



Understand Slovenia

SLOVENIA TODAY204

From riches to rags? Not quite, but the economy, maritime borders and national sausage are all facing their day in court.

HISTORY206

From *narod* (a nation of people) to *nacija* (nation-state) in a mere two decades. You've come along way, Slovenia.

SLOVENIAN WAY OF LIFE..... 216

Well-educated, self-confident, multilingual and athletic – these are just a few of the traits that make up the Slovene.

ARTS..... 219

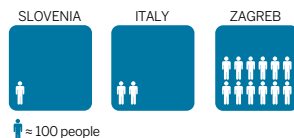
Culture has a special place in Slovenia, where literature, music and fine art kept *Slovenstvo* ('Slovene-ness') alive before independence.

THE SLOVENIAN TABLE224

If you thought cuisine here was heavy, meaty and borrowed exclusively from its neighbours, think again.



population per sq km



Slovenia Today

Baby, It's Cold Outside

Now is the winter of Slovenia's discontent, a country not used to hearing the 'dis' word much since independence. But perhaps reaching full maturity at 21 has forced it to put away childish things and confront some less-than-attractive realities. Take the economy... Slovenia was the wealthiest republic of the former Yugoslavia; with only 8% of the national population, the industrious Slovenes produced up to 20% of Yugoslavia's GDP and exported more than a quarter of its goods. And in 2007 Slovenia was the first of the former communist countries of Eastern Europe to adopt the euro. Now it faces the possibility of a 'Greek scenario' and may become yet another EU country to need a bailout. The problems lie with the nation's banks (the government has already provided 1% of GDP to the biggest one, Nova Ljubljanska Banka), a lack of foreign investment and a contracting economy that has seen growth fall from a dizzying 7% in 2007 to below nothing now.

Change of Guard

The year 2012 saw two important changes on the political stage. In parliament, a new government was installed, a five-party coalition led by conservative Prime Minister Janez Janša of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), who had been a gadfly to the communist leaders in the 1980s as a journalist, and was prime minister for four years until 2008. Austerity reforms introduced by Janša, including spending cuts of up to 10% and a constitutional amendment requiring all governments to run a balanced state budget, prompted some 10,000 demonstrators to take to the streets of Ljubljana and Maribor, accusing the government of corruption and demanding Janša's resignation. Less than a week later, the man

- » Population: 2.05 million
- » Area: 20,273 sq km (0.2% of Europe's total land mass)
- » GDP: US\$49.6 billion
- » GDP per capita: €18,675 (84% of EU average)
- » GDP growth: -1.1%
- » Inflation: 2.5%
- » Unemployment: 9.1%

Common Courtesy

- » Do not refer to Slovenia as being part of Eastern Europe or – God forbid – the Balkans, which Slovenes think start at the Croatian border.
- » Diners at the same table always wish one another '*Dober tek!*' (Bon appetit!) before starting a meal.

- » Some Slovenes enjoy a *špička* – slang for a little glass of schnapps – during the day as a pick-me-up, and you'll probably receive the invitation '*Pridite na kupico!*' ('Come and have a drop'). It's your call.

Top Icons

- » **Kozolec** Distinctive rack used for drying hay that is the ultimate Slovenian symbol.
- » **Potica** A nut roll eaten at all festive occasions.
- » **Triglav** The nation's tallest peak (2864m) which every Slovene is expected to climb.