Souvenirs of Slovenia
What is the inherent quality of Oskar Kogoj's designs? How is it different from the works of other designers?

How does Oskar Kogoj's approach to design differ from his predecessors? What unique qualities does he bring to his work?

What are the inspirations behind Oskar Kogoj's designs? How do they reflect his vision of nature?

What impact do Oskar Kogoj's designs have on the viewers? How do they inspire and influence the audience?

What is the significance of the GALLERY NATURE DESIGN exhibition? How does it showcase Oskar Kogoj's work?

What is the role of the designer in the context of modern society? How do Oskar Kogoj's designs challenge or contribute to contemporary culture?

How do Oskar Kogoj's designs reflect the importance of nature in our lives? What lessons can we learn from his approach to design?

What is the inherent value of Oskar Kogoj's designs? How do they add to the beauty and functionality of everyday objects?
Souvenirs ... of Slovenia

A varied array of souvenirs is available in Slovenia, a land of immense natural and cultural diversity at the junction of the European Alps, the Mediterranean and the Pannonian Plain. The wealth of variety, which forms the basis of the nation’s celebrated creativity, can be directly credited to these three major European environments. It builds on the characteristic, predominantly natural European environments. It builds on the vast natural and cultural diversity of the European Alps, the Mediterranean and the Pannonian Plain. The wealth of variety, which forms the basis of the nation’s celebrated creativity, can be directly credited to these three major European environments. It builds on the vast natural and cultural diversity of the European Alps, the Mediterranean and the Pannonian Plain.

The select, highly distinctive offer of Slovenian souvenirs is not made up of just one product; it is a well-rounded variety of products that reflect the true creative character of souvenirs available in the area where the Alps, the Mediterranean and the Pannonian Plain meet. Three remarkable products originate in central Slovenia. From the Ribnica Valley come wooden utensils arranged in a bouquet, straw and maize baxt. These materials are of course at the heart of the Slovenian cultural heritage products. Such products are still made by many handicrafters working to keep the historical memory alive and carry on the various old local and regional pottery, weaving, blacksmithing and a number of other traditions. An important creative role is played by souvenir makers who improve and reshape cultural heritage products, from the viewpoint of either design/artistic value or practical applicability. Then there is the third type of souvenir maker who creates souvenirs that are detached from the cultural heritage and represent modern tokens of economic, social and spiritual aspirations of modern-day Slovenia.

Slovenia focuses particular attention on maintaining the highest possible quality of souvenirs. Top-quality handicrafts, the flagship of Slovenian souvenirs, which are sold in souvenir and gift shops and other locations, carry the distinctive mark "Rokodelstvo - Art & Craft - Slovenija." This brand label denotes universal product integrity, which means that the labelled products exhibit exquisite technological, aesthetic, denotative and practical qualities. What is more, all quality souvenirs and souvenir-themed products carry the "I Feel Slovenia" label. Both brand labels are there to help visitors to Slovenia decide which products to buy and take home as mementos of individual local peculiarities, remarkable regional features or the country as a whole.

The Alpine areas of Slovenia are first represented by the household candleholder, made by the skilled hands of Kropa blacksmiths (UKO Kropa) and designed by the famous Slovenian architect Jože Plečnik (1872–1957). The next masterpiece of the Alpine Slovenia: honey, mead and other products made in fruitful cooperation among man, honeybees and nature. Centuries ago, this part of Slovenia was home to numerous important pious and teachers of beekeeping, who were also highly recognised in the European context.

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The Pannonian part of Slovenia is represented by two products. In 2007, archaeologists unearthed at the Nova Tabla site near Mursika Sobota «the first lady of Slovenia,» that is, the oldest female figurine, a votive statuette made of baked clay which is more than 5,500 years old. The original is kept at the Mursika Sobota Regional Museum, and the replica, presented in neat packaging, is sold as a souvenir. The other typical group of products from these parts of Slovenia is represented by glassware made by Steklarska Nova in Ljubljana and the Murska Sobota Regional Museum, and the replica, presented in neat packaging, is sold as a souvenir. The other typical group of products from these parts of Slovenia is represented by glassware made by Steklarska Nova in Ljubljana and the Murska Sobota Regional Museum.

