

# Slovenia

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Ljubljana** The architecture, the hilltop castle, the green spaces and the vibrant nightlife of the 'Beloved' capital (p1005)
- **Bled** The impossibly beautiful lake, island and hilltop castle as backdrop (p1012)
- **Piran** Strolling through the romantic Venetian port and dining on seafood (p1016)
- **Postojna Cave** The Karst's speleological Disneyland with the added bonus of the pint-sized 'human fish' (p1015)
- **Best journey** Crossing the magnificent Vršič Pass by bus or car (p1014)
- **Off-the-beaten track** The lovely traditional villages around Bohinj and their ancient (and iconic) hayracks (p1014)

## FAST FACTS

- **Area** 20,273 sq km (half the size of Switzerland)
- **ATMs** Everywhere, even in villages
- **Budget** €25-45 per day
- **Capital** Ljubljana
- **Country code** ☎ 386
- **Famous for** Mountain sports, Lipizzaner horses, ruby-red Teran wine
- **Head of state** Dr Janez Drnovšek
- **Language** Slovene
- **Money** euro (€); A\$1 = €0.60; CA\$1 = €0.68; ¥100 = €0.66; NZ\$1 = €0.51; UK£1 = €1.47; US\$1 = €0.78
- **Phrases** *dober dan* (hello), *živijo* (hi), *prosim* (please), *hvala* (thank you), *oprostite* (excuse me), *nasvidenje* (goodbye)



- **Population** 2 million
- **Time** GMT/UTC + 1, + 2 in summer
- **Visas** Not required by most visitors. South Africans still need one in advance.

## TRAVEL HINTS

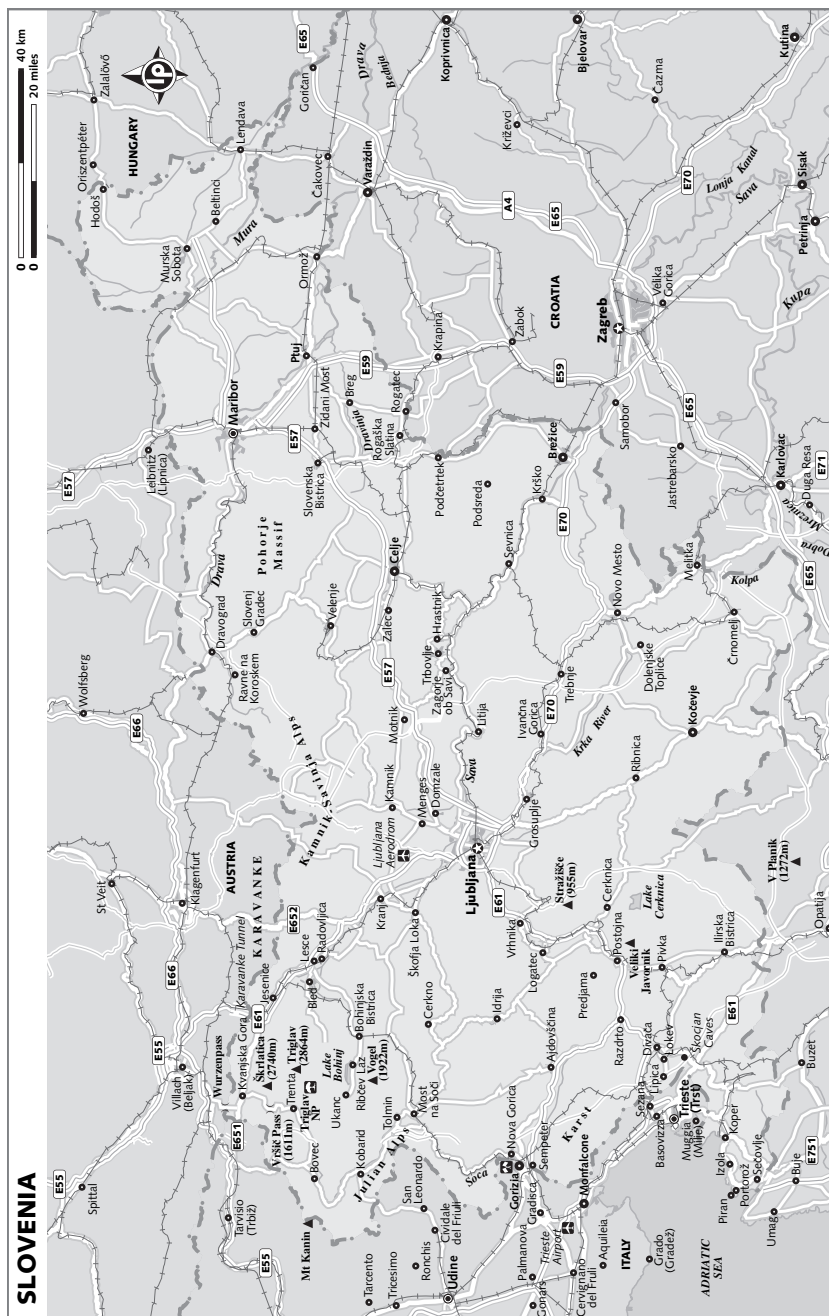
Excellent tourist information centres have great free maps, literature and websites – especially [www.slovenia-tourism.si](http://www.slovenia-tourism.si). Avoid public transport on Sunday. Bring (black) tea.

## ROAMING SLOVENIA

Slovenia's so small you could visit everything from Ljubljana, but it's more cost effective – and nicer – to base yourself at Bled or Bohinj in the Julian Alps, Bovec or Kobarid in the Soča Valley and Koper or Piran on the coast.

It's a tiny place, there's no doubt about that, with a surface area of just over 20,000 sq km and a mere two million people. But 'good things come in small packages', and never was that old chestnut more appropriate than in describing Slovenia (Slovenija).

Patchworks of lush green meadows are crisscrossed by idyllic lanes and scenic highways. Soaring peaks are hemmed with forests and deep valleys offering an unparalleled choice of



active sports. Lowland hills are covered with vines and riddled with awesome caves. The short, well-developed coastline offers both beaches and superb Venetian art and architecture at Koper and Piran. Many places have picturesque Old Towns; Ljubljana's is a 'mini-Prague' of important sights, atmospheric street cafés and stylish shops.

Slovenia isn't cheap but it's fabulously good value. It's safe, compact, friendly and multilingual, with an up-to-date infrastructure.

## HISTORY

Slovenes like to claim they had Europe's first democracy. By the early 7th century their Slavic forebears had founded the Duchy of Carantania in what is now Karnburg in Austria. Ruling dukes were elected by ennobled commoners. This model was noted by Thomas Jefferson when writing the American Declaration of Independence.

From the mid-14th century Austria controlled Slovenia almost uninterrupted until 1918. After some of the most ferocious fighting in WWI, western Slovenia was handed to Italy as Austro-Hungarian postwar reparations and northern Carinthia stayed with Austria. The rest of Slovenia joined fellow south (*jug*) Slavs in forming the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later Yugoslavia.

Nazi occupation in WWII was for the most part courageously resisted by Slovenian partisans. The war ended with Slovenia regaining Italian-held areas from Piran to Bovec but losing Trst (Trieste) and part of divided Gorica (Gorizia).

Slovenia represented only 8% of the national population, but it was the economic powerhouse of Tito's postwar Yugoslavia, producing up to 20% of the GDP. By the 1980s the federation was becoming increasingly Serb-dominated and Slovenes feared losing their political autonomy. After free elections and careful planning, Slovenia broke away from Yugoslavia on 25 June 1991. A 10-day war that left 66 people dead followed; Yugoslavia swiftly signed a truce in order to concentrate on bashing Croatia instead. Slovenia was admitted to the UN in May 1992 and joined the EU in May 2004. In January 2007, Slovenia became the first of the 10 new EU states to adopt the euro as its national currency.

## THE CULTURE

The population of Slovenia is largely homogeneous. Some 83% are ethnic Slovene, with the remainder being Croats, Serbians, Bosnians and Roma; there are also small, long-term enclaves of Italians and Hungarians.

Slovenes are typically multilingual and very friendly. Somehow they have been able to combine a Germanic work ethic with a Mediterranean *joie de vivre*.

## ARTS

Far and away Slovenia's best-loved writer is the Romantic poet France Prešeren (1800–49), whose lyric poetry helped to raise national consciousness.

Many of Ljubljana's most characteristic architectural features were added by the celebrated Slovenian architect Jože Plečnik (1872–1957).

Slovenia's vibrant music scene embraces rave, techno, jazz, punk, thrash-metal and *chanson* (eg Vita Mavrič); the most popular rock band in Slovenia at present is Siddharta. There's also a folk-music revival. Terra Folk is the quintessential world music band.

## ENVIRONMENT

Slovenia is amazingly green; indeed, 57% of its total surface area is covered in forest. It is home to some 3200 plant species – some 70 of which are endemic. Triglav National Park (p1012) is particularly rich in indigenous flowering plants. Living deep in karst caves, the endemic 'living fossil' *Proteus anguinus* is a blind salamander that can survive for years without eating (p1015).

### READING UP

*A Brief History of Slovenia* by Janko Prunk is a low-key but very readable introduction to Slovenian history. *Slovenia and the Slovenes: A Small State and the New Europe* by James Gow and Cathie Carmichael offers excellent analyses not just of history and politics but of culture and the arts too. Misha Glenny's classic *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War* is a thrilling, on-the-spot account of the war that led to Slovenia's independence, although it mostly concentrates on events in Bosnia and Croatia.

