



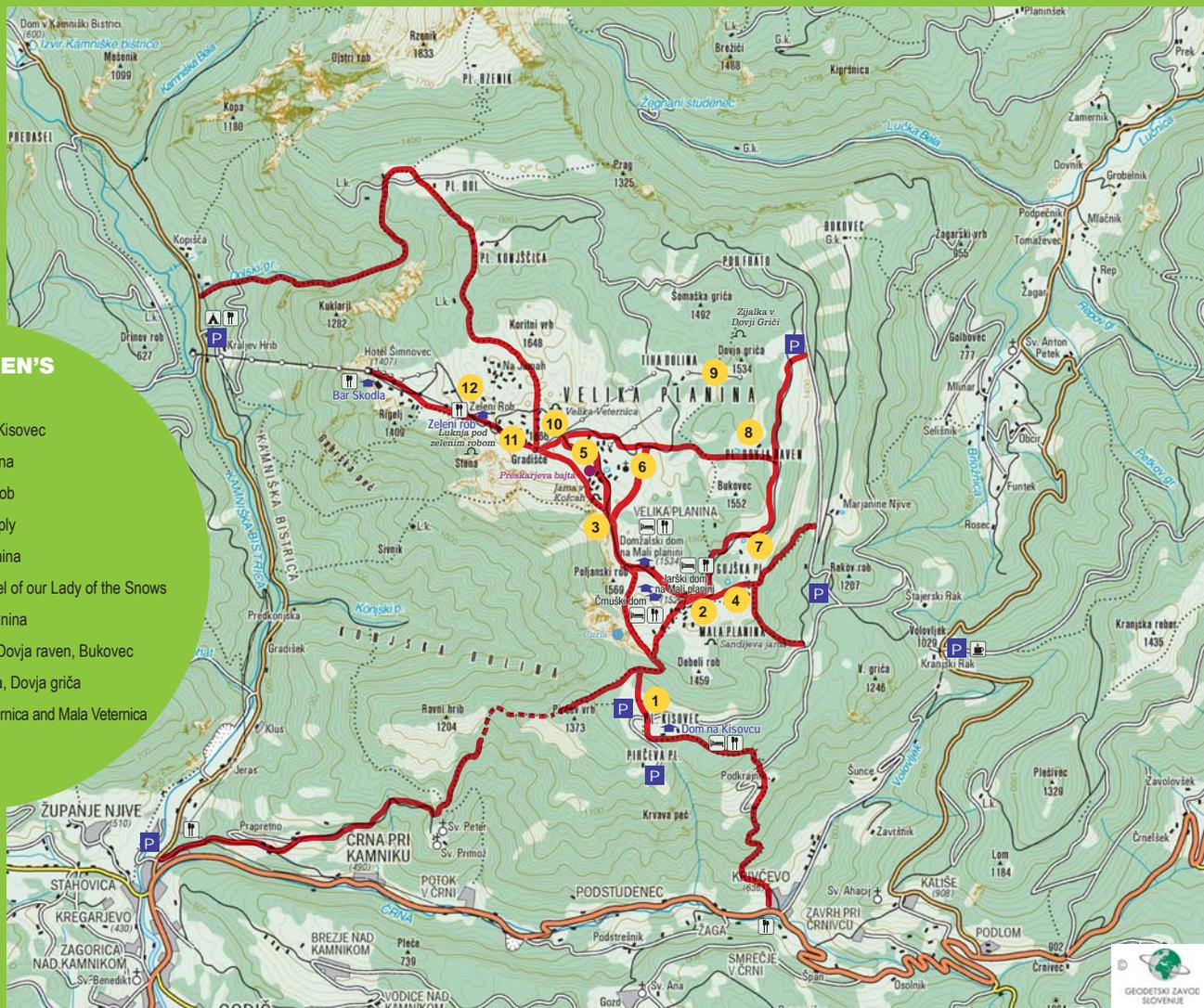
Velika
planina

Along the
Herdsman's
Trails

VELIKA PLANINA	
GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES	
LOOKING BACK	
VEGETATION	
MOUNTAIN HUTS AND SETTLEMENTS OF VELIKA PLANINA	
CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS OF TAKING CATTLE TO PASTURE	
HERDSMEN'S LIFE	
MOUNTAIN KISOVEC	1
MALA PLANINA	2
POLJANSKI ROB	3
WATER SUPPLY	4
VELIKA PLANINA	5
THE CHAPEL OF OUR LADY OF THE SNOWS	6
GOJŠKA PLANINA	7
MOUNTAIN DOVJA RAVEN (STOVNIŠKI STAN), BUKOVEC	8
TIHA DOLINA, DOVJA GRIČA	9
VELIKA VETERNICA AND MALA VETERNICA	10
GRADIŠČE	11
ZELENI ROB	12

