Press release

**Pony stampede!**

**A record number of more than 900 legendary Slovenian Pony bicycles climb Vršič pass**

**Ljubljana, 5 June 2017 – On Saturday 3 June, the third annual climb of Vršič using Rog Pony bicycles was held, at which three records were broken. More than 900 cyclists left Kranjska gora at 3.00 pm and headed for the pass. The best time was posted by Primož Jurak of Celje, who made it to the top in a record 44 minutes and 30 seconds. An expert panel also judged the cyclists’ best retro outfits. The Vršič climb was also joined by the** [**Cycling Ambassadors of Slovenia**](https://www.slovenia.info/sl/novinarsko-sredisce/novice/7504-ambasadorji-kolesarjenja-za-uvod-v-kolesarsko-dirko-po-sloveniji)**, who completed their unforgettable cycling adventure around Slovenia on Sunday.**

*“The Vršič Climb is a must-have trophy for all serious Slovene cyclists. At this year’s climb we broke three records – the overall number of participants and the fastest climb in both the men’s and women’s categories. At the third annual edition of the event, the number of participants grew from 573 last year to* ***922 cyclists****, and this year’s winner,* ***Primož Jurak of Celje****, finished the climb in* ***44 minutes and 30 seconds****,”* said project organisers Red Bull Slovenia. The Red Bull Pony Stampede, a less competitive and much more social and fun-oriented event using Pony bicycles to make the climb from Kranjska gora to Vršič, continues to delight the participants, hosts and organisers. The atmosphere in the sunny weather was fantastic – relaxed, friendly and light-hearted.

**Give up? I don’t think so.**

Despite the introduction of a new, lighter version of the Pony bicycle for 2017, the winners rode older bikes. Last year’s runner up **Primož Jurak** made it to the top in a new record time of **44 minutes and 30 seconds**. *“I quickly got to the front, maintained my tempo and soon I was by myself. I could only see one racer behind me. This victory is my second-best achievement in cycling, just after becoming the amateur national champion in cross-country mountain biking in 2009,”* said the winner. His fellow townsman, ultra-distance cyclist **Žiga Srnec**, was breathing down his neck the whole race and finished 22 seconds back, while third place went to amateur road racer **Srečko Brulc** from Dolenjska.

A record was also set amongst the women. “*My goal was to be around 55 minutes, so I am quite satisfied. I felt good, and I thought it would be harder*,” said this year’s winner **Laura Šimenc**, who finished the climb in **52 minutes and 10 seconds** and was more than five minutes faster than second-placed **Tamara Grm**. The third woman to the top was the winner of the first two editions of the race, **Jasmina Jelovšek**, who lowered her best time by more than a minute.

**It’s got to be retro**

An expert panel judged the cyclists’ best retro outfits. The winner among the ladies was **Aleksandra Kogovšek**, whose fluorescent aerobics look from the 80s was a perfect match to her pink Pony. **Tomaž Alauf** took the laurels in the men’s category with his superb costume based on Vučko, the mascot of the Olympic Games in Sarajevo in 1984, and first place among the teams went to the **Ribnica Hunters**, who rode up to Vršič with rifles and bits of forest camouflage.

**Cycling ambassadors have a go at Vršič**

Slovenia’s most famous climb was also participated in by cyclists from other countries, including the Cycling Ambassadors, who rode around Slovenia between 30 May and 4 June. “*Slovenes are totally mad about this event. The crowd was so packed I could hardly ride through it. When I got to the top it was an amazing feeling, as the spectators were cheering and encouraging us. I felt like a winner, even though I didn’t win,”* said **Adam Kožoušek**.

Their cycling adventure was organised by the Slovenian Tourist Board (STB) as part of the 24th Tour of Slovenia. From an enormous number of applications, the STB selected 6 adventure-seekers from the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, the Czech Republic and Great Britain. On their 6-day trip around Slovenia, the Ambassadors rode through the historical centre of the capital, Ljubljana, the mysterious subterranean world below Mt. Peca, and Slovenia’s wine-growing regions, got to know the Karst Plateau, Goriška Brda and the coast, and finished their trip with a visit to the pearls of the Alpine foothills, Bled and Bohinj. You can read about their experiences and see highlights from their trip on the [**STB website**](https://www.slovenia.info/en/cycling-ambassador-of-slovenia), their social network accounts and blogs.

**Further information**

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