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English Studies Exchange

University of Ljubljana, Slovenia



Source: www.slovenia.info
Photographer: Tomo Jeseničnik

LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

Slovenia

Small but diverse. A unique blend of Slavic hospitality, Germanic efficiency and the Mediterranean joie de vivre.

We're a tiny, hen-shaped country in southern Central Europe that most people don't even notice on the map. No, we are not Slovakia. And neither are we an extension of neighbouring Italy or of our other neighbours, Croatia, Austria and Hungary, with whom we were once joined in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. We were part of Yugoslavia as well, but since



Photo: Maruša Pangeršič

1991 we have been an independent country and proud of it. We are ideally situated for anybody wanting to explore Europe at large. Wherever you are in Slovenia, you are never more than a 2-hour ride away from a different country; it takes only 3 hours by car to get from Ljubljana to Venice, and 4 to reach Vienna, for example.

Slovenia's smallness – the territory measures only a bit more than 20,000 km² (to illustrate, 11 Slovenian hens would fit nicely on the island of Great Britain) – is compensated by the country's great diversity. The open plains in the northeast are contrasted with the pristine Alpine world in the northwest, which includes Slovenia's highest mountain, the majestic Mount Triglav (2,864m). The hilly southeast is sun-kissed wine country, renowned also for its numerous old castles, while the southwest boasts karstic wonders, formed by the dissolution of carbonate bedrock, and 43 kilometres of coastal landscape.

Rent a car and drive all around Slovenia, explore its nooks and corners, nothing is more than a few hours away.



Photo: Katarina Bogataj

This proximity means that in a single day you can ski in the mountains and swim in the sea; you can sail on Lake Bled, raft down the Soča River, explore the mysterious karstic caves, push your way through the virgin

forests of Kočevje and relax in the thermal waters in a spa. Plenty of things to do, in short. It's no wonder the country has been named a favourite spot by *Guardian* and *Observer* readers!



Source: www.slovenia.info;
Photographer: Jurij Pivka

Adventurous types will find this wide and inexhaustible array of activities more than attractive: rafting, canyoning, kayaking, canoeing, skiing, mountain-climbing, paragliding, hang-gliding, bungee-jumping, skydiving, zorbing, horseback riding, cycling, mountain biking, dog sledding, night tobogganing, snowmobile rides, etc. – these are merely a fraction of what you can do while in Slovenia, and that's in addition to exploring the many mysterious caves that fantasy writer George R.R. Martin insisted on visiting.

Those who relish gastronomy will not be disappointed. Our varied cuisine is an amalgamation of the Mediterranean seaside, the Pannonian plain, the Alps and the Balkans. Students are especially well taken care of with our system of subsidized meals. (Well now, you can't possibly study on an empty stomach!) In addition to the country's protected specialties – the mouth-watering *kranjska klobasa*, *kraški pršut*, *idrijski žlikrofi* and *prekmurska gibanica*, to name just a few difficult-to-pronounce-but-absolutely-delicious items on the must-eat list – finding ethnic food restaurants is particularly easy in urban areas, if you're craving Thai, Indian or Turkish for example. Drive to Trojane to taste the lovely, rich *trojanski krof*, you'll notice our doughnuts don't have holes in them. Try a number of



Source: www.slovenia.info;
Photographer: Aleš Fevžer



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different regional wines on wine routes or in the many local wine cellars and get to know the people; they'll be delighted to have you amongst them.

I FEEL SLOVENIA

We have a soft spot for languages and cherish our own language deeply, since it acted as one of the most important elements of national identity throughout that part of our history when we were not yet an independent country. Slovenian is also one of the very few languages with a special dual form for specifying two persons, objects, or concepts, which makes falling in love in Slovenia all the more special. We're also the only country in the world to have *love* in our name. A useful hint: learning a few words and phrases of Slovenian will get you a very long way towards procuring our instant and everlasting adoration! One dober dan and you're practically part of the family.

A foreign land of spectacular sights with a homey feel.

Ljubljana



Photo: Nina Frančeškin

The lovely Ljubljana is Slovenia's capital and its biggest city, with approximately 300,000 inhabitants. It combines a special local charm with a multicultural vibrancy that attracts visitors from all around the world, with a number of

events and festivals offering a culinary, musical, or artistic experience. Some of the well-established music festivals are the Druga godba Festival of Alternative Music, considered one of Europe's best world music festivals, the prestigious Ljubljana Festival and the Ljubljana Jazz Festival. Some more major theatre, dance and multimedia art festivals well worth a visit are the trendy Young Lions, the City of Women, the always-anticipated LIFFE Film Festival and the International Biennial of Graphic Arts. The festival season reaches its peak in the summer, when



Photo: Nina Frančeškin

you can also experience the commotion of some free street arts festivals such as Ana Desetnica. The fact that students amount to a quarter of the population ensures there is never a shortage of events and places to go to.



