inside designed by, you guessed it, Jože Plečnik.

► **Habatova 15, 1236 Trzin, zupnija.trzin@rc.si, www.zupnija.rc.si/trzin.**

ST LUKE'S CHURCH

In the village of Spodnje Prapreče sits St Luke's Church. Unusually for a church in Slovenia it doesn't rest on the top of a hill, more on a gentle slope in the village. Another interesting facet, and one immediately more noticeable upon entering the church, is the sloping floor. The rise from the entrance to the presbytery is well over a metre. There are two main schools of thought behind this; either those who built the church wanted to maintain the higher position of the priests over the people, or merely the natural shape of the floor was respected. We aren't sure. What we are sure about is the elegance of the 16th century frescoes within, as well as the all-encompassing acoustics inside. Call ahead for a tourist viewing. ► **Spodnje Prapreče, Lukovica, tel. +386 (0)1 723 67 40.**

ST MARGARET'S CHURCH

Gradišče, a small village of around 230 inhabitants in the hills around Lukovica, might not be the easiest to get to but you'll be glad you made the effort once the panoramic views play out in front of your eyes. On a clear day Ljubljana, Domžale and pretty much the entire valley can be seen from the clearing in front of St Margaret's Church. Gradišče

Lake is also viewed from behind the church, as well as the mountains on the other side. The church itself is as adorable as a small compact church can be. The restored frescoes inside are particularly impressive, respectful in their simplicity. A Celtic fort stood next to where the church stands, and there is also a monument to lives lost in World War Two nearby. St Margaret's Church in Gradišče provides more than enough to justify the walk up. Call ahead to book a viewing of the inside of the church. ► **Gradišče, Lukovica.**

ST MICHAEL'S PARISH CHURCH

At the heart (and the soul) of Mengeš is St Michael's Parish Church and its accompanying grounds. What started off as romanesque became gothic which finally became baroque, complete with a 15th century gothic presbytery containing many frescoes painted by Janez Ljubljanski (a respected Slovene painter of the same century). Jože Plečnik also has his fingerprints all over it, with his plans forming the basis for the confessional boxes and baptistry inside. It can be argued that the church tower is responsible for Mengeš still standing in the form it does today. When Turkish war addicts were on the door in the 16th century, it was from here that the people of Mengeš were able to protect themselves from an almost certain violent death. ► **Mengeš.**

ST VITUS CHURCH

Some churches go a little over the top with regards to their interior. St Vitus church in the village of Šentvid flies dangerously close to this category, but manages to stay

on the right side of class due to the sheer quality and history of all the adorns its walls. Including a crowned Mary Help of Christians (Mary Pomagaj), something that required official permission from the Pope, the church was a place of pilgrimage for a long time. This may have lessened in recent times, but there is still more than enough here to justify a visit. The organ alone is worth going to hear. It was made by Slovene organ making company Škrabl, whose organs can be heard all over the globe. ▶ **Šentvid, Lukovica.**

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

BRDO PRI LUKOVICI CASTLE

The birthplace of influential Slovene writer Janko Kersnik, the renaissance castle in Brdo pri Lukovici was the heart of the region up until as recently as World War Two. It was burnt down in the middle of that war however, and hasn't been renovated since. This has left it a ruin of its former self, but its prior elegance is practically undeniable. Only the exterior walls remain, but that is enough to imagine what it was like. What is left of a one vastly luxurious garden sits in front, complete with a little pond. The castle still belongs to the Kersnik family to this day. ▶ **Brdo Pri Lukovici, Lukovica.**

DOMŽALE RADIO TRANSMITTER

With the original being built in 1927 and beginning operations in 1928, the radio transmitter in Domžale is the most powerful in the entire country. Operating on a medium wave frequency, it can be heard throughout all of Europe at night. Unsurprisingly it got destroyed in World War Two, as radio towers tend to in war, as well as being damaged in the 1991 independence skirmish. These interruptions have been short though, and it continues to broadcast continent-wide to this very day. ▶ **Domžale**

FLYING CLUB MILAN BORIŠEK LITJA

Founded in 1947, this flying club based in Litija traces its roots to way before World War Two. These days they concentrate on sports flying with ultra light planes, as well as keeping busy with their extensive modelling section and the production of aircraft models. Flying enthusiasts can even get a licence for flying motor planes or motor hang gliders here. The club uses two airfields, although one of the two was out of use at the time of writing. ▶ **CKS 2 ali Grbinska cesta 33, Litija, +386 (0)41 71 35 39, aeroklub.litija@gmail.com, www.aeroklub.litija.com.**

FRANC JELOVŠEK BIRTHPLACE AND MONUMENT

Born in Mengeš in 1700, Franc Jelovšek is widely regarded as one of the great Slovene painters in history, with his frescoes gaining widespread acclaim and adoration. He is considered the father of baroque painting in the region, which tells us something. The house in which he was born sits next to St Michael's Church in the town, and a monument to the great man stands in front. ▶ **Mengeš**

JABLJE CASTLE

First mentioned in the 13th century, Jablje Castle is a cultural monument of importance for good reason. Its current incarnation dates to the 16th century and the house of Lamberg. Whilst it didn't suffer too badly during World War 2 it was heavily plundered and looted in the subsequent years, being converted into apartments for a while amongst other things. It went under heavy renovation between 1999 and 2006, but it is mostly famous for the frescoes inside painted by Franc Jelovšek, including a particularly bizarre camel-riding Chinese tambourine player. We'll leave you to make up your own mind about that one. ▶ **Grajska 1, Loka Pri Mengeš, Mengeš, tel. +386 (0)1 560 86 00, info@jable.si, www.jable.si.**



Kamnik's idyllic Little Castle watches over the old town

VELIKA PLANINA



Covering some 577 hectares of pastureland, Velika planina is the catchall name for a number of plateaus that are home to one of the oldest shepherd settlements in Europe still in use today. Just a short drive outside of Kamnik, hordes of herdsmen's cottages sit at an altitude of over 1500 metres surrounded by pine forests. It is a remarkable place, and one that truly is a must-see when in Kamnik or Ljubljana.

As May comes around green becomes the overwhelmingly dominant colour on the highland, along with the blossoming of the purple Kamnik flower (or Nigritella lithopolitana, to give it its scientific name). Huts sit lazily all around, with pine shingle roofs and an architecture that is genuinely unique to this mountain land. As various peaks rising over 2000m loom in the background, it all makes for some wonderful scenery.

The Herdsmen's Settlement comes alive in summer, maintaining traditions that are centuries old. The Snow Mary Chapel sits on top of the settlement, looking over in a most protective manner. The tourist settlement might not have quite as much history but it still has a fascinating story nonetheless, and the views are even more remarkable from this elevated spot. A number of guesthouses sit at various points throughout, providing weary hikers with some much-needed food straight from the history of this beautiful land.

CHAPEL OF OUR LADY OF THE SNOWS

Sit above the herdsmen's settlement like a protective mother, the first incarnation of the Chapel of Our Lady of the Snows was built in 1938 in order to provide the herdsmen a venue for the holy mass. Prior to its being built, the herdsmen would gather on Zeleni Rob in order to hear church bells ringing through the valley. The first chapel wouldn't last so long unfortunately, being burnt down by German soldiers and Slovene militiamen in World War Two. Only a painting of the Virgin Mary with Jesus survived, and this painting adorns the rebuilt (1988) chapel today. The Lady of the Snows feast day is August 5th, and is the busiest day of the year for the settlement. It really is quite the celebration. ▶ [Velika planina, Kamnik](#).

HERDSMEN'S SETTLEMENT

From June until September, Velika planina acts as home for around 30 herdsmen, who slowly move up the mountain to their settlement to continue tradition and to tend to their cattle. Some 63 huts dot the landscape with their distinctly unique architecture in what is now an officially protected cultural landscape. The settlement came very close to being ripped down in 1957, only to be saved after an intervention by Vlasto Kopač and the herdsmen. Along with the 63 huts there is a parliament building (the main social centre for the shepherds) and an open-air dance floor. ▶ [Velika planina, Kamnik](#).

VELIKA PLANINA

HISTORY OF VELIKA PLANINA

There is evidence to suggest that man has been present on Velika planina since prehistoric times. A number of items have been uncovered to confirm this, such as a number of axes from between the 13th and 11th century, numerous tools, pendants and ceramics, amongst other things. As with many things from such a terrifyingly long time ago there is a lot of conjecture with regards to the little details, but it is believed that animals were reared on these hills in the long long ago as well.

Velika planina's glory years, if a mountain can have such things, began in the 16th century. The style of huts that came to dominate were built during this time, with the Preskar Museum hut that stands today being almost identical in design. Dairy farming really took off during this time as well. The number of people living up on the mountain was generally unknown until the 18th and 19th centuries, when tentative records began. Tourism exploded in the 1930s, and this was because the huts, which had previously been empty in winter, were rented out to those who came to ski.

Velika planina couldn't escape the carnage that engulfed Europe in World War Two, and German soldiers and local militiamen burned down all of the huts on the plateau. Not even the Chapel of Our Lady of the Snows was spared. Immediately following the end of the war the rebuilding process began, bringing the settlement to its current aesthetic. The chapel was rebuilt in 1988. Much credit for the rebuild goes to Vlasto Kopač, a Slovene architect and mountaineer who visited the peak every

year for 70 years, carefully noting everything and anything down about life so high up. Kopač died in 2006.

PRESKAR HUT MUSEUM

The only preserved oval hut with an open fireplace and no windows or chimney, the Preskar Hut Museum stands out in the settlement. Built after the devastation of World War Two, it now houses a museum showing the life of herdsmen in the 19th century. Upon arrival a herder in traditional dress greets you, and we can confirm that it is quite the striking look. Through the summer there are also occasional events and workshops. ► **Velika planina, Kamnik, tel. +386 (0)31 68 08 02/+386 (0)61 832 72 58, info@velikaplanina.si. Open Jun - Sept 10:00-16:00.**

TOURIST SETTLEMENT & GOSTIŠČE ZELENİ ROB

Built for tourists and adjusted to suit their needs, the area around Zeleni Rob is now home to numerous cottages for those who wish to extend their stay on Velika planina to extra days. Built using plans drawn up by Vlasto Kopač, it was intended to be aesthetically separate from the Herdsmen's Settlement but it still retains a distinct Velika planina flavor. The mountain lodge Zeleni Rob is at the heart of the settlement, and also to provide some much needed sustenance after a long day of walking. They specialize in traditional fare, doing an excellent line in cheese dumplings. ► **Velika planina, Kamnik, tel. +386 (0)51 34 14 06/+386 (0)51 64 45 12, info@velikaplanina.si, www.velikaplanina.si. Open 08:00-18:00, Fri-Sun 08:00 - 20:00 (June-Sept), and 08:00-16:00, Fri-Sun 08:00-18:00 (Oct-May).**





The glass pyramid in Trzin's industrial zone is hard to miss

JUB PAINT FACTORY

Dol is home to the company who at one point had a 60% market share in paint in the former Yugoslavia. Impressive. With beginnings arriving in 1875 when a mill owner first started-a-grinding, the company went under multiple changes in holder before settling on the name JUB in 1919. Between the wars the quality of its paints was established, and although World War Two put a stop to pretty much everything JUB was able to rebuild after the war. After another dip following the collapse of Yugoslavia, JUB thrives today and recently opened its first factory abroad. ▶ **Dol pri Ljubljani.**

MALI GRAD (LITTLE CASTLE)

Sitting proudly above the town, Mali Grad is worth every one of the steep steps you must trudge in order to reach it. The 11th or 12th century castle itself may lie in ruins, but who doesn't love some castle ruins? The baroque-style chapel of St. Margaret is perfectly preserved however, and it rests peacefully on top of an old Slavic burial ground. Not only that, but the crypt is supposed to be guarded by Veronika (she of half-woman half-snake fame), keeping would-be thieves away from her treasure. Truth be told however, it is the views of Kamnik that really make Mali Grad a must-see when in the town. From the ruins of the castle you get a true idea of just how breathtaking Kamnik is. It is all understated yet colourful building and red roofs protecting narrow streets. Oh, and the Kamnik Alps lurking (can mountains lurk?) in the background, providing the most dramatic of backdrops to a sight you'd be foolish to miss. ▶ **Kamnik.**

NEUDORF HUNTING LODGE

Once the property of Janez Valvasor, everyone's favourite Slovene historian and nobleman, this former hunter's mansion in Zavrh has undergone something of a turbulent recent history. When the entire population of the village was deported to Germany during World War Two, a German poet was put living here and the entire place was ransacked, everything of value taken or destroyed. It is since restored, with an elegant knight's hall as well as the remains of a tunnel in the basement, which may or may not be a secret passage. Organised tours of the lodge are available by prior appointment.