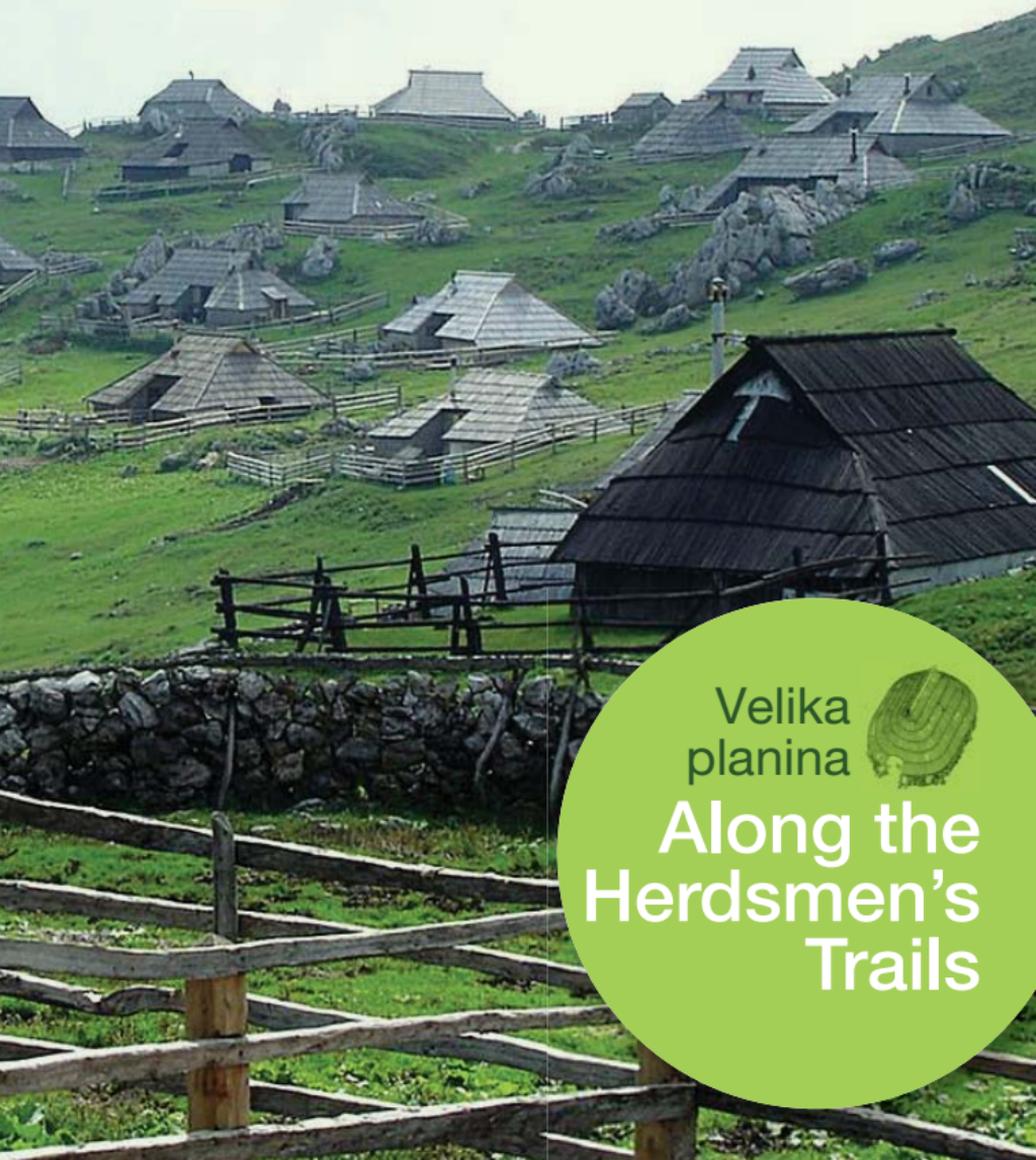
MAP OF HERDSMEN'S TRAILS

- 1 Mountain Kisovec
- 2 Mala planina
- 3 Poljanski rob
- 4 Water supply
- 5 Velika planina
- 6 The Chapel of our Lady of the Snows
- 7 Gojška planina
- 8 Mountain Dovja raven, Bukovec
- 9 Tiha dolina, Dovja grica
- 10 Velika Veternica and Mala Veternica
- 11 Gradišče
- 12 Zeleni rob



“A mountain’s charm, its folklore and historic message can fully be revealed only when herdsmen’s villages revive and unveil the picturesque richness of their architecture ...”

Tone Cevc



Velika
planina



Along the
Herdsmen's
Trails

Numerous hikers, mountaineers, bikers, skiers and other visitors exploring Slovenia's greatest pastureland are enraptured with Velika planina. The booklet is a valuable source of information about the richness of the natural, cultural and spiritual heritage of herdsmen's life. Merit for the thorough ethnological research of the mountain goes to *Dr. Tone Cevc*, who followed and documented herdsmen's customs and heritage for over fifty years. *Vlasto Kopač*, an architect and alpinist, the author of numerous drawings of herdsmen's homes, drew up a conservation plan for the architectural heritage of Velika planina to ensure preservation of evidentiary heritage for the architectural legacy. In addition, he compiled an ethnographical collection of items typical of Velika planina, which you is exhibited at Zaprice Intermunicipal Museum in Kamnik.

VELIKA PLANINA



The captivating charm of Velika planina lies beyond its specific ethnological and architectural features as it possesses a richness in terms of geology, relief, hydrology, climate, vegetation, and history. You are kindly invited to explore a Karst cave, meet herdsman Peter whose home has the highest altitude in Slovenia, admire plant endemics of the Kamnik-Savinja Alps

and the Kamnik orchid; during the summer months you will enjoy hiking among the pasturing livestock, and visit the ancient Preskar Alpine Dairy Farm along the way, which is now converted into a museum.



The area of Velika planina is Slovenia's largest highland pasture. It is frequently described as the most beautiful Slovenian mountain, offering breathtaking views of the Kamnik-Savinja Alps and the Ljubljana Basin accompanied by a well preserved herdsman's heritage.