Slovenia boasts a rich natural and cultural diversity, and likewise varied are the opportunities for discovering and buying souvenirs. All major towns and tourist hotspots have specialised gift shops and kiosks. You will also find many attractive souvenirs at the markets and various traditional annual fairs. Some souvenir makers give practical demonstrations of their trade at workshops during open days. Many stalls selling souvenirs are also often set up at various events ...

And there is another group of products that define and characterise this aspect of Slovenia's recognisability among tourists. Individual regions and places are of course represented by a large number of other products, which are presented in the rest of this catalogue.

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So there is ample opportunity for you to take at least a part of the nature, creativity and memories of Slovenia and its people back to your cultural background.
Selected characteristics of places and regions

Slovenian regions are strongly characterised by their local natural materials, which have been the fundamental modes of creative expression for centuries. Such natural material of the Primorska region and Slovenian Istria is stone, which was used not only for building but also for handcrafting numerous useful and decorative items. Today, stone is the basic working element for stonemasons, particularly in the Karst region. One part of Slovenia’s Alpine region is characterised by sheep fleece, the basic natural ingredient for a wide range of knitwear and felt products. It goes without saying that a very large part of Slovenia is marked by wood. As a matter of fact, wood is the number one material in Slovenia, and it is used in the widest-ranging spheres of handcrafting. Practically the same goes for wicker, wood shavings, and straw. Alongside clay, straw is the creative material that has most profoundly marked the Slovenian Pannonian Plain, specifically its northeastern and southwestern parts. Many centuries ago, the region’s clay deposits – giving clays of various textures and colours – gave rise to what later evolved into some of the nation’s biggest pottery centres.
Ljubljana as the country’s capital and the hub of central Slovenia is also symbolised by mascots dressed in stylised costumes belonging to individual Slovenian regions. These costumes were widely used until the 19th century, but today they are worn on festive occasions by members of folk dance clubs. Ljubljana is also represented by various miniature versions of the Ljubljana Dragon, one of the capital’s main attractions, which appears on the city’s coat of arms and sits on the famous Dragon Bridge on the Ljubljanica. Another distinctive feature of Ljubljana is the decorative Easter bundle, or butarica, made of many-coloured wood shavings and evergreen shrubs, which city people have taken to church for a blessing on Palm Sunday since the First World War. The most typical culinary souvenir from central Slovenia is the Carniolan sausage, arguably the best known Slovenian food around the world. The national Best Carniolan Sausage contest is held in Sora, near Medvode, every year. The sausage of 

Ljubljana, central Slovenia and Zasavje

The Ljubljana Tourist Board offers a wide palette of quality souvenirs carrying the label »Ljubljana Souvenir«.

Ljubljana Easter bundle

Replicas of the ring from the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana

Carniolan sausage

Ljubljana Dragon

Prešeren Figs

course carries a protected designation of origin and is still made to the traditional recipe first written down in the beginning of the 19th century. One of the capital’s most prominent public spots, the popular, cultural and political meeting point, and an ideal venue for various events, gatherings and casual get-togethers is Prešeren Square, whose landmark is the statue of the greatest Slovenian poet France Prešeren (1800–1849). It was his life that inspired the top-quality confectionery product »Prešeren Figs«, which are dipped in dark and white chocolate. It is said that the poet would often carry dried figs in his coat pocket and children, knowing this, would call after him »Doctor, figs, figs!«.
Gorenjska was among the first Slovenian regions to further the development of tourism, which coincided with the development of tourism in Europe. For instance, the very first graphic depiction of Lake Bled, with the church on the island and the castle perched above the lake, was made as early as 1851, which ranks as one of the country’s earliest souvenirs.

