SLOVENIA, the Land of Good Beekeepers

Api experience & tour

In the centre of Europe, where the Alps meet the Mediterranean area and the Karst changes into sumptuous forests, you will be captivated by the blue Adriatic Sea and the mysterious Karst with its subterranean caves. The beautiful world of the mountains, nature parks, ravines, plateaus and crystal clean waters which pour in picturesque lakes will amaze you. Picture the wealth of the thermal and mineral wells – a source of health and relaxation, picturesque vineyards on the spur of hills, quality wine and excellent food, attractive cities, medieval monasteries and castles, illuminated churches on hilltops and hospitable people with open arms and a smile.

📅 September 2014

Day 01: Arrival in Slovenia
Arrival in Slovenia. Drive to hotel in Ljubljana, dinner and overnight stay.

Day 02: Ljubljana – Visit to a beekeeper – Museum of Apiculture – Lake Bled – Ljubljana
From Ljubljana we will drive to the Gorenjska region where we will spend the entire day. The trip will start with a visit to a beekeeper with an introduction to their activities followed by a tasting of their products, particularly the famous honey brandy and innovative beetroot honey, which has medicinal uses. The next stop is the city of Radovljica and the Museum of Apiculture which offers displays of Slovenia’s beekeeping heritage; special emphasis is placed on the developments within the profession in the 18th and 19th centuries. The museum stores some 600 original hive fronts whose motifs painted in oil depict the lives and beliefs of people from that period. After a short walk through Radovljica’s old town we will continue our trip to the magnificent lake of Bled - one of Europe’s most stunning Alpine resorts. Optional boat ride with the traditional wooden boat “pletna” to the small island on the Lake of Bled where you can ring the bell at Church of the Assumption for good luck.
Breakfast, dinner and overnight stay at the hotel in Ljubljana.

Day 03: Ljubljana – Teaching apiary – Carthusian monestry – Ljubljana
Drive to Dolenska region. Hill vineyards and little hilltop churches, castles and monasteries, broad forests and groves of birch trees give the extensive region of south-east Slovenia a particular charm. Visit to a beekeeper and artist, that set a new typical Slovenian apiary which is arranged by a space dedicated to apitherapy and learning. This teaching apiary - part of Slovenian architectural heritage and cultural landscape primarily serve different form of learning - experiential learning. Variety of activities are held in and around apiary. Beekeepers can also learn here how to arrange an appropriate space for apitherapy following this example. The nature and importance of ecology will be experienced in the natural environment Krakovo Forest which is still part of the primeval forest.
Optional: opportunity to observe the process of honey production: honey harvest, cooking wax, wiring comb, getting propolis and royal jelly,...
Drive to the river island on which Kostanjevica na Krki, one of Slovenia’s oldest towns, was built in the 13th century. As a result of frequent floods in past centuries the town became known as 'the Venice of Lower Carniola' – since the only way to get around was by boat. Today it is famous as a cultural centre. Next stop is at Pletorje - Carthusian Monestry, the only operating Carthusian Monastery in Slovenia. The Church of the Holy Trinity, a rich library and an art collection remain from the original monastery. The monks offer their famous Pletterje brandies and bottled pears for sale. Return to the capital of Slovenia, with the medieval town core, rich Baroque and Renaissance architecture, museums, galleries,... We enjoy a walk through the old town centre, across Plečnik’s well-known Triple Bridge, down to the cathedral, past Francesco Robba’s fountain, and the town hall, where you can take the funicular up to the town castle. Breakfast, dinner and overnight in hotel in Ljubljana.

Day 04: Ljubljana – Postojna cave – Predjama Castle – Bee farm – Piran (Adriatic sea)
Departure for Postojna cave, the largest cave in the "classic karst" and the most visited show cave in Europe with 20 kilometres of passages, galleries and chambers. Ride with electrical train through the marvellous underground world. Next stop is at nearby Predjama castle with dramatic setting in the gaping mouth of a cavern halfway up a cliff. Continuing to coastal region. Visit to a bee farm, known for its collection of miniature bee houses and...
photographic gallery. The visit will begin with an introduction to their activities followed by a tour of the plantation of nectar producing plants and a tasting of bee products. Piran is a very special city. It is the best preserved cultural monument of Slovenian Istria and the closest neighbour of Portorož, the luxurious city of flowers. Throughout time, Piran maintained the clustered medieval structure narrow winding streets; houses huddled close together, rising in cascades, the contact with the sea, numerous squares and churches. Tartini Square is the gem found in the very centre of Piran. It was named after the famous violinist and composer Giuseppe Tartini, who made the town world-famous. Dinner and overnight in hotel at coastal region.