Velika planina is a part of the **Kamnik-Savinja alpine range**, rising high above the Kamniška Bistrica valley. It is Slovenia's largest highland pasture, extending over 557 hectares at the altitude between 1,400 and 1,668 metres. The highest point of the plateau is Gradišče. Velika planina, this mountainous karstic plateau, is composed of Velika, Mala and Gojška planina as well as the mountains Dol and Konjščica. Apart from being one of the mountains within the mountain range, Velika planina is also the name of the entire ensemble of the aforementioned mountains. Velika planina is designated as a geomorphological and geological natural asset of national importance. A calcareous geological base is a precondition for the forma-

tion of numerous sinkholes, caves and abysses. Traces of dolomite and chert can also be found in the base. Due to the karstic structure of the Velika planina relief there is hardly any surface water on the plateau. In the past however, water played a significant role in the shaping of its surface. Over 30 registered caves and abysses formed at crevices and tectonic faults have been registered there. The collapsed caves of Velika and Mala Veternica, Jama in Kofce, and Luknja under Zeleni rob, shaped by mechanical rock disintegration, are probably the most distinctive. Smaller karstic formations, such as grooves, limestone pavements and karrens, have not been registered. The harsh

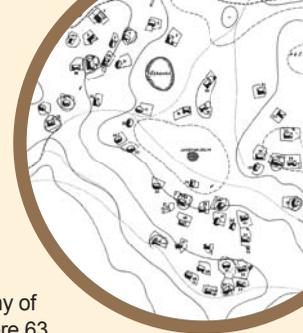
mountainous climate is reflected in a relatively short growing season, lasting 4 months only. A total annual precipitation amounts to around 1,800 mm, while the average air temperature ranges between 4 and 6 Degrees Celsius. Man has successfully adapted to such living conditions as the mountain has been inhabited since prehistoric ages. Herdsman's settlements were set up in quiet and windless areas outside the basins and away from exposed ridges. The plateau's typical cultural landscape has been preserved to this day, giving the mountain a distinguished charm.

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

People have been attracted by plateau areas since the beginning of time. They deforested them, created highland pastures and through the centuries constructed herdsmen's huts which distinctly symbolize these areas.



Archaeological findings bear witness of man's presence on Velika planina since the prehistoric ages. Prehistoric copper axe has been found above Tiha dolina and medieval ceramic remains have been discovered in cave Dovja griča. Research into the plateau's history points to a continuous tradition of pasturing in the area, since the beginning of the 16th century. In 1826, according to the testimony of The Franziscan Land Cadastre, there were 63 cottages on Velika planina, of which 31 were located on Mala planina, and around 120 cottages in the surrounding settlements. In 1875 farmers from nearly twenty valley settlements pastured 160 cows, 400 oxen and 100 pigs in the mountain area. In late Middle Ages, Velika planina was called Konjska planina (Horse mountain) because the pastures were mostly grazed by horses. In those times, the main sources of income for the town of Kamnik and its surroundings were trade and transport. In the past, pasturing on the mountain was an economic necessity, crucial for the sustaining of farms in the valley and a larger number of cattle. The activity has maintained its relevance to the present, as every summer between 500 and 800 pasturing cattle can be seen.



**LOOKING
BACK**

The vegetation of Velika planina greatly contributes to its amazing beauty. Open pastureland covered in grass and rock surfaces represents a perfect foundation for the growth of numerous picturesque flowers. Many of them are highland flowers, typical of calcareous Alps. Some of the most common species, significantly contributing to the landscape, are as follows:



Spruce (*Picea abies*) on Velika planina was not planted by man as it presents its natural environment – most spruce forests in Slovenia are manmade. Herdsmen used spruce wood for the construction of their cottages, roofing (shingle roof or “*šinkelni*”), fences and many other things. Today the once deforested areas are again overgrown with spruce, and thus the slopes reclaim the area that was once entirely pastureland.

Mugo pine (*Pinus mugo*) flourishes on altitudes above the treeline. This mountain pine grows as a big shrub. On Velika planina you will find it overgrowing higher rocky ridges, where the environment is not too windy or exposed. The weight of snow bends it to a certain level but it cannot break it. Mountain pine grows in large bunches and accompanied by other plants, such as *Rhododendron hirsutum*.



When snow melts away, pastures are covered by the blossoming **Spring Crocus** (*Crocus vernus*). Flowers often make their way even through the snow. They prefer deep and fresh soil typical of planes and depressions. Only blossoms and narrow grass-like leaves grow above the ground. During the long and harsh mountainous winters, these flowers are hidden in the soil as bulbs.

Spring heath (*Erica carnea*) also starts to flower as soon as it appears from under the snow. It is a low growing sub shrub covered with dense tiny blossoms when it blooms. Flower buds have already been formed in last autumn. The plant is well adapted to growing in a rocky and shallow ground. It is typical of carbonates and therefore of limestone and dolomites.



**VEGETA
TION**





Mountain avens (*Dryas octopetala*) is a small prostrate evergreen subshrub with deep woody roots and short green sprouts that can grow as tall as ten centimetres. It huddles to the bedrock to hide away from wind and soak in all the warmth the stone absorbed in the sunny days. Its leaves are evergreen and glossy. Mountain avens is recognized by its snowy white blossoms and ripening fruits with white feathery hairs. Mature fruits are dispersed with the wind and disseminated across the pastures.

Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) is a small bush flourishing only in carbonated ground. So how come it grows on Velika planina, a mountain of pure calcareous rock? Its growth is enabled by washed out soil and carbonated ground caused by the downfall of spruce, larch and mountain pine needles.



Blooming **Hairy Alpine rose** (*Rhododendron hirsutum*) is one of the most notable mountainous plants. Anybody who has ever hiked in the summer is familiar with it. Hairy Alpine rose is typical of a calcareous terrain and as such it differs from other garden "rhododendrons" flourishing only in carbonated ground. The plant was named after the small hairs growing on its leaves. Living in a symbiosis with fungi makes its otherwise gruelling mountainous existence a bit easier. Fungus supplies its roots with mineral nutrients and, in return, fungus gains direct access to glucose and sucrose.