## TRANSPORT

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

#### Air

Slovenia's national airline, **Adria Airways** (code JP; ☎ 01-231 33 12; www.adria-airways.com) flies to Ljubljana from some two dozen European cities. Adria flights can be remarkably good value, but with the inauguration of non-stop daily flights from London by Stansted-based **easyJet** (code U2; ☎ 04-206 16 77; www.easyjet.com) and Luton-based **Wizzair** (code W6; ☎ 04-206 19 81; www.wizzair.com), most Britons are now weekend visitors on a budget.

An alternative budget option, especially if you want to concentrate on the coast, is **Ryanair** (code FR; www.ryanair.com), which links London Stansted with **Ronchi dei Legionari airport** (www.aeroporto.fvg.it) at Trieste. Though in Italy, Trieste is much closer to Koper, Piran and the Soča Valley than Ljubljana's airport at Brnik. From the Trieste airport terminal there is a daily **bus** (www.lowcostcoach.com) at 2.40pm to Koper (1½ hours, 56km), Izola (two hours, 61km), Portorož and Piran (2½ hours, 69km); the single/return fare is €15/25.

#### Boat

**Venezia Lines** (☎ 05-674 70 29; www.topline.si) catamarans sail to Venice from Piran (one way/return €49/60.50, 2¼ hours) from May to mid-September. The **Prince of Venice** (☎ 05-617 80 00; portoroz@kompas.si) catamaran from nearby Izola also serves Venice (€42 to €67, 2½ hours) mid-April to September. Both operate between once and four times a week, generally returning the same evening.

#### Bus

International bus destinations from Ljubljana include Frankfurt (€80, 12½ hours, 777km, 7.30pm Sunday to Friday, 9.30pm Saturday) via Munich (€35.40, 6¼ hours, 344km); Sarajevo (€35.65, 9½ hours, 570km, 7.15pm Monday, Wednesday and Friday); Split (€34.20, 10½ hours, 528km, 7.40pm daily) via Rijeka (€11.43, 2½ hours, 136km); and Zagreb (€13.20, 2¼ hours, 154km 2.30am, 7.30am and 8pm).

There are regular buses on weekdays only between Trieste and Koper (€3, one hour, 23km, up to 13 a day) plus a direct

year-round Ljubljana–Trieste service (€11.50, 2½ hours, 105km, 6.25am Monday to Saturday), with an additional departure at 8.15am on Saturday between June and mid-October.

Also from Koper, buses serve destinations in Croatia, including Rijeka (€7.60, two hours, 84km, 10.10am Monday to Friday) and Rovinj (€11.10, 129km, three hours, 3.55pm daily July and August) via Poreč (€8, two hours, 88km). There are two or three more buses to Poreč only, notably at 8.30am Monday to Friday.

#### Train

Daily Ljubljana–Vienna trains (€57, 6¼ hours, 385km, twice a day) via Graz (€30, 200km, 3½ hours) are expensive though so-called SparSchiene discounted fares as low as €29 apply on certain trains and times. Otherwise save money by going first to Maribor (€7.30 to €12.30, 2½ hours, 156km, up to two dozen a day), buy a Maribor–Graz ticket (€11, 1¼ hours, three daily) then continue on domestic tickets from Graz to Vienna (€13.50, 2¾ hours, 201km). Similar savings apply via Jesenice and Villach and/or Klagenfurt.

Three trains daily depart Ljubljana for Munich (€66, 6½ hours, 405km). The 8.17pm departure has sleeping carriages available.

Ljubljana–Venice trains (€25, four hours, 244km) depart at 1.47am (via Trieste; €15, 99km), 10.28am and 4.16pm. It's cheaper to go first to Nova Gorica (€7.30, three hours, 153km, six a day), walk to Gorizia then take an Italian train to Venice (€7.90, 2¼ hours).

For Zagreb there are eight trains daily from Ljubljana (€11.90, two hours, 154km) via Zidani Most. Several trains from the

#### EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- Ambulance (☎ 112)
- Fire brigade (☎ 112)
- Police (☎ 113)
- Road emergency or towing (☎ 1987)
- SOS Helpline (☎ 080-11 55; www.drustvo-sos.si; hnoon-10pm Mon-Fri, 6-10pm Sat & Sun)

capital serve Rijeka (€11.40, two hours, 136km) via Postojna.

Ljubljana–Budapest trains (€58.60, 8¼ hours, 451km, three daily) go via Ptuj and Hodoš; there are Budapest Spezial fares as low as €39 on certain trains and at certain times. The 9.05pm train to Thessaloniki (€83.80, 25 hours, 1159km, one a day) in Greece goes via Belgrade (€39.40, 10 hours, 535km).

#### GETTING AROUND

Unusually, trains in Slovenia are usually cheaper (but less frequent) than buses.

#### Bus

The **Ljubljana bus station** (☎ 234 46 01, information 090 42 30; www.ap-ljubljana.si) website is your best source of information on long-distance bus travel. It's worth booking a seat on popular routes (eg the coast), especially if travelling on Friday afternoon. If your bag has to go in the luggage compartment below the bus, it will cost €1.25 extra.

#### Car & Bicycle

Renting a car is recommended, and can even save you money as you can access cheaper out-of-centre hotels and farm or village homestays. Daily rates usually start at €45/245 per day/week including unlimited mileage, collision-damage waiver and theft protection. Unleaded 95-octane petrol (*bencin*) costs €1.03 to €1.05 per litre, with diesel at €0.98. You must keep your headlights illuminated throughout the day.

Bicycles are available for hire at some train stations, tourist offices, travel agencies and hotels. You'll find mountain bikes easiest to rent in Bovec, Bled and Bohinj.

#### Hitching

Hitchhiking is fairly common and legal, except on motorways and a few major highways. Even young women hitch in Slovenia, but it's never totally safe and Lonely Planet doesn't recommend it.

#### Train

**Slovenske Železnice** (Slovenian Railways; ☎ 01-291 33 32; www.slo-zeleznice.si) has an online timetable that's easy to use. Buy tickets before boarding or you'll incur a €2.10 supplement. Be aware that IC (InterCity) trains carry a surcharge of €1.40 to €1.70 on top of the standard quoted fares.

## LJUBLJANA

☎ 01 / pop 254,200

Charming Ljubljana has a Lilliputian but delightful Old Town, a vibrant street-café culture, a buzzing student community and an alternative-lifestyle centre at Metelkova. The Slovenian capital may lack the grandeur or big-name attractions of cities like Paris or Prague, but the great museums and galleries, atmospheric bars and varied, accessible nightlife make it a great place to visit and stay awhile.

#### HISTORY

If Ljubljana really was founded by Jason and the Golden Fleece-stealing Argonauts as Ljubljančani say, they left no proof of their stay. However, legacies of the Roman city of Emona (remnants of walls, dwellings and early churches) can be seen throughout. Ljubljana more or less took its present form as Laibach under the Austrian Habsburgs, but it gained regional prominence in 1809, when it became the capital of Napoleon's short-lived Illyrian Provinces. Some fine Art Nouveau buildings filled up the holes left by a devastating 1895 earthquake.

#### ORIENTATION

Prešernov trg, on the left bank of the Ljubljanica River, is the heart of Ljubljana. Just across Triple Bridge is the Old Town, which follows the north and west flanks of Castle Hill. The bus and train stations are 800m north of Prešernov trg up Miklošičeva cesta. The airport is in Brnik, 25km north.