▶ **Zavrh 3, 1273 Dole pri Litija, +386 (0)1 897 22 84, +386 (0)51 31 27 39, mojca@jarina.si.**

OIC PYRAMID

Not many are aware, but the first modern industrial zone in all of Yugoslavia was put together in Trzin. The reasons for this were fairly clear; Trzin is a prosperous area with a great location, close to Domžale in particular which was one of the richest towns in the entire state as well as perfectly located next to Ljubljana and Brnik (now Jože Pučnik) airport. Built partly on a swamp, the area thrived for decades before slowing to a halt with much of the national economy. These days it is more known for something different. Constructed in the 1990s, the OIC pyramid sticks out like the sorest of glassy thumbs in this industrial area. It is thought that this was the major reason it was built, to provide something different in an otherwise drab zone. It is quite the sight. ▶ **Trzin.**

STARI GRAD (OLD CASTLE)

Kamnik has a 'Little Castle', which surely hints at the existence of another castle, right? Sitting atop Bergantova gora are the remains of the Stari Grad (Old Castle), a 13th century strategic palace built by the Counts of Andechs. It happens to be one of the oldest castles in Upper Carnolia. In 1511 it was badly damaged by an earthquake however, and has been in irreparable decline ever since. To reach it, head on a 30-minute walk out of the city up Maistrova ulica and you'll reach some of the finest panoramic views in all of Slovenia. ▶ **Kamnik.**

MUSEUMS & GALLERIES**BUDNAR MUSEUM HOUSE**

What was life like in the Slovene countryside 350 years ago? Wonder no more. Just a short drive outside of Kamnik is the Budnar Museum House, a (very) old farmhouse bringing simple Slovene heritage to life. Contained within the grounds are a farmhouse, an outbuilding and a black kitchen. This is the most rural of kitchens, using an open furnace to bake and smoke meat with a maple wood table as well. To taste something special from the kitchen, you must book ahead, and it is more than worth it. Every now and then ethnographic cultural events and exhibitions are hosted here, as well as the odd workshop. Large groups are advised to book ahead. ▶ **Zgornje Palovče 5, Zgornje Palovče, Kamnik, tel. +386 (0)41 37 66 38/+386 (0)31 52 87 47, tdkamnik@gmail.com. Open Sat-Sun 14:00-17:00.**

CARLOS KLEIBER MEMORIAL ROOM

Regarded by many as the greatest conductor of the 20th century, Carlos Kleiber was something of a reclusive genius. The myth goes that he would only give a concert when his freezer was empty. We don't know how much truth there is to that, but there aren't many modern composers with such a glittering reputation. He happened to marry a Slovene ballet dancer by the name of Stanka Brezovar, and the couple had a holiday home in the village of her parents. The village is Konjšica, just outside Litija, and Kleiber would be buried here when he died in 2004. In the village today stands a memorial room dedicated to the great man, featuring a biography, some of his work and small descriptions of his private life. Go and learn more about the perfect conducting machine. Be sure to call beforehand to arrange a visit. ▶ **Konjšice, Litija, tel. +386 (0)41 53 23 79/+386 (0)41 38 22 49.**

JAJAČNKOVA HOMESTEAD

Currently under renovation, the stables next to the house in which Ivan Hribar was born are in the process of being made into a museum. Depicting the life of a 19th century family, the building itself is a mix of the original materials and ecological modern developments. The birth-house of Hribar next door is a house of stories as well, having being ruined in fires on at least three occasions. A monument in front of the homestead pays respect to three people killed here during World War Two. ▶ **Trzin.**



The Jafačnkova homestead stands next to the birthplace of Ivan Hribar

Sightseeing

JANEZ TRDINA'S BIRTHHOUSE

The man that Ivan Cankar described as the best Slovene stylist of his period was born in Mengeš. His name was Janez Trdina and he lived in the 19th century, and is so revered that the highest peak in the Gorjanci mountain range is named after him. Many say that he is responsible for keeping alive Slovene folk tradition, with his notebooks full to the brim of tales and customs. What was important with Trdina was that he recorded everything with emphasis on realism, as opposed to the usual romantic vision of idyllic countryside. The house that he was born in still stands in Mengeš, but today serves a very different purpose.

Musical instruments have been manufactured in the town for centuries, a tradition that continues to this day. The town band has existed for almost 150 years, famously having instruments bought for them by the people of the town. A stringed instrument factory/shop called Melodija stands here today and is well worth a visit. ▶ **Trdinov Trg 4, Mengeš**, tel. +386 (0)1 723 75 78, info@melodija.si, www.melodija.si. Open 09:00 - 19:00, Sat 09:00 - 13:00. Closed Sun.

JURIJ VEGA MUSEUM

Mathematician, scientist, artillery specialist, military strategist. Not a bad list right? Jurij Vega, born in the mountain village of Zagorica in 1754, was all of this and more. His most famous work was that in improving the accuracy of logarithms, which were the most widely used calculation tool until way into the 20th century. Vega's math exploits weren't confined to this one act however, and in 1789 he held the world record of calculating pi to 140 places. Only 126 were correct, but it is still pretty impressive. Vega also fought in many battles, combining brains with brawn on

a frequent basis, and married a 16-year-old Czech noble lady when he was 33. As you do.

Whilst the house in which he was born was burned down in World War Two, it has since been rebuilt and is still lived in by descendants of his. A memorial room within houses a permanent exhibition to his life and work. A 1.5km hiking trail leads from Dolsko to Zagorica, a meandering stroll through the woods, full of information on this life of one of the most important Slovenes who ever walked the earth. His birthday (23rd March) is celebrated as the municipality holiday. Phone ahead to be sure of a visit. ▶ **Zagorica 12, Dol Pri Ljubljani**, tel. +386 (0)1 564 72 76.

KRUMPERK CASTLE

Between the villages of Ihan and Dob lies the 16th century Krumperk Castle, an aesthetically stunning example of a renaissance manor. It was heavily plundered following World War Two and has stood in its decaying state ever since, but in 1990 it was restored to the original family and plans to renovated have been in place ever since. The family was that of Adam Ravbar, leader of an army of knights who would help the Austrian Empire defeat the Ottomans at the Battle of Sisak, thus halting the Ottoman drive through Europe. Most illustrious blood! ▶ **Gorjuša, Domžale**.

LENČEK GALLERY

Marina Lenček truly has something special going on here. Housed in a former confectionary, the gallery is home to her vast catalogue of Lect art, the art of gingerbread production and dough design. Gingerbread and Slovenia go way back, and Lenček has taken this and twisted it into an entirely different beast. Hearts adorn all sides of the gallery with individual messages written by Lenček on each, and



The inspiring Lenček gallery is gingerbread as you've never seen it

LEGEND OF COUNTESS VERONIKA

A town isn't a town without a local myth. If you were to glance at Kamnik's coat of arms, you'd be forgiven for wondering why they have a mermaid on there. A mermaid? But Kamnik is some 110km from the sea! Well, it isn't a mermaid at all, but the cruel fate that was bestowed upon one Countess Veronika.

The story goes as follows: Veronika was a gorgeous, wealthy countess living in Mali Grad. Despite her beauty and bank balance, she also happened to be completely stingy, making her unpopular with the locals. Three brothers also lived in the town, three brothers who were also three priests, and they desired to be able to preach mass at the same time. They decided to build a new church in Kamnik, one with three chapels so the entire town could go to mass at the same time. Let's call it community building. However, as with most goodwill projects the brothers needed some gold to finance their endeavor, and they quickly ran out.

They made the decision to ask Countess Veronika if she would be interested in donating money towards the construction of church. Rather than just politely say no, Veronika declared that she would rather turn into a snake than donate money to the project. As soon as she finished her sentence, lightning struck her. This may seem bad enough, but her words had come true and the beautiful Veronika had become half girl-half snake. Rumour has it that she still lives underneath the castle, guarding her treasures.

Of course, the narrative has many different versions. In another, Veronika is a Christianized heathen girl who broke off an engagement with a heathen knight. She can only be saved by the arrival of a seven year-old boy who will whip her three times, or three kisses from an honest young man, or even by a hero who will behead the spirit that guards her. Regardless of its specific incarnation, it is quite the tale.

like everything else inside there is heritage and story behind it. These hearts were given silently from boys to girls, and if the girl accepted the heart without saying a word, the love was accepted. How romantic.

Everything is symbolic inside. Everything is also truly impressive, whether it is the jaw dropping works harking back to Slovenia and its history (such as a dough Domžale coat of arms) or more abstract works (such as a huge, terrifying dough tarantula). Lenček herself is inspiringly passionate about her work, which is good as the process is painfully long. To find out more, pay her a visit. ▶ **Karan-tanska 4, Domžale.**

MENAČENK HOMESTEAD

An initiative of the municipality itself, the Menačenk Homestead was opened in 2004 and is an example of a 19th century house in all its glory. The home of a tailor, the interior is as accurate as you will find for such a depiction, showing the cramped living arrangements and the sacrifices that needed to be made in order to get by in tough times. You'll be shocked at the sleeping quarters, trust us. The ceilings are low, and there is also an example of a traditional Slovene black kitchen. The extension once housed cattle, but today it is used for exhibiting the work of local artists.

▶ **Cankarjeva 9, Domžale, tel. +386 (0)1 722 50 50, info@kd-domzale.si, www.kd-domzale.si. Open 10:00 - 12:00, 17:00 - 19:00, and by appointment. Closed Sat and Sun.**

MIHA MALEŠ GALLERY

One of the most important Slovene artists of the 20th century, Miha Maleš was born and bred in Kamnik, and was fiercely loyal to the town until his dying breath. His memory and work are kept alive in a gallery devoted to him just off of Glavni trg. Maleš' work focuses on living in the moment, of losing yourself to impulse, ideas that clearly shine through in the work on view at the gallery.

It also houses various temporary exhibitions. ▶ **Glavni Trg 2, Kamnik, tel. +386 (0)1 839 75 04. Open 08:00 - 13:00; 16:00-19:00. Closed Mon, Sun.**

MUSEUM OF LITIJA

Based around three permanent exhibitions, Litija's town museum focuses on the transport and the industry that brought it economic prosperity throughout the centuries. It contains the only river traffic collection in Slovenia. As early as the Middle Ages Litija was an important shipping centre, due to its position on the banks of the vital Sava River. The Sava saw much traffic back in the day, and Litija's two shipyards meant much prosperity for not only the shipping sector, but also innkeepers and farmers in the town. The collection contains some models of boats as well as authentic boat-making tools.