Gentian blossoms, growing amidst the green grass, reflect the most amazing azure of the sky. Gentians have a tubular shape, opening into a blue pentamerous star. There are several different species of Gentians growing on the dry turfs of Velika planina – from



tiny spring gentians (*Genitana verna*) to distinguished, large-flowered Clusi's gentians (*Genitana clusii*).

Monkshood (*Aconitum*) is a plant you would try only once. The cows know it is poisonous and avoid it by miles. It flourishes on pastures with deep, moisture retentive soil, rich with nitrogen ("fertilized").

Blue flowering monkshoods, such as Helmet flower (*Aconitum napellus*), are very beautiful and noticeable summer flowers, herdsman used to call it Wolf's bane (volkovec). Alpine wolf's bane (*Aconitum lycoctonum*) used to be called the wolf's flower. In the past, herdsman used it for poisoning their rivals, the wolves. You are advised not to pick *Aconitum* because it is poisonous.

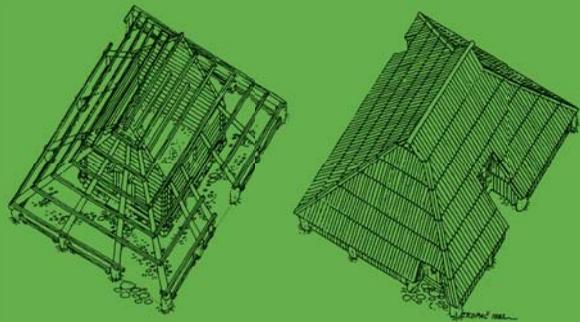
Carlina thistle (*Carlina acaulis*) with its bristly leaves successfully resists cows' muzzles and flourishes on the highland pastures. The blossom is famous for being open in nice weather and closing up during rain and in the evenings. A thumb's breadth exterior part of the inflorescence bud is bristle and spiky. Drying carline thistle can be seen on the last hikes before the first snow falls, shining through the grass.



Black hellebore (*Helleborus niger*) is a spring flower with snowy white petals, named after its black roots. The blossom is white, sometimes slightly pink. Petals usually grow greenish over time. All parts of the flower are poisonous. It flourishes on limestone or dolomite. Flower buds are formed before the winter and blossom from February to April when the snow usually melts away.



Original herdsmen's cottages of Velika planina are unique in Slovenian as well as entire Alpine area, creating a distinctive cultural landscape.



Herdsmen's huts on the mountain are called "bajte". Settlements on Velika, Mala and Gojška planina were designed as provisional settlements with an entirely unique shape of huts having an oval and rectangular floor plan that cannot be found anywhere else in Slovenia. The terrain and weather conditions have greatly influenced the organizational structure of the settlements. They were set up in quite lee areas of lower humidity. Before World War I, all the huts on the mountain had an oval shape, whereas after the war, some rectangular cottages were built as well. In the winter of 1945, Germans burned down the entire settlement on the mountain, comprised of more than 100 huts, as well as the Chapel of Our Lady of the Snows. **The Preskar Hut** was renovated right after the war in accordance with old construction techniques and has been protected as a cultural monument of local importance since 2005. This small and grey hut built on a rocky cleft is the last and only preserved example of a typical oval hut in Slovenia today. The interior is separated into two parts - the herdsman's room in the middle is encircled by a cattle pen. The plain central room has no chimney, ceiling, windows, tables, chairs, not even a toilet. It is furnished only to suffice for a simple everyday life of a herdsman. A hut is covered by characteristic small wooden boards called shingles or "šinkelni". Shingles are made of larch or spruce wood. After World War II, architect Vlasto Kopač designed a tourist settlement imitating the traditional herdsmen's huts, which was then built in the surroundings of Gradišče and Zeleni rob.



MOUNTAIN HUTS AND SETTLEMENTS OF VELIKA PLANINA

Taking cattle to pasture for the summer is a very special event for every farm. Summer pasture used to be a necessity as it enabled survival and larger stock of cattle in the valley. This tradition is still kept alive.



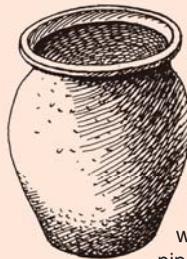
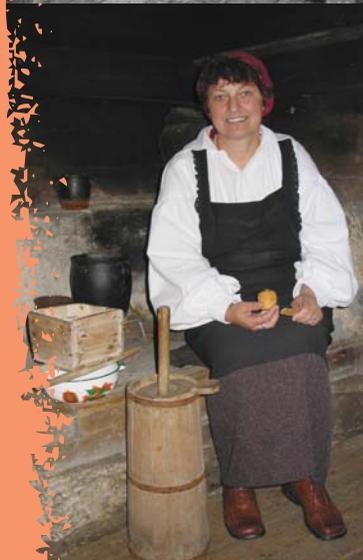
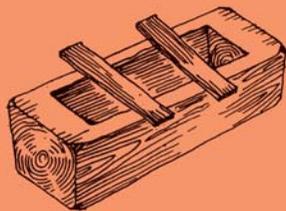
CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS OF TAKING CATTLE TO PASTURE



The cattle are brought to the mountain in the beginning of June. They used to bring it up on June 9th, St. Primus and Felicianus day, but nowadays the day is chosen according to the weather conditions. The former pasture trail started in Stahovica and passed the gothic Church of St. Primus and Felicianus. In each family, the one who was most easily missed in other farm chores, was usually designated as the herdsman. On the day before he left for the mountain, the housewife had usually prepared a basket full of dishes,

