

LJUBLJANA AS A CLASSROOM: AN »OUT OF THE BOX« CITY EXPERIENCE AT THE GLOBAL GREEN DESTINATIONS DAY 2016

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PHOTOS: TADEJ BERNIK,
GOODPLACE

Ljubljana – the European Green Capital 2016, recently hosted a resounding conference on sustainable tourism, Global Green Destinations Day, which took place on 27 and 28 September 2016. Organised by the international organisation Green Destinations and the Institute of Sustainable Tourism GoodPlace, its main partner and co-organiser was Ljubljana Tourism, in cooperation with the Slovenian Tourist Board. The event attracted over 300 delegates from destinations around the globe to discuss the challenges that destinations are facing with regard to their sustainable development, new technologies, and to celebrate the 2016 Top 100 Sustainable Destinations precisely on the World Tourism Day.

No better recap could be used than the words of Tracy Johnson, Associate editor of The Place Brand Observer, a sister publication of Sustainability Leaders, who attended GGDD 2016: "I can't think of a better place to host a celebration of international green destinations than in Ljubljana. From the lush forests that encircle the city to its dedication to reduced traffic, clean drinking water and its Slovenia Green sustainable tourism strategy, the city oozes green from its pores".



The Convention Bureau within Ljubljana Tourism designed an alternative way to present the city through a "green lens", moving the event from the venue – Grand Hotel Union, into the streets. To stir up the energy, attendees first embarked on an urban adventure – Unlock Ljubljana, that kept them busy unfolding the secrets from its past through different tasks taking them across four bridges. Not only do bridges represent architectural masterpieces, as they also carry the symbolic meaning of connecting: two riverbanks, different worlds or unknown people, which was our ultimate goal.

As the next step, participants joined one among four offered programmes, each focusing on a different aspect of sustainable practices in the destination: Sustainable Mobility, Local Goods, Green Accommodation, and Social Responsibility.

Those who opted for the Sustainable Mobility tour were presented the closing of the city centre to traffic with a focus on the central Slovenska cesta street (now nicknamed Ljubljana's living room), the BicikeLJ public bicycle system, Kavalir (Gentleman) electric vehicle, which offers free of charge rides in the pedestrian area, and more. The discovery was partly »pedals-on«, as bikes

of the BicikeLJ system, which has impressive user statistics, were used as a means of transport. This allowed the time to venture into the Tivoli Park, where the Kavalir brought a »drive-in« surprise: delicious snacks from the Taste Ljubljana culinary project. During the walk that followed special attention was drawn to the underground storage tanks for separate waste collection.



Green Accommodation featured the first two Travelife certified properties in Ljubljana, Park Hotel and Hostel Celica. The Park Hotel terrace is more than just a rooftop with breathtaking views, as it is a home to diligent urban bees and honey plants. Guests learnt how their Urban&Green story started, how the bees "flew" into this frame, and how their initiative is spreading beyond the property, opening up to the community in the Tabor city quarter and nearby park. The take-aways were: home-made sweets as a treat during the active visit, a small jar of honey and valuable information on the many future plans. Enej Vitrih, the hotel's Marketing Manager, says: »We are happy that the reaction and comments were very positive, and with lots of helpful suggestions. Hopefully the participants had as much fun as we did while guiding them up and down our hotel and that this year's GGDD will be one to remember".



In Hostel Celica guests learnt about its unique concept, where the artistic transformation and sustainability went hand in hand. The development from a once degraded ex-military prison to one of the most original hostels with 20 art-themed rooms behind bars, which is also the first eco-certified hostel in the world, was illustrated. As Tanja Lipovec, Project Manager at Celica, says: »The GGDD delegates were intrigued by our sustainable philosophy and local art used to transform a negative prison vibe into a warm and welcoming place. The highlight of the tour was definitely the tasting of local delicacies grown in the hostel's herb garden, home-made bread prepared with wild yeast, super spicy chilli oil and a variety of organic fruit syrups. A true attraction was reading the funny quotes on small info plates, located around the hostel, addressing the guests and visitors on how they can participate to our more sustainable and green operation«.

As we are very proud of our clean, chemically untreated drinking water and culinary delights, Local Goods showcased the system of public drinking fountains in Ljubljana and emphasized the importance of locally produced food, which also meant that attendees participated in a culinary workshop and prepared a traditional



www.meetinjubljan.com

local dessert together. This took place in Gostilna dela, a restaurant that was established as a social entrepreneurship project with the aim to train and employ young people from various vulnerable groups. At the same time the Green Supply Chain was presented - a pilot project in the region of Central Slovenia, connecting local producers and local tourism providers with the aim of giving the latter an opportunity to purchase reasonably-priced food, produced 100% locally, regionally or nationally. Tita Destovnik, director of CenterKontura, which runs Gostilna dela, adds: »Among other, our guests had questions on recycling, food delivery, our daily offer, managing the operational costs (i.e. electricity, water), and applauded our social entrepreneurship concept. Not to forget – all enjoyed very much tasting the dessert they baked with joint efforts«!