The central modern souvenir of Bled is the wishing bell, a miniature copy of the well-known bell hanging in the church tower on the island of Lake Bled, which visitors ring so that their wishes come true. The miniature bell is also associated with the famous Bled legend of the sunken bell. Not far from Bled lies Bohinj, a place with a magnificent Alpine lake and home to the spicy matured cheese, the «Bohinj Mohant», which is a true delight for the most refined gourmet tastes. It can be savoured as a spread or garnish or used in the baking of strong-tasting Mohant biscuits. One of the typical creative activities of the Alpine areas is represented by an assortment of wooden products. Among them are meticulously carved pigeons symbolising the Holy Spirit, which were and still are hung above tables in central living spaces. In Kropa, the old centre of nail making and blacksmithing, skilled hands forge lovely handheld candleholders to the design of the world-famous Slovenian architect Jože Plečnik (1872–1957). Many towns and villages across the Gorenjska region are home to a number of excellent beekeepers, whose honey, mead and other apiary products are a significant part of Slovenia’s all-natural delicacies. The Museum of Apiculture in Radovljica holds remarkable testaments to the importance of beekeeping for Gorenjska and Slovenia as a whole. Of all the old pottery centres in the Gorenjska region, the art of pottery was kept alive only in Komenda and its surroundings. Potter Franc Kremkar, based in Gmajnica near Komenda, carries on the pottery tradition of old Komenda potters. Handicraft in the nearby town of Kamnik dates back to the mid-19th century. The local ceramic workshop has been producing decorative and functional ceramics in the faience technique since 1911, and the most widely known product is the so-called Kamnik majolica. The Kusmač handicraft workshop, based in Rietrica pri Štiftu, produces elaborate replicas of various functional and ornamental items made of wood, which are kept in museums and private collections. Among them are wooden pocket sundials, exactly like the ones which would have been used by shepherds on the Velika Planina pasture above Kamnik. From Železniki come the hand-shaped honey breads known as Dražgoše breads. Named after the village of Dražgoše, which is situated on the hillside above Železniki, the honey breads are a popular gift for children, couples in love, for various festive occasions and life’s milestones.

Honey, mead, and dried fruit in honey

Gorenjska

Bled wishing bell

Kamnik majolica

Baking dish for potica – potičnica

Bird of paradise from Bled

Dražgoše bread

Plečnik’s candleholder

Plečnik’s candleholder

Honey, mead, and dried fruit in honey
The craft was introduced to this area by miners and their families who populated the area around the former Idrija mercury mine. The successful development of lacemaking, particularly expertise in this field, can largely be credited to the Idrija Lace School, which has been active since 1876. Idrija bobbin lace has a protected designation of origin, and in recent years the development of this craft also focuses on creating fashionable articles of clothing and accessories.

Mesarstvo Podobnik from Čeplez above Cerkno makes top-quality dry-cured meat products called Čeplez (originally Šebrelje) stomachs. Stuffed stomachs mature between wooden boards in remarkable natural conditions, and are very fleshy and well-balanced. They are often served as delicious appetizers or cold cuts for various occasions.

Idrija bobbin lace

The central souvenir of the Idrija and Cerkno areas is by far Idrija bobbin lace.
Primorska and Slovenian Istria

Primorska and Slovenian Istria

The most distinctive souvenir of Primorska are without doubt the fine wines produced in the wine region of the same name.

Karst wines and Teran liqueur

Among them especially those we call our own or native. Among them are the ruby red Kraški Teran, Refošk and Malvazija in Slovenian Istria, Zelen, Pinela, Orgasna and Klarnica in the Vipava Valley, and in Goriska Brda there is Rebula. This wine region also produces other internationally known wines, such as Sauvignon-ais (formerly known as Tokaj), Barbera, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, Sauvignon and

Ribolla Gialla (Rumena Rebula) -

region also produces exquisite Karst gin and Teran liqueur. The neighbouring Brkini produces, or rather distills, Brkinški slivovec, plum brandy with a protected designation of origin. The main material of the Karst is stone, which served for many centuries as an inspiration to stonemasons, who would use it to make functional and ornamental items and construction elements. Stone mortars and pestles are