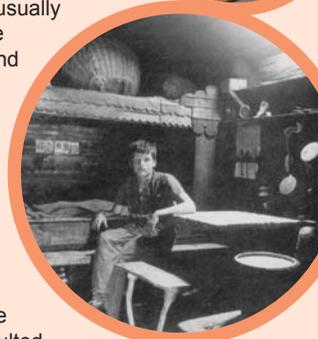
clothes, blanket and some food for the herdsman. He always tied a bunch of flowers to his hat and carried a walking stick. Afterwards, the landlord would hang a heavy bell called “**tropinar**” on the leading cow or bull to announce the solemn departure to the mountain. Herdsmen took the cattle to pasture with blessed Palm Sunday branches. The long journey from the valley to the mountain usually began early in the morning since it took quite a few hours. Stops were made at the signs and drinking troughs for the cattle. Herdsmen tended their cattle on the mountain for three months, from mid-June till September. As the end of August was approaching, the herdsman could already feel the autumn crawling to the mountain and when the first frost covered the pastures, even the most persistent left. Traditionally they would depart the mountain on the Nativity of Our Lady Day (September 8th). Nowadays, most farmers bring their cattle to the mountain and take it back home by tractor trailers.

Herdsmen's life during the summer on the mountain and away from their family is always filled with hard work.



A typical herdsman's day starts at dawn, usually around 4 AM, when the first milking of the cows is carried out. Then the cattle are taken to the pasture, the stables are cleaned and breakfast is prepared. Days are filled with minor chores around the hut, processing milk and preparing lunch. Herdsmen pass the time on the pasture with pleasant conversation, smoking pipes or picking herbs and wild berries. Before nightfall, another milking takes place, and afterwards a light evening meal is consumed. In the evening, herdsmen usually visit each other and join together in the evening prayer. They go to sleep around ten. Herdsmen's food on the mountain is always plain in comparison with what they eat at home. They like to make milky porridge and buckwheat porridge, they eat milk, cheese, cream and a typical herdsman's dish called "**Masovnik**" (sour milk and hard-boiled corn mush). On the weekends, their families bring them some lard, pasta, rice and drinks. There were also times when forbidden hunting resulted in delicious meal prepared from chamois meat. Herdsmen usually used rainwater for washing and cooking.

Wolves would often present a danger and burning logs were the only thing that kept them away at night. Herdsmen on night guard usually sat on small two-legged chairs, which were so unstable that they could not fall asleep. **Wolf's holes** on the way from Kisovec, Sušave and on Velika planina under Žrelo are a vivid reminder of wolves.



HERDS MEN'S LIFE

1 MOUNTAIN KISOVEC

Mountain Kisovec lies below Mala planina at the altitude of 1,200 metres. Mountain Kisovec is a foremountain - it is lower and its grass grows green earlier than on the mountain. Thus, the pasturing can start here first. It is a straight ledge in the shelter of Pirčev vrh and other higher grounds.

There used to be an intermediate station of the transport line on mountain Kisovec, which was constructed to enable the construction of Domžalski dom; the transport line started operating on July 15th 1951. The transport line with the length of 2,925 m ran from Žaga to Pirčeva planina (intermediate station) and onward to mountain Kisovec and Mala planina, covering 914 m of altitude difference. The highest gradient of the line was 35 degrees; the line operated till 1963. There used to be a lodging house for railway workers ("Železničarski dom") on Kisovec and according to the locals, there were plans to build a health resort.



2 MALA PLANINA

Vast pastures of Mala planina, Velika planina and Gojška planina are **common or community mountains** with a defined number of pasture beneficiaries. The answers to the questions regarding the rights to pasture and to cut down trees in common forests are very complicated and unclear. The rights are based on oral tradition and were never written down, they never belonged to individuals but to pasturing communities called "**pwaninšnam**". Pastures that used to be common, were divided into three parts in 1913. Stone and wooden fences were put up between individual mountains. The pasturing communities of Velika planina, Mala planina in Gojška planina still manage the mountains and unite 167 pasture beneficiaries from the villages and hamlets of the southern slopes of Grintovci. The community is governed by a committee composed of a chairman and members who are elected by pasture beneficiaries. Pastures and chores (Socage) on the mountain are divided in proportion to their share of pastured cattle. Nevertheless, pasturing and milk processing is always conducted individually as each herdsman tends only to his cattle and his milk. There used to be a transport line station on Mala planina, carrying loads to the mountain from Črna valley. There is also a memorial plate in remembrance of an allied bomber that crashed down here during the World War II.



3 POLJANSKI ROB



Poljanski rob is one of the highest points of Velika planina – it is located at the altitude of 1570 m. The hill, overgrown to the top on the southern side and with a steep descent to Konjska Valley, offers extraordinary views of the surroundings. On a sunny day you can see all the way to Trdinov vrh, Snežnik and Nanos, whereas at night, enjoy the twinkling lights shining all the way up from the Kamnik-Bistrica plain. From Domžalski dom, Poljanski rob can be seen as a bare pasture delight and a perfect triangular shape cut by a hiking trail, running almost exactly on the contour line at its lower end. Walking by the fence from the top toward Grlo above Vovkova jama is a unique experience as well. When the wind is not following your footstep, you can observe the rocky choke, a stone masterpiece of nature, shaped by rare but still very active air. **The Kofce cave** is characterized by a permanent watercourse at its bottom and a geomorphological subterranean natural sight of national importance. The entrance to the cave is a collapsed cave now overgrown with spruce, which continues into an abyss. It is one of the longest (1,090 metres) and deepest (103 metres) caves in the Kamnik-Savinja Alps, although without the decorative capillary stalagmite. In the past, it used to be an important deposit of iron ore. Herdsmen used to use the entrance as a shelter, and years later it provided a handy deposit point for all sorts of garbage. Today, the entrance is enclosed by barbed wire used for protecting the cattle on the pasture.

