

Slovenia

NESTLED BETWEEN THE ALPS AND THE MEDITERRANEAN, ENCHANTING SLOVENIA IS EUROPE'S BEST KEPT SECRET

About Slovenia

One of the smallest countries in Europe, Slovenia lies in an enviable geographical position between the majestic Alps and the Mediterranean. Slovenia (pop. 1.9 million) borders Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia.



When To Visit

Any time of the year. Peak season for summer tourists is July-August; for winter tourists, it's December-March.

Visa Requirements

Citizens of Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, the USA and most European countries do not require visas. Visitors from other countries can get 90-day visas in advance at any Slovenian embassy.

Getting There

There are cheap Easyjet flights from western Europe to Ljubljana. It's also easy to travel by bus or car from Hungary, Croatia, Austria and Yugoslavia. You can even cross the border by motorcycle, bicycle or on foot.

Bahrain Connection

Johnny Young has been a popular American ambassador to both Bahrain and Slovenia.



By Ali Hussain Mushaima

SLOVENIA IS THE 20TH COUNTRY ON OUR TOUR, but only the second one (after Ireland) that I hadn't previously visited.

I was especially keen on visiting Slovenia as it was the new home of former American ambassador to Bahrain Johnny Young. I first met the ambassador in Bahrain and was hugely impressed not only by his friendly, welcoming manner, but also by his inspiring life story.

Young rose to his position in the face of heavy odds – he was a black kid born into abject poverty in an America where equal rights were still a dream, yet rose to become one of the country's most well-liked ambassadors. We interviewed Young for our annual publication *Visitor's Complete Guide to Bahrain* – the interview can be accessed online at this address: www.bahrainguide.org/BG5/johnnyyoung.html.

When I spoke to the ambassador before the tour, he



Johnny Young and his wife Angie pose near the Friendship Tour vehicle at their villa in Ljubljana.

PAGE OPPOSITE:

The Three Bridges, a Ljubljana landmark. Located in the heart of the city, the Three Bridges lead to the old part of the town, the food market and towards the castle that towers above the city.



A view of the city with Ljubljana Castle towering above it in the distance.



Travel Tip
Buy a telephone card at a main post office if you plan on phoning within the country or continent.



A street performer entertains passers-by in Ljubljana.

was not only very supportive of my plans, he also arranged for my visa to visit Slovenia. When we finally arrived in the country, the ambassador and his wonderful wife Angie also set up a meeting with local journalists so we could talk about the Friendship Tour and everything it meant.

Slovenia is one of Europe's best kept tourism secrets. It hardly made any headlines until 1991 when it broke away from the former Yugoslavia in an unusually peaceful manner.

Except for a brief period in June and July 1991 when Yugoslavia attempted forcibly to prevent Slovenia from leaving its fold, there's been no fighting, no war and no terrorism in Slovenia. While Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo became embroiled in the bitterest conflict in Europe since World War II, Slovenes kept out of the limelight, and managed

Fast Fact
If you plan to stay in Slovenia for more than a few days, you must register with the police as a tourist. (Most hotels will do it for you).



The Friendship Tour vehicle parked outside the Slovene Philharmonic building in Ljubljana. Founded in 1701, it is among the oldest music societies in the world, and has boasted honorary members such as Beethoven, Paganini and Brahms.



to maintain their independence.

Slovenia is dominated by mountains and rivers. One of the smallest countries in Europe, it lies between the majestic Alps and the Mediterranean. The capital, Ljubljana, is situated in the heart of the country, along the banks of the Ljubljanca River, within a two-hour drive of all the state borders. The old part of the town is particularly delightful. We visited some grottos, including one so big, you had to travel within by train!

We also visited some castles and took in the architecture which must rank on par with the best in Europe.

It's been a pleasant and enjoyable tour of this country, certainly very different from what we expected. How long before tourists finally discover this gem?





One of the many bridges in the capital Ljubljana.