Day 05: Piran – Lipica stud farm – Bee hives transport system – Piran
In the morning we take a trip to the Karst, a picturesque region stretching between the Bay of Trieste and the Vipava valley which is cultivated with olive trees and vineyards, and which hides, beneath its surface, an exceptional beauty of caves, sinkholes, and solution valleys. Experts claim that some 11,000 subterranean features, caves, and hollows can be found all across Slovenia, which is unlike any other country in the world. Visit to Lipica Stud farm, the breeding ground for the world famous Lipizzaner horses. Founded in 1580 during the Habsburg monarchy, it has been boasting the tradition of breeding and selecting pure-breed horses. In the afternoon there will be time for relaxing and swimming. Next stop is a visit to a beekeeper in Karst region specialized in bee hives transport system. Special typical lunch together with red wine and cured ham tasting will be offered. Dinner and overnight stay in a hotel in the coastal region.

Day 06: Piran – Sečovlje salt works – Ljubljana
Morning visit to the salt works in Sečovlje and its open-air Museum of Salt Making. The Sečovlje salt works or flats are the only remaining salt works where sea salt is still harvested by way of a traditional method used since the 14th century. Return to the capital of Slovenia, with the medieval town core, rich Baroque and Renaissance architecture, museums, galleries,... We enjoy a walk through the old town centre, across Plečnik’s well-known Triple Bridge, down to the cathedral, past Francesco Robba´s fountain, and the town hall, where you can take the funicular up to the town castle. Breakfast, dinner and overnight in hotel in Ljubljana.

Optional: In the evening enjoy dinner with a folklore show in a restaurant in Ljubljana.

Day 07: Ljubljana – Beekeeping Centre – Ljubljana
Drive to Beekeeping centre, the head office of the Slovenian Beekeeping Association that was established 140 years ago, and comprises 200 beekeeping societies. Of equally venerable age is the journal "Slovenian Beekeeper", whose interesting and detailed articles are an excellent source of information on activities in the beekeeping world. A significant part of their efforts are dedicated to informing the general public about the importance of beekeeping. Introducing with the activities of the Center, multivision presentation, visit of plantation of nectar producing plants and bee hives, built in unique Carniolan style. Apitherapy lecture - Lecture on Slovenian medical honey and their effect on the treatment of wounds – Vivamel alginate dressing with sweet chestnut medical honey and the applications of Slovenian medical honey in periodontal pockets for the treatment of cronical periodontitis. At the centre there is also the company that is specialized in the manufacture of beekeeping equipment from stainless materials and beekeeping supplies. Manufacture takes place in new premises using modern CNC machines, which allows manufacturing even the most demanding of products. Free time for shopping, to visit library or short walk at this beautiful spot. Return to Ljubljana. Free time for individual visits, shopping. Dinner and overnight in the hotel in Ljubljana.

Optional: Lecture on Slovenian honey, bee hive systems in Slovenia, apitherapy, ...

Day 08: Ljubljana – departure
Breakfast and departure.

The following specialized visits to beekeepers can be arranged upon request: professional beekeeping training and meetings with professionals, a visit to the queen-mating station with an opportunity to buy queen bees, a visit to a specialized beekeeping equipment store, honey massage, a visit to a beehive, a workshop on making products from honey dough and beeswax, observing a master beekeeper at work, a visit to a store with bee products and api cosmetics, ...

A special care for the creativity and relaxation of the ladies accompanying men beekeepers on Api Excursion: during the professional visits ladies can treat themselves with spa treatments, by visiting a herb farm, different workshops such as making products of honey dough, pottery, bread-making, shopping, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Package price:</th>
<th>699EUR (40 passengers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>759EUR (30 passengers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>880EUR (20 passengers)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Price calculated in December 2013. Price is per person, based on stay twin room.
Included:
✓ 7 nights in 3* and 4* hotels in twin rooms: 5 nights in hotel in Ljubljana and 2 nights in hotel in the coastal region
✓ Tourist tax
✓ 7 buffet breakfasts
✓ 1 lunch in a restaurant
✓ Red wine and cured ham tasting
✓ 7 dinners in hotel (drinks not included)
✓ Transportation in air-conditioned coach in Slovenia
✓ Entrance and other fees as per program
✓ English-speaking guide
✓ Organization and assistance

Not included:
✓ Additional payment for single room
✓ Transport to and from Slovenia
✓ Airport transfer
✓ Entrance and other fees: e.g. the “pletna” boat ride, funicular ride up to the Ljubljana castle
✓ Drinks
✓ Trip cancellation insurance (in case of illness before departure)
✓ Optional lectures
✓ All items not listed listed under “Included”
Among the many Europeans who visit Slovenia each year to enjoy its natural beauty, peace, wonderful people and delicious food and wine there are hundreds who travel solely for the authentic experience to observe and to learn the details of Slovenian beekeeping (Apiculture). Slovenia is a destination for serious beekeeper travelers. For centuries Slovenian beekeeping has been among the most advanced in Europe.

