

**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**

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TURIZEM

Special edition 2018

Message of sustainability
FIGHT FOR GREEN



Tina Maze

**SLOVENIA MADE
US WHO WE ARE**

So green, so diverse, so specific
**SLOVENIA FOR ALL
SPORTS NEEDS**

I FEEL SLOVENIA

INTERNATIONAL SPORTING EVENTS IN SLOVENIA 2018

fight for green



Slovenia, A DESTINATION FOR LIFE TIME EXPERIENCES



Slovenia is blessed with the perfect location in the heart of Europe and with incredible natural conditions suitable for different kinds of sports and recreation. Alongside numerous outdoor sports, the indoor have developed too, thanks to specialised sports centres and health resorts with their own medical specialisations. These are connected to the internationally renowned professional sports and medical institutions. Thanks to mobile laboratories, Slovenian expert knowledge is available everywhere in the country.

A network of sports facilities offering the best sporting environment has been built by the Slovenian government. Millions of euros have been invested in upgrading sports facilities across the country and in building thousands of kilometres of cycling routes, mountain trails and cross-country ski routes. Among the world-class sport locations in Slovenia, Planica Nordic Centre with the world's longest ski jump stands out. The world-famous venue for the organisations of the FIS Ski Jumping World Cup offers a variety of opportunities for sport preparations and it is my greatest pleasure to tell you that it will host the FIS Nordic World Ski Championships in 2023. Worth mentioning is also the new national football centre at Brdo pri Kranju recognised as a world-class football training facility by UEFA, which is led by Slovenian Aleksander Čeferin.

We are very proud that one of the world's leading associations is led by a Slovenian – as we are very proud, too, of our excellent world-class athletes.

According to the Olympic Committee of Slovenia, there are more than 6000 registered world-class athletes that have won 39 Olympic medals since Slovenia gained independence in 1991. Names such as Peter Prevc, the Ski Jumping World Champion, Tina Maze, the winner of 26 World Cup races and

the best Alpine skier in the history of Slovenia, Goran Dragič and Luka Dončić, the international basketball stars, Jan Oblak, the current goalkeeper at Atlético Madrid, Anže Kopitar, the first Slovenian to play in the NHL and the team captain of the Los Angeles Kings and two-time Stanley Cup winner, Primož Roglič, a great cyclist and the winner of the 25th Tour of Slovenia and many others have helped spreading the image of the green, active and healthy Slovenia around the world. Also with their help, Slovenia is now seen as a tourist destination that has managed to upgrade its beautiful natural resources with an adequate infrastructure and experiences.

Slovenia has developed into an excellent sports and recreational destination for 365 days a year, suitable for the training of professional athletes and sports teams, as well as for hosting major international sporting events. It is also a perfect place for five-star experiences for lovers of sports and active holidays.

The variety of reasons that will bring you to Slovenia is as diverse as the country itself and I am convinced that you will remember Slovenia for a life time.

After spending some time in Slovenia, Alex Chacon, one of this year's Cycling Ambassadors of Slovenia, posted on his Instagram account: "Slovenia, where have you been all my life?" I am sure that this is a question you will soon be asking yourself.

Welcome to Slovenia.

Maja Pak, MSc
Director of the Slovenian Tourist Board





14



20



10



22



16

05 — **#ifeelsLOVEnia**
25th Tour of Slovenia Stars
WE CAN REALLY FEEL sLOVEnia NOW

06 — **IN THE FOREGROUND**
So green, so diverse, so specific
SLOVENIA FOR ALL SPORTS NEEDS

10 — **INTERNATIONAL SPORTING EVENTS IN SLOVENIA**
Message of sustainability
FIGHT FOR GREEN

14 — **INTERVIEW**
Tomaž Ambrožič
SLOVENIA IS IDEAL FOR SPORTS PREPARATIONS

16 — **MEDIA EXPOSURE**
Cycling Ambassadors of Slovenia
MANY ACTIVITIES AND CULINARY SURPRISES

18 — **SPORT AND TOURISM**
High-profile Events in Slovenia
A STAR ON THE MAP FOR LOVERS OF SPORT AND ACTIVE HOLIDAYS

20 — **GASTRONOMY**
Slovenian chefs
ENJOY LOCAL DISHES, THEY ARE THE HEALTHIEST FOR YOU

22 — **THE FINAL WORD**
Different possibilities in Slovenia
MADE US SPORTSWOMEN AND MEN WHO WE ARE

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25th Tour of Slovenia Stars

WE CAN REALLY FEEL sLOVEnia NOW



Rigoberto Uran, Rafał Majka, Primož Roglič, Mark Cavendish, Marcel Kittel

Rigoberto Uran

Team EF Education First-Drpac p/b Cannondale
"This is my first tour in Slovenia, and for me good preparations for the Tour. I had to choose among the races and I rather came here than Dauphiné. My first goal is to have good preparations for Tour de France, it will be difficult to win with Primož Roglič on the start."