Source: www.slovenia.info;
Photographer: Aleš Fevžer

Legend has it that – most probably some time after prehistoric dwellers left us the world's oldest wheel – Ljubljana used to be occupied by a dreadful, fire-breathing dragon. Then St. George came, subdued the dragon, and made the city more habit-

able. You can still encounter the dragon's ghost in its stone form, though, as it now acts as the city's symbol. Much more people-friendly after the dragon's defeat, Ljubljana was settled by ancient Romans, who stayed here for quite some time, long enough to leave behind some interesting monuments.



Photo: Ines Ana Jarc

Ljubljana boasts a rich architectural legacy. The numerous monuments, façades and portals that can be found in the old city centre reflect historical styles ranging from the Ba-



Photo: Nina Frančeškin

roque period to Art Nouveau, with some surprisingly fitting functional and socialist architecture thrown in. Discover Jože Plečnik's Ljubljana and the promenades designed by this respected architect who practised his skills in cities such as Prague and Vienna. Go and look for the remains of the Roman town Emona, visit the prominent Ljubljana Castle or some of the city's many museums and galleries (the City Museum, the National Gallery and Galerija ŠKUC are particularly interesting).

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA

The University of Ljubljana was established in 1919 and is the oldest, largest and most important Slovenian university. It has ranked among the top 3% of the world's uni-

University education
in Slovenia is free to EU
nationals.

versities for a number of years (according to ARWU Shanghai, QS World University Rankings and Webometrics) and is one of the most

prominent higher education institutions in the Central and Eastern European region. It ranks among the world's top 500 universities, and Europe's top 200 universities. There are 26 faculties within the university and the Faculty of Arts is one of them. It is well respected for its excellence in teaching and research, and has made a great contribution to the multilingual competence of the Slovenian populace.

Among the 21 departments that are part of the faculty, the Department of English is the one that offers students the opportunity to

New friendships,
experiences, new
stories to tell.

study the English language and its literature, either as a “pedagogic” or “non-pedagogic” subject. The courses on offer are varied and include English linguistics, literatures in English, teaching English as a foreign language, cultural studies, communicative and writing skills, etc. Our staff will be happy to provide direction if a topic sparks your interest and you would like to read more or do some research.

“Location, location, location” the saying goes, and the Faculty of Arts certainly has all three covered. It is situated in the centre of Ljubljana, surrounded by several great restaurants within walking distance that offer inexpensive student menus, and the student residences are not far either.

The Department of English is very active; there is always some social event or other where your presence is absolutely vital (you shouldn't forget to go to your classes, though!). Each year a Thanksgiving dinner is organised, where



Faculty of Arts; Photo: Ines Ana Jarc

we talk the evening away over a table of snacks. We gather again for Saint Patrick's Day, and meet regularly for our book club, delightfully scrutinizing every aspect of a book. Throughout the year, there are several tea parties, readings, and then there are still special lectures and conferences from time to time (such as a recent memorable visit by David Crystal) – and, of course, the freshers' welcome parties, where we get to know our first-year students over an evening of improv or karaoke.

You will fall in love with Slovenia and call it home.

The Faculty of Arts also offers a wide range of sport activities for free or at a very affordable price. In addition to recreational programmes, students (and staff) also participate in competitive group or individual sports, representing the faculty. The Faculty of Arts also cooperates with the Centre for University Sport, which offers free activities, recreational programmes and also ECTS evaluated subjects. You can choose from aerobics, badminton, basketball, climbing, contemporary dance, fitness, football, gymnastics, jazz dancing, ju-jitsu, judo, yoga, Pilates, rollerblading, scuba diving, social/ballroom dancing, swimming, table tennis, tennis, volleyball, etc. Also on offer are SUP (stand up paddling)



Photo: Maruša Pangeršič



Photo: Maruša Pangeršič

tours and courses, kayaking, skiing, ski touring, snowboarding, ice climbing, trekking, hiking, jogging, mountain biking, cross country, wind surfing, and much more.

Slovenia ranks first in terms of student satisfaction on the Student Experience Exchange (STeXX) website, run by StudyPortals, with an overall rating of +74 (within a possible range of -100 to +100).

Source: www.studyportals.eu

Why come here, you say?

While in Slovenia on an Erasmus exchange, you don't have to pay for tuition. For British students, it is a particular bargain, as they pay no more than 15% of their yearly fee at home. At the same time you're engaging with another culture and gaining a wider perspective on life and culture in the global village. Future employers will value your having spent a year abroad and the confidence and self-reliance that comes

"In a survey for thirdyearabroad.com, 86% of students who took a year abroad considered it to be the most valuable part of their degree."

Source: The Guardian

with it, so in the long run your international experience will be especially worthwhile. Student living expenses aren't particularly steep, since accommodation in student dorms is very affordable and two subsidized meals a day offered in a large number of restaurants situated across Ljubljana and Slovenia are a big money-saver. You are

also eligible for discounts on public transport and you will benefit from reduced admission fees to many events as well as various courses and activities (you can even get a free pass for movie screenings at the arty cinema Kinoteka).

The notoriously tricky Slovenian language is not a barrier either, since all the classes at our department are held in English. The majority of Slovenians, and virtually all young people, also have a solid grasp of English. If the first person you meet isn't able to understand and help you, then the second one most certainly will be – as reported by a Eurobarometer survey, 56% of Slovenians speak English at a conversational level and Slovenia in fact comes third in the EU in terms of the number of people who can have a conversation in at least two other languages.

Student opinions of the exchange

"Lost, confused, and overwhelmed – that's how I felt on the first day of my Erasmus exchange. But I was lucky to meet wonderful people at the Department of English. My fellow students were friendly and quick to help me and they made it easy for me to become one of them. I made wonderful friends. The teachers, too, were great, especially my coordinator was lovely and



supportive. I had a beautiful time. Ljubljana is a great place with great people.”

Marlien, Germany



“I’ve had a very pleasant stay in Ljubljana! The teachers and students are very friendly and helpful; they made me feel at home immediately. Although some courses started really early, I never regretted getting out of bed and riding my bike through the slippery snow to get to class. I think the University of Ljubljana is very well organised when it comes to dealing with exchange students.”

Margo, Belgium

In 2012, the University of Ljubljana ranked 14th in Europe according to the number of incoming exchange students. We’re currently one of the hottest student destinations, with some 1,000 exchange students every year.

Source: European Commission

“I can safely say that my decision to spend a year living and studying in Slovenia is one of the best I’ve ever made. Taking part in an Erasmus exchange is a unique and enriching experience, both personally and in terms of your education and career. Taking part in an Erasmus exchange in Ljubljana is particularly special (although perhaps I am biased!) due to its size and beauty. The compactness of Ljubljana means that you are able to get to know the city intimately within a few months, as well as allowing for increased mobility and freedom. You are bound to bump into people you know whilst walking around, giving the city a cosy and familiar feel. The night life is fantastic, with many concerts and cultural activities going on all the time for a fraction of the price that you’d pay in the UK, and on top of that, there are mountains, lakes, and forests on your doorstep. I cannot overstate the beauty of the Slovenian outdoors – you have to go there yourself to see it. The university environment is wonderful, and having the opportunity to learn in an institution where things work very differently helped me in becoming more adaptable and independent. My list of reasons to do an exchange in Slovenia – such as the ease with which



you can rent a car and drive to Budapest, Zagreb, or Venice – could go on indefinitely, since it was undeniably one of the best years of my life thus far. I strongly urge others to go and experience it for themselves!”

Georgia, United Kingdom

“Ljubljana is a surprise waiting to be found. What at first may seem like a quiet and small city, becomes a booming environment for personal growth. Here you can find everything you could ever find in a bigger city but without the hassles of long commuting hours, pollution, or any of the downsides of bigger cities. From good restaurants to bars, parks to libraries, you won’t find a day with nothing to do.”

Pedro, Portugal



Erasmus IP Summer School

Students at the Department of English also have the opportunity to attend the Erasmus Intensive Programme Summer School, which takes a close and critical look at the cultural differences and barriers encountered in interaction with English-speaking countries (recent locations included Swansea and Glasgow). Culturally constructed concepts are analysed not only as they relate to the pervasive British and American cultures, but also locally (e.g. Scotland, Wales, Ireland) and internationally (World Englishes, English as a lingua franca). The summer school is organized by university teachers from Slovenia, Croatia, Germany, Ireland and Portugal, and for a period of two weeks the participants take part in a number of intensive lectures, seminars, workshops and out-of-classroom activities. Students explore cultural encounters based on their own and their peers’ experience through discussion and teamwork all the while having more than just a little bit of fun.

“I am now able to understand why we do the things we do, and why some cultures do even the simplest things very differently.” *Philippa, Ireland*

“The courses were very interesting, and I actually regretted having to choose between two of them in certain slots, since I wanted to attend both. If you’re still thinking of applying, just do it – you won’t regret it.” *Andraž, Slovenia*



M.P.



N.F.



N.F.



I.J.



N.F.



M.P.



I.J.



I.J.



M.P.



M.P.



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M.P.



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