The tour of Slovenia beekeeping for Americans being planned for Fall, 2014 would be the very first time beekeepers from the United States would visit the small and charming nation of Slovenia … known to some as the "Beekeeper of Europe." The purpose of the trip is to learn and to comprehend the details and relationships between bee culturing, nature and good health. Slovenian beekeepers are very enthusiastic about having American beekeepers visit with them as a group for the first time.

This winter and early spring I will organize an Autumn 2014 tour of Slovenian Beekeeping. Why me? My great grandparents came from this magical land…. and one of my most consuming interests are the bees that I keep on Cape Cod. After visiting my ancestral land frequently over the years it occurred to me that American beekeepers would benefit from an in-depth exposure to Slovenia beekeeping and would enjoy being introduced to this beautifully understated culture and country.

The idea for this tour began to take shape in spring of 2013. I have enthusiastically shared this plan with a few of you. Some individuals have already signed up. Others have expressed a desire to be kept informed of the plans following their viewing of the presentation Mike Doyle and I have made about Slovenia beekeeping and the iconic AZ hive that is used in Slovenian "bee homes" and on their mobile truck-homes and trailer-homes. Mary Blohm, Georgia beekeeper who has visited Slovenia and is also enthralled with Slovenia's beekeeping, will join this tour. She is communicating with her regional beekeeper friends to persuade them to also make the trip.

Following the time I first began thinking about organizing this trip the Slovenian Beekeepers Association (SBA) have made decisions to insure the success of any groups visiting Slovenia to learn about beekeeping. The SBA is the proactive umbrella organization for all of the local associations who provide connections for the 7,500 Slovenian beekeepers. (1 in every 250 Slovenians keeps bees.) As a son of Slovenia allow me to modestly state that to be Slovenian is to keep bees.

In late 2013 the SBA established a relationship with Aritours, a premier Slovenian travel company, to assure that all visitors interested in learning about Slovenian beekeeping would receive a quality experience. Apitours was specifically created to provide excellent tours by using only guides that have been instructed and certified in beekeeping by the SBA. I have personally met the owners and staff of Aritours in Maribor, Slovenia. This experienced travel organization employs a very professional and english-speaking staff who strive to give their customers a wonderful and trouble-free travel experience.

For this trip to occur we will need a minimum size of the group to be about twenty people. This number will allow for us to realize certain economies, to be flexible, to transport easily and to allow for a comfortable blending in with the different people and communities who will be hosting us.
For the tour to become a reality I would appreciate your assistance. If you believe learning about the many different aspects of Slovenian beekeeping might also interest your beekeeper friends then please inform them of this tour and encourage them to join us this fall in late September or early October. Feel free to reply to me about this announcement with any ideas, suggestions, names and email addresses of beekeepers you believe may wish to learn more about the tour. I suggest forwarding this email to your friends and to ask them to contact me by email or by calling me at 774 722 2409 if they would like to learn more about what will be an extremely interesting and exceptional tour. I have excellent English language CDs and literature about Slovenian beekeeping and bee-touring. Please contact me if you would like to borrow these materials.

Lastly let me assure you that little Slovenia is a democratically (formerly Austrian) governed country which is boardered by Italy, Austria, Hungry and Croatia. It is not only beautiful, but personally safe and very welcoming to visitors. Encountering English speaking local citizens is normal. English is taught in the elementary and high schools. 85% of the population of Slovenia lives in rural areas. More than 50% of the country is covered by forests - there is even a "forest honey" that is produced annually. Most Slovenians have relatives living in America and are always proud and pleased to introduce and to share their unspoiled country,... especially with American visitors.

From my personal experience I can truly state that Slovenian beekeepers are extremely experienced, wise and intuitively know more about bees than they could ever begin to write down on paper. This trip will be a wonderful, informative and relaxing occasion. Join with me in this trip of of a lifetime for any American beekeeper.

Warm regards, mark simonitsch 774 722 2409