Rafał Majka

BORA hansgrohe, winner of 2017 Tour of Slovenia
"I expect a good race, just like last year. We already went for a ride today and the roads are beautiful. I want to do good on the race, it doesn't matter if I win the race or not. I want to have a good training and do something special. It will be harder to win this year, Roglič is a favourite and we also have a time-trial on the end."

Primož Roglič

Team LottoNL-Jumbo, winner of 2015 and 2018 Tour of Slovenia
"Honoured and proud that the best cyclists in the world will see my beautiful country – we are sure gonna put on a big fight – for green ... It's nice to race on home roads, in front of home fans. Usually they only see me on screens, now they can see me live out there on the roads. It's crazy to think that the race will pass my hometown, and I expect a lot of friends and neighbours there to support me ... Thank you, my Slovenia."

Mark Cavendish

Dimension Data
"My third time back in Slovenia, last year it was my only race ahead of Tour and for me it was a great race. This year the field is even stronger than last year. Line-up for the sprints is great, which is perfect for this part of the year. We'll have two opportunities and I'll aim for a green jersey. After that the GC contenders will have their race and we'll enjoy the countryside. Slovenia is a beautiful country, I'm happy to be back. Also, I love the food here."

Marcel Kittel

Team Katusha Alpecin
"It's beautiful, lots of small villages and nature, it reminds me on my home in Germany. I look forward to the race, it's my first time here for the race, I was here with my parents when I was younger. Every pure sprinter is looking at what he will do during the season. Dauphiné and Tour de Suisse are both very hard, for us it's great that we can come here and have a good race ... It was nice to roll through beautiful (!!!) Slovenia and push some hard watts into our pedals ... So, nice day on the bike and I can really feel Slovenia now."

📷 Vid Ponikvar/Sportida



Nordic centre in Planica where the FIS Nordic Ski World Championships 2023 will be held.

So green, so diverse, so specific SLOVENIA FOR ALL SPORTS NEEDS

Slovenes have upgraded beautiful natural resources with an adequate infrastructure and experiences. Thus, Slovenia has been developed into an excellent sports and recreational destination for 365 days a year, suitable for the training of professional athletes and sports teams, as well as for carrying out major international sports events.

The third most forested country in the European Union has 10 thousand km of well-marked hiking trails and many biking and other trails, leading you across dynamic terrain from the Alps to the Mediterranean, from the Pannonian Plain to the Karst. Slovenia is one of the European countries that are richest in water resources. On just over 20,000 km² of land, it has more than 27 thousand kilometres of watercourses, including rivers, streams, an abundance of lakes, waterfalls, water springs, and

no less than 87 thermal and mineral water sources. Furthermore, the Adriatic coast adds to this wealth in water resources.

Slovenia is particularly known for easy access to all of its different geographical areas: following the longest diagonal route, it is less than 400 kilometres from one end of Slovenia to the other. A plethora of outdoor exercise facilities is available in natural surroundings all over the country. Many of these are connected to the modern indoor exercise facilities.



*Slovenia will always be my home
Slovenia is and will always be my
home. I go there to recharge my
batteries. It is very relaxing and
pleasant; for me, time stops there.*

Anže Kopitar, the professional ice hockey centre, the first Slovenian to play in the NHL, team captain of the Los Angeles Kings, two-time Stanley Cup winner

Sustainability first

In Slovenia, sports and active vacations are closely connected to tourism. The strategy of sustainable growth of Slovene tourism 2017–2021 classified sports tourism as one of the key tourism products of the Slovene tourism (apart from vacations in the mountains and the outdoors, health and well-being, experiences of the nature, the sun and the sea – that is, tourism products that are all part of an active vacation).

Slovenian tourism is based on sustainable growth, which has also brought some prestigious awards and titles to Slovenia, as well as an even greater recognition as a green, active, healthy country: *National Geographic World Legacy Destination Leadership Award, First Green Country in the World, Ljubljana – European Green Capital 2016*. Efforts to become one of the most sustainable countries in the world have been rewarded this year at the World's Leading Travel Trade Show ITB Berlin; Slovenia was declared one of the six best destinations in the world and the best in Europe within the *Sustainable Destinations 2018 Top 100 in the Best of the Planet – Best of Europe* category.

Slovenes are also proud that the UN General Assembly, on the initiative of Slovenia, announced 20. May as World Bee Day, and thus supported our efforts to preserve the animal species that is of essential importance for all mankind.

Professional, hospitable and safe

Slovenia has a number of specialised sports centres, and most of what is on offer for world-class athletes is connected to the well-developed tourist destinations, such as Slovenian natural health resorts. This is also why athletes will be welcomed warmly anywhere they go, and there will be a lot of flexibility regarding their accommodation, food, and other major factors



The preparations of the professionals can be held in the peaceful nature.

required for successful training. However, the major advantage of health resorts with their own medical specialisations, also focused on sport, as well as of all other Slovenian sports destinations, is the integral connection with internationally renowned professional sports and medical institutions. Due to mobile laboratories, Slovenian expert knowledge is available to athletes anywhere in the country.

World-class athletes require privacy and safety when they are preparing. Privacy is provided by experienced hosts, who offