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# Slovenia - Culture Smart!: The Essential Guide To Customs & Culture



## Synopsis

Slovenia seems closer to Austria or Italy than to its Balkan neighbors. The richest of the Slavic nation-states, it has an entirely Western tradition, having belonged in the past to the Roman Empire, the Frankish kingdom, the Holy Roman Empire, the Republic of Venice, the Habsburg monarchy, and the First French Empire. After the Second World War it became part of the Republic of Yugoslavia, before declaring independence in 1991. This extraordinary cultural legacy is what sets Slovenia apart, matched by an amazingly varied topography packed into a small area. Traveling toward the coast, you see changes in the landscape and in the architecture. This reflects both the natural and the historical variety: the Venetians built their buildings one way, the Austrians another. Slovenia's natural beauty is astonishing. Legend relates that when God was allotting nature's bounty, he forgot Slovenia. His last-minute solution was to take bits of the best from other places: gorgeous Alpine ranges, the less craggy Pohorje mountains, the Pannonian plain stretching toward Hungary, hill after hill rolling southward into the horizon, the unique karst landscape, rivers aplenty, and a few miles of Adriatic coastline. Never having had a glorious unified kingdom in the past, Slovenians identify themselves not by blood or history but by their language, which differs from the other languages of the ex-Yugoslavia. The older generation is fluent in Serbo-Croatian, which helps for politics and trade, but has little of its historical baggage, and the country has geo-political importance as a politically stable stepping stone to the Balkans. As far as nationhood goes, Slovenia's golden age is now. There is a sense of change in the country—mostly for the better, and not the dull stampede toward materialism that one sees in some other former Eastern bloc countries. As a tourist destination Slovenia has it all, from medieval ruined monasteries to whitewater rafting. The people of this lovely land are genuinely glad that others are "discovering" their country. There are no real language problems; the younger people all speak English. Moreover, membership of the EU means that this is a country in transition. Culture Smart! Slovenia will introduce you to the inner world of this moderate, orderly, and conservative people who have emerged into the post-Communist world hungry for change.

## Book Information

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## **Customer Reviews**

Culture Smart! has come to the rescue of hapless travellers, Sunday Times Travel - ...the perfect introduction to the weird, wonderful and downright odd quirks and customs of various countries, Global Travel - ...full of fascinating, as well as common sense, tips to help you avoid embarrassing faux pas, Observer - ...as useful as they are entertaining, Easy Jet Magazine - ...offer glimpses into the psyche of a faraway world, New York Times.

Jason Blake teaches in the English Department at the University of Ljubljana. Born and raised in Toronto, he has been living in Slovenia since 2000. In addition to a PhD in English literature, he has an MA in German, and before moving to Slovenia he spent over three years studying and working in Germany and Austria. He has translated widely from Slovenian (and less widely from German), primarily in the area of cultural studies. Among his published translations are five books, myriad articles, as well as over a dozen short stories by different authors. He is the author of Canadian Hockey Literature, and a book-length essay-writing guide that focuses on cultural differences between Slovenian and English writing. In 2007/2008 he worked as a language trainer preparing civil servants for Slovenia's presidency of the European Union.

Charmingly written, informative and brief (164 smallish pages) summary of Slovenian history, geography, customs, attitudes, family life and social relations. Jason Blake has a good eye for the essentials of Slovenian culture, and gives good examples of how Slovenians resemble or differ from people of other cultures. Good sidebars on climate, demography, national holidays, and even a few everyday phrases in Slovene.

We visited Slovenia last year and were intrigued. It was somehow western and eastern at the same time. We were left with some questions after the visit (corruption, honesty, etc.), and this book

answered all of them. We look forward to going back!

As I prepare to move to Slovenia to work for approximately a year this book is proving to be a valuable introduction that is augmenting aspects of Slovenia that I couldn't quite articulate during a recent look-see visit.

Haven't finished reading it yet, but very informative on the peoples, customs and land of Slovenija.

It was very interesting to read about the people now. Many of the things I didn't know were in the book. Good book for the non-Slovenian.

Well written and insightful. Just what I needed.

love it .

I spent two years living in Slovenia and this book would have been a real cherished asset if I had found it sooner!

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