This elegant renaissance manor was once home to Adam Ravbar

Sightseeing

The age of shipping was ended with the advent of the railway, which brings us cozily to the next exhibition. The rail line was built in 1849, and whilst it might have spelt doom for shipping it certainly didn't spell economic doom for Litija. The railway only contributed to the rapid development of the town, and also increased the success of Litija's mining industry, which is showcased in the third exhibition in the museum. Mostly focusing on Sitarjevec mine, the exhibition shows how it came to be the second biggest lead mine in all of Europe at one point. ▶ **Trg na Stavbah 8a, Litija, tel. +386 (0)1 890 02 00, jzk.litija@siol.net, jzk.si/muzej. Open 08:00 - 12:00. Closed Sat, Sun. €2 adults, €1 children under 14.**

MUSEUM OF TOO-MODERN ART

It is a common point of disagreement between those who consider themselves artists and those who admit ignorance on the subject; does art take itself too seriously? Those at the Museum of Too-Modern Art know where they stand on the subject. What to begin with looks like any other barn is in fact a critical and genuinely funny view on contemporary art. Here you can find exhibitions of the work of the founders as well as occasional live music and art workshops. This is truly unorthodox contemporary art, and you don't need to be artistically minded to appreciate it. ▶ **Spodnji Hotič 19, Litija, tel. +386 (0)31 57 00 52, premoderna@gmail.com, www.premoderno.org.**

RUDOLF MAISTER'S BIRTHPLACE

Held in a little renovated house on the main street in town, the life of Rudolf Maister is celebrated in a most stylish way. Maister was a Slovene military officer and political activist as well as a poet, and can be credited with making sure Slovenia isn't even smaller than it is, largely thanks to his work following World War One. He is remembered with a small exhibition that tells his story and contains many artifacts from his life, such as military hats and sabres. There is also a fantastic collection of drawings of the man (and his glorious moustache) by local children. ▶ **Sutna 23, Kamnik, tel. +386 (0)83 176 47, info@muzej-kamnik-on.net, www.muzej-kamnik-on.net. Open 10:00 - 18:00. Closed Mon, Sun.**

SADNIKAR MUSEUM

The private museum of Josip Nikolaj Sadnikar, the collection was started in 1893 and now contains over 1500 items. That's a lot of items! Included amongst them are such wonders as medieval weapons, period furniture and liturgical objects, and much much more. You must call ahead in advance to arrange a visit, but it is well worth a look. Sadnikar himself was a veterinarian and an avid art collector, with this house as a fitting legacy. ▶ **Šutna 33, Kamnik, tel. +386 (0)1 839 13 62, sadnikarjev.nakamniskem.si.**



An enlarged replica of the 5th century BC situla near the geometric centre of Slovenia

HISTORY OF STRAW HAT MAKING



You would be hard pushed to find an industry so intertwined with the history and development of a town as is the case with Domžale and its production of straw hats. Of course, its history begins with something approaching legend. In the nearby town of Ihan there was a chap who had not long returned from serving in the army. He was fairly poor at this point, so eventually had to exchange the teaching of a skill for a place to rest his head. The skill in question was the plaiting of straw, and before long the hats from this had spread across the region like wildfire.

The term 'straw hat' is first mentioned in 1701. Wheat was the dominant crop in the area around the Kamniška Bistrica, and whilst the grain was more important the plaiting of the straw began to increase. The hats were initially made in private homes for personal use and occasional sale at local markets, and the process can only be described as lengthy. If you were particularly (read: very) efficient, you could conceivably produce one straw hat in a day. From these humble beginnings a giant industry did grow, and by the mid 19th century almost one million hats were being produced annually.

The late 19th and early 20th century would prove to be the glory years for the industry, with Domžale hats

having branches in such illustrious cities as New York, Vienna, Florence and even the proud principality of Wales. Large numbers of Slovenes emigrated to the United States to work in the factories there, and the hats produced in Slovenia itself were the only hats good enough for the Austrian Imperial family. It is largely because of the success of this industry that Domžale achieved market town status in 1925.

Inevitably, all good things must come to an end, and the industry went into serious decline after World War One. The decline was severe, and when World War Two ended there were just two factories and two workshops remaining. By 2003, these too had gone.

You can still see the influence in the town today. Domžale's coat of arms contains three plaits, a street in the town is named after the art (Slamnikarska) and the town's newspaper is even called Slamnik. Therefore, the Straw Hat Museum is an almost vital stop when in Domžale. Full of fascinating history as well as examples of the machinery used to produce the hats and a vast collection of them, the museum is the perfect place to learn about the art that made a town. **Kajuhova 5, 1230 Domžale, +386 (0)1 724 84 08, slamnikarski.muzej@kd-domzale. Open 10:00 - 12:00, 17:00 - 19:00. Sat 10:00 - 12:00. Closed Sun.**



Železna cave is full of fascinating stalactites

THE VAČE SITULA

Found in 1882 by a farmer called Janez Grilc, the original of this 5th century BC situla is now in the National Museum in Ljubljana. On the spot where the original was discovered however, in Klenik just outside of Vače, lies a replica of the original enlarged five times. Grilc sold his original within a year of finding it, and he'd be kicking himself now if he knew what he'd done. A situla is a bucket type vessel used by the wealthy to serve drinks, using a ladle. The figures depicted on this particular situla now form the background in the Slovene passport. ▶ **Vače, Litija.**

ZAPRICE CASTLE AND REGIONAL MUSEUM

The views just keep on coming. A short walk up a hill just off of Sutna brings you to Zaprice Castle, which sits opposite Mali Grad on the other side of the train tracks. The small grassy area in front of the castle gives jaw dropping views of Kamnik, both the narrow streets of Glavni Trg and the more lived in side to the west. The castle itself was constructed in the 14th century and has been through many renovations and even more owners in the seven centuries since.

Situated inside the castle itself is the Kamnik Regional Museum. Now, we can all be honest, sometimes regional museums that span thousands of years of history can often drag, as fact after fact after fiction after fact flies by, leaving you none the wiser to a town. Somehow, the museum inside Zaprice Castle avoids this by keeping the displays interesting and providing plenty of interaction.

The museum tells the story of Kamnik from the early ages all the way through the 19th century, with items aplenty from the various centuries. You are also given the opportunity to mint your own medieval Kamnik money, as well as creating your own Kamnik myth.

The ground floor focuses on Kamnik through the millennia, the first floor on furniture (including a supremely comfy looking rocking chair) and the second floor is kept for exhibitions. ▶ **Muzejska pot 3, Kamnik, info@muzej-kamnik-on.net, www.muzej-kamnik-on.net.**

NATURAL ATTRACTIONS

SOPOTA VALLEY

Formerly a land of sawmills, the Sopota Valley has since seen them consigned to the bin of history. In their place remains a vast gorge of gloriously liberated nature. The Sopota River runs through the gorge, creating rapids and cascades on one hand, ponds and steady bodies of water on the other. Animals have taken back the land, and now it is a healthy ground for kings of the Slovene wild to roam and prosper. Nature truly is lord here. There are hiking trails of course, hiking trails that slide past waterfalls, caves and the remnants of the sawmills. Sat at the foothills of Kum Mountain, there is even a waterfall here for the romantic amongst us. Sušjek waterfall has even played host to many weddings in its history. It doesn't get much more romantic. ▶ **Litija.**



One tulip blossoms for each and every Slovene

THE KAMNIŠKA BISTRICA GREEN AXIS

The Kamniška Bistrica River is the most urbanized in the country, mostly due to the numerous mill streams that punctuated it throughout history. This has led to a decrease in the natural environment. What seemed like a frustrating but inevitable future of continued urbanization has seen a reverse however, with initiatives being made to protect the environment and restore the river channel. By connecting the three municipal capitals that share the river (Kamnik, Domžale and Dol pri Ljubljani), the initiative would create a river park spanning the entire 33km length of the river, providing flood protection and improving the ecology of the riverside environment. The other neighboring municipalities would also be involved, creating a shared single system of recreational and ecological tourism, using educational trails along bike and walking paths. As we stand right now, 21km worth of trails are interposed with benches and picnic tables providing the most relaxing of afternoon walks (or rides) for all the family. The confluence of the Kamniška Bistrica and the Rača rivers at the beginning of the trails add another element of beauty, accentuated by linden trees all around. ▶ **Domžale.**

ŽELEZNA CAVE & MUSEUM

Just a short walk from Krumperk Castle, Železna Jama cave is yet another in Slovenia's long line of fascinating caves. Well lit inside, the cave sits comfortably at a temperature of 8 degrees and is full of rich stalactites and interesting formations.

The first of these you notice is the strangely Camel's head shape jutting out over the walkway deeper into the cave. The natural acoustics are wonderful, and choirs have been known to perform in the cave from time to time. Adjoining Železna Jama is Babja Cave, but this currently isn't open to visitors.

The Jamarski museum near the entrance to the cave is chock-full of minerals, fossils and stalactites from not only Železna Jama but also caves from all over the country. Impressively the museum is home to the nation's biggest collection of stalactites, moved from the Natural History Museum in Ljubljana after being damaged in a fire. The house also runs a caving club for children. ▶ **Domžale, tel. +386 (0)61 72 15 77, irena.stazar@helios.si, www.drustvozrj.domzale.si.**

PARKS & GARDENS

ARBORETUM VOLČJI POTOK

Open to the public since the University of Ljubljana took it over in 1952, Arboretum Volčji Potok has since become the most visited horticultural site in the entire country, by some distance. When you enter the 80 hectare-wide grounds, it is very easy to see why. Volčji Potok truly is an explosion of colour in the most peaceful of ways. It is flowers as far as the eye can see with every colour imaginable represented. It is a majestic sight. It isn't just flowers however. The gardens positively drip in elegance. As you stroll amongst the lakes and ponds, you feel that if you closed your eyes tight enough you could almost imagine being the head of a wealthy family from the long long ago patrolling your estate. Or maybe we are alone on that one.

Volčji Potok is as ecologically diverse as anywhere you are going to come across, with over 2,500 different types of trees and shrubs within its borders. Spring and summer are obviously the best times to visit as the flowers begin to blossom and the park plays host to all sorts of flower shows. Supposedly around two million tulips bloom every year, one for every Slovene in the country. How romantic. How spectacular. ▶ **Volčji Potok 3, Radomlje, tel. +386 (0)1 831 23 45, info@arboretum.si, www.arboretum-vp.si.**

THE MYTHS OF THE SITARJEVEC MINE

At one point in its history, the Sitarjevec mine near Litija was the second biggest lead mine in Europe. It also happens to be one of the oldest in Slovenia, and was a huge source of income for the town until it closed its doors for the final time in 1965. The mine may have closed for business, but it still lives on in the town today, and not just through the ecological issue of polluted water from the galleries. A number of myths live on from the history of the mine. Here are just a couple of our favourites.

The story of the church in Šmartno pri Litiji is intertwined with the mine. The story goes that on one day the miners were digging, as miners do, but they unfortunately managed to get buried in the shaft. They dug and dug and dug in an attempt to escape, and resolved to build a church if they ever saw the sun again. Lo and behold, they penetrated the surface at Šmartno, thus the church stands today.

Our favourite however has to be the story of Berkmandeljic (one of many names), the protective goblin of the Sitarjevec mine. Berkmandeljic had a mixed reputation, being a protector of the miners who was believed to have caused many accidents. Indeed, he caused so much havoc that many miners equated him with the devil, and older miners were forbidden from scaring younger ones with stories of him. The myth goes that he enjoyed stealing bread and hiding lamps, two inconveniences to folk today but a matter of life and death for a miner. It was through his pranks that he would lead a group of miners away from a gas filled gallery however, thus cementing his role as the prankster protector of the Sitarjevec mine. The mine is closed today, but it occasionally opens up for visitors. Keep an ear to the ground for a visit.



Brdo pri Lukovici is home to the centre of beekeeping in Slovenia

DOL PARK PAVILLION

This one requires a little imagination. Once upon a time, the area surrounding the Dol Park Pavilions was something of a paradise. A park the very definition of lush, ponds full of lively fish, fountains spurting here there and everywhere and romantic walks lined with trees as far as the eye can see. Not enough? How about a botanical garden containing a rumored 7,000 different species of fauna? This was the home of one Josef von Erberg, a baron from Ljubljana born in the 18th century. He moved to Dol aged 34 and began to obsessively collect books, cultural objects and who knows what else. He amassed his personal collection around where the pavilions stand today. Unfortunately the pavilions are all that remains. Fully restored, they are rare examples of purely classical architecture in the country. Not to be outdone, one of the pavilions in Erberg's time housed the first museum on Slovene-inhabited soil. So whilst the grounds aren't the glorious visual they once were, the pavilions are a more than fascinating exercise in individual imagination and the power of history. Ring ahead for a tour. ► **Dol Pri Ljubljani**, tel. +386 (0)31 32 40 07.

LAND OF CHARCOAL BURNERS

A mere 25km outside of Litija and you are far away from the hustle and bustle of the modern world, finding yourself in serenity as far as the eye can see through the rolling hills. You may also start to notice smoking black piles, piquing your curiosity. What they are is in fact examples of the ancient art of charcoal burning. It may be a dying art, but those in the vicinity of Dole pri Litiji are doing their best to keep it alive. The mounds of smoke are strangely beautiful, in particularly when they start to die out and the smokes turns to a royal shade of blue. The 2,000 hectares of gorgeous greenery also helps. Phone ahead to make a prior arrangement for visiting. ► **Dole Pri Litiji, Litija**, tel. +386 (0)1 897 21 04.