The idea behind the Social Responsibility tour was to explore local social enterprises and get to know the fair trade principle. "It makes us extremely proud to see how much visitors value the originality and dedication of creative social economy projects in the city that we present as part of our 'From Ljubljana with love' tour. Moreover, they appreciate the approach we take at CurioCity,



which is that they have a feeling of being taken around Ljubljana by a friend. The participants of the GGDD have been no exception - they've followed with interest the stories behind innovative local solutions and this makes us proud," says Dragan Barbutovski, co-founder of CurioCity, who organised the programme.

The Druga Violina (Second violin) management revealed how they implemented a successful model to integrate young adult persons with disabilities into the working



process. In the 3MUHE shop, which only sells products grown, produced or manufactured to fair trade standards, participants learned about the Fair Do global education project. The »Second hand – New use« social entrepreneurship project & shop was also presented, as well as Smetumet (their slogan is Glamorous garbage), a trio of practical and ecologically-minded ladies



hooked on creating a range of useful items by recycling diverse materials. The final touch to this

special Ljubljana experience was staged at Cafe Čokl, famous for the fair trade coffee that they roast by themselves. Needless to say what the attendees tasted.

The day did not end after such an active afternoon, as the evening featured an original award cer-



emony to honour the Top 100 Sustainable Destinations around the globe, right at the top of the city – the Ljubljana Castle. And, the day after, another inspiring set of presentations wrapped up a successful and sustainable GGDD 2016.



Festive and magical December in Ljubljana

The festive season in Ljubljana will this year begin before the first Sunday of Advent, starting on Friday, 25 November. This is when the Christmas lights will switch on and the Festive Fair, which Tourism Review recently listed among the top 10 Christmas markets in Europe, will open, adding a tinge of fairy-tale spirit to the city until 1 January 2017. Ljubljana is widely known for having one of the most original and magical Christmas lights displays, which visitors will have the chance to admire until 8 January 2017. As each December in Ljubljana, the festive atmosphere will once again lighten up the downtown areas, with the historical quarter turning into a major hub of social life where locals enjoy meeting up with friends even when temperatures occasionally drop below zero. And visitors are welcome to join our tradition! During this time, numerous free events will take place on open-air stages in the magically decorated Old Town. The traditional ones include the St. Nicholas and Festive fairs, Santa Claus Parade, the Good Fairy, who makes all wishes come true, street art and organ grinder perfor-

mances, the Christmas concert in front of the Town Hall and diverse concerts in numerous squares around the Old Town. In addition to the rich programme that will take place in the open air, several institutions have designed a range of festive initiatives and activities, including, among others, Kinodvor art cinema, the Ljubljana Festival, Ljubljana Castle and Ljubljana Puppet Theatre. The New Year's Eve will be marked by a variety of concerts by renowned musicians of different genres and at midnight, the fireworks from organic and biodegradable materials will brighten up the sky above Ljubljana. Some of the December highlights are listed below, while the detailed programme is published at www.visitljubljana.com. As an extra tip, on 2 January 2017 a special concert will mark the conclusion of the year when Ljubljana proudly wore the prestigious title of European Green Capital 2016. December in Ljubljana is truly enchanting – come and live your magic Christmas fairy-tale with us!

PHOTOS: LJUBLJANA TOURISM,
D. WEDAM

**25. 11. 2016 at 17.15: Ljubljana's festive
lights switch-on event**

25. 11. 2016 - 1. 1. 2017: Festive Fair / Christmas Market

3. - 6. 12. 2016 at 10.00-20.00: St Nicholas Fair

5. 12. 2016 at 17.00: St Nicholas Procession

16. - 20. 12. 2016 at 19.00: Street theatre performances

24. 12. 2016 at 17.00: Christmas Concert

26. - 30. 12. 2016 at 17.00: Grandpa Frost processions

31. 12. 2016 at 21.00: New Year's Eve celebrations



A quick look at 2016 and an overview on congress Ljubljana in 2017

The Slovenian capital, which has been present on the international association meetings market for more than thirty years, can be regarded as an established, yet fresh destination that can welcome meetings with up to 2,200 delegates in the two largest congress venues. The compact layout and "walking city" dimension of Ljubljana, the European Green Capital 2016, is definitely one of its advantages, making it a logistically easy destination. Although 2016 is not over yet, it can be definitely considered a positive year with regard to the business volume growth in the meetings industry sector and tourism overall. Although there was no congress going beyond 800 delegates, a considerable number of mid-sized ones attracted from 300 to 600 delegates. The largest event organized this year by regional, European or international association at CD – Cankarjev dom Congress Centre Ljubljana was WINFOCUS World 2016 – the 12th World Congress on Ultrasound