Stone mortar and pestle

Karst prosciutto -

even today widely used in cooking. They are made by the Pliskovica-based expert stonemason Jernej Bortolato. This wine region also produces other internationally known wines, such as Sauvignon-ais (formerly known as Tokaj), Barbera, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, Sauvignon and

Sea salt from the Sečovlje saltpans

salt flower, which are marketed under the »Solnce« brand. The salt and salt flower are produced in the Sečovlje saltpans. Among delicious fruit desserts from this part of Slovenia belong fig buns, arguably the most authentic and practical souvenirs. With no added sugar or preservatives, they can be eaten all at once or enjoyed for several months without going bad.

Refošk

Zelen
The Notranjska region is a typical karst landscape with numerous karst phenomena. Notranjska

Postojna Cave, Predjama Castle and Škocjan Caves boast the most wide-ranging souvenir offer. Places around the intermittent Lake Cerknica, which has been the subject of explorations from as early as the 17th century, mostly offer mascots of witches or sorceresses, which are said to reside in Slivnica above Lake Cerknica.

Children’s picture book »Postojna Cave Dragon«

Witch from Slivnica above Lake Cerknica

Monograph »Škocjan Caves Park«

Depiction of the blind cave salamander popularly known as the »human fish«

The Ribnica Street Fair, organised annually by the Ribnica Tourist Society and held on the first Sunday of every September, features 100+ woodenware and pottery makers and craft workers from all around the country. The largest tourist event in Slovenia, boasting 33 years of tradition, the Fair draws tens of thousands of visitors from home and abroad.

In recent years the Fair has grown into a multi-day festival with numerous cultural and entertainment events, and a rich gastronomic offer.
The Ribnica Valley, Kočevska, Dolenjska and Bela Krajina

Ribnica woodenware bouquet or »suha roba«

Ribnica horse and rider

Kočevje honey

Bela Krajina Easter egg or »drsanke« and »pisanice«

Cviček

The Ribnica Valley, Kočevska, Dolenjska and Bela Krajina

Cviček, a popular low-alcohol wine with a pleasing bouquet and special properties that facilitate digestion of meaty and high-fat foods and are good for one’s digestion in general. And, speaking of Cviček, there is the typical jug from which this wine is poured. The jug is shaped like a cock, which is the emblem of Šentjernej, one of the main centres in the land of Cviček. The cock also appears on the town’s coat of arms. The Dolenjska Museum in Novo Mesto holds a remarkable collection of archaeological artefacts, which also include a number of objects belonging to the art of situlae. Replicas of some of the artefacts can be purchased at the museum shop. The road across the Gorjanci Hills leads to Bela Krajina, the region bordered by the Kolpa River on the opposite side. Bela Krajina is home to painted and ornamented Easter eggs called »pisanice« and »drsanke«. Other distinctive features of the region are Bela Krajina needlework and linen, and the traditional musical instrument – a bass made of pottery – called gúdalo.

Trading in these products has hundreds of years of tradition, as travelling traders are known to have distributed the products across the entire southeastern and central parts of Europe. The symbolic decorative product, made up of miniature wooden utensils, is the set of Ribnica woodenware arranged in a bouquet, known locally as »suha roba«. The Ribnica Valley has rich clay deposits, which gave rise to the development of the art of pottery. This tradition has been carried on by four workshops. One of them, Nosani’s workshop in Prigorica, produces horses and riders, whistles also referred to as little horses with whistling rear ends. Copies of these little horses can be found in several museums around Europe. The nearby Kočevje area is home to Kočevje wild honey, which has a protected designation of origin, which means that its quality, properties and tradition are safeguarded. The high quality of the product can be credited to honeybees, which collect nectar in a pristine forest environment. The central souvenir of the Dolenjska region is the most specific of Slovenian wines, ruby red Cviček. It is a very popular low-alcohol wine which has a pleasing bouquet and special properties that facilitate digestion of meaty and high-fat foods and are good for one’s digestion in general. And, speaking of Cviček, there is the typical jug from which this wine is poured. The jug is shaped like a cock, which is the emblem of Šentjernej, one of the main centres in the land of Cviček. The cock also appears on the town’s coat of arms. The Dolenjska Museum in Novo Mesto holds a remarkable collection of archaeological artefacts, which also include a number of objects belonging to the art of situlae. Replicas of some of the artefacts can be purchased at the museum shop. The road across the Gorjanci Hills leads to Bela Krajina, the region bordered by the Kolpa River on the opposite side. Bela Krajina

