



SURPRISING SLOVENIA

JUST BECAUSE SLOVENIA QUIETLY AND EFFICIENTLY GETS ON WITH THINGS, DON'T LET ITS ATTRACTIONS PASS YOU BY. PLANNERS LOOKING FOR SOMETHING DIFFERENT WILL FIND A HOST OF NEW EXPERIENCES FOR DELEGATES AND AN AMBIENCE THAT IS TRULY DELIGHTFUL

This is a tiny country bordering a tiny part of the Adriatic and surrounded by much larger neighbours. But its size is a trump card for Slovenia because it is also hugely diverse. Planners can choose urban or rural, seaside or mountains, and all quickly accessible from the international airport. It offers venues and activities to suit all tastes and budgets and conference facilities for up to 2,000. In fact, it has a long history of hosting events and major meetings, especially in the capital Ljubljana. It's safe, populated by cheerful, industrious people and offering excellent value for money. In

event-planning terms, a country that competes more than favourably with anywhere else in Europe.

Globally speaking, too, Slovenia is on a roll. One of the new EU states joining two years ago, it is among the most highly respected and in the first half of 2008 will be the first to hold the prestigious EU presidency. This alone will bring publicity as well as political kudos, but on the economic front Slovenia also leads the bunch. The only one of the new members so far to fulfil the criteria for introducing the euro, it will exchange the Tolar for the European



currency next January 1, bringing a level of transparency and stability event organisers really appreciate in today's competitive market.

As for infrastructure, the country is divided into five regions, all served by a good road network and boasting unique characteristics. To define the offer more clearly for planners, the Slovenia Convention Bureau markets it as four distinct product "clusters": cities, the Alpine region, the coast plus the area known as Karst, and spas and wellness. They represent everything from quiet seclusion to

adventure, both in summer or winter, from culture to haute cuisine and viticulture, from history and heritage to modern-day sophistication. Complementing this, a number of professional service providers are convention bureau members and more PCOs, DMCs and incentive houses are setting up in business. "Apart from Best Western, you won't find the big international hotel chains here yet," explains bureau director Miha Kovacic. "But it's only a matter of time because, as good as our four and five-star properties are, our hotel stock is nowhere near saturation point. The government, too, is well aware

of the importance of new investment and applying for further EU funding.”

VISIONARY NEW DEVELOPMENTS

In the meantime, existing venues keep pace with market demands by refurbishing and enlarging while visionary new developments come on stream.

Ljubljana’s first designer hotel opened two years ago, the four-star Mons Hotel & Congress Centre which is a Worldhotels First Class member. Now the same enterprising company is opening in July the Pule Estate, just one hour’s drive from the city. The 70 hectare estate will comprise a sensitively restored main house with a meeting room for 24 and restaurant which could seat 60 theatre-style. Accommodation for 24 maximum is in wooden cabins, and there will be a shop and stables housing some of Slovenia’s famous Lipizzaner white horses. The ideal venue for executive retreats and small incentive groups looking for an authentic and natural environment.

In the city, the five-star Hotel Lev has added six meeting rooms to the former eight which, as they are right at the top of the tower building, have great views over the capital. The well known City Hotel, situated in the heart of the old town, is undergoing a comprehensive facelift and when it reopens next summer will have 209 rooms and four meeting rooms for up to 200 delegates.

The largest spa resort Terme Catez, which owns and operates the four-star Hotel Golf Castle Mokrice, recently renovated the stables to create a charming venue for up to 120.

In the north-westerly Alpine region, Sava Hotels & Resorts is constantly renovating its properties in Bled. The four-star Hotel Park, overlooking magnificent Lake Bled, has just reopened after total renovation and the addition of new meeting facilities. HIT, Slovenia’s largest gambling corporation which runs two hotels and casinos in Nova Gorica in Karst, has been investing heavily in the ski resort of Kranjska Gora, providing more hotel capacity and a whole new sports and tourism complex.

On the coast at Portorož, LifeClass Hotels & Resorts continues to develop the thalassotherapy and wellness facilities connected to its six hotels, adding a new pilates holistic centre and an Indian Ayurveda treatment centre. The Portus Convention Centre comprises seven halls which together accommodate up to 1,100 delegates. The company is also restoring the old Art Nouveau-style five-star Palace Hotel, which will offer 174 luxury bedrooms and a ballroom seating 200 people. The Hotel St Bernardin Portorož, Slovenia’s largest convention hotel with a hall seating 1,100 delegates, recently reported its best financial year in history: meetings business



increased by 25 per cent, with 75 per cent of its revenue coming from foreign business. Next year it will add a slot-machine casino.

This is just a taster. To find out more about a beautiful country that, once explored, never ceases to amaze, log on to www.slovenia-convention.com or email info@slovenia-convention.com.

GETTING THERE

Slovenia is well served by mainland Europe road and rail services. The national carrier Adria Airways (a member of Star Alliance) offers regular scheduled flights to Ljubljana from many major European cities, as well as Tel Aviv and Moscow, recently adding Barcelona

and Rome to the network. Low-cost Wizzair has just started flights from London/Luton and Brussels/Charleroi airports to Slovenia and discussions are in hand with other budget airlines interested in flying there, possibly to second city Maribor in the north-east. There is also an airport at Pororož suitable for private aircraft but the nearest international airport to the resort is Trieste in Italy.

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