in Emergency & Critical Care Medicine, with 780 attendees, followed by the EU Robotics Forum, with 500 delegates. At the GR – Ljubljana Exhibition & Convention Centre, instead, 6th European Congress on Geosynthetics – EuroGeo 6, NMDPD 2016 (on Parkinson disease) and the 17th World Lace Congress of OIDFA attracted 600 delegates each. The Grand Hotel Union was the venue for the 21st EUMASS Congress of Insurance Medicine and Social Security (600 delegates) and 15th Congress of the European Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care Society – EVECC 2016 (400 delegates) and the 11th European Quality Assurance Forum (400 delegates). Among the academic venues, the largest event, CEEISA-ISA 2016 Joint International Conference, »Politics for International Relations«, at the Faculty of Social Sciences, attracted 700 delegates. Among the congress highlights in 2017, similar in terms of size to the larger congresses this year, are:

Ljubljana Jože Pučnik Airport back to growth

Ljubljana Jože Pučnik Airport has swung back to growth following six consecutive months of declining figures. Slovenia's busiest airport handled 132.081 passengers in October, an increase of 2.8% compared to the same month last year. The number of aircraft movements stood at 2.788, up 0.4%. The passenger decline, which began in April, was solely a result of Adria Airways, which made significant cuts to its network under new ownership this summer season. On the other hand, foreign carriers saw their numbers improve by 13% on their services to and from Ljubljana. As a result of the protracted downturn, the airport's annual figures are still softer to that of last year. It welcomed 1.210.414 travellers through its doors during the January – October period, a decrease of 4.2%. Aircraft movements were down 1%, standing at 27.906. This winter season, Ljubljana Airport expects to see strong-

er numbers. Adria Airways has boosted frequencies on five of its routes (Amsterdam, Paris, Sarajevo, Warsaw and Zurich), although it no longer flies to Berlin, unlike last winter. Foreign carriers will also be adding flights, with low cost airline easyJet to introduce new services from London's Gatwick Airport to complement its existing flights from Stansted Airport. Overall, there will be over 180 scheduled flights per week out of Ljubljana this winter, operating to 22 destinations in eighteen countries. The airport, management which sees strong competition from larger nearby rivals such as Zagreb, Venice and Budapest, says it is holding its own. "Slovenia's main airport is attracting a growing number of Slovenian and cross-border passengers by competing successfully with other airports in the region", it said in a statement.

<http://www.lju-airport.si>

In February:

- [2017 EFMD Conference for Deans & Directors General](#) Faculty of Economics / University of Ljubljana, 350 del. Availability of networking areas
- [T. Harv Eker's Millionaire Mind Intensive](#) EventGR – Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre, 1.000 del.

In April:

- [10th International Congress of the Vascular Access Society – VAS 2017](#) CD Congress Centre Ljubljana, 600 del.
- [2nd South Eastern European Joint Meeting of Thoracic Anaesthesiologists and Surgeons](#) Grand Hotel Union, 200 del.

In May:

- [36th EBC Congress - European Brewery Convention 2017](#) CD Congress Centre Ljubljana, 600 del.
- [4th World Landslide Forum](#) CD Congress Centre Ljubljana, 500 del.

In July:

- [10th Liquid Matter Conference](#) CD Congress Centre Ljubljana, 800 del.

In September:

- [Open Educational Resources – OER](#) CD Congress Centre Ljubljana, 500 del.
- [European JAZZ Conference and EJM General Assembly](#) CD Congress Centre Ljubljana, 250 del.
- [29th Congress of EFSUMB – Euroson 2017](#) GR – Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre, 700 del.

This venue has three more potential projects from 500 to 1,800 del. in negotiation process at the moment.

In October:

- [European Academy of Paediatrics Congress and Mastercourse – EAP2017](#) CD Congress Centre Ljubljana, 600 del.
- [Europa Donna Pan-European Conference 2017](#) Grand Hotel Union, 300 del.
- [13th European Lighting Conference – Lux Europa 2017](#) Grand Hotel Union, 280 del.

The largest convention hotel in Ljubljana is between January and July also hosting five meetings of the Forum Train Europe – FTE on the harmonisation of freight and passenger traffic on railways (150 participants each), which have been returning to the same venue for years.

Confirmed congress bookings are in place for as far as the year 2021, and it is already clear now that 2018 will be a record congress year for Ljubljana! Destination partners focusing primarily on the corporate / incentive markets, both hotels and DMC's, are also reporting a positive business outlook in 2017, following a well busy year 2016. Check out the congress calendar for the updated list of major association events in Ljubljana.