The Ribnica Valley is represented by a wide range of functional and decorative wooden products, which are collectively referred to as »ribniška suha roba«.
The central souvenir from this area is fine wines, particularly white ones, some of which enjoy a great international reputation.

Home to the nation’s best Welschriesling and Rhine Riesling. The superior, native Šipon, however, is produced in Prlekija. Exquisite Traminer is produced in Radgona-Kapela Gorice. Some people also rank Ramiša among the indigenous grape varieties, and the area also produces Green Sylvaner, Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Yellow Muscat, Rivaner, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Noir, Kerner and others. Since the second half of the 18th century, vineyards and winegrowing have been associated with the setting up of wooden wind rattles called »klopotec«. Originally, they would have been used to scare off birds, but today they produce a pleasant sound which echoes among wine-growing hills before and during the grape harvest. This winegrowing region of Slovenia is therefore home to the »klopotec«. There are two distinct types: the Prlekija and the Haloze styles. Wind rattles, either life-size or in miniature, are a very popular souvenir. Another activity is closely connected to wine and the wine culture. That is glassmaking, or specifically glass blowing and cutting. The products are exquisite glasses and other drinking vessels. The centre of modern-day glassmaking in Slovenia is the spa town of Rogaška Slatina. Having won widespread acclaim for its remarkable mineral springs centuries ago, this town has been an important health resort ever since. The natural mineral waters from Rogaška and nearby Radenci wonderfully complement the offer of souvenirs in Slovenia. But let’s go back to wine and wine culture. Maribor’s Lent boasts the oldest living grapevine in the world, which still thrives every year. It is estimated to be more than 400 years old, so the sheer memory of this grapevine growing by the Drava River can be a unique experience for everyone. During the Mardi Gras period, the oldest Slovenian town and its near and far surroundings transform into a colourful and vibrant hotspot of carnival customs with numerous masquerades. Some of those customs are modern reenactments of ancient rituals, which featured exceptional characters. One such character is the »korant« or »kurent«. As a memento of your encounter with the kurents, there are minature mascots and an excellent monograph published on this topic. The Štajerska and the neighbouring Prekmurje regions, the latter described in more detail below, have been producing delicious Štajerska-Prekmurje pumpkin oil since the 18th century. This highly aromatic oil can serve a variety of purposes – it can be used in various dishes and salads, even as a topping for vanilla ice cream. Pumpkin seeds too can be used for cooking. Gostilna Rajh in Bakovci near Murska Sobota, in the Prekmurje region, add various fl avours to the seeds and pack them in neat packaging.

The »Slovenian Dozen« glasses, designed by Oskar Kogoj and made by Steklarska Nova in Rogaška Slatina or cooked, then roasted and cooled. Cold pieces of meat are then put in wooden tubs or receptacles, which are then filled up with minced lard. Meat preserved in this way retains its natural juices and is a true delight to the taste buds.

Posavje, Kozjansko, Haloze, Štajerska and Prlekija

Prleška tünka
Koroška

A typical Alpine region, Koroška boasts two top-quality foods which are increasingly popular as souvenirs.

- Koroška rye bread
- Koroška must

Numerous visitors to tourist farms and guests of some of the traditional inns, or gostilnas, in this part of Slovenia often take these delicacies home with them. The typical souvenirs of Slovenj Gradec and the Mliniška Valley are honeybreads made by Medičarstvo in svečarstvo Perger in Slovenj Gradec, who carry on the old Austro-Hungarian tradition.