IVAN HRIBAR

Trzin's most famous son is also without doubt one of the most important Slovenes to have ever existed, a man who fought for Slovene cultural autonomy at arguably the most critical point in its history. Ivan Hribar was many things to many people. A banker, a poet, a diplomat, a politician, a journalist and much more, but above all he was a Slovene. After an earthquake registering around 6.1 on the Richter scale hit Ljubljana, Hribar found himself in the position of mayor of the city when the rebuilding began. He set about it with an intense focus and by the time construction was complete Ljubljana had gone from a provincial town in the Austrian Empire to a modern city, a cultural centre for all Slovenes.

It was during this time that Hribar instigated the building of water works, gas works, trams and a public bath, not to mention the complete renovation of Prešeren square, Triple bridge and the construction of Dragon bridge. He dreamt of creating a cultural and economic capital for the Slovene people and this he achieved. His tenure as mayor of Ljubljana would come to an end after one disagreement too many with Emperor Franz Josef I in 1910, at which point Hribar moved his focus onto Pan-Slavism in the empire, encouraging closer collaboration between all the Slavs under the Austrian Empire. It was such thinking that led to him being imprisoned on two separate occasions during World War One.

The Second World War would see the tragic end of Hribar's life however. As fascist forces ran through Yugoslavia, Ljubljana was annexed by Mussolini's Italy. The fascist occupiers offered the then 90-year old Hribar the mayorship of the city once more. As a man who had worked for almost all of his adult life for Slovene cultural autonomy and Slavic liberation, this was tantamount to a failure for the passionate Hribar. Thus the story goes, he wrapped himself in a Yugoslav flag and jumped into the Ljubljanica, ending his own life.

The cultural and information centre in Trzin is named after him, so be sure to pay it a visit when in the village to learn more.

SLOVENIAN BEEKEEPING CENTRE

Not a week goes by in international media now without talk of the peril humanity would be in if the humble bee ceased to exist. What better time to learn about the history of beekeeping in the country that claims to be more emotionally attached to bees than any other? Slovenia is the only EU country to have protected its indigenous bee after all. We're talking of course about the Carniolan bee (*Apis mellifera carnica*, for the scientists), a diligent, gentle and frugal bee with a supposed excellent sense of orientation. The first Slovenian beekeeping association of any kind was established in 1873 in Ljubljana, and the centre of the nations bee tending is now found in Brdo pri Lukovici.

Beekeeping is one of the oldest rural activities, and at the centre you can get to know the history of beekeeping in the country, understand more about the mysterious lives of bees as well as taste and buy some fantastic locally produced honey. We particularly recommend the Linden variety. Here you can also learn more about the ancient art of Apitherapy, otherwise known as the study of using honeybee products for medicinal purposes, and purchase bee-related goodies from the shop. The centre is located in absolutely idyllic surroundings as well, as if the bee-aspect of it wasn't enough to drag you in. For organized tours of the centre (in a variety of languages) you must make a prior booking. ▶ **Brdo pri Lukovici 8, Lukovica, tel. +386 (0)1 729 61 00/+386 (0)41 37 04 09, barbara.dimc@czs.si.**

THE GEOMETRIC CENTRE OF SLOVENIA

Ever wondered where the geometric centre of Slovenia was? Wonder no more. In a hamlet called Spodnja Slivna just a short distance outside of the village of Vače is a small collection of monuments marking the centre of this beautiful country. An obelisk with its co-ordinates takes centre stage, with an X underneath marking the very central spot. Scattered around are various other monuments, such as a cenotaph dedicated to patriots from the Slovenian War of Independence and

a monument created by various members of the Slovene diaspora using different materials. A linden tree (the national tree) and various flags top it all off. The site is some 600m above sea level, and the hiking trail that accompanies it comes with some truly memorable views. ▶ **Spodnja Slivna, Litija, tel. +386 (0)1 897 60 95/+386 (0)41 89 58 52, jani.kolenc@siol.net, www.drustvo.geoss.si.**

TOURIST FARMS

ECO TOURIST FARM PR' LAVRIČ

Not far from the geometric centre of Slovenia, the ecological tourist farm Lavrič couldn't be in a more tranquil location. Far away from the traffic and noise, it is easy to lose track of time whilst in the most serene of surroundings. All dishes are freshly prepared and have a strong local slant, with fresh lamb being their number one dish. The local organic theme is continued with the vegetables, all of which are grown on the farm. Large groups are advised to book ahead for a little slice of peaceful heaven. ▶ **Mala Sela 5, Vače, Litija, tel. +386 (0)40 35 97 12, vera.lavric@gmail.com. Open Fri - Sun 09:00 - 21:00, and by appointment.**

PATERNOSTER FARM

It doesn't get much more old-timey. In the little village of Tenetiše close to the fire station, Paternoster



A world away from the hustle and bustle of the city



The Bajer swamp is just one focus of Trzin's ecological drive

Farm takes traditional sleeping to whole new levels. Ever fancied sleeping on a bed of hay? Paternoster is for you. How about sleeping snugly with around 15 other weary travellers in an Indian tent? Yeah, Paternoster has that as well. Fresh homemade dairy products are available to taste and buy by prior arrangement, and there is a great area for picnics. Don't miss the opportunity to go back to a way of life from long ago. ▶ **Tenetiše 1, Litija, tel. +386 (0)41 21 84 57, ignac.paternoster@gmail.com.**

PR' KRAČ TOURIST FARM

In modern-day central Europe, it is fair to say there aren't many legitimate old-fashioned experiences left. Sure, you can visit old-fashioned places and be shown ancient ways of life and eat the food of those long gone, but it is carefully coordinated to the finest detail. Somehow, in the 21st century, Pr' Krač tourist farm has managed to maintain a legitimacy in its tradition. The only operating supply centre left on the Sava River, it has rightly been designated a monument of national importance. In the hands of the same family for 300 years (and 300 more to come they say), it provides traditional (there's that word again) accommodation

in an old fashioned farmhouse. Food is available at the weekends, with weekdays by reservation, but weary walkers in the weekdays won't be shunned away, the family is always available to do what they can for the benefit of others. In our case, it was a bounty of ham and pickles with some glorious homemade bread, as well as some great red wine.

The small Galerija 19 inside also hosts the occasional exhibition of local artists, as well as less frequent live music. The park and orchard provide the setting the very definition of a romantic walk. ▶ **Dolska 19, Dol Pri Ljubljani, tel. +386 (0)1 563 82 60/+386 (0)1 564 76 15, prkrac@him.si. Open Fri - Sat 13:00 - 24:00, Sun 13:00 - 20:00, weekdays by prior arrangement.**

TOURIST INFORMATION

KAMNIK TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

Sitting right in the very centre of Kamnik, the tourist information centre in town is there to provide you with any information we have failed to cover in this guide. A mine of information, the super friendly staff can help with getting around, organising tours or simply picking up souvenirs or event tickets. Free Wi-Fi is also available inside.

► Glavni trg 2, tel. +386 (0)1 831 82 50, tic@kamnik-tourism.si, www.kamnik-tourism.si. Open 14 June to 14 Sept 09:00 – 21:00, 14 Sept to 14 June 09:00 – 18:00, Sun 10:00 – 14:00.

LITIJA TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

Just down the road from St. Nicholas church in the centre of Litija is the official tourist information centre of the town. While most info centres will be very formal in their layout, with a desk clearly separating tourist from staff, Litija do things a little differently. A large wooden table sits in the middle of the room, putting everyone on the same level. An array of local products with everything from craftwork to liquor is displayed in a delightful honeycomb exhibition on the back wall, and the staff are always on hand to answer any and all queries. If a tourist information centre could ever be described as being delightful, Litija is it. ► **Valvazorjev Trg 14, Litija, tel. +386 (0)51 31 27 39, turizem,litija@razvoj.si, www.srce-slovenije.si. Open 10:00-15:00, Wed 10:00-17:00, Sat 09:00-12:00. Closed Sun – Tues.**

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN TRZIN

As we are all aware by now, global warming is no joke. The idea of sustainable development and the use of renewable energy has been bandied about for a while, and whilst the vast majority of people agree with the idea not many towns have taken active steps towards its implementation. Trzin is one such town that has, ever since its independence as a municipality in the late 1990s. From the very first moment the town was dedicated to the idea of creating a workable environment and conserving the vast nature all around. All new buildings built since have been done so with low energy in mind, and other public buildings have been gradually restored for maximum efficiency.

The most impressive example so far is the new kindergarten in town, constructed between 2010 and 2013. Built of recyclable material and heated by groundwater heat pumping, this is an eco-kindergarten from the future that should surely be the norm already. The dedication of Trzin towards this cause is truly something to behold.



It doesn't get much more quaint than Kamnik's old town



Exercise and education on Trzin's Onger trail

ADVENTURE PARKS

GEOSS ADVENTURE PARK

Hidden away in the trees of the village Slivna near the geometric centre of Slovenia is a little adventure park that will get the adrenaline pumping in both children and adults alike. Not only is the GEOSS Adventure Park a great way to de-stress, it is also a great place to get away from the summer Slovene heat and get active, with the dense forest all around providing some most refreshing shade. A total of four treetop-climbing routes fill the park, ranging from one to 11 metres, the easiest of which is suitable for children aged four years and up. Trained instructors are always on hand to make sure the fun stays safe, guaranteeing an energetic adrenaline-filled time for all the family. Large groups are advised to book ahead. ▶ **Slivna Pri Vače**, tel. +386 (0)30 33 23 32, info@pustolovski-park-geoss.si, www.pustolovski-park-geoss.si. Open 10:00-19:00, weekends & holidays 10:00-18:00 (6 Apr - 21 Jun & 2 - 29 Sept), 10:00-17:00 (30 Sept - 27 Oct). Admission €15 adults, €12 children between seven and 15 years of age, €8 for children below seven years of age, €13 family ticket. All prices for three hour climbing, with a €4 surcharge for every extra hour. Children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

HIKING

ONGER TRAIL & MOUNTAINEERING ASSOCIATION

Named after the hill carved in between old and new Trzin, the Onger Mountaineering Association (*Planinsko društvo Onger* in Slovene) was founded in 1983 and has worked tirelessly ever since helping Trzin's drive towards ecology. Specifically aimed towards the people of Trzin before it even gained municipal independence, they would organize tours to attract new members as well as focusing explicitly on young mountaineers. Their legacy can be felt in the 1.2km long Onger Trail, traversing the hill of the same name and full to the brim with trees and plants of differing shapes, sizes and prevalence. A handy guide to each plant of interest can be found at the beginning of the trail, all be it in Slovene only. The highest point of the trail is 377m. For more information, contact the Mountaineering Association. ▶ **Rašiške Čete 4**, Trzin, info@onger.org, onger.org.

ŠUMBERK TRIM TRAIL

Are you in the mood to strengthen both your body and your mind? Starting from the bridge over the Kamniška Bistrica River on Šumberška cesta in Domžale, the

Šumberk Trim Trail is a perfect exercise for either or both. Almost 2km long, 11 exercise stations provide a variety of different workouts to keep even the most fitness-crazed individual interested. Each board provides information about the trees in the forest as well as local tidbits, and you are accompanied on your journey by an adorable little fox. How pleasant. ▶ **Domžale**

TRIM TRAIL & HIKING IN MENGEŠ

A 2200m trail along the slopes of the Gobavica hill, this route starts and ends at Oranžerija and has 26 exercise stations along the way to keep your heart pumping. Whilst the route itself isn't too demanding, the rewards are great. Beautiful views to all sides of Mengeš, whether it is the Mengeš plain, the Kamnik-Savinja Alps or the Karavanke mountain range, make every sloped step and every task worth every drop of sweat.

It is by no means the only hiking option in and around Mengeš, as a whole plethora of choices are available with differing levels of intensity and difficulty. Almost all of them lead you through shaded greenery and past a number of sights and attractions. Dobeno and Rašica hills are more popular, and are easily navigated either on foot or by bicycle. Dobeno is all about agro-tourism and Rašica has a lookout tower at the top (641m up), with views every bit as spectacular as one would assume from such great heights. The air is clean, the wa-

ter pure, the health benefits hard to deny.

