More than half of all of Slovenia is covered in forest but not Notranjska. In fact, almost all of ‘Inner Carniola’ is wooded, making it one of the best places in the country for outdoor activities. Notranjska Regional Park encompasses a large portion of the province, and there are country parks at Rakov Škocjan gorge and around isolated Snežnik Castle.

Transport through the forests of this isolated province has been difficult; when the railway linking Trieste and Ljubljana opened in 1857, it sidestepped much of the province. Notranjska was hit by massive emigration (especially around Cerknica) from the turn of the century up to WWII. Today, much of Notranjska is given over to logging and sometimes you’ll see nothing for kilometres on the region’s narrow back roads but trucks loaded with timber, especially on the Bloke Plateau – the birthplace of skiing, according to local lore – and in the Lož Valley.

But woodlands are not the only distinguishing physical characteristic of the province. Slovenia counts more than 7500 karst caves and sinkholes created by ponor (or ‘disappearing’) rivers and some 20 of these caverns, most of them in Notranjska, are open to visitors.

Notranjska is the most typical Dinaric region of Slovenia, but its karst is different from Primorska. Abundant rain and snow fall here, but the ground is like a great Swiss cheese; the water vanishes and resurfaces on the fringes of karst fields called polje. Notranjska is also known for its underground rivers and ‘intermittent’ lakes at Cerknica and Planina.

Notranjska’s isolated setting has spawned some of Slovenia’s most cherished myths and legends, notably that of the Turk-slayer Martin Krpan, made famous in Fran Levstik’s book of the same name.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Follow Gospod Lueger’s lead and throw cherries from *Erazem’s Nook* (p195) in Predjama Castle
- Visit the renovated period rooms in back-of-beyond Snežnik Castle (p198)
- Get forked with Uršula at Cerknica’s *Pustni Karneval* (p197)
- Spot the difference while examining a ‘human fish’ (*Proteus anguinus*) in the *Proteus Vivarium* (p193) at Postojna Cave
- Slide or skate (if you’re so lucky) across the frozen surface of the reappeared Lake Cerknica (p196)
POSTOJNA

05 / pop 8870 / elev 555m

The karst cave at Postojna, one of the largest in the world, is among Slovenia’s most popular attractions and its stalagmite and stalactite formations are unequalled anywhere. A visit is a ‘must’ on the ‘to do’ list of most arrivals in Slovenia so expect a scrum of tour groups throughout most of the year.

The cave has been known – and visited – by residents of the area for centuries; you need only look at the graffiti dating back seven centuries in the Gallery of Old Signatures by the entrance. But people in the Middle Ages knew only the entrances; the inner parts were not explored until April 1818, just days before Habsburg Emperor Franz I (r 1792–1835) came to visit. The following year the Cave Commission accepted its first organised tour group, including Archduke Ferdinand, and Postojna’s future as a tourist destination was sealed. Since then more than 32 million people have visited the cave.

Orientation

The town of Postojna lies in the Pivka Valley at the foot of Sovič Hill (677m). The Pivka River and the entrance to the cave are about 1.5km northwest of Titov trg in the town centre.

Postojna’s bus station is at Titova cesta 36, about 250m southwest of Titov trg. The train station is on Kolodvorska cesta about 600m southeast of the square.