Prekmurje

Prekmurje is the northeasternmost Slovenian region, which stretches between the left bank of the Mura River and Hungary.

In the past this area had many pottery centres which produced a special type of black pottery. Today this tradition and the souvenir-making technique are kept alive by a handful of individuals. Straw is still used to weave and put together various festive decorations, which are usually hung indoors, and cereal plant wreaths called »doužnjek« or »ujęstre«. They were used as festive decorations during harvest and Christmas, also for weddings, but today they are often found hanging in people’s homes and in food establishments. Another common natural material used for weaving various functional and decorative items is maize bast or husks. The Prekmurje region successfully carries on the old tradition of decorating Easter eggs, which the locals call »remenke« or »rumenke«. Two delicacies which are often bought as souvenirs by tourists are pumpkin oil and seeds. Prekmurje ham, with a protected designation of origin, is also very popular and valued. Prekmurje ham is produced based on centuries of tradition of preserving pork legs. The product tastes like matured dry-cured meat and bacon, has a distinctive aroma with a hint of smoke, and contains moderate amounts of salt.

- Two-handled bag made of bast
- Rye bread
- Honeybread heart
- Pumpkin seeds
The Savinja and Salek valleys

Slovenia has at least one more type of premium stuffed and dry-cured stomachs.

These are stuffed and dried stomachs from the Upper Savinja Valley. The secret to the production is in the drying process, which uses the favourable natural conditions of the sub-Alpine climate and the special microclimate of the place where the end products dry. The Upper Savinja Valley stomach has a protected geographical indication. In the town of Celje, the centre of the Lower Savinja Valley, tourists can choose from a wide array of souvenirs which are replicas of museum items associated with the Counts of Celisia. Among them are products of modern design – both functional and decorative items – inspired by the town’s rich historical heritage. A collection of such products was designed by Oskar Kogoj, and the products can be purchased in the gallery in Celje which was named after this famous designer. In recent years the production of functional and decorative felt products underwent considerable growth in the Upper Savinja Valley. The material used comes from the indigenous Jezersko-Soltava sheep breed. This craft is centred in Soltava, and it involves a number of craftswomen from the wider area of the Upper Savinja Valley.

Upper Savinja Valley stomach

Commemorative coin

Felt slippers
Quality assurance

Where to find quality souvenirs?

As a matter of fact, the question in the heading is difficult to answer. Mostly because Slovenia sells souvenirs of various quality grades, at various locations and in a variety of ways.

First there are dedicated gift and souvenir shops and kiosks selling souvenirs in all the major cities and towns (the most in Ljubljana) and tourist hotspots (e.g. Bled, Postojna). The range of souvenirs to choose from is also wide in open-door workshops and some museums. Museum shops in Slovenia are more of an exception, as the range of souvenirs available in museums is still very limited. Normally you will only find several replicas of museum items and publications at the entrance to a museum. The range of souvenirs is, however, quite wide and varied at numerous fairs, tourist events, various public celebrations, in town squares and marketplaces. Tourists are advised to buy products carrying the distinctive labels «Bolekslovo-Art&Craft-Slovenija» and «I Feel Slovenian». The latter is featured on a fairly wide selection of mass-produced souvenirs, including promotional and functional items and materials like baseball caps, T-shirts, small flags, writing instruments and various other products of a predominantly functional character, as well as ballmark products that are representative of the souvenir offer of Slovenia and are described in the introduction to this catalogue. When buying souvenirs of Ljubljana, we recommend you choose the ones carrying the label «Ljubljana Souvenir».