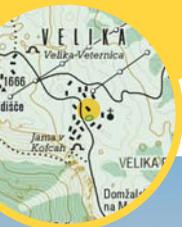
There are not many water springs on Velika planina as the plateau is mainly karstic, so water usually surfaces at its foothills. One of the highest water springs in Slovenia, **Curia**, appears at the juncture of permeable and impermeable rocks on the mountain. The water spring can be reached by getting off the hiking trail leading from mountain Kisovec to the edge of Mala planina. If the landscape itself does not lead you straight to the wooden trough, follow the orientation fence and look for the door. The descent to the trough is quite difficult and should only be attempted when the weather is dry. Small karstic ponds called **lokve** or **kali**, lying at the bottom of basins or under the slopes, provide drinking water for the cattle. Initially, soil was thoroughly dug through and salted to attract the animals. When it rained, the water accumulated at the bottom. Kali are spread all over the mountain, though most of them are in the pasturing areas. They are the only habitats for many aquatic and swamp animals, mostly for Alpine newts, dragonflies and frogs. Since amphibians are an endangered and protected animal species in Slovenia, the preservation of kali is a priority and takes precedence over other water supply sources for the cattle on the mountain. Today, summer droughts are minimized by water supplied in tanks.

4 WATER SUPPLY



5 VELIKA PLANINA

Velika planina is the vastest and the highest plateau on the altitude of 1,500 to 1,600 metres. Its highest summits, Poljanski rob (1,569 m) and Gradišče (1,668 m) lie in the western part. On the northern side, the plateau descends to mountains Konjščica and Dol.



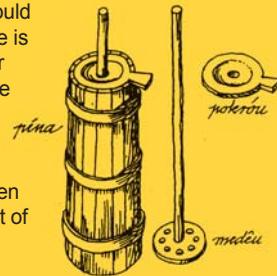
Herdsmen's clothes

Herdsmen's garments were always simple and practically identical to the ones they wore in the valley. Wooden clogs, big wide hats and bast coats were typical of their mountain attire. **Clogs** are wooden shoes which herdsmen used to wear and were usually made out of maple wood. When it rained, the herdsmen would put on a bast coat called **pwajš**. The coat was made out of long, narrow strips of linden bark. It was cut into long strips and soaked in the water so the thinner layer would come off. The remaining strips were collected and tied to a strap which the herdsman would then tie around their neck.



Churning butter and making cheese

Herdsmen usually used some milk for churning butter and some for making cheese. In the past, butter was a very important element of everyday diet, so churning butter was one of the most important chores in herdsmen's life. Butter is prepared from cream skimmed off the milk which has undergone a souring process for a day or two. First, the cream was poured into the butter tub and mashed for approximately two hours, depending on the temperature. On the weekends, when their families came to visit, they would take the butter back to the valley. Cheese is usually made once or twice a week. After three or four days of milk turning sour, the cream is skimmed off the milk, and sour milk is poured into a bigger pot. Then, the cheese is slowly cooked. The condensed substance is placed into a wooden bowl and the liquid whey is squeezed out of it. Cottage cheese is made from whey.



Trniči

Trnič is a special sort of cheese which herdsmen used to make; it is a local delicacy of Velika planina, unique in this area. It is made of dry cheese with added cream and salt. Typically, **trnič** is manually shaped into a pointed ball, which is then decorated with wooden seals called **pisave**. Then, pear shaped balls are dried out over the fireplace and turned into a very firm cheese.

Trnič is more a decoration than food. It is made in pairs and is supposed to represent female breasts. Young herdsmen would usually give a pair of trniči to their girlfriends as a token of their love and affection when they returned to the valley. The tradition of making trniči is today almost extinct.



Pisave

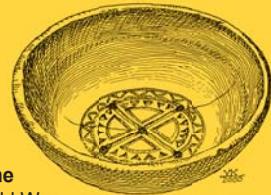
Trniči were then decorated with the so-called pisave. These wooden "stamps" are approximately 20 centimetres long and two and a half centimetres wide and represent a canvas for herdsman's imagination. Different motifs were carved out on both ends, depicting vegetation, hearts, cross, monstrance and similar. After World War II, the art of carving out pisave as well as making trniči almost disappeared and is nowadays practically extinct. During winters, herdsmen usually left pisave at the cottages and a lot of them were burnt in 1945 when Germans burned down the herdsmen's settlement.



Dishes and other utensils

The herdsmen used several different pots for carrying water, milking cows, making cheese, keeping cheese, cooking and daily washing. Special round wooden bowls made of single wood piece called **torila** were used for draining and moulding cheese. **Skutenca** was used for draining cottage cheese and **oval boxes** made out of bended maple or ashen wood were used for keeping lard or bacon or as a lunch box.

Spoons, knives, cooking spoons and ladles were made out of wood in different shapes, carefully carved and decorated.



Free time

The herdsmen did not have a lot of **free time** on the mountain. Every Sunday before World War II, they used to gather at Zeleni rob and listen to the church bells echoing from the valley. They prayed and sang together. In nice weather, they would pick herbal flowers at a steep rock called Križa. Edelweiss, gentian and a distinctive flower called *Nigritella lithopolitana* were among the most desired. At night, they used to enjoy otherwise forbidden hunting and returned with a chamois or a roebuck at sunrise. Herdsmen always loved to hunt even though sometimes the hunting ended tragically. On Sundays and holidays, they gathered in one of the huts and danced the night away with polkas, waltzes or fox tails. They played the zither, accordion and feathers. Stumping clogs would always rock the floor. They loved to play two herdsmen's games: »**svinko bit**« and »**nebeškanje**«. They used to make small wooden cows out of dwarf pine for the kids. Herdsmen also used to make simple wooden pipes, pisave for trniče and other small items while waiting for the cattle to graze or in their spare time.