#### INFORMATION

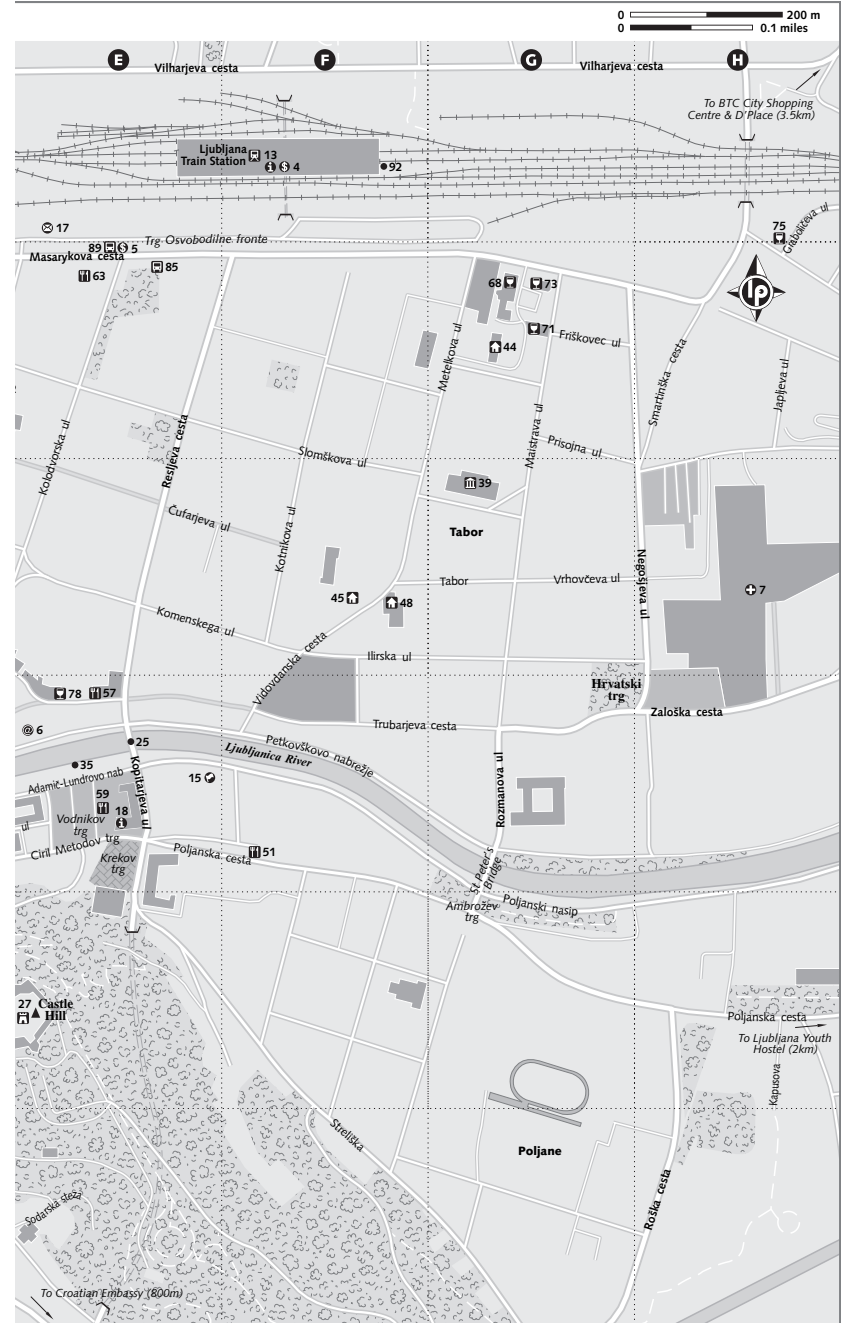
##### Bookshops

**Geonavtik** (☎ 252 70 27; www.geonavtik.com, in Slovene; Kongresni trg 1; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-4pm Sat) Stocks Lonely Planet guides and books about Slovenia.

**Kod & Kam** (☎ 200 27 32; www.kod-kam.si; Trg Francoske Revolucije 7; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) Map specialist.

##### Discount Card

**Ljubljana Card** (€12.50) The excellent-value Ljubljana Card is valid for three days (72 hours) and is available from tourist offices. It offers free admission to many museums, unlimited city bus travel and discounts on organised tours, accommodation and restaurants, rental cars etc.



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Abanka.....	1 D2	History.....	30 A1	Sokol.....	65 D4
Australian Consulate.....	2 B4	National Gallery.....	31 B3		66 D4
Austrian Embassy.....	3 A4	National Museum.....	32 B4	<b>DRINKING</b>	
Bureau de Change.....	4 F1	Philharmonic Hall.....	33 C5	Bacchus Center Club.....	67 C4
Bureau de Change.....	5 E2	Plečnik.....	34 B6	Channel Zero.....	(see 68)
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French Embassy.....	9 B6	Roman Walls.....	38 A6	Klub Gromka.....	71 G2
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STA Ljubljana Café.....	(see 20)	Vila Veselova.....	50 A4		
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US Embassy.....	22 B4	Ali Baba.....	51 F4	Bus 13 To Ljubljana Youth Hostel.....	84 D5
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>		Aska in Volk.....	52 D6	Bus 13 To Ljubljana Youth Hostel.....	85 E2
Art Nouveau Buildings.....	23 D4	Delikatesa Ljubljanski Dvor.....	53 C5	Bus 13 To Ljubljana Youth Hostel.....	86 C5
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Franciscan Church of the Annunciation.....	26 D4	Hot Horse.....	57 E4	Funicular Lower Station.....	90 E4
Ljubljana Castle.....	27 E5	Hot Horse.....	58 A1	Funicular Upper Station.....	91 E5
Ljubljana University.....	28 C5	Market.....	59 E4	Ljubljana Bike Stand.....	(see 44)
Modern Art Museum.....	29 B3	Mercator.....	60 D2	Ljubljana Bike Stand.....	(see 18)
		Mirje.....	61 A6		
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## Internet Access

Internet is available at most hostels and hotels; the Slovenian Tourist Information Centre (see right), per half-hour €1.05; the STA Ljubljana café (opposite), per 20 minutes €1.05; and at the following places:

**Cyber Café Explorer** (☎ 430 19 91; Petkovškovo nabrežje 23; per half-/full hr €2.40/4, 5hr €11; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Fri, 2-10pm Sat & Sun) Has 10 super-fast computers and wireless connection.

**Portal.si Internet Kotiček** (☎ 090 42 30; Trg OF 4; per hr €3.75; ☎ 7am-8.30pm) In the bus station.

## Left Luggage

**Bus station** (Trg OF 4; per day €1.80; ☎ 5am-9.30pm)

**Train station** (Trg OF 6; per day €2.10; ☎ 24hr) Coin lockers on platform 1.

## Medical Services

**Emergency Medical Assistance Clinic** (Klinični Centre – Urgenca; ☎ 232 30 60; Bohoričeva ul 9; ☎ 24hr)

## Money

ATMs are everywhere, including the train and bus stations, where you'll also find **bureaux de change** (☎ 6am-10pm) that will change cash for no commission but not travellers cheques.

**Abanka** (☎ 471 81 00; Slovenska c 50; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat)

**Nova Ljubljanska Banka** (☎ 425 01 55; Trg Republike 2; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri) Main office of the biggest bank.

## Post

**Post office** (Slovenska c 32; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) Holds poste restante for 30 days.

## Tourist Information

**Ljubljana Tourist Information Centre** (TIC; www.ljubljana-tourism.si) Stritarjeva ul (☎ 306 12 15; Kresjica Bldg; ☎ 8am-9pm Jun-Sep, 8am-7pm Oct-May); Train Station (☎ 433 94 75; Trg OF 6; ☎ 8am-10pm Jun-Sep, 10am-7pm Oct-May)

## Slovenian Tourist Information Centre (STIC;

☎ 306 45 76; www.slovenia-tourism.si; Krekov trg 10; ☎ 8am-9pm Jun-Sep, 8am-7pm Oct-May) Internet and bicycle rental also available.

## Travel Agencies

**Erazem** (☎ 430 55 37; www.erazem.net; basement, Miklošičeva c 26; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat Jun-Sep, noon-5pm Mon-Fri Oct-May) Popular with backpackers and students. Staff make flight and train bookings and sell ISIC, ITC and IYTC cards.

**STA Ljubljana** (☎ 439 16 90; www.staljubljana.com, in Slovene; 1st fl, Trg Ajdovščina 1; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri) Offers discount air fares for students and its café has internet access.

## SIGHTS

Delightfully sprinkled with cafés, **Mestni trg**, **Stari trg** and **Gornji trg** wind picturesquely beneath a tree-dappled bluff crowned by the Old Town's focal point, **Ljubljana Castle**. Admission is free to the castle's central courtyard and some ramparts. However, views are even better from the 19th-century **Belvedere** (adult/concession €3.30/2; ☎ 9am-9pm May-Sep, 10am-6pm Oct-Apr). The fastest way to reach the castle is via the new **funicular**, which will have begun operations by the time you read this. It ascends from Vodnikov trg, though you can also take the hourly **tourist train** (adult/child €2.50/1.70; ☎ 9am-9pm mid-Jun-Sep, 11am-6pm Apr-mid-Jun, 9am-7pm Oct, 11am-3pm Nov-Mar) from Prešernov trg.

**Prešernov trg**, Ljubljana's main square, boasts the salmon-pink **Franciscan Church of the Annunciation** (1660), the **Prešeren Monument** (1905) to the nation's favourite poet (see p1003) and the small but almost perfect **Triple Bridge**. The prolific architect Jože Plečnik (see p1003 for more information) added two side bridges to the original 1842 span in 1931 to create something truly unique.

North of Prešernov trg you can admire some fine **Art Nouveau buildings** along Miklošičeva cesta, including the still-grand **Grand Union Hotel** at No 1 and the colourful **former Cooperative Bank** (1922) up the road at No 8.

East of the Triple Bridge is the brilliantly frescoed **Cathedral of St Nicholas** (Ciril Metodov trg; ☎ 10am-noon & 3-6pm), dating from the early 18th century, and much loved **Dragon Bridge**, whose guardian dragons are city mascots. The recently renovated baroque **Robba**

**Fountain** stands before the Gothic **town hall** (1718) in Mestni trg.

The grand if somewhat pompous main building of **Ljubljana University** (Kongresni trg 12) was the regional parliament (1902) under Habsburg rule. The more restrained **Philharmonic Hall** (Filharmonija; Kongresni trg 10) dates from 1898 and is home to the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra.

Of the major galleries and museums to the west of Slovenska cesta, the best are the impressive **National Gallery** (☎ 241 54 34; www.ng-slo.si; Prešernova c 24; adult/concession €2.90/4.20, free admission 2-6pm Sat & 1st Sun of month; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), the vibrant though outwardly dowdy **Modern Art Museum** (☎ 241 68 00; www.mg-lj.si; Cankarjeva c 15; adult/concession €4.20/2.10; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) and the quiet **Museum of Contemporary History** (☎ 300 96 10; www.muzej-nz.si; Celovška c 23; adult/student €2.10/1.25; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sat) situated in the Park Tivolji with its imaginative glance at 20th-century Slovenia.

The **National Museum** (☎ 241 44 04; www.narmuz-lj.si; Muzejska ul 1; adult/concession €4.60/3.35, admission free 1st Sun of month; ☎ 10am-6pm Fri-Wed, 10am-8pm Thu) occupies an elegant 1888 building but is partially closed for a protracted renovation. The **Slovenian Ethnographic Museum** (☎ 300 87 45; www.etno-muzej.si; Metelkova ul 2; adult/concession €3.35/2.10; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), on the southern edge of Metelkova, has an excellent permanent collection with all manner of traditional Slovenian trades and crafts.