Numerous Slovenian foodstuffs of farm origin carry the Protected Designation of Origin, Protected Geographical Indication and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed labels, all of which signify high quality.
Hello, anybody home? << 0 open-door workshops

As a matter of fact, open-door workshops are nothing new. An integral part of the souvenir offer of Slovenia, they are one of the many ways to meet local craftsmen and see their products. Today open-door workshops offer visitors a chance to familiarise themselves with specific work processes and see first-hand how the products are created. Visitors or customers can also get hands-on experience of the tasks. For example, almost all pottery centres give visitors a chance to work the potter’s wheel and mould a clump of clay into a useful piece of pottery. Workshops often have a separate exhibition area and a shop for visitors to see and choose the products first hand. A visit to an open-door workshop can be a truly fulfilling experience, an event much more than just shopping for souvenirs, as it provides visitors with an opportunity to learn more about the local and regional cultures and creative aspirations of individual craftpeople. A visit to an open-door workshop is therefore a special, unique tourist event.

Some crafts were traditionally carried out in home workshops, and these domestic working environments were frequented by customers. Today open-door workshops offer visitors a chance to familiarise themselves with specific work processes and see first-hand how the products are created. Visitors or customers can also get hands-on experience of the tasks. For example, almost all pottery centres give visitors a chance to work the potter’s wheel and mould a clump of clay into a useful piece of pottery. Workshops often have a separate exhibition area and a shop for visitors to see and choose the products first hand. A visit to an open-door workshop can be a truly fulfilling experience, an event much more than just shopping for souvenirs, as it provides visitors with an opportunity to learn more about the local and regional cultures and creative aspirations of individual craftpeople. A visit to an open-door workshop is therefore a special, unique tourist event.

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With craftspeople around Slovenia
and its arts and crafts centres

The first conceptual plan to establish arts and crafts centres across Slovenia was developed in 2001, whereby individual centres, linked by the so-called Arts and Crafts Route, would develop shared activity and visitor programmes. Some centres have already set their course and enjoy relatively successful results, while others are still in the process of developing a well-rounded offer of arts and crafts, which will in turn make for a systematic approach to presenting the arts and crafts heritage and modern creativity.

From the organisational point of view, the central point of this system will be Ljubljana, where all the fundamental educational and other institutions such as museums are based which play an important role in the shaping of the souvenir offer and in the planning of the future development of crafts. The first regional craft-oriented centre, focusing on woodwork, or »suha roba«, and pottery, will be established in Ribnica. Ribnica already has a museum collecting and studying the testaments to the rich heritage of these two crafts. From Ribnica the road leads through many arts and crafts centres into the Dolenjska region, where no craft centre has yet emerged. The greatest prospects can be found in the area around Trebnje, which could grow into a centre of wickerwork. Leave the Dolenjska region by crossing the Sava River, drive through the Kozjansko area to Kropa, which is inspired by centuries-old traditions of nail-making, ironworking and ornamental blacksmithing. The next well-rounded arts and crafts centres can be found in Idrija, home to the protected Idrija bobbin lace; there is the local museum, whose research, expert and documenting work is priceless, the Idrija Lace School, the Arts and Crafts Centre then runs from Prekmurje to Maribor, where the development of new arts and crafts centre in the renovated old town is well underway. Its operation and mission will focus primarily on new handicrafts and technologies. Go through the Drava Valley to Dravograd, then head for Slovenska Bistrica. This historical town at the heart of the Mura Valley has been playing host to Slovenian biennial arts and crafts exhibitions since 1977, the town’s planned arts and crafts centre will be active in several areas of activity, predominantly those associated with woodworking. Incidentally, through the Mura Valley runs Slovenia’s one and only regional (municipal) arts and crafts route linking open-door workshops. From Slovenska Bistrica head for Slovenska Bistrica, whose arts and crafts centre for creative ceramics is already taking shape and whose Bistricka Caste was renovated to provide a suitable environment for such activity.