Lovers of plants are encouraged to follow the path from Gobavica towards Pristava Lake for a fascinating variety of rare fauna and flora. The lake itself has a number of different sized carp and catfish within, although anyone interested in fishing must possess the correct permit beforehand. The Bistrica-Domžale Fishing Association is the company to ask (rd.bistricadomzale@gmail.com). ▶ **Mengeš**

SPA & WELLNESS

HARMONIJA MENGEŠ

Slovenia now has a plethora of wellness centres, but only one can lay claim to being the first. Harmonija in Mengeš has that very privilege, and it is still providing reinvigoration of the highest calibre today. A variety of treatments are available, with the particularly impressive range of saunas catching our eye in particular. As well as the Turkish (steam) and Finnish (dry) versions, we also find a herbal bio sauna and an infra-red type too, perfect for detoxification. The centre itself is built by the principles of Feng Shui, and a number of sports are also available, including football, tennis and beach volleyball. 12 modern hotel rooms and a restaurant complete the package. ▶ **Linhartova cesta 33, tel. +386 (0)1 729 66 50/+386 (0)40 88 80 21, recepcija@harmonija.eu, www.harmonija.eu.**



Hike in the greener than green surroundings of Gobavica hill in Mengeš

Sports & Activities

TERME SNOVIK

We're not really sure if a better location for a Spa and Wellness centre can exist. Way up in the hills, Terme Snovik ticks all the boxes for anyone looking to reinvigorate themselves in the most peaceful of surroundings. The scenery borders on the overwhelming, perfect for one of the hikes that the centre organizes. The facilities in the centre are good as well, with an indoor thermal pool complimented with an outdoor equivalent, complete with three slides. The magnesium and calcium rich water also has government-approved healing powers, which can't be a bad thing. A choice of saunas is also available, for those who enjoy sweating their way to health. Terme Snovik couldn't be more family friendly, making this a great excursion for all the family. ▶ **Snovik 7, Laze v Tuhinju, tel. +386 (0)1 834 41 00, info@terme-snovik.si, www.terme-snovik.si.**

TUNJICE

Those coming from stressful lives in big cities will perhaps get the most benefit from a trip to this natural healing resort in Tunjice (near Kamnik), with its customary Kamnik Alp backdrop. Nine energy springs, releasing earth energy, are said to heal numerous parts of the body and mind, from blood circulation, legs, bladder and respiratory organs, as well as emotional wellbeing. Guided tours of up to 20 can be taken around the site, which is often busy. ▶ **Tunjice 12, Kamnik, tel +386 (0)1 831 70 85, info@zdravilnigaj.si, www.zdravilnigaj.si.**

SPORTS

AS LITJIA RECREATIONAL PARK

Tennis is still something of a growing sport in Slovenia, but here at In Your Pocket we enjoy a game, even if we aren't the best. This recreational centre along the Sava River in Litija is a most excellent choice for all tennis lovers to get a game or two in, with four outdoor courts as well as three indoor for when the weather isn't the best. There is also a children's playground and a restaurant full of healthy options for enthusiasts of the sport. ▶ **Savska cesta 5, tel. +386 (0)1 898 08 00, info@as-litija.si, www.as-litija.si.**

GOLF ARBORETUM

They say if you can play well here, you can play well anywhere. Does that make the Golf Arboretum the New York of Slovenian golf? We don't know, but if it involves picturesque pineforest surroundings then we're all ears. Sure, it might not be the longest course, but it is more than tough enough for anyone with experience of the white-ball game. The 18 holes provide a diverse variety of challenges as well as stunning views of the Kamnik alps. Never hurts right? The restaurant is fabulous as well, with a clear focus on keeping the menu as seasonal as possible. The arboretum provides a truly unique golfing experience. ▶ **Volčji Potok 43g, Radomlje, tel. +386 (0)51 395 777/+386 (0)1 831 80 80, info@golfarboretum.si, www.golfarboretum.si.**

KORENT RECREATION CENTRE

Up in the woods above the road running from Ljubljana to Litija we find the Korent recreation centre. Obviously the surroundings are wonderful, with the region it goes without saying to a point. Complete with a running track, it is a great place for some heart-pumping exercise, be it football, basketball or beach volleyball, and then an equally great place to relax with a picnic in the aftermath. From the centre you can also cycle (or walk) a number of specially set out paths, one of which leads to Ajdovščina, at 495m the highest hill in Dol pri Ljubljani. ▶ **Zaboršt 90, Dol pri Ljubljani, tel. +386 (0)1 564 75 05/+386 (0)41 38 47 67, td.dolprijubljani@siol.net, td.dol.si.**

SPORT IN DOMŽALE

Aside from straw-hat making, Domžale is also famous throughout Slovenia for the quality of its sports teams and athletes. The local basketball side, KK Helios, won the national title in 2006/07 and subsequently finished runners up the next two years. They also fell at the last hurdle in the cup in 2013. The town also has a strong history of athletics and it used to host a particularly strong Challenger tournament in Tennis.

Despite the inconsistency of the international team, football continues to dominate the sporting landscape in Slovenia. The quality of the domestic league tends to be rather hit and miss, and with the exception of current champions NK Maribor no club has made much of a dent in continental competition. Still, Slovenes take their clubs seriously, and since Slovenia gained independence only five different clubs have claimed the national title. One of these is NK Domžale, who are also one of the oldest clubs in the country. Established in 1921, Domžale's golden era came in the mid 2000's, with back-to-back league titles in 2006/07 and 07/08. They've flittered around mid-table since then, but have maintained a reputation as one of the top teams in the country. Nearby NK Dob and NK Radomlje compete in the next tier below, with Dob winning promotion to the top division and Radomlje about to take part in a play off for the same honor. NK Domžale play their home matches at the almost 3,000 capacity Sports Park, next to a Mercator with a huge chimney in the middle of the car park. The chimney once belonged to a straw-hat making factory, and has been left as a landmark of sorts. In Domžale, you are never far away from those straw-hats. Head to the ground on match day for a ticket, usually costing €5. ▶ **Domžale.**



KAMNIŠKA BISTRICA



The heart of Slovenia is a heart lined with some incredible valleys, none more so than the Kamniška Bistrica valley. A hike, cycle or even just a stroll through the valley presents the prospective visitor with a vast array of sights and sounds. Right next to Planinski Dom Kamniška Bistrica (Kamniška Bistrica Alpine hut), the Source of the Kamniška Bistrica River springs to life out of moss-covered rocks, the cold water as clear as water can be. It then stops in an artificial lake, before continuing its journey to meeting with the Sava and the Ljubljanica. On a bright sunny day, with the sun peeking through the trees and the lake glistening, this is worth a visit to the valley all in itself. Nearby to the lake we find Plečnik's Mansion. Formerly known as the Royal Hunting Lodge of King Alexander I, it was designed by Plečnik in 1932 and frequently used by Josip Tito himself during the Yugoslav years. There is also a Memorial Park, dedicated to all the lives lost in the Kamnik-Savinja Alps. The park was established in the 1970s. At the narrowest part of the Kamniška Bistrica riverbed are the two Predaselj gorges. Imaginatively named Veliki Pesadelj (Big Presadelj) and Mali Presadelj (you guessed it, Small Presadelj), the larger of the two is 30m deep at its deepest point. The gorge opens up, giving you a delightful view of the pure river below. Believe us, it is stunning. Those with a sense of adventure who wish to get a closer look can arrange so, and with the local mountain rescue team's assistance you can be lowered down into the gorge. Not for the faint hearted.

Everyone loves a waterfall, the valley doesn't disappoint in the shape of Orglice Waterfall. Some 30m high, it can run dry if the weather has been particularly hot, but it is also rumored to give a sound not dissimilar to that of someone playing a harmonica. Orglice is the Slovene word for harmonica, so maybe there is something there. To reach the falls, enter from Predbela. Mills frequent the many streams hidden within, and there is also a great selection of hiking options for the hiking-minded, with Grintovec (2559m) arguably the most popular. Cycling paths are also readily found throughout. As for accommodation, two options really stick out. We'd be foolish not to mention the world's first free of charge eco-campsite, Kamp Alpe (+386 (0)31 2267 63, matjaz@kamp-alpe.com, www.kamp-alpe.com for more information). Run on a donation basis and with no reception, perspective campers (in groups of less than six) are welcome to stay for up to four nights all for the cost of whatever you want to donate and for looking after yourself during your stay. The camp is open from June 1st until September 15th. Open from mid-April until mid-October, Planinski Dom Kamniška Bistrica (mentioned at the top of this feature) offers something a little more traditional. In the upper part of the valley near to the artificial lake and source of the Kamniška Bistrica, this delightful alpine hut has everything you need to regenerate yourself after a long hike, or to prepare yourself for a forthcoming one.



On the outskirts of Domžale, Gostilna Adam Ravbar claims to be the first private brewery in Slovenia

RESTAURANTS

BUON PIATTO

As soon as you walk through the door, the unmistakable smell of Italy swarms into your nostrils. Okay, maybe not the entire nation of Italy, but Italian food at the very least. Mengeš isn't exactly overflowing with restaurants, but a short 10-minute walk to the outskirts of the town will bring you to Buon Piatto (Italian for good dish). Opened by one man and his initiative some 15 years ago, the menu is almost exclusively pizza and pasta based and reasonably priced. 'Buon piatto' indeed. ▶ **Baragova 2, Mengeš, tel. +386 (0)1 729 12 36/+386 (0)1 516 13 87. Open 12:00 - 22:00, Fri, Sat 12:00 - 23:00.**

DOBENSKI HRAM

Mengeš prides itself on being wrapped in unspoiled nature whilst simultaneously being a stones-throw away from the big city, and Dobenski Hram sums this up pretty much perfectly. Whether you are looking for a feast from the a-la-carte menu or just a quiet afternoon snack in the sun, Dobenski Hram provides everything and anything. The work of local artists adorns the walls, maintaining a community atmosphere that we love. We also love the desserts, homemade and impossible to resist. A great

place to host a celebration, Dobenski Hram also put on live music from time to time. ▶ **Dobeno 7, Mengeš, tel. +386 (0)41 99 63 84, www.dobenski-hram.si. Open 10:00 - 22:00. Closed Mon.**

GOSTILNA & PIVOVARNA ADAM RAVBAR

We do love a good homebrew. This gostilna on the outskirts of Domžale happens to lay claim to being the first private brewery in all of Slovenia. In a land where homebrew still seems to be slowly emerging, this is rather impressive. A spruced-up pizzeria that retains an authentic pub feel, it is named after the guy who helped repel the Turks at the Battle of Sisak. A private brewery with excellent pizzas named after a hero? You can't go wrong really. Tours of the brewery are available by prior arrangement. ▶ **Perkova 17, Domžale, tel. +386 (0)1 729 55 05, info@pivnica-adamravbar.si, www.pivnica-adamravbar.si. Open 09:00 - 22:00, Fri and Sat 09:00 - 23:00, Sun 11:00 - 22:00.**

GOSTILNA & PIZZERIA FURMAN

Right in the middle of Lukovica on Stari trg, Furman is a family-run gostilna that will appeal to those who like their portions large and their beers to be of the homemade variety. In a nation where pizzas are usually big it takes some guts to call your pizzas 'giant', and even more to back it up.