## SLEEPING

**Ljubljana Resort** (☎ 568 39 13; www.ljubljanaresort.si; Dunajska c 270; camp sites per adult €7.10-12.10, per child €5.30-9.10; ☎ ☎) It's got a pretty grandiose name, but wait till you see the facilities at this attractive seven-hectare camping ground-cum-resort 5km north of the centre (bus 6 or 8). It's open year-round.

**Dijaški Dom Tabor** (☎ 234 88 40; www.2arnes.si/~ssljddta4; Vidovdanska c 7; dm/s/d €10/26/38; ☎ late Jun-late Aug; ☎) From some time in June to August five colleges open their dormitories (*dijaški dom*) to foreigner travellers but this 300-bed one is the most central.

**Ljubljana Youth Hostel** (☎ 548 00 55; www.yh-ljubljana.com; Litjijska c 57; dm €17.50; ☎) This HI-affiliated hostel has six rooms with shared facilities some 3km east of the centre (bus 5, 9 or 13).

**our pick** **Celica Hostel** (☎ 230 97 00; www.hostel.celica.com; Metelkova ul 8; dm €17, s/d/tr cell €44/46/57, 4-5-bed r per person €24, 6-7-bed r per person €19; ☒ ☑) This revamped former prison (1882) in Metelkova has 20 designer 'cells', complete with original bars, rooms and apartments with three to seven beds and a popular 12-bed dorm. The all-blue room No 116 with the circular bed is like sleeping in an eye. The ground floor has three cafés (set lunch €3.15 to €5.25): a traditional *gostilna*, a western-style café (with two internet stations) and the Oriental Café, with cushions, water pipes and shoes strictly outside. Celica has become such a landmark that there are guided tours every day at 2pm.

**Alibi Hostel** (☎ 251 12 44; www.alibi.si; Cankarjevo nabrežje 27; dm/d €20/60; ☒ ☑ ☑) This unbelievably well-situated 110-bed hostel right on the Ljubljana has brightly painted, airy dorm rooms with six to 12 wooden bunks and five doubles on four floors. Its sister hostel, the tiny Alibi K5 (☎ 252 49 60), at Krojaška ul 5, takes the overflow.

**Park Hotel** (☎ 300 25 00; www.hotelpark.si; Tabor 9; s €39-55, d €48-71; ☒ ☑) The 145 renovated rooms here are bright and well equipped. Cheaper rooms have en suite toilet but share showers, and students with ISIC cards get a 10% discount.

**Vila Veselova** (☎ 059-926 721, 041-678 000; www.v.v.si; Veselova ul 14; dm €20-25, d/tr €70/90; ☒ ☑ ☑) This very attractive freestanding villa with its own garden and 40 beds opposite Park Tivoli offers mostly hostel accommodation in three rooms with four to eight beds, though there's a double and an apartment with en suite facilities.

**Hotel Emonec** (☎ 200 15 20; www.hotel-emonec.com; Wolfova ul 12; s €53, d €60-70, trly €83; ☒ ☑) The décor is simple and coldly modern at this 26-room hotel, but everything is spotless and you can't beat the central location.

## EATING

### Self-Catering

Handy supermarkets and convenience stores include **Mercator** (Slovenska c 55; ☒ 7am-9pm) and, opposite the train and bus stations, **Noč in Dan** (☎ 234 79 62; Trg Of 13; ☒ 24hr).

### Quick Eats

**Delikatosa Ljubljanski Dvor** (☎ 426 93 27; Kongresni trg 11; ☒ 9am-midnight Mon-Sat; pizza slices €1.20-1.70) Bargain slices of pizzas, salads and grilled

vegetables sold by weight to take away or eat on the spot.

**Hot Horse** (Trubarjeva c 31; snacks & burgers €2.50-3.35; ☒ 8am-1am Mon-Sat, noon-1am Sun) Supplies Ljubljancani with a favourite treat: horse burgers. There's another branch at Park Tivoli, open 24 hours.

**Nobel Burek** (Miklošičeva c 30; snacks €1.50-1.90; ☒ 24hr) This round-the-clock hole in the wall serves *burek* and pizza.

**Paninoteka** (☎ 059-018 445, 041-529 824; Jurčičev trg 3; soups & toasted sandwiches €2.10-3.35; ☒ 8am-1am Mon-Sat, 9am-11pm Sun) Healthy sandwich creations on a lovely little square by the river.

**Ribca** (☎ 425 15 44; Adamič-Lundrovo nabrežje 1; dishes €2.70-6.70; ☒ 7am-4pm Mon-Fri, 7am-2pm Sat) Below the Plečnik Colonnade, this basement seafood place serves generous lunches to hungry market-goers.

## Restaurants

**Harambaša** (☎ 041-843 106; Vrtna ul 8; dishes €2.70-4; ☒ 10am-10pm Mon-Fri, noon-10pm Sat, noon-6pm Sun) Here you'll find authentic Bosnian cuisine served at low tables in a charming modern cottage atmosphere.

**Gostilna Pri Pavli** (☎ 425 92 75; Stari trg 1; mains €5.80-10.85; ☒ 8am-11pm) 'Paula's Place' is an attractive, country-style inn in an enviable location that has managed to retain its old-school style and prices.

**Sokol** (☎ 439 68 55; Ciril Metodov trg 18; mains €5.80-11.20; ☒ 7am-11pm Mon-Sat, 10am-11pm Sun) In this old vaulted house, traditional Slovenian food is served on heavy tables by costumed waiters.

**Ali Baba** (☎ 230 17 87, 051-234 066; Poljanska c 11; mains €7.10-7.75; ☒ 7am-11pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat) Carpets and low brass tables decorate this cosy little restaurant that serves Iranian and Indian favourites.

**Aska in Volk** (☎ 251 10 69; Gornji trg 4; mains €7.10-13.80; noon-10pm Sun-Thu, noon-11pm Fri & Sat) The 'Lamb and Wolf', which takes its name from a Bosnian novel, is a very stylish choice for South Slav specialities, including roast lamb.

Ljubljana is awash in pizzerias (pizzas €4 to €6.50), but the pick of the crop include **Foculus Pizzeria** (☎ 251 56 43; Gregorčičeva ul 3; ☒ 10am-midnight Mon-Fri, noon-midnight Sat & Sun), which boasts a painted vaulted ceiling; **Trta** (☎ 426 50 66; Grudnovo nabrežje 21; ☒ 11am-10.30pm Mon-Fri, noon-10.30pm Sat), on the Ljubljana's right bank; and **Mirje** (☎ 426 60 15; Tržaška c 5;

☒ 10am-10pm Mon-Fri, noon-10pm Sat), southwest of the centre, also with excellent pasta.

## DRINKING

**Kafeterija Lan** (Gallusovo nabrežje 27; ☒ 9am-midnight Mon-Thu, 9am-1am Fri & Sat, 10am-1am Sun) This little greener-than-green café-bar on the river below Cobbler Bridge is something of a hipster/gay magnet.

**Kavarna Zvezda** (☎ 421 90 90; Kongresni trg 4 & Wolfova ul 14; ☒ 7am-11pm Mon-Sat, 10am-8pm Sun) The Star Café is celebrated for its cakes, especially *skutina pečena* (€2), an eggy cheesecake.

**Le Petit Café** (☎ 426 14 88; Trg Francoske Revolucije 4; ☒ 7.30am-11pm Sun-Thu, 9am-midnight Fri & Sat) Just opposite the Križanke, this pleasant, studenty place offers great coffee and breakfast (€2.90 to €4.20).

**Pločnik** (Prešernov trg 1; ☒ 7am-1am Apr-Oct) This roped-off café-bar on the southern side of Prešernov trg is one of the most popular places for a drink if you just want to sit outside and watch the passing parade.

**Salon** (☎ 439 87 64; Trubarjeva c 23; ☒ 9am-1am Mon & Tue, 9am-3am Wed-Sat, 10am-1am Sun) Salon is a dazzling designer-kitsch cocktail bar with excellent cocktails.

**Žmavc** (☎ 251 03 24; Rimska c 21; ☒ 7.30am-1am Mon-Sat, 8am-1am Sun) A super-popular student hang-out west of Slovenska cesta with comic-strip scenes and figures running halfway up the walls.

## CLUBBING

**Pub As** (☎ 425 88 22; Knafjev prehod 5a; ☒ 7am-3am Wed-Sat) DJs transform this candle-lit basement bar, hidden beneath an upmarket restaurant, into a pumping, crowd-pulling nightclub four nights a week.

**Bacchus Center Club** (☎ 241 82 44; Kongresni trg 3; ☒ 10pm-5am Mon-Sat) This place has something for everyone and attracts a mixed crowd.

**D'Place** (☎ 040-626 901; www.club-dplace.com, in Slovene; Šmartinska c 152; 10pm-6am Thu-Sat) This new club with different themed evenings is in the Kolosej multiplex cinema at the BTC City Shopping Centre (bus 2, 12 or 17).

**Klub K4** (☎ 438 03 04; www.klubk4.org; Kersnikova ul 4; ☒ 10pm-4am) This evergreen club in the basement of the student union features rave-electronic music Friday and Saturday, with other styles of music weeknights, and a popular gay and lesbian night on Sunday.