The Gorenjska region has a dedicated arts and crafts centre in Kropa, which is inspired by centuries-old traditions of nail-making, ironworking and ornamental blacksmithing. The next well-rounded arts and crafts centre can be found in Idrija, home to the protected Idrija bobbin lace; there is the local museum, whose research, expert and documenting work is priceless, the Idrija Lace School, the centre for the protection of bobbin lace, lace-making workshops and gift shops, and the lace festival. The journey to the arts and crafts centres of Slovenia ends in the Karst town of Sežana, where an important centre for Karst stonemasonry is being formed to offer suitable educational programmes and to enable a hands-on learning experience in the Karst region, a living testament to the cultural heritage of stonemasonry. All twelve planned arts and crafts centres are already putting together various visitor programmes, which they will continue to do in the future. This is one of the essential prerequisites for their future development.

Every Slovenian region boasts a colourful variety of arts and crafts. Visiting and learning about the arts and crafts centres is a great opportunity for discovering and exploring Slovenia, its natural environments, and aspirations of its people.

With craftspeople around Slovenia and its arts and crafts centres
### Souvenirs at events and souvenir-dedicated events

Fairs of various types are the perfect opportunity to visit stalls and other points of sale to learn about and buy souvenirs.

Such events are normally held ahead of festive seasons (e.g. St Nicholas, Christmas, New Year, Easter fairs) or in individual seasons of the year (e.g. spring, autumn fairs). The traditional fairs are divided into pedlars’ fairs and livestock markets. Some of them have centuries of tradition. They are still held on the same days as they were long ago, or during local church festivals. The latter are called benediction fairs, that is, fairs held to commemorate the day the local church was consecrated and fairs held on the feast day of the local patron saint (e.g. St Joseph’s, St Ann’s, St Catherine’s, St George’s fairs, etc.). Next, there are fairs that are dedicated exclusively to souvenir-making and are directly associated with one or more arts and crafts (e.g. the Idrija Bobbin Lace Festival, Železniki Lacemaking Day, Shoemaker’s Sunday in Tržič, Blacksmith’s Day in Kropa).

Rather uncoordinated is the offer of souvenirs at various mediaeval fairs and events related to the Middle Ages. Flea markets, selling mostly cultural heritage items and antiquities, are also popular. Apart from selling their products, craftspeople use the many events to demonstrate how a particular product is made or to explain how the products function and how they can be used in everyday life.

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**MARKET DAY IN SODRAŽIČA**

The Sodražica Market Day is a traditional event inspired by the revival of market days from the second half of the 18th century. A special focus is placed on the presentation of traditional crafts and customs, some of which originated in the area, while others were brought in from elsewhere and survived to this day. The Market Day is accompanied by a number of cultural, sporting and entertainment events, like the Friday night celebration called “Psoglavska Noč”, with various musical ensembles and a fireworks display, and the Saturday demonstration of old habits and customs called “Valiki Večer”, with theatre and singing performances. There is also a very rich culinary offer, with a special emphasis on the local dishes, for example the threesome called “sedrčka trojka”. The event draws a larger number of visitors each year, not only from the surrounding areas but also from all over Slovenia and across the border.

The Sodražica Market Day, or “Tržni Dan v Sodražici”, is a full-day event which takes place on the first Sunday of every July.

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**www.slovenia.info/events**
A land of stone, drought and the harsh Bora wind, the Karst region toughened its people, who live with stone all their lives. The people co-exist in harmony with stone and know how to make it work to their advantage. The people of the Karst therefore shaped the rich architectural and cultural heritage of the area. The loyalty to stone and the tradition of stone-working were passed from generation to generation and have been kept alive to this day.

JERNEJ BORTOLATO

A self-taught stonemason from Pliskovica in the Karst region, born in 1974, Jernej Bortolato walked – in the eleven years since he started working Karst stone as a hobby – a long and impressive path from creating plain replicas to products of artistic value. He works with several renowned Slovenian designers, notably Andraž Debeljak, with whom he achieved remarkable results. Their products can be found among the business gifts of respectable Slovenian businesses and state protocol gifts. Bortolato makes miniature replicas of karst wells, mortars and pestles, bowls, paperweights and other items from natural Lipica stone and other Karst stone. His work has been showcased in a number of notable and successful exhibitions both in Slovenia and abroad.

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