The highlight of the menu however is without doubt the Rokovnjaški goulash, the hearty meal that kept the bandits of the nearby hills full in the early 19th century. Furman also offers its own beer, also called Rokovnjaški, which is brewed next door at Pivovarna Lukovica and available in both light and dark varieties. For those that drink a little too much, there are cushions on the wall above the gentlemen urinals, another quirky aspect of a fascinating interior. ▶ **Stari Trg 19, Lukovica, tel. +386 (0)41 62 95 23/+386 (0)51 33 66 66, info@gostilnafurman.si, www.gostilnafurman.si. Open 07:00 - 24:00, Fri, Sat 07:00 - 02:00. Closed Sun.**

GOSTILNA BURICA

The oldest inn in the village of Dragomelj, Burica has been serving excellent food for centuries now. Obviously we can't confirm this as fact, but we're going to accept it based on how good the food is now. Local delicacies (and excellent fried chicken) are the order of the day, enhanced with fantastic wine and the sort of atmosphere you would expect from the oldest pub in town. Well worth a visit to Dragomelj. ▶ **Dragomelj 92, Domžale, tel. +386 (0)1 562 62 27/+386 (0)41 35 20 72, gostilna.burica@volja.net. Open 12:00 - 22:00, Sun 12:00 - 19:00. Closed Wed, Thu.**

GOSTILNA KAMRCA

If first impressions count, Gostilnica Kamrca has got something very right. From the outside the building is stunning. There is an almost undeniable elegance to it, emphasizing the importance of simplicity and grace. The menu is var-

ied, with focus leaning towards French and Italian cuisine, adding even more in the way of class. The interior matches these first impressions, full of antiques and the requisite piano, as the sommelier keeps you abreast of the finest wine on offer. Outdoor seating is also available. ▶ **Slovenska 56, Mengeš, tel. +386 (0)1 723 95 20/+386 (0)40 77 22 11, kamrca@siol.net, www.kamrca.si. Open 13:00 - 23:00. Closed Sat, Sun.**

GOSTILNA KEBER

Romantically set under the protection of nine chestnut trees, Keber opened its doors in 1785 and hasn't looked back since, making it the oldest restaurant in Domžale. You'd be hard pressed to find one with a tenderer setting too. Keber is a throwback to tradition, a noble environment for an afternoon lunch or an evening dinner. It also opened a pizzeria not too long ago, providing huge pizzas at more than reasonable prices in a simple, tranquil setting. Booking in advance for the restaurant is advised. ▶ **Ljubljanska 112, Domžale, tel. +386 (0)1 724 15 19, stane.kovac@amis.net, www.gostilna-keber.com. Open 07:00 - 23:00, Sun 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon.**

GOSTILNA MILI VRH

In the hills above Kamnik lies a little village by the name of Žale, and within this village is a pretty little Gostilna called Mili Vrh. It is a family run house with a delightful terrace, complete with green views as far as the eye can see. The food is great, but don't be shy about asking for off-the-menu local specialties. In fact, this is Mili Vrh's pre-



Mili Vrh is one of our favourite restaurants in the region

Restaurants

ferred option, allowing their passion for all things local to shine through. It even offers a five-day course where you can learn how to cook local dishes, as well as organizing tours of the best sights and attractions in the area. A lot of guesthouses in Slovenia come automatically tied to the adjective 'homely', but Mili Vrh truly takes the biscuit in this regard. There is even an impromptu gallery of drawings by children that have stayed there over the years.

► **Žale 10a, Kamnik, tel. +386 (0)40 20 16 98, gostilna.milivrh@kks-kamnik.si, www.gostilna-milivrh.si.** Open Mon, Thur, Fri 10:00-22:00, Sat 09:00-22:00, Sun 09:00-20:00. Tues-Wed by prior arrangement.

GOSTILNA NAROBE

In a town flush with places to eat, it is Gostilna Narobe that arguably sits atop of the pile. It has a great selection of traditional Slovene dishes, with more ways of utilizing buckwheat in a meal than we thought originally possible. It also has a truly astonishing wine list, which can never be a bad thing. Whilst the interior is delightful in itself, the outdoor court is really the place to sit. The walls are adorned with various stable paraphernalia and romance more than fills the air. All of this outside an almost 500-year old house and more-than-ample portion sizes and what you have is a wonderful dining experience. If that wasn't enough, it also has one of the cutest dogs we've ever seen. ► **Mengeška 37, Trzin, tel. +386 (0)1 564 20 89, polona.breznik@gmail.com, www.narobe.eu.**

GOSTILNA PIRC

Just when you think a culinary invention can't be bettered, something comes along to blow you away once more. We thought we'd tasted all of the fried chicken possible, but this gostilna in the village of Radomlje still managed to blow us away with theirs. It is difficult to put our finger on why exactly, it just needs to be tasted to be believed. Great homemade puddings as well.

► **Žiška 12, Radomlje, tel. +386 (0)1 722 70 07, info@gostilnapirc.si, www.gostilnapirc.si.** Open 12:00 - 24:00, Fri and Sat 12:00 - 01:00, Sun 12:00 - 18:00. Closed Wed and Thur.

GOSTILNA REPANŠEK

Approaching 125 years of being open, Repanšek is *the* place in Radomlje to meet up, have a drink and a dance whilst all the while enjoying some of the finest food in the area. A playground is just outside to entertain the kids, and the teenagers can be occupied by table football or pool, leaving you time to sit back and relax as the food flows. Repanšek also plays host to many traditional events throughout the year, with Women's Day being particularly exciting. ► **Bolkova 42, Radomlje, tel. +386 (0)1 722 79 50.** Open 10:00 - 22:00. Closed Mon, Tue.

GOSTILNA REPNIK

Located in the village of Vrhpolje just a short walk outside of Kamnik, Gostilna Repnik is a special, special place. This





Gostišče Trojane is visited by 200,000 people annually

part of the world is famed for hospitality, and Repnik stand tall as one of the places taking this to new heights. The staff are simply beyond excellent, welcoming and passionate about the food they serve without being overbearing. And the food? Wow. The focus is on traditional Slovene fare in the most genuine of ways, complete with a fine selection of wines to compliment every meal. It has perfected the feel of a family inn in the classiest manner, juxtaposing a formal atmosphere with the comforts of home perfectly. By the way, they also provide romantic horse and carriage rides around the area after your meal.

► Vrhpolje 186, Kamnik, tel. +386 (0)1 839 12 93, info@gostilna-repnik.si, www.gostilna-repnik.si. Open 10:00 - 22:00, Sun 09:00 - 15:00. Closed Mon.

GOSTILNA VEGOV HRAM

Many gostilnas will claim tradition, will claim history, but there is always a chance this is bluster. Gostilna s Prenočišči Vegov Hram in Dolsko has the chops to back the claim up. In a building built by Jože and Ana Zupančič in 1895 for their family, four generations later the inn is still in family hands and thriving. The homely feel bleeds through into the food, providing Slovene classics cooked with passion and care. There is plenty of space as well, with four separate restaurant parts. Vegov Hram also have 12 comfortable rooms for staying overnight (singles starting at €38) as well as renting out bicycles and organize guides for exploring the local area.

► tel. +386 (0)1 564 71 40/+386 (0)41 83 29 77, info@vegovhram.si, www.vegovhram.si.

GOSTILNA ZAJC

With a lovely atmosphere bordering on the infectious, Gostilna Zajc in the small settlement of Mala Loka is yet another great dining option when in the area. The usual mixture of Slovene dishes and pizzas and pastas are on offer, as well as a great soup and stew selection. The garden is its crown jewel, possessing an almost ye olde English feel. It even has a swing set for the kids, or for the super romantic. ► Mala Loka 6, Domžale, tel. +386 (0)1 562 61 41, info@gostilnazajc.si, www.gostilnazajc.si. Open 10:00 - 21:00, Fri and Sat 10:00 - 22:00, Sun 10:00 - 20:00.

GOSTIŠČE JUVAN

Opened in 1968, Gostišče Juvan has been the life of three generations of the Juvan family ever since. With three large rooms available as well as a chestnut tree-adorned garden there are plenty of options for sitting for a good meal. Slovene and international cuisine dominate the menu, but we have to say the fish dishes were exemplary. Gostišče Juvan offers a seasonal menu to fully compliment the atmosphere. ► Ljubljanska 124, Domžale, tel. +386 (0)1 724 13 11, info@gostiscejuvan.si, gostiscejuvan.si. Open 12:00 - 22:00, Sun 12:00 - 18:00. Closed Mon.

GOSTIŠČE TROJANE

Whilst the village of Trojane itself is well worth a peek, it is the guesthouse on its outskirts that is the must-visit here. More than 200,000 visitors stop here every year, and for good reason. The guesthouse is more of a guest-complex, with a number of buildings fulfilling a

Restaurants



Vegov Hram in Dolsko

number of different functions. It is mostly known for its doughnuts, famous throughout the region, but they are by no means the only things here worth eating. A variety of dishes are on offer in its great restaurant, everything from grilled meats to pastas and a surprisingly good vegetarian selection, amongst other things. There is a large selection of Slovenian wines available to compliment your dish of choice, and the service is some of the most efficient and pleasant we've encountered. The guesthouse also has a mini-supermarket next door, for those continuing their journey. ► **Trojane 11, Trojane, tel. +386 (0)1 723 36 00/+386 (0)41 31 54 68, gp-trojane@gp-trojane.si, www.gp-trojane.si. Open 05:30 - 23:00.**

KREJAN LEVEC HIŠA KRUHA

Bread. Since the dawn of time (there or thereabouts), humans have been making bread and eating it as quite possibly *the* staple of their diets. As factory production has taken over home baking more and more in modern times, the quality of bread has undeniably dropped, dramatically. The Krejan Level House of Bread is doing its own little bit to reverse this however, making bread with only the finest organic ingredients with fantastic results. Add to this a restaurant serving the finest authentic Slovene dishes and you have something worth seeing when in Trzin. ► **Brodščice 21, Trzin, tel. +386 (0)1 563 73 39, info@krejan-levec.si, www.krejan-levec.si.**

KRONA

Quality food in a most relaxed, almost pub-esque environment, the on-site restaurant in Hotel Krona (going by the same name) is yet another quality eating choice in Domžale. While the menu provides the usual fare, it is

punctuated with little slices of class such as the double beefsteak (pricey, but a double steak should be right?) and an excellent octopus salad. Pictures adorn any and all walls which might not be to the taste of everyone, but that can be easily ignored. The service is excellent.

► **Ihanska 2, Domžale, tel. +386 (0)1 724 06 00, hotel.krona@siol.net, www.hotel-krona.com. Open 12:00 - 22:00. Closed Sun.**

MENGEŠKA KOČA

Some 400m above sea level on Gobavica hill, Mengeška Koča offers you the chance to sample local cuisine in the greenest of surroundings within the most pristine nature. It takes a most personal approach to service, leaving you with the impression of being a guest at a family celebration. A playground and a mini zoo can keep the kids interested throughout as you plough through a barrage of stews and soups. We particularly enjoyed the mushroom soup, for what its worth. Mengeška Koča also throws a particularly vibrant Mayday party, complete with live music and a bonfire. ► **Ogrinovo 1, Mengeš, tel. +386 (0)41 77 48 61, info@mengeska-koca.si, www.mengeska-koca.si.**

MONA LISA

Offering a wide variety of snacks, lunches and heartier meals, Mona Lisa is a great option for eating in the centre of Litija. It covers everything from Slovene cuisine to the international variety, with plenty of options for vegetarians as well. Mona Lisa has plenty of sitting both indoor and outdoor, and the service is personable whilst maintaining a desired efficiency. Great English too. ► **Ulice Mire Pregljeve 4, Litija, tel. +386 (0)1 898 41 37, barbara.smolnikar@siol.net. Open 08:00 - 22:00. Closed Sun.**



Bread, glorious bread.

TASTE KAMNIK



Part of the Taste Central Slovenia project, Taste Kamnik is hell-bent on bringing traditional Kamnik food back into the public mouth, as well as providing a modern day spin on a number of the dishes. So far, 14 restaurants in the area are taking part, and the variety of the food on offer is astounding. The social diversity of Kamnik through the centuries is truly represented with a number of amusing historical anecdotes to boot.

The shepherds of Velika planina provide the most amusing of these, with their salty Trnič cheese. Resembling a tiny crown or a baby's hat, depending on what angle you are looking from, they are supposed to resemble the breasts of a woman. It was lonely up in those hills, but the boob cheese was traditionally given from a boy to a girl as a sign of affection. A strange sign of affection we'll admit, but who doesn't love tasty cheese?

At the other end of the scale is the delightful Princely Venison Goulash (firšov divjačinski golaž). A favourite of

the noblemen of the 16th century, it is tied particularly to Archduke Charles II and his hunting expeditions. Charlie and his imperial entourage ate near Predaselj Gorge in the Kamniška-Bistrica valley in 1564, with the table coming to be named the Prince's Table. The honourable nature of the dish is reflected in its name.

What better way to finish all of this off than with some liquor? Pinecone liquor (rušovec) no less. Combining the shepherding tradition of the region with more modern medicinal herb picking, the pinecone liquor is sweet but not too sweet, strong but not too strong and a genuine joy. They say it is helpful with colds, and that is good enough reason for us.

Taste Kamnik is a continually evolving project, meaning the recipes will change and grow as the project moves further forward. It is a great way to get a feel for Kamnik through the centuries, experienced through your taste buds.