**Metelkova Mesto** (btwn Metelkova ul & Maistrova ul; www.metelkova.org) 'Metelkova Town', an ex-army garrison taken over by squatters after independence, is now a free-living commune, with half a dozen idiosyncratic venues coming to life generally after midnight Thursday to Saturday. They include Gala Hala, with live bands and club nights; Channel Zero (punk, hard-core); Klub Tif-fany and Klub Monokel for gay men and lesbians respectively; and Klub Gromka with folk music and live concerts.

**Orto Bar** (☎ 232 16 74; www.orto-bar.com; Graboličeva ul 1; ☒ 6pm-4am Mon-Thu, 6pm-5am Fri & Sat, 6pm-2am Sun) Popular bar for late-night drinking and dancing, with occasional live music.

## ENTERTAINMENT

*Ljubljana Life* (www.ljubljanalife.com) is a free quarterly magazine with practical information and listings. *Where to? in Ljubljana*, available from the tourist offices, lists cultural and sporting events.

The most active venue is the multipurpose **Cankarjev Dom** (www.cd-cc.si, in Slovene; ☎ 241 71 00; Prešernova c 10), whose **ticket office** (☎ 241 72 99; ☒ 11am-1pm & 3-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-1pm Sat & 1hr before performance) is in the subway below the Maximarket supermarket on the opposite side of Trg Republike.

Also check for classical concerts at the attractive **Philharmonic Hall** (Filharmonija; ☎ 241 08 00; www.filharmonija.si; Kongresni trg 10) and for opera and ballets at the **Opera House** (☎ 241 17 40; www.opera.si; Župančičeva ul 1). The **Križanke** (☎ 241 60 00, 241 60 26; Trg Francoske Revolucije 1-2) hosts events during the **Ljubljana Summer Festival** (www.festival-lj.si) in what was a sprawling monastic complex from the 13th century.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Bus

Ljubljana's shed-like **bus station** (☎ 234 46 01, information 090 42 30; www.ap-ljubljana.si; Trg Of 4; ☒ 5.30am-10.30pm Mon-Sat, 8am-8pm Sun) has bilingual info-phones, and its timetable is useful once you get the hang of it. Frequent buses serve Bohinj (€8, two hours, 86km, hourly) via Bled (€6.15, 1¼ hours, 57km). Most buses to Piran (€11.70, three hours, 140km, up to seven daily) go via Koper (€10.75, 2½ hours, 122km, up to 11 daily) and Postojna (€5.75, one hour, 53km, up to 24 daily).

## Train

The capital's **train station** (☎ 291 33 32; www.slo-zeleznice.si; Trg Of 6; ☎ 5am-10pm) has services to Koper (€7.30 to €8.70, 2½ hours, 153km, four times a day). Or, take the Sežana-bound train (5.55am) and change at Divača (1¼ hours). For international services see p1004.

## GETTING AROUND

The cheapest way to Ljubljana Aerodrom at Brnik is by city bus from stop 28 (€3.70, 50 minutes, 27km) at the bus station. These run hourly, from 6.10am to 8.10pm Monday to Friday; at the weekend there's a bus at 6.10am then one every two hours from 9.10am to 7.10pm.

Ljubljana has an excellent network (21 lines) of city buses but you'll need them only if you're staying out of town. Buy little metal tokens (*žetoni*; €0.80) from newsstands or pay €1.25 on board.

**Ljubljana Bike** (☎ 051-441 900; 2hr/day €0.85/4.20; ☎ 8am-8pm Apr-Oct) has bikes available from some 10 locations around the city, including the train station, the STIC office (Krekov trg 10; see p1008) and the Celica Hostel (Metelkova ul 8; see p1010).

## JULIAN ALPS

The Julian Alps – named in honour of Caesar himself – form Slovenia's dramatic northwest frontier with Italy. Triglav National Park, established in 1924, includes almost all of the alps lying within Slovenia. The centrepiece of the park is, of course, triple-peaked Mt Triglav (2864m), Slovenia's highest mountain. The area offers a wide range of adventure sports at very affordable prices.

## BLED

☎ 04 / pop 5250

With its emerald-green lake, picture-postcard church on an islet, medieval castle clinging to a rocky cliff and some of the country's highest peaks as backdrops, Bled seems too good to be true. It's a delightful base from which to explore the mountains.

## Information

**3glav adventures** (☎ 041-683 184, 041-819 636; www.3glav-adventures.com; Ljubljanska c 1; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Oct) The No 1 adventure- and extreme-sport specialists in Bled.

**À Propos Bar** (☎ 574 40 44; Bled Shopping Centre, Ljubljanska c 4; per 15/30/60min €1.25/2.10/4.20; ☎ 8am-midnight) Internet access.

**Globtour Bled** (☎ 575 13 00; www.globtour-bleed.com; Ljubljanska c 7; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat Sep-Jun, 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 8am-noon & 4-8pm Sun Jul & Aug) This travel agent in the Hotel Krim rents out private rooms.

**Gorenjska Banka** (C Svobode 15; ☎ 9-11.30am & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 8-11am Sat)

**Kompas** (☎ 572 75 00; www.kompas-bleed.si; Bled Shopping Centre, Ljubljanska c 4; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat, 8am-noon & 4-7pm Sun Sep-Jun, 8am-7pm Mon-Sat, 8am-noon & 4-8pm Sun Jul & Aug) Rents private rooms and bicycles.

**Tourist Information Centre Bled** (☎ 574 11 22; www.bleed.si; C Svobode 10; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun Jul & Aug, 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun Jun & Sep, 8am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-5pm Sun Oct & Mar-May, 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun Nov-Feb)

## Sights

On its own romantically tiny island, the baroque **Church of the Assumption** is Bled's own icon. Getting there by a piloted **gondola** (pletja; ☎ 041 293 424) is the archetypal tourist experience. Gondola prices are standard from any jetty (return per person €10) and it's a 1½-hour trip. Ordinary row-yourself boats for three to four people cost €10.50 per hour.

Perched atop a 100m-cliff, **Bled Castle** (☎ 578 05 25; Grajska c 25; adult/student €5/4.60; ☎ 8am-8pm May-Oct, 8am-5pm Nov-Apr) is the perfect backdrop to a lake view. A footpath leads up from behind the Bledec Hostel. Admission includes entry to the museum collection as well as **Castle Printworks**.

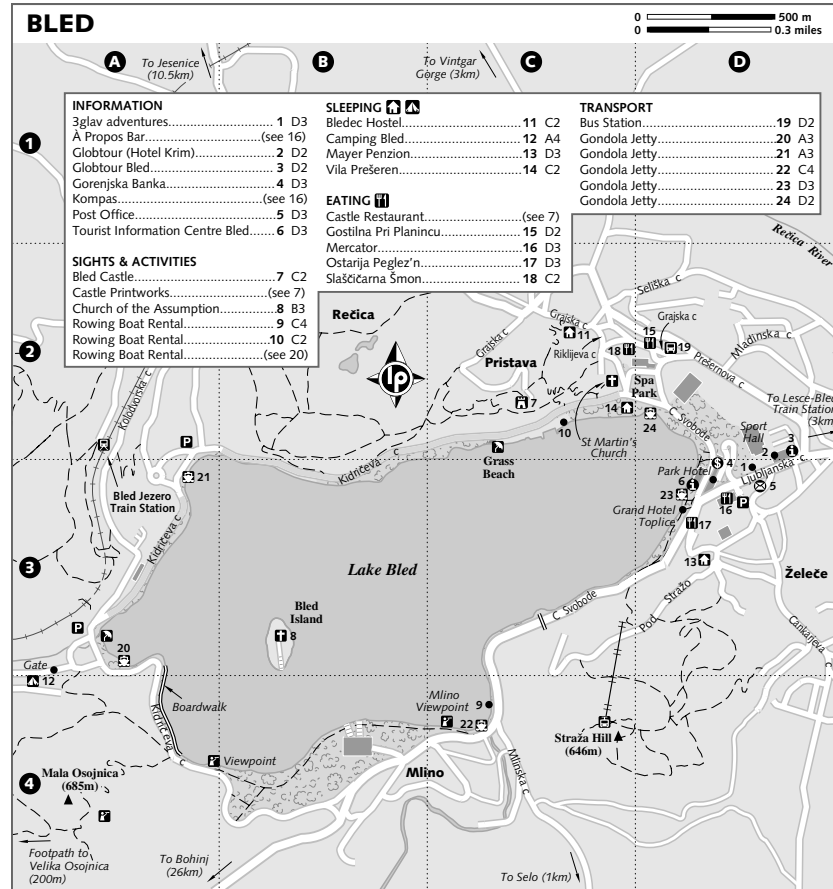
## Activities

The best way to see Lake Bled is on foot; the 6km stroll shouldn't take more than a couple of hours, including the short (but steep) climb to the brilliant **Osojnica viewpoint**. A popular and easy walk is to **Vintgar Gorge** (adult/student €2.90/2.50; ☎ 8am-7pm late Apr-Oct), some 4km to the northwest of Bled.

For something tougher, join one of the rafting or kayaking (€23 to €38) trips or paragliding flights (€70) available from 3glav adventures (see left).

## Sleeping

Private rooms are offered by dozens of homes in the area. Both Kompas and Globtour Bled (see left) have extensive lists, with prices for singles/doubles starting at €20/30.



**Camping Bled** (☎ 575 20 00; www.camping.bleed.si; Kidričeva c 10; adult €8.50-11, child €6-7.70; ☎ Apr-mid-Oct) This popular 6.5-hectare site fills a rural valley behind a waterside restaurant at the western end of the lake.