Hut-dwelling

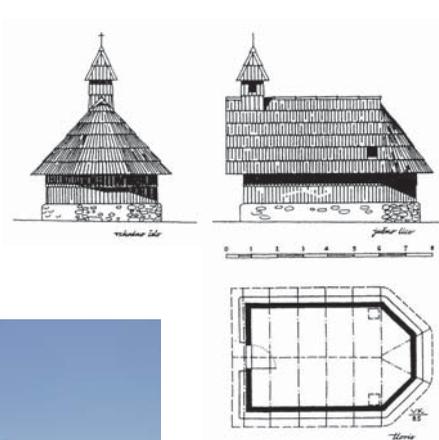
Hut dwellers or **bajtarji**, as the tenants of herdsmen's huts call themselves, are a very important part of the Velika planina's tourist image. Bajtarji are tenants of herdsmen's huts outside of pasture season. The first "official" bajtar was Rajko Gregorc from Kamnik. He and his brother rented a herdsman's hut on Velika planina during the winter of 1930, as it provided a relatively easy access and a delightful skiing slope. Before World War II, bajtarji started and gradually developed skiing tourism and after the war, their active socializing and efforts greatly contributed to the revival of Velika planina. Today, hut dwelling is an alternative way of spending active leisure time away from contemporary lifestyle. Bajtarji are not only enthusiastic skiers but also great promoters of tourism. The renowned architect Vlasto Kopač, who exerted great influence on the tourist development of the area, used to be a bajtar as well.



6 THE CHAPEL OF OUR LADY OF THE SNOWS



The herdsmen were farmers used to a traditional way of life. A six-day workweek was followed by Sunday's rest, which always included attending Sunday's mass and socializing. This was partly the reason why the Chapel of Our Lady of the Snows was built in the herdsmen's settlement on Velika planina in 1939. Jože Plečnik, the world-famous Slovenian architect, designed the sketch for the chapel, modelling it upon herdsmen's huts. The chapel was burnt down by the Germans in the winter of 1945. It took almost four decades to rebuild the chapel upon herdsmen's initiative and with the help of bajtarji and many others. The chapel is now located in exactly the same place as before. 7. In August 1988, the archbishop and metropolitan Dr. Alojzij Šuštar blessed the festively decorated new chapel, built according to the sketch of Vlasto Kopač.



From June 15th to September, masses are held every Sunday at 2 PM. The Christmas Midnight Mass and the Assumption Day Mass are especially well attended. If you would like to visit the chapel, please stop by the "bishop's" cottage and ask for the keys.

7 GOJŠKA PLANINA

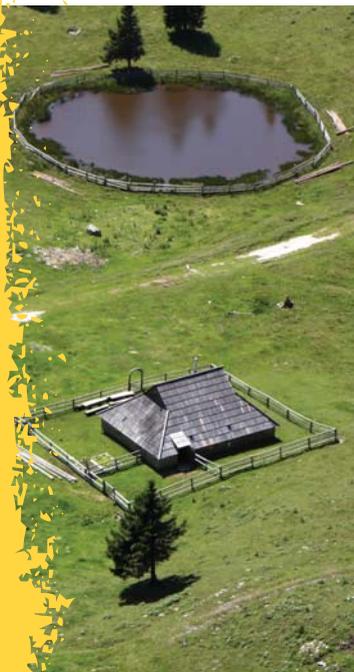


Gojska planina got is named after a mountainous village Gozd above Črna valley, locally also known as Gोजzd. Gojska planina has a very interesting morphological shape as it is a side mountain stretching over two terraces. Its area extends over 122 hectares and it is larger than Mala planina; in 2009 there were more cows pasturing on it than on Velika planina – exactly 149. Small karstic ponds called lokve (kali) are used for the cattle's water supply and on the way from Marjanine njive stemmed spring from which water is running to the trough. Farmers from Črna used to take the cattle to the pasture on St. John the Baptist Day; the trail led past Podkrajnik and they usually left this mountain a week later than those descending from Velika planina and Mala planina (around September 15th) as the pastures of Gojska planina lie at a lower altitude and in a lee area. Today, here as well as on other pastures on the plateau, cattle is no longer brought to the pasture by foot. Instead, farmers drive the cows uphill by tractors. Nowadays, typical Velika planina-style pasturing on Gojska planina is slowly disappearing: traditional oval cottages are mostly replaced by square cottages for herdsmen and stables for the cattle. Gojska planina is still the most peaceful and unchanged mountain in the area as it lies furthest from the tourist settlement.

Mountain Dovja raven is a juncture of three mountains: Velika planina, Mala planina and Gojska planina. Its local name - Bukovec - indicates that a part of the mountain used to be overgrown by beech which was then deforested through centuries because of the constant need for wood needed for charcoal burning and construction. Later it was overgrown by fast growing spruce, the prevailing tree species on the mountain today.

