**PRESS RELEASE**

**STB at luxury tourism week in the USA for the first time**

Ljubljana, 11 August – ***The Slovenian Tourist Board (STB) will present what Slovenian tourism has to offer at the elite Virtuoso Travel Week, a network of the best travel agencies in luxury tourism. Virtuoso Travel Week will take place between 12 and 18 August in Las Vegas, where over 5,000 tourism professionals are expected. Besides the presentations in the official programme, which also includes over 270 individual meetings with travel agents, the STB has been given another excellent opportunity to highlight Slovenia and its tourism. Virtuoso has selected it from among its 1,700 preferred partners to participate at exclusive media networking sessions with globally influential media. Slovenia is thus one of only nine destinations to have the honour to introduce itself to the world’s most distinguished media that influence the popularity of destinations.***

Virtuoso is considered to be a driving force for the luxury travel industry. It collaborates with 1,700 selected preferred partners, since this year including the STB. As a global travel network, Virtuoso represents over 15,200 travel agents, advisors and partners who ensure over $21 billion of travel revenues annually, with their clients having an average net worth of $568,000.

Virtuoso members gather once a year at the Virtuoso Travel Week; last year’s event saw 5,257 members who came to Las Vegas from 98 countries. They held 320,000 individual meetings that required 1.5 million minutes. The purpose of these meetings is to establish personal contacts, which is extremely important when designing special experiences for demanding clients who want personalised and unique experiences. This year’s Virtuoso Travel Week, already the 29th, will take place between 12 and 18 August in Las Vegas.

The STB will hold over 270 individual meetings in Las Vegas, where it will present Slovenia to travel agents as a green, active and healthy destination for five-star experiences. Of utmost importance are also the individual meetings with representatives of globally influential media. Based on their offer and novelties, the participants in these exclusive media networking sessions are chosen by Virtuoso itself from among its preferred partners. This time, only nine destinations, or 50 agencies and companies, from among 1,700 partners will have this opportunity. One participation condition is that a high-executive representative must attend the exclusive individual meetings. The selectees include the STB, with its Director General MSc Maja Pak presenting the Slovenian tourism offer to the media.

*“We are greatly honoured to present Slovenian tourism to the media that shape the opinions of millions of readers worldwide and help create the recognisability and popularity of a destination. I am particularly pleased that Virtuoso, a network offering the best in luxury tourism, has recognised the quality of the Slovenian tourism offer and its commitment to developing excellent green, active, healthy five-star experiences,”* says **MSc Maja Pak**, Director General of the STB, who is among the 50 selected representatives of high-executive staff from around the world who will be able to present the offer of their companies, agencies or countries to the leading global media. *“Our entire Las Vegas presentation, focused on five-star experiences, gastronomy and culture, is extremely important for Slovenian tourism. The STB decided to collaborate with Virtuoso in accordance with the strategic vision for the sustainable growth of Slovenian tourism to make Slovenia a globally recognisable green destination for five-star experiences tailored to demanding visitors who seek out high-end products. Today, luxury tourism means an innovative top-notch offer with elements of the authentic and sustainable, and is adapted to individual guests. Slovenia can already offer special, personalised experiences that are the result of an increasingly varied and growing innovative, sustainable offer where a personal approach to the guest is at the forefront. Our Las Vegas presentation will also nicely complement the STB’s communication strategy on the US market.”*

*“Present-day travellers seek something deeper, exclusive, a tailor-made experience that will enrich their lives in some way. It can be getting to know the culture of a chosen destination, learning something new or looking for inspiration or self-discovery. Today, luxury is personalisation,”* says the **Virtuoso** network, where they have registered a growing demand for tailor-made holidays. In recent years, there has been an increase – of 33% compared to last year – in the number of travel agents who deal with this area. *“Our agents can prepare an experience many others have only dreamed about, ensure added value, and offer our clients VIP status. In a torrent of information and offers, they can provide advice, access, advocacy and accountability, which is impossible to get online. They also save one of our client’s most precious values: time. The value of human relationships is immense in the travel industry.”*

Research from abroad (source: Tourism Economics) shows that over the next ten years the average growth rate of luxury travel will be 6.2%, while that of overall travel will be 4.8%. North American and Western European guests now account for 64% of these trips, despite making up only 18% of the world’s population. Because of the prosperity and maturity of these two markets, their dominance will continue in the next ten years, but we can expect an increase in luxury trips from Brazil, Russia, India and China.

Virtuoso is the leading global travel network in luxury tourism, comprising more than 15,200 travel advisors, agents and partners from 390 agencies and companies. They come from 44 countries throughout North America, Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, Asia-Pacific, and Africa. The network provides different education opportunities to its members, participation at networking events, and communication channels to address end users. 70% of the agencies in the network are from the USA which is one of the key markets of Slovenian tourism.

According to the data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, tourist arrivals from the USA increased by 26% in the first semester of 2017, while overnight stays increased by 18%. Both segments have recorded growth since 2006. In terms of the number of arrivals, tourists from the US ranked 12th last year, and in terms of the number of overnight stays they were 14th. According to data from 2015, 70% of American tourists came to Slovenia on holiday, while 15% visited for business reasons. Two thirds of American tourists chose Slovenia as their only holiday destination, the others most often also visited Croatia and/or Italy. More than half of American tourists spent their holidays in Ljubljana in 2015, while just under a quarter visited other municipalities. Two thirds of US tourists opted for a four- or five-star hotel. Their average daily consumption was EUR 166, which was above the average consumption of foreign guests in Slovenia. The largest share was spent on accommodation, slightly below a third on food in restaurants, and close to 10% on shopping and gifts.

For American tourists, the most important reasons or motives for choosing a trip or holiday are personal safety, friendliness of the local population, and cleanliness of the destination. The USA is the second most important global emitting market in terms of tourist arrivals and the most important market in terms of tourist consumption. The trend of growth in arrivals from the USA to Europe has been positive for the last few years.

**More information**

**Slovenian Tourist Board**

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