CAFÉS

DOL ST CAFÉ

A pleasant little café right at the entrance to the town, Dol St. Café isn't flashy but there is something very comforting about it. Maybe it's the blocked orange and white walls, the elegant red and brown booths or the English-speaking personable staff. The interior is all unassuming modernity, comfort and efficiency. It also has Lego/Duplo-esque 'Abrick', perfect for keeping the kids entertained whilst you put the world to rights with a morning coffee. ▶ **Videm 54, Dol Pri Ljubljani, dolstreetcafe@gmail.com. Open 06:00 - 22:00, Sun 08:00 - 14:00. Closed on holidays.**

KAVA BAR AFRODITA

God bless roadside cafes. Smack bang on the outskirts of Dolsko, Afrodita is a no-frills establishment with comfortable seating booths, a television playing the finest soap operas and an old Santa Claus Coca-Cola poster in the window. The ceiling is bafflingly impressive, giving off the faintest hint of Ottoman royalty despite there being no obvious link. Beers, wines, spirits, cocktails, coffees and teas, Afrodita's position directly opposite the bus stop makes it a decent place to sit with a coffee before heading on. ▶ **Dolsko 53, Dol Pri Ljubljani.**

KAVA BAR SOSED

A mere 30-second stroll from St Margarets Church in the heart of Dol we find Kava Bar Sosed, a small café with good-sized sheltered outdoor seating. It also does a great line in toasted sandwiches, making it a great spot to stop for a quick bite to eat before seeing what Dol has to offer. A wide drinks selection and free Wi-Fi round it all off. ▶ **Dol pri Ljubljani 1e, Dol Pri Ljubljani. Open 06:00-23:00, Fri 06:00-24:00, Sat 07:00-24:00, Sun 07:00-21:00.**

KAVARNA ART & CAFÉ

Litija unfortunately isn't flush with coffee shops and cafes, but those in need of a caffeinated pick-me-up could do worse than head to Kavarna Art and Caffè on the main square. A selection of snacks is also available, making it a decent stop for a brief refuel before heading out to the mass of sights in and around the town. ▶ **Trg Svobode 3, Litija, tel. +386 (0)41 42 66 46. Open 08:00 - 22:00, Fri - Sat 08:00 - 23:00, Sun 08:00 - 21:00.**

KAVARNA NA GLAVNEM TRGU

Could there be a better location for a café in Kamnik? Smack bang in the middle of Glavni Trg, the aptly named Kavarnica Na Glavnem Trg (translated as 'coffee shop in the main square') is the perfect place to spend a lazy afternoon. There is a plethora of outdoor seating, making it the ideal spot to spend watching Kamnik's bustle go by. Well, when there is bustle of course. In a town of good coffee their espresso genuinely stands out also. It is also a great place to head for a late night drink if the mood takes. ▶ **Glavni Trg 1, Kamnik. Open 07:00 - 23:00, Fri, Sat 07:00 - 24:00.**

KAVARNA VERONIKA

There is something delightfully artistic in an old-fashioned way about Kavarna Veronika. Located in a great position directly in front of Mali Grad, it is named after the town legend of Veronika, half-woman, half-snake, all-myth. The café she lends her name to has a wide variety of coffees, soft drinks and beers on offer, as well as toasted sandwiches for breakfast. It also frequently puts on events such as art exhibitions, drama evenings and piano music, ramming home the artistic feel if anyone was still in doubt. ▶ **Glavni Trg 6, Kamnik, tel. +386 (0)59 970 949. Open 07:00 - 22:00, Fri, Sat 07:00 - 23:00, Sun 07:00 - 21:00.**

MESSING BAR

Not more than two minutes walk from the tourist information office in Mengeš and also the main bus stop, Messing Bar is a pleasant place to stop in for a drink after an equally pleasant stroll around the town. It has a good selection of coffees, inexpensive alcoholic drinks and some exuberant locals, something of a surprise possibly after the peacefulness of Mengeš itself. ▶ **Slovenska 24, Mengeš, tel. +386 (0)1 723 83 60.**

MOTORINO CAFÉ

Sat on the square just in front of the Ivan Hribar Centre, Motorino Café is a cozy modern café perfect for an early morning espresso or a late afternoon cup of tea. The selection of tea is impressive, with suggested teas for every time of the day. Whilst the indoor seating is fairly limited, when the sun is shining we prefer sitting outside nonetheless, and Motorino isn't short of seats out in the sun. ▶ **Ljubljanska 12, Trzin, tel. +386 (0)31 74 77 89. Open 07:00-22:00, Sat-Sun 08:00-22:00.**

ORANŽERIJA

It might look fairly unassuming from the roadside, but as soon as you head down the stairs into Oranžerija (located at the bottom of Gobavica hill) it's difficult not to be astounded. The garden is simply huge, and gorgeous too. The combination of friendly staff, good coffee and ice cream will rarely fail to please, and Oranžerija (so named as this is where oranges were kept back in the day) has all three in abundance. Did we mention the cakes? They just happen to be excellent as well. ▶ **Šolska 1, Kamnik, tel. +386 (0)1 723 76 48, info@oranzerija.si, www.oranzerija.si. Open 08:00 - 24:00, Fri 08:00 - 01:00, Sat 16:00 - 01:00, Sun 14:00 - 23:00.**

POD GRADOM

In a town of such delightful cuteness, sometimes something a little grittier can be in order. Pod Gradom provides this in spades. We love ourselves a dive bar, and you won't find anywhere better of this ilk in Kamnik. There are always plenty of chatty local peo-



ple around, solidifying the stereotype of Slovenes as wonderfully friendly people. The beer selection is great as well, and superbly inexpensive. The high-beamed ceiling adds an element of class, and there is plenty of outdoor seating for sunny summer afternoons. ▶ **Sadnikarjeva 1a, Kamnik, tel. +386 (0)41 556 100. Open 08:00 - 24:00.**

POD SKALO

We are obviously impartial, but there is something about Pub Pod Skalo that we adore. Maybe it is the classic rock, the darts and the pool, the photographs on the wall or maybe it might be the beer. Pod Skalo will help out those who are unsure whether to go for a light or a dark beer by providing something in the middle, and it's fantastic. There is a huge amount of space, making for the best atmosphere in town on the weekend or one of the frequent live music nights. It is located just 200m outside of town on the road to Celje and Terme Snovik, next door to the hotel of the same name. ▶ **32 Maistrova Ulica, Kamnik, +386 (0)1 839 12 33. Open 07:30 - 01:00.**

PRI PODKVI

Tucked away down a side street just off the main drag in Kamnik, Pri Podkvi has a great reputation with locals and for good reason. The button-cute garden is the perfect spot for an afternoon gossip, and Pri Podkvi (Slovene for 'At the Horseshoe') have a mean selection of international coffees to boot. If the weather isn't on your side, the indoor seating is every bit as elegant. The lunch specials, which change on a daily basis, are freshly cooked to order and nothing less than delicious in our opinion. The staff are young and enthusiastic and always on hand to help. ▶ **Trg Svobode 1, Kamnik, tel. +386 (0)59 903 307, www.pri-podkvi.si. Open 09:00 - 22:00. Closed Sun.**

OKREPČEVALNICA BARCA

Don't be fooled, Barca is deceptively large. Right smack bang in the centre of Trzin, the inside contains a sprawling layout that seems to just go and go and go. It also has an ever changing daily menu of meals under €6, with portion sizes that will test even the hungriest of men. A 'create your own salad' type of deal also exists, and the staff are as friendly as can be. Plus any coffee that comes with a sweetie is alright by us. It also has some of the most interestingly designed bar seats we've come across. They don't look like they have any right to be as comfortable as they are. ▶ **Ljubljanska 5a, Trzin. Open 07:00 - 18:00. Closed Sat, Sun.**

OKREPČEVALNICA BOR

Sat next to the only Mercator in Trzin, Bor gives off something of an old-fashioned American diner vibe. The sparse interior replete with red and white checked tablecloths and the long bar might be the reason. The food on offer is your general quick bite fare, soups and the ever-present local sausage. Bor certainly doesn't go out of its way to wow you, but with its old-fashioned atmosphere it really doesn't need to. ▶ **Reboljeva 28, Trzin. Open 07:00 - 23:00, Sun 08:00 - 13:00.**

PARK

Offering a fine selection of pasta, polenta, steaks and fish dishes, Restavracija Park is located opposite the football stadium and is a world away from the usual fare found in such locations. Whilst many restaurants go overboard (or indeed too minimal) when it comes to decorating, Park gets the balance just right with its comforting interior. The art is elegant, the foliage is unassuming, and the entire show works perfectly. It offers plenty of space both indoor and outdoor, and the food is excellent with most generous portions, especially when it comes to the fish. ▶ **Kopališka 3, Domžale, tel. +386 (0)1 721 67 38, restavracija.park@siol.net, www.restavracijapark.si.**

PIZZERIA & ŠPAGETERIJA OLIVA

Pizza seems to be omnipresent in Slovenia now, and Trzin is no different in this regard. On the square in front of the Ivan Hribar Centre is Olivia, the premier pizzeria in town. The selection of pizzas is vast, although the minute difference in price between big and small renders that choice irrelevant. The sizes of the small ones also do the same, as it seems the definition of 'small' may have been lost in translation. These pizzas are *big*. A selection of daily menus around €5 represent the value option, but when at a pizzeria you go pizza. ▶ **Ljubljanska 12d, Trzin. Open 09:00 - 22:00. Closed Sat, Sun.**

PRI ČEBELICI

Seeing as this gostišče is located in the Beekeeping Centre of Slovenia, you would expect honey to make various appearances on the menu. You might not expect the sheer variety of honey-based dishes and drinks available however. In fact, we ourselves did something of a double take upon reading of honey champagne. Traditional Slo-

KRANJSKA KLOBASA



Many towns lay claim to its invention, but the loudest assertion to the creation of the Kranjska Klobasa echoes out of Trzin. It is a town famous for its butchers, to the point where almost every house once had a butcher within its walls. The heavily smoked sausage known as Kranjska Klobasa is their most enduring and famous creation. Traditionally eaten with sauerkraut and fermented turnip (far better than it sounds, trust us), old Ljubljana chronicles have record of it being on the menu at any and all important events during the Austrian Empire years. There is a famous story regarding Emperor Franz Josef and his experience of the sausage. Stopping for a bite to eat in a tiny village, he was dismayed to find that the only thing available was homemade sausage. However, upon tasting it he is supposed to have proclaimed: 'This is no ordinary sausage!' Head to Trzin, the home of the Kranjska Klobasa, and make up your own mind.

vene cuisine abounds, with plenty of space both indoor and outdoor, with the outside option offering great views of the breathtaking green surroundings. There's even a sandpit for the kids. Pri Čebelci also has three star accommodation available, as well as three separate conference rooms. ▶ **Brdo Pri Lukovici 8, Lukovica, tel. +386 (0)1 729 61 13, gostisce.pricebelici@gmail.com, www.gostiscepricebelici.si. Open 09:00 - 22:00.**

PRI PLANINSKEM ORLU

Some years ago we got lost trying to take a shortcut through the mountains in a heavy rain storm and ended up following a convoy of cars, which serendipitously led us to this traditional family-run restaurant on the road to Kamniška Bistrica. Seeing that the parking lot was packed despite the weather, we vowed to return in the near future, and when we did so several weeks later, we weren't disappointed. Popular with hikers, tourists and locals, Pri Planinskem Orlu (or the Mountain Eagle) specialises in local cuisine prepared according to traditional recipes, and is especially known for its venison and other game dishes. If you fall in love with the idyllic natural surroundings and would like to make a holiday of it, there are several new guest rooms upstairs.