**Bledec Hostel** (☎ 574 52 50; Grajska c 17; dm low/high season €18/20, d low/high season €24/26; ☎ ☎) This well-organised hostel has four-bed dorms with attached bathrooms, a bar, an inexpensive restaurant and laundry (per load €8.35). Prices discounted for HI members.

**Mayer Penzion** (☎ 574 10 58; www.mayer-sp.si; Želeška c 7; d/q €70/90, apt €65-75; ☎ ☎) A delightful 13-room inn in a renovated 19th-century house, the Mayer is in a quiet location above the lake.

**Vila Prešeren** (☎ 578 08 00; www.vila.preseren.s5.net; Kidričeva c 1; s lake view €58-64, s park view €50-55, d lake view €78-88, d park view €67-72) A positively charming mini-hotel, the Prešeren has just six rooms and two suites in a lovely old villa, dating from 1865, facing the lake just west of Spa Park.

## Eating

**Gostilna Pri Planincu** (☎ 574 16 13; Grajska c 8; mains €5.85-15; ☎ noon-10pm) 'At the Mountaineer's' is a cosy pub-restaurant just down the hill from the Bledec Hostel with simple Slovenian mains and grilled Balkan specialities.

**Ostarija Peglez'n** (☎ 574 42 18; C Svobode 19a; mains €6.25-16.25; ☎ 11am-midnight) The 'Iron Inn' just opposite the landmark Grand

Hotel Toplice has fascinating retro décor and serves some of the best fish dishes in town.

**Castle Restaurant** (☎ 579 44 24; mains €10.85-18.80; ☎ 10am-10pm) Typical local dishes are pricey for what they are, but the view from the terrace is unbeatable.

**Slaščičarna Šmon** (☎ 574 16 16; Grajska c 3; ☎ 7.30am-9pm) Bled's culinary speciality is *kremna snežna rezina* (cream cake; €1.70), a layer of vanilla custard topped with whipped cream and sandwiched neatly between two layers of flaky pastry, and this is the place to try it.

You'll find a **Mercator** (Ljubljanska c 4; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Sat, 8am-noon Sun) at the eastern end of Bled Shopping Centre.

### Getting There & Around

Frequent buses to Bohinj (€3.50, one hour, 26km, hourly) and Ljubljana (€6.10, 1¼ hours, 57km, hourly) use the central bus station. Trains for Bohinjska Bistrica (€1.45, 20 minutes, 18km, seven a day) and Nova Gorica (€5.05, 2¼ hours, 79km, seven a day) use little Bled Jezero station, which is 2km west of central Bled – handy for the camping ground. Trains for Ljubljana (€3.90 to €5.30, 55 minutes, 51km, up to 17 a day) use Lesce-Bled station, 4km to the east of town.

### BOHINJ

☎ 04 / pop 5260

Bohinj, a larger and much less developed glacial lake 26km to the southwest, is a world apart from Bled. Triglav itself is visible from the lake and there are activities galore – from kayaking and mountain biking to trekking up Triglav via one of the southern approaches. **Bohinjska Bistrica**, the area's largest village, is 6km east of the lake and useful mainly for its train station. The minuscule tourist centre at the lake's eastern end is **Ribčev Laz**, containing a supermarket, a post office with ATM and the **Tourist Information Centre Bohinj** (☎ 574 60 10; www.bohinj.si; Ribčev Laz 48; ☎ 8am-8pm Jul & Aug, 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-3pm Sun Sep-Jun).

### Sights & Activities

**Central Alpinsport** (☎ 572 34 86; www.alpainsport.si; Ribčev Laz 53; ☎ 9am-7pm Jun-Aug, 10am-6pm Sep-May) organises a range of activities and rents kayaks, canoes, bicycles and other equipment

from a kiosk near the stone bridge. Next door is the **Church of St John the Baptist**, which contains splendid 15th- and 16th-century frescoes but is undergoing a protracted renovation.

A nearby village called **Stara Fužina** has an appealing little **Alpine Dairy Museum** (☎ 572 30 95; Stara Fužina 181; adult/child €1.70/1.25; ☎ 11am-7pm Tue-Sun Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 4-6pm Tue-Sun Jan-Jun, Sep & Oct). Just 2km east is **Studor**, a village famed for its *kozolci* and *toplarji*, Slovenia's unique single and double hayracks.

### Sleeping

Private rooms are available through the tourist office (per person €9.20 to €15.10).

**Avtokamp Zlatorog** (☎ 572 34 82; www.alpinum.net; Ukanc 2; camp sites per person €5.85-10; ☎ May-Sep) This pine-shaded 2.5-hectare site accommodating 500 guests is at the lake's western end.

**Penzion Rožič** (☎ 572 33 93; rozic@siol.net; Ribčev Laz 42; per person €20-25; ☎) This unpretentious chalet-style guesthouse with 20 rooms and a popular restaurant is just 200m east of the tourist office.

### Getting There & Around

Buses run regularly from Ukanc to Ljubljana (€8.50, two hours, 91km, hourly) via Ribčev Laz, Bohinjska Bistrica and Bled (€4, one hour, 34km), with six extra buses daily between Ukanc and Bohinjska Bistrica (€2.20, 20 minutes, 12km). From Bohinjska Bistrica, passenger trains to Nova Gorica (€4.50, 1½ hours, 61km, up to seven a day) make use of a century-old tunnel under the mountains that provides the only direct option for reaching the Soča Valley. In addition there are six daily auto trains (*avtovlaki*) to Podbrdo (€7.10, eight minutes, 7km) and Most na Soči (€10.85, 25 minutes, 28km).

## SOČA VALLEY

The region of the Soča Valley stretches from Triglav National Park across to Nova Gorica. It is dominated by the 96km-long Soča River, coloured a deep – almost artificial – turquoise. The valley has more than its share of historical sights, but most people come here for rafting, hiking and skiing.

### BOVEC

☎ 05 / pop 1650

The best alpine views are at Bovec, which lies in the shadow of Mt Kanin, Slovenia's highest ski resort. The compact village square, Trg Golobarskih Žrtev, has everything you need, including the **Tourist Information Centre Bovec** (☎ 384 19 19; www.bovec.si; Trg Golobarskih Žrtev 8; ☎ 9am-8pm Jul & Aug, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 4-6pm Sat, 9am-noon Sun Sep-Jun) and adventure-sports companies, including **Soča Rafting** (☎ 389 62 00; www.socarafting.si) and **Top Extreme** (☎ 330 00 90, 041-620 636; www.top.si).

Camping facilities are generally better in nearby Kobarid but **Kamp Polovnik** (☎ 388 60 69; www.camp-polovnik.com; camp sites per adult/child €6.70/4.80; ☎ Apr-Oct) about 500m southeast of the centre is attractive and convenient. The tourist office has hundreds of private rooms (per person €12 to €25) on its lists. The 103-room **Alp Hotel** (☎ 388 60 40; www.bovec.net/hotelalp; Trg Golobarskih Žrtev 48; s €37-48, d €57.50-78; ☎ ☎) is fairly good value and as central as you are going to find in Bovec.

### Getting There & Away

Weekday buses from Bovec via Kobarid go to Nova Gorica (€5.75, 1½ hours, 55km, five a day) and to Ljubljana (€6.95, three hours, 130km, up to four a day), passing Most na Soči train station (good for Bled and Bohinj). Daily in July and August a bus crosses over the spectacular Vršič Pass to Kranjska Gora (€6.65, three hours, 68km).

## KARST & COAST

Slovenia's short coast (47km) on the Adriatic is not renowned for its fine beaches, though the southernmost resort of Portorož has some decent ones. Koper and Piran, two important towns full of Venetian Gothic architecture, are the drawing card here. En route from Ljubljana you'll cross the Karst, a huge limestone plateau and a land of olives, ruby-red Teran wine, *pršut* (air-dried ham) and deep caves.

### POSTOJNA & ŠKOCJAN CAVES

☎ 05

Two kilometres northwest of Postojna (population 8670), **Postojna Cave** (☎ 700 01 00; www.postojnska-jama.si; adult/student €16.65/12.50; ☎ hourly 9am-6pm May-Sep, 10am, noon, 2pm & 4pm Apr & Oct,

10am, noon & 2pm Mon-Fri, 10am, noon, 2pm & 4pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) is home to endemic *Proteus anguinus* – cute, eyeless salamanders nicknamed 'human fish'. The cave is filled with endless stalagmites, stalactites and almost as many tourists. Visits (1½ hours) involve underground train rides as well as a 1.7km walk with gradients but no steps. Dress warm or rent a coat (€2): inside it's 8°C to 10°C.

The quieter and more remote **Škocjan Caves** (☎ 763 28 40, 708 21 10; www.park-skojanske-jame.si; Škocjan 2; adult/student €10.85/7.50; ☎ tours hourly 10am-5pm May-Sep, 10am, 1pm & 3.30pm Apr & Oct, 10am & 1pm Mon-Sat, 10am, 1pm & 3pm Sun Nov-Mar) are 4km southeast of Divača. **Kraški Turist** (☎ 041-573 768; kraskiturist@gmail.com; ☎ 8am-5pm Apr-Oct) at the train station next door has route maps for walking to the caves and rents bicycles (per hour/day €1.25/8.35). Shepherded two-hour visits are on foot and involve hundreds of steps.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Kompas Postojna** (☎ 721 14 80; info@kompas-postojna.si; Titov trg 2a; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat Jun-Aug, 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat May, Sep & Oct, 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat Nov-Apr) Can help with private rooms (per person €13.90 to €15.80).