*There are practically no legendary oral traditions on Velika planina, but there are traditions among herdsmen relating **actual events**. Their stories are truly very captivating. There were tales of **wild men** living on the opposite side of Velika planina, close to Gojska planina, in the wild rock or the caves of **Dovja griča**. According to these tales, wild men were hairy, tall and strong and they never went to the valley because they were afraid of people. They used a language nobody else understood. They never took any food from people and if somebody tried to give them something they would always run away. Herdsmen tried to capture those wild men to learn from them, but they never succeeded. Also, **white maidens** supposed to live on the mountain, hiding away in secret places. They were dressed in white and were usually asking herdsmen for milk. Whoever refused them was later himself left without milk. They used to sing at the sunset and herdsmen would often go and listen.*

8 MOUNTAIN DOVJA RAVEN (STOVNIŠKI STAN), BUKOVEC



9

TIHA DOLINA, DOVJA GRIČA



At the far north-eastern end of the mountain lies the sinkhole of Tih dolina, a **frosting point** (mrazišče) with typical vegetation inversion, which means that captured cold air inverted the vegetation growth and vegetation zones are therefore in ordered differently than they would be under normal circumstances. There are spruce trees with shrivelled tips and Boyd's willows growing on the outskirts and dwarf pine with herbal layer (cranberries, bilberries and moss) at the bottom of the sinkhole. The measurements conducted in the last few years indicate that this is the coldest part of Velika planina with hoarfrosts that are more or less common even in the summer. In winter, morning temperatures can go well below minus 40 degrees Celsius. There are wild animals in the less populated areas of the mountain. Boars, moufflons and chamois still live on the mountain. One can also come across the timid and cautious hares. There are still wild roosters in the woods, and jackdaws and ravens can be seen flying over treetops. Wolves and bears were pretty common in the past as well.

Zijalka in Dovja griča, as well as Dovja griča or cave Nandetova jama is horizontal cave and represents geomorphic subterranean natural sights of national importance. Horizontal caves are rare on Velika planina; they are the remains of larger historic surface watercourses, which disappeared under the ground as the earth surface was getting higher and because of the ground's permeability and karstic characteristics.

Velika Veternica and Mala Veternica are caved or roofless caves and present geomorphic subterranean natural assets of national importance in the central part of Velika planina. They are located on the altitude of approximately 1,600 metres with up to 20 meters deep vertical rock walls. **Vegetation inversion** is their distinctive characteristic. Patches of snow in the bottom of the cave can remain there even during the summer. In the dry season, herdsman used to go to Velika Veternica and Mala Veternica carrying baskets to collect the snow and use it as drinking water after it melted. In the last two decades, snow in caves usually melts by

the middle of the summer and water is supplied by way of water tanks. During World War II, Velika Veternica represented a great hiding place for military materials.

10 VELIKA VETERNICA AND MALA VETERNICA



11 GRADIŠČE



Gradišče is the highest summit of Velika planina (1,668 m) and offers a spectacular view of the entire range of the Kamnik-Savinja Alps. In the past, Velika planina was visited mostly by locals for pasturing, hunting, searching for minerals and herbs, and looking for some personal gains and benefits. Hikers trying to relax in the peaceful mountain atmosphere only rarely wandered the mountain, and relaxing calmness is exactly what modern tourists are looking for. Artists and painters began discovering and depicting the Alpine world in the 19th century, and enlightened educated people came following. The development of tourism was possible only when middle classes joined in. In mid 19th century,

there were already several accounts of journeys to Velika planina. An important milestone in the development of Velika planina tourism was the opening of the cottage of Slovenian Mountaineering Society in the herdsmen's settlement. At the time, first skiers could be seen on the slopes of the mountain. At first, tourists visited Velika planina only in the summer and during pleasant weather conditions, but with the development of winter tourism, it has become increasingly attractive in the winter as well.



12 ZELENI ROB



The construction of cable car line connecting the valley of Kamniška Bistrica with the western part of the mountain called Šimnovc in the 1960's was a turning point in the development of tourism on Velika planina. The cable car paved the way for mass tourism on the mountain and made it an easily accessible ski resort. Construction of the chair lift to Gradišče followed, as well as several ski lifts around the mountain. Tourist settlements in the area of Zeleni rob and Gradišče were built according to the plans of architect Vlasto Kopač, a former student of Jože Plečnik. Tourist cottages resemble herdsman's huts. After World

War II, the so-called trade union tourism used to prevail on the mountain and huts were mostly owned by public companies. Nowadays, around 50,000 visitors come to Velika planina by cable car each year; several times more visit the mountain on foot. Most visitors come in the summer. The skiing season depends entirely on snow-fall and is therefore insecure. The Velika planina Ltd. runs the cable car line. Because of the easy access, people usually do not realize that there are completely different conditions on the mountain compared to the valley, which results in numerous injuries. Most injuries happen on steep hay-fields where visitors pick edelweiss, where in the winter, people can get easily misguided by the treacherous fog. Close to Zeleni rob lies **Luknja pod Zelenim robom** or **Brezno nad oknom**, which is a geomorphic subterranean natural sight of national importance. It is particularly attractive due to two reasons; when one approaches it from the western side, a natural bridge can be seen, whereas a natural window at the bottom of the abyss is located on the eastern side.



Conclusion

Velika planina is a unique Slovenian mountain that never fails to charm visitors regardless of the season. Throughout the year, it attracts with snow-covered huts in winter, blooming pastures in spring, the liveliness of summer, the tranquility of autumn and the slow transition into its winter quietness again. Tourism has in no way diminished the charm and allure of Velika planina. The vision for the future development of Velika planina is based on sustainable highland pastures and on tourism as a supplementary activity.

Dear mountain visitors!

As guests to the mountain area of Velika planina you are kindly asked the following:

- do not pick Alpine flowers
- do not disturb grazing animals on pastures
- do not approach the ponds
- do not disturb wild animals
- do not enter caves or abysses
- do not walk outside designated trails
- keep your dog on a leash
- take the garbage back to the valley
- cycling is permitted only on designated mountain bike trails

Please set the example and help us preserve the unspoiled beauty of Velika planina for future generations. Join the herdsmen on Slovenia's largest highland pasture.



Garbage disposal prohibited



Making fires prohibited



Camping prohibited



Picking of protected plants prohibited



Biking outside established trails prohibited



Snowmobile rides prohibited



Hiking outside designated trails prohibited



Dogs on leash

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