▶ **Stahovica 20, Stahovica, tel. +386 (0)1 83 25 410, info@priorlu.si, www.priorlu.si. Open 10:00 - 22:00, Sat 10:00 - 24:00, Sun 10:00 - 20:00. Closed Tue.**

PRISTAN

All aboard! We feel a bit silly for resorting to that, but its difficult not to get involved at Restavracija Pristan. The story of a sailor is told as the calming sounds of the waves envelop the room. The food? Why, the fish is every bit as great as you would expect from somewhere with such a theme. The octopus goulash is particularly fascinating, not to mention delicious. ▶ **Šaranovičeva 18, Domžale, tel. +386 (0)1 721 12 62/+386 (0)41 33 34 71, info@restavracija-pristan.si, www.restavracija-pristan.si. Open 11:00 - 22:00, Fri and Sat 11:00 - 23:00, Sun 12:00 - 16:00. Closed Mon.**





The elegant interior of LAGOJA bar, Trzin

CAKES & SWEETS

SLAŠČIČARNA LENČEK

Most people will find it difficult to deny the existence of a sweet tooth. We certainly won't deny it, and the Lenček patisserie in Domžale is something of a utopia in that case. Relatively hidden away in the courtyard of a residential area in the centre of town, Lenček has a most inviting atmosphere amplified by the quality of the sweets on offer. Some of the most aesthetically pleasing cakes, wafers, cookies we've come across are available and are all freshly made by their (official) Master Confectioner. Their specialty, kremšnitro (a particularly decadent cream cake) has its recipe originate from 1938 and still tastes entirely modern today. Lenček are also available for wedding and birthday cakes by prior arrangement. ▶ **Ljubljanska 87, Domžale, tel. +386 (0)1 721 51 52, anze.lencek@gmail.com, www.slascicarna-lencek.com. Open 08:00 - 20:00. Closed Sun.**

BARS & PUBS

LAGOJA BAR

Let's not waste time beating around the bush; we absolutely love the interior of LAGOJA Bar. It could very well be the bar in a grand hotel in a small 19th century Austrian imperial town. It is grand and it is stately, it is elegant and it is downright enchanting. Not only this, but the selection of drinks on offer is staggering. All sorts of ice teas and chocolates are available, as well as tea, coffee, beers, wines and spirits. Outdoor sitting is also available, but it is worth visiting just for the interior alone. Stunning. ▶ **Mengeška 35, Trzin, tel. +386 (0)1 564 23 97. Open 08:00 - 23:00, Fri and Sat 08:00 - 01:00, Sun 08:00 - 22:00.**

PIVNICA NA STAREM TRGU

It is almost like being transported to a different town. Kamnik is a beautiful town, light and airy, yet hidden away down a side street lies Pivnica Na Starem Trgu, an old fashioned pub where light is in short supply. Darkness prevails in this no-frills drinking establishment. This is no bad thing, giving a very real feel to an afternoon drink. It is the sort of place that makes a compelling argument for the indoor smoking ban being a bad thing. Plus we can't help but enjoy a pub with playable darts. A working mans pub in an adorable town.

▶ **Prešernova Ulica 10, Kamnik.**

TROJANE DOUGHNUTS

We can't deny it: doughnuts are one of our favourite guilty pleasures. There aren't many more rewarding sweet foods, and Gostišče Trojane is particularly famous for making the sugary spherical snacks. As soon as you pull into the parking lot (or even exit the motorway), the unmistakable smell fills your nostrils. When production of the doughnuts began in here 1961, around 10 were made every day. Now, despite the popularity of doughnuts, no one could have expected the explosion of production over the last 50 years. From less than 100 per week, the company has grown to selling three to five thousand each and every day of the year, and even more on holidays - especially during Carnival when doughnuts are the traditional treat. In total, a whopping two million every year! Understandably, it has become something of a traveller's pilgrimage, and with the quality of the doughnuts you'd be foolish to miss out. Traditionally made with marmalade inside, Trojane's doughnuts are now available with a variety of fillings, with our personal favourite being blueberry (borovnica).

APARTMENTS

APARTMAJI HRIBAR

Neatly placed in the Tuhinjska Dolina valley, Apartmaji Hribar is a stunning tourist farm ideally located for visiting all of the attractions in the local area. Choose from four modern furnished apartments and sit back to watch daily farm life juxtaposed with contemporary accommodation. You can also purchase a number of homemade goods from the farm. There is also some fantastic cycling and walking options nearby. Apartmaji Hribar is a genuinely peaceful option. ▶ Srednja Vas 14, Kamnik, tel. +386 (0)1 839 27 00, info@apartmaji-hribar.si, www.apartmaji-hribar.si.

B&B PRI CESARJU

A majestic flower-adorned building in Kamnik, Pri Cesarju claims to have been open since before the first train arrived into Ljubljana station. Ideal for families, friends and solo travellers, all the rooms have great free Wi-Fi as well as flat screen televisions and minibars. A number of different rooms are available, but it is hard to ignore the €92 a night tripe superior room, complete with Emperor-sized bed. It isn't very often you get to sleep as an Emperor. ▶ Tunjiška 1, Kamnik, tel. +386 (0)41 62 98 46, info@cesarski-dvor.si, www.pricesarju.si. Singles €36, doubles €48-74, triples €92. Breakfast €4.

PENZION ŠPENKO

Directly in front of the bus station in Kamnik, Špenko is a solid no-frills option in the town. Whilst the bus station itself doesn't make for the best initial view, tucked just behind it is the Kamniška Bistrica river and the rolling hills, which can never be anything less than a stunning view. It also has an a-la-carte restaurant, as well as free Wi-Fi and all rooms come equipped with cable television. ▶ Prešernova 14c, Kamnik.



POČITNIŠKA HIŠA MATAŽIČ

This large 19th-century house (renovated in 2009) is just a short drive outside of Kamnik, and a great option for those looking to splash out a bit on their accommodation. The panoramic views over the Alps are stunning, and the house itself isn't far behind in the beauty stakes. What could be nicer than a sunset picnic in a lime-tree shaded open terrace overlooking the Alps, before a spot of late night swimming? We can't think of many things. ▶ Vrhovje 3, Kamnik, tel. +386 (0)41 75 05 04, bwiegele@siol.net, www.vrhovje.si. €789 - 1689 per week. Accommodates up to 8 persons.

CAMPING

CARAVANNING IN THE HEART OF SLOVENIA

Caravanning may not be as popular a way of travel as it once was, but the heart of Slovenia is doing all it can to make it far more attractive option. A vast network of caravan rest areas have been set up throughout the region, offering something different to prospective caravan travellers. 17 rest areas provide homemade food and overnight accommodation, and nine more offer just the local homemade delicacy option. There are also over 40 rest stops where travellers can stop, reset and enjoy some of the local food and nature before continuing on their way. Not only is this a boon for the caravan tourism industry, but truly what better way to taste and buy homemade products than when in the very house in which they were created? Numerous cycling and hiking trails pass by the rest areas, giving the opportunity to explore the glorious nature of this beautiful region. A map of the caravan network can be found at www.razvoj.si.

GUESTHOUSES

B&B AND HOSTEL POD SKALO

Pod Skalo means 'under the rock', and that literally describes this lovely little hostel's location. Family-run in their old family house just a five-minute walk from Kamnik's bus station, Pod Skalo isn't huge but then it doesn't need to be. The 10-bed dorm is one of the most attractive dorm rooms we have come across, and the beds are comfier than the usual hostel fare. Clean rooms, a great breakfast spread and the pub next door make this a great option for laying your head in Kamnik. ▶ Maistrova 32, Kamnik, tel. +386 (0)1 839 12 33/+386 (0)31 521 365, info@hostel-kamnik.si, www.hostel-kamnik.si. Reception open 07:30-24:00.

GOSTILNA JANEŽIČ

Another family-run gostilna in the Dol pri Ljubljani area is Janežič. It has a number of pleasant, modern rooms with über-comfortable beds and some of the most attractive carpeting we've come across. Honestly. Single rooms for solo travellers, double rooms for couples and a family suite for, well, a family, and you have accommodation for all comers. They even allow pets. The breakfast buffet is great as well, which you expect after eating in their restaurant. Three generations and 80 years of history



have led to a great selection of steaks. ▶ **Pšata 25, Dol Pri Ljubljani**, tel. +386 (0)1 562 70 20/+386 (0)41 68 95 21, gostilna.janezic@siol.net, www.gostilna-janezic.si. Restaurant opening hours 12:00 - 22:00, Sun 12:00 - 18:00, closed Mon and Tue. Single room €50 (€40 at weekends), double room €70 (€60), family suite €120 and apartment €100.

HIŠA BERDNIK

Simply put, if you aren't staying on the mountain itself there isn't a better accommodation option for exploring Velika planina than Hiša Berdnik. Just a 500m walk to the lower cable car station, this family-run house in the Kamniška Bistrica valley can act as the perfect home in the heart of the countryside. It also has a small wellness centre of its own for those in need of further relaxation, and try as we might we can't say no to a hot tub. ▶ **Kamniška Bistrica 4b, Stahovica**, tel. +386 (0)41 31 57 01/+386 (0)41 63 59 03, info@hisaberdnik.si, www.hisaberdnik.si.

PRENOČIŠČE KAMRICA

It is almost a microcosm of Kamnik itself. Small, beautiful, friendly and comfortable, Prenočišče Kamrica is sat at the foot of Mali Grad, meaning you'll struggle to find a better location for accommodation in the town. As mentioned it is a small pension-type place with only five rooms, but the size means that the attention to detail shown is impressive. Almost as impressive as the breakfast spread, which is worth paying extra for. ▶ **Trg Svobode 2, Kamnik**, tel. +386 (0)1 831 77 07, kamrica.kamnik@siol.net, www.kamrica-kamnik.com. €22 per person, €15 children aged 9 - 12, €10 children aged 6-8, children under six no charge. Breakfast €3.

HOTELS

AMBIENT HOTEL

Set in what was previously a leather factory, Ambient Hotel is a family-run enterprise on the outskirts of Domžale with a lot to offer. A grand total of 70 rooms allows for plenty of space, with four of those rooms containing round beds for extra luxury. We do love a round bed. Aro-

matherapy and Thai massage are also available at Ambient, if any more wellness is required. Ambient is also a great place to go for an afternoon coffee or drink, with a great garden providing the perfect setting. ▶ **Aškerčeva 6a, Domžale**, tel. +386 (0)8 200 2000/+386 (0)70 55 52 02, info@ambienthotel.si, www.ambienthotel.si.

HOTEL KRONA

Three-star accommodation with five-star hospitality, Hotel Krona has plenty of room available. Whilst the rooms aren't exactly overwhelmingly lovingly decorated they are functional, and what does decoration matter when you are fast asleep in a comfortable bed? The restaurant is fairly elegant though, and the quality service excels there. It is only a 100m walk from the Kamniška Bistrica River, perfect for a dusk-time stroll. ▶ **Ihanska 2, Domžale**, tel. +386 (0)1 724 06 00, hotel.krona@siol.net, www.hotel-krona.com.

HOTEL MALOGRAJSKI DVOR

Inside a renovated 19th century inn we find this family run hotel, an affordable upmarket option when in Kamnik. The rooms are spacious and exceptionally furnished, comfort at a premium. The staff is also more than willing to assist at all possible times. Their restaurant is also definitely a great option, serving traditional Slovene cuisine made from local specialties. It also serves žganci, a buck-wheat dish formerly known as the 'pillar of Carniola' and the food that children were told to eat in order to grow up big and strong. The hotel also provides free transfer to and from Brnik Airport. ▶ **Maistrova 13, Kamnik**, tel. +386 (0)1 830 31 00, info@hotelkamnik.si, www.hotelkamnik.si.

PENZION MOJCA

An ultra-comfortable option in the Industrial Zone of Trzin, Penzion Mojca really goes all out in the quest for coziness. With wall-heated rooms making for temperature perfection all year round (regardless of your preference), Mojca thrives in its modernity. Each room is furnished in a different style, all the while managing to maintain an underlying continuity. Plasma televisions, big beds, free Wi-Fi and a restaurant with a seasonal menu round off this gem, not to mention free parking. We love free parking. ▶ **Blatnica 10, OIC Trzin**, tel. +386 (0)1 562 21 73/+386 (0)41 40 42 60, info@penzion-mojca.si, www.penzion-mojca.si. Singles €60, doubles €90.

PRI ŠPORNU

A charming four-star hotel just outside of Mengeš, Pri Špornu has plenty to offer the prospective visitor. The rooms blend old and new together, the traditional mixed in seamlessly with the contemporary. The restaurant is the ultimate charmer here, or the four room options should we say. Equal parts aesthetically stunning and comforting, you really couldn't ask for a more enjoyable environment to scoff down some seasonal food. ▶ **Cesta Radomeljske Čete 1, Radomlje**, tel. +386 (0)1 722 70 00, info@sporn.si, www.sporn.si.