**Hotel & Hostel Sport** (☎ 720 622 44; www.sport-hotel.si; Kolodvorska c 1; dm €13-15, s €34-38, d €43-56; ☎ ☎) With 37 spick-and-span and very comfortable rooms and dormitory, it's just north of the centre of Postojna.

**Gostilna Malovec** (☎ 763 02 00; Kraška 30a; s/d €20/40) In Divača, you'll find half a dozen basic but comfortable renovated rooms in a building beside a popular restaurant (mains €5 to €9.10, open from 7am to 10pm).

### Getting There & Around

Buses from Ljubljana to Koper and the coast all stop in Postojna (€5.75, one hour, 54km, half-hourly) and Divača (€7.60, 1½ hours, 82km, half-hourly). The train is good for Divača (€5.90, 1½ hours, 104km, hourly) but less useful for Postojna.

### KOPER

☎ 05 / pop 23,270

Koper (Capodistria in Italian) is a workaday port city that at first glance scarcely seems to give tourism a second thought. Yet its central core is delightfully quiet and much less touristy than its ritzy cousin Piran, 17km down the coast.



The **Tourist Information Centre Koper** (☎ 664 64 03; tic@koper.si; Titov trg 3; ☎ 8am-9pm Jul & Aug, 9am-5pm Sun Sep-Jun) is within the restored 15th-century **Praetorian Palace** (Titov trg 3; admission free), which also houses an old pharmacy. Opposite, the splendid 1463 **loggia** (Titov trg 1) is now an elegant yet affordable **café** (☎ 621 32 13; Titov trg 1; ☎ 7.30am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun). The **Koper Regional Museum** (☎ 663 35 70; Kidričeva ul 19; adult/child €1.70/1.25; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun) inside the Belgramoni-Tacco Palace has an Italianate sculpture garden.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Dijaški in Študentski Dom Koper** (☎ 662 62 50; www.d-dom.kp.edus.si; in Slovene; Cankarjeva ul 5; dm €15; ☎ late Jun-late Aug; ☒) In summer this relatively central student dormitory becomes a hostel.

**Kompas** (☎ 663 05 82; Pristaniška ul 17; ☎ 8am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) Can arrange private rooms (singles €12.50 to €14.60, doubles €20.85 to €25).

**Motel Port** (☎ 639 32 60; motel.port@siol.net; Ankaranska c 7; dm €14, r for up to 3/4 €46/65; ☎ ☒) Hidden on the top floor of a modern shopping centre south of the Old Town, this place has excellent en suite rooms but it's next to a truck terminal.

**La Storia** (☎ 031-769 079; Pristaniška ul 3; mains €5-10; ☎ 11am-9pm Mon-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun) This Italian-style trattoria focuses on pasta and salads and has outside seating in the warmer months.

### Getting There & Away

Buses run to Piran (€2.60, 30 minutes, 18km) every half-hour on weekdays and every 40 minutes at the weekend. Up to 15 buses daily run to Ljubljana (€10.35, 1¼ to 2½ hours, 120km), though the train (€7.30 to €8.70, 2½ hours, four a day) is more comfortable.

### PIRAN

☎ 05 / pop 4050

Little Piran (Pirano in Italian) sits on the tip of a narrow peninsula, the westernmost point of Slovenian Istria. Piran Bay and Portorož (population 2800), Slovenia's largest beach resort, lie to the south. Piran's Old Town is a gem of Venetian Gothic architecture and is full of picturesque narrow streets.

**Sergej Mašera Maritime Museum** (☎ 671 00 40; Cankarjevo nabrežje 3; adult/student €2.50/2.10; ☎ 9am-noon & 6-9pm Tue-Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-noon & 3-6pm Tue-Sun Sep-Jun) is on the harbour just short of central Tartinijev trg where you'll find the helpful **Tourist Information Center Piran** (☎ 673 02 20; www.piran.si; Tartinijev trg; ☎ 9am-1.30pm & 3-9pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 10am-5pm mid-Sep-mid-Jun).

Piran is dominated by the **Cathedral of St George** (Adamičeva ul 2), whose soaring bell tower (1608) was clearly modelled on the campanile of San Marco Basilica in Venice. The nearby **Minorite monastery** (☎ 673 44 17; Bolniška ul 20) has a delightful cloister.

### Sleeping

**Avtokamp Fiesa** (☎ 674 62 30, 031-487 255; autocamp.fiesa@siol.net; adult €8.35-10, child €2.50; ☎ May-Sep) The closest camping ground to Piran is this tiny site at Fiesa, 4km by road but less than 1km if you follow the coastal trail east of the Church of St George.

**Maona Tourist Agency** (☎ 673 45 20; www.maona.si; Cankarjevo nabrežje 7; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm & 5-7pm Sat, 10am-1pm Sun) Can book private rooms (singles €15.85 to €25, doubles €23 to €35).

**Val Hostel** (☎ 673 25 55; www.hostel-val.com; Gregorčičeva ul 38a; dm €24 Jun-Aug, €23 Sep-May; ☎ ☒) This central, partially renovated hostel has 22 rooms with shared shower, free internet access, kitchen and washing machine. HI discount for members.

**Alibi B14** (☎ 031-363 666; www.alibi.si; Bonifacijeva ul 14; per person €20-25; ☎ ☒) This upbeat and colourful four-floor party hostel has six rooms, each with four to six beds, kitchenette and bath.

**Alibi T60** (Trubarjeva ul 60; per person €30; ☎ ☎ ☒) Even better than the Alibi B14 is its more subdued sister hostel, with a fully equipped double on each of five floors.

### Eating

**Flora** (☎ 673 12 58; Prešernovo nabrežje 26; pizza €3.35-5.85; ☎ 8am-1am Jul & Aug, 10am-10pm Sep-Jun) The terrace of this simple pizzeria east of the Punta lighthouse has uninterrupted views of the Adriatic.

**Riva** (☎ 673 22 25; Gregorčičeva ul 43; mains €5-16.70; ☎ 9am-midnight) Our new favourite seafood restaurant on Prešernovo nabrežje has superb décor and sea views.

**Pri Mari** (☎ 673 47 35, 041-616 488; Dantejeva ul 17; mains €6.25-14.60; ☎ noon-10pm Tue-Sat, noon-6pm Sun) This very stylish restaurant south of the

bus station successfully combines Mediterranean and Slovenian tastes.

There's a small **Mercator** (Levstikova ul 3; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 7am-1pm Sat, 8-11am Sun) supermarket in the Old Town.

### Getting There & Away

From the bus station buses run every 30 to 40 minutes to Koper (€2.60, 30 minutes, 18km) via Izola. Five buses per day (weekdays only) head for Trieste (€4.60, 1¼ hours, 36km) and up to eight to Ljubljana (€11.70, 2½ to three hours, 140km) via Divača and Postojna.

From Tartinijev trg, minibuses (€1) shuttle to Portorož-Lucija (No 1) and Portorož via Strunjan (No 3).

## SLOVENIA DIRECTORY

### ACCOMMODATION

Camping grounds generally charge per person, and rates always include hot showers. Almost all sites close from mid-October to mid-April.

Slovenia's growing stable of hostels includes Ljubljana's trendy Celica and the Alibi hostels found both in the capital and at Piran. Throughout the country there are student dorms moonlighting as hostels in July and August.

Tourist offices can help you access extensive networks of private rooms, apartments and tourist farms or they can recommend private agencies that can also help. Be aware that there are usually surcharges of 30% to 50% on stays of less than three nights.

Guesthouses, known as a *penzion*, *gostišče* or *prenočišča*, are often cosy and better value than full-blown hotels; in any case, it can be difficult to find a double room in a hotel for under €50. There's usually a tourist tax of between €0.65 and €1 levied per person and per night.

### ACTIVITIES

Skiing is a national passion, with slopes particularly crowded over the Christmas holidays and early in February. See www.slovenia-tourism.si/skiing for much more information.

Hiking is extremely popular, with around 7000km of waymarked trails and 167 mountain huts (book via tourist of-

fices). Check out the website of the **Alpine Association of Slovenia** (www.pzs.si).

Bovec (p1015) is a magnet for fans of extreme sports, notably paragliding and canyoning. The Soča River nearby offers Slovenia's best white-water rafting. The Sava River at Bohinj (p1014) is a great base for fly-fishing.

Mountain bikes are available for rent from travel agencies at Bovec, Bled and Bohinj. The rental season is usually limited to May through October.

Spas and wellness centres are very popular in Slovenia; see www.termegiz.si.

### BUSINESS HOURS

Many shops close Saturday afternoons and Sundays are still 'holy', although a handful of grocery stores open, including Mercator branches. Most museums close on Monday. Banks often take lunch breaks from 12.30pm to 2pm and only a few open Saturday mornings.

Restaurants typically open for lunch and dinner until at least 10pm, though they may have longer hours at the weekend.

Usual business hours in Slovenia:

**Banks** ☎ 8 or 8.30am to 5pm weekdays (often with a lunchtime break from 12.30pm to 2pm) and 8am until noon or 1pm on Saturday.

**Museums** ☎ 10am to 6pm Tuesday to Sunday

**Main post offices** ☎ 8am to 7pm weekdays and 8am until noon or 1pm on Saturday

**Main post office:** 8am to 7pm weekdays and 8am until noon or 1pm on Saturday

**Restaurants** ☎ from 10 or 11am to 10 or 11pm daily

**Shops** ☎ 10am to 6pm Monday to Friday, 10am to 1pm on Saturday

**Supermarkets** ☎ from 8am to 7pm on weekdays and 8am until 1pm on Saturday

### EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

#### Embassies & Consulates in Slovenia

**Australia** (☎ 01-425 42 52; 12th fl, Trg Republike 3; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Fri)

**Austria** (☎ 01-79 07 00; Prešernova c 23; ☎ 8am-noon Mon-Thu, 8-11am Fri)

**Canada** (☎ 01-430 35 70; Dunajska c 22; ☎ 9am-noon Mon-Fri)

**Croatia** (☎ 01-425 62 20; Gruberjevo nabrežje 6; ☎ 10am-1pm Mon-Fri)

**France** (☎ 01-479 04 00; Barjanska cesta 1; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm Mon-Fri)

**Hungary** (☎ 01-512 18 82; ul Konrada Babnika 5; ☎ 9am-noon Mon, Wed & Fri)

**Ireland** (☎ 01-300 89 70; Poljanski nasip 6;

🕒 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

**Italy** (☎ 01-426 21 94; Snežniška ul 8; 🕒 9-11am

Mon-Fri)

**Netherlands** (☎ 01-420 14 61; Poljanski nasip 6;

🕒 9am-noon Mon-Fri)

**New Zealand** (☎ 01-580 30 55; Verovškova ul 57;

🕒 8am-3pm Mon-Fri)

**South Africa** (☎ 01-200 63 00; Pražakova ul 4;

🕒 3-4pm Tue)

**UK** (☎ 01-200 39 10; 4th fl, Trg Republike 3;

🕒 9am-noon Mon-Fri)

**USA** (☎ 01-200 55 00; Prešernova c 31; 🕒 9-11.30am

Mon-Fri)

## Slovenian Embassies & Consulates Abroad

Slovenian representations abroad are fully listed on [www.mzz.gov.si](http://www.mzz.gov.si) and include the following embassies:

**Australia** (☎ 02-6243 4830; [vca@gov.si](mailto:vca@gov.si); 6th fl, St

George's Bldg, 60 Marcus Clarke St, Canberra ACT 2601)

**Austria** (☎ 01-586 13 09; [vdu@gov.si](mailto:vdu@gov.si); Nibelungengasse

13, A-1010 Vienna)

**Canada** (☎ 613-565 5781; [vot@gov.si](mailto:vot@gov.si); Suite 2101, 150

Metcalfe St, Ottawa K2P 1P1)

**Croatia** (☎ 01-63 11 000; [vzg@gov.si](mailto:vzg@gov.si); Savska c 41,

10000 Zagreb)

**Hungary** (☎ 01-438 5600; [vbp@gov.si](mailto:vbp@gov.si); Cseppkő út 68,

1025 Budapest)

**Ireland** (☎ 01-670 5240; [vdb@gov.si](mailto:vdb@gov.si); 2nd fl, Morrison

Chambers, 32 Nassau St, Dublin 2)

**Italy** (☎ 06-80 914 310; [vri@gov.si](mailto:vri@gov.si); Via Leonardo Pisano

10, 00197 Rome)

**Netherlands** (☎ 070-310 86 90; [vhg@gov.si](mailto:vhg@gov.si); Anna

Paulownastraat 11, 2518 BA Den Haag)

**UK** (☎ 020-7222 5400; [vlo@gov.si](mailto:vlo@gov.si); 10 Little College St,

London SW1P 3SH)

**USA** (☎ 202-667 5363; [vwa@gov.si](mailto:vwa@gov.si); 1525 New Hamp-

shire Ave NW, Washington, DC 20036)

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Major cultural and sporting events are listed under 'Events' on the website of the Slovenian Tourist Board ([www.slovenia-tourism.si](http://www.slovenia-tourism.si)) and in its annual *Calendar of Major Events in Slovenia*. The most important and/or colourful include the following:

**Kurentovanje** ([www.kurentovanje.net](http://www.kurentovanje.net)) A 'rite of spring' is celebrated in Ptuj for the 10 days leading up to Shrove Tuesday (February or early March).

**Festival Lent** (<http://lent.slovenija.net>) A two-week extravaganza of folklore and culture takes place in Maribor's Old Town in late June/early July.

**Ljubljana Summer Festival** ([www.festival-lj.si](http://www.festival-lj.si)) The

nation's premier cultural event (music, theatre and dance) is held from early July to late August.

**Cows' Ball** ([www.bohinj.si](http://www.bohinj.si)) A zany weekend of folk dance, music, eating and drinking at Bohinj in September to mark the return of the cows from their high pastures to the valleys.

## FOOD & DRINK

It's relatively hard to find such archetypal Slovenian foods as *žlikrofi* ('ravioli' filled with cheese, bacon and chives) and *ajdovi žganci z ocvirki* (buckwheat porridge with savoury pork crackling). An inn (*gostilna* or *gostišče*) or restaurant (*restavracija*) more frequently serves *klobasa* (sausage), *zrezek* (cutlet), *golaž* (goulash) and *paprikaš* (piquant chicken or beef 'stew'). Fish (*riba*) is usually priced by the *dag* (decagram or 0.1kg).

Balkan dishes such as *cevapčići* (spicy meatballs of beef or pork), *plešavica* (meat patties) and *ražnjići* (shish kebabs) are very popular.

You can snack cheaply on takeaway pizza or slices of *burek* (€1.90 to €2.50), flaky pastry sometimes stuffed with meat but more often cheese or even apple. Alternatives include *štruklji* (cottage-cheese dumplings) and *palačinke* (thin, usually sweet pancakes).

Distinctively Slovenian wines (*vino*) include peppery red Teran made from Refošk grapes in the Karst region and Cviček, a dry light red – almost rosé – wine from eastern Slovenia.

Beer (*pivo*), whether *svetlo* (lager) or *temno* (dark), is best on draught (*točeno*).

There are dozens of kinds of *žganje* (fruit brandy) available, including *češnovec* (made with cherries), *sadjavec* (mixed fruit), *brinjevec* (juniper), *hruška* (pears, also *viljamovka*) and *slivovka* (plums).

## GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

**Roza Klub** (☎ 01-430 47 40; Kersnikova ul 4) in Ljubljana is made up of the gay and lesbian branches of ŠKUC (Študentski Kulturni Center or Student Cultural Centre).

**GALfon** (☎ 01-432 40 89; 🕒 7-10pm) is a hotline and source of general information for gays and lesbians. The websites of **Slovenian Queer Resources Directory** ([www.ljudmila.org/siqrd](http://www.ljudmila.org/siqrd)) and **Out In Slovenia** ([www.outinslovenija.com](http://www.outinslovenija.com)) are both extensive and partially in English.

## HOLIDAYS

Slovenia celebrates 14 holidays (*prazniki*) a year.

**New Year's holidays** 1 & 2 January

**Prešeren Day** 8 February (Slovenian Culture Day)

**Easter & Easter Monday** March/April

**Insurrection Day** 27 April

**Labour Day holidays** 1 & 2 May

**National Day** 25 June

**Assumption Day** 15 August

**Reformation Day** 31 October

**All Saints' Day** 1 November

**Christmas Day** 25 December

**Independence Day** 26 December

## INTERNET ACCESS

There is internet access in towns and cities throughout the county, but most cyber cafés usually have only a handful of terminals.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

The website of the **STB** ([www.slovenia-tourism.si](http://www.slovenia-tourism.si)) is tremendously useful, as is that of **Mat'Kurja** ([www.matkurja.com](http://www.matkurja.com)), a directory of Slovenian web resources.

## LANGUAGE

Closely related to Croatian and Serbian, Slovene (*slovensčina*) is written in the Latin alphabet and consonants are generally pronounced as in English, with some notable exceptions: c=ts, č=ch, j=y (though a 'j' is silent at the end of a word), š=sh and ž=zh (as in the 's' in 'pleasure'). On toilets an 'M' (*Moški*) indicates 'men' and 'Ž' (*Ženske*) is 'women'. Virtually everyone in Slovenia speaks at least one other language.

## MONEY

Slovenia replaced its 15-year-old currency, the tolar (SIT), with the euro in January 2007. Exchanging cash is simple at banks,

major post offices, travel agencies and *menjalnice* (bureaux de change), though some of the latter don't accept travellers cheques. Major credit and debit cards are accepted almost everywhere and ATMs are ubiquitous.

## POST

Local mail costs €0.20 for up to 20g while an international airmail stamp costs €0.45. Poste restante is free; pick it up from the main post office at Slovenska c 32, 1101 Ljubljana.

## TELEPHONE

Public telephones require a phonocard (*telefonska kartica* or *telekartica*), available at post offices and some newsstands. The cheapest card (€3, 25 units) gives about 20 minutes' calling time to other European countries. Mobile phones generally have the prefix 031, 040, 041 or 051. SIM cards with around €4 credit are available for €12 from **Simobil** ([www.simobil.si](http://www.simobil.si)) and €15.40 from **Mobitel** ([www.mobitel.si](http://www.mobitel.si)).

## TOURIST INFORMATION

The Ljubljana-based **Slovenian Tourist Board** (☎ 01-589 18 40; [www.slovenia-tourism.si](http://www.slovenia-tourism.si); Dunajska c 156) has dozens of tourist information centres (TICs) in Slovenia and branches in a half-dozen cities abroad.

## VISAS

Citizens of European countries as well as Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand and the USA do not require visas for stays of up to 90 days. Those who do require visas (including South Africans) can get them at any Slovenian embassy or consulate. They cost €35 regardless of the type or length of validity. You'll need confirmation of a hotel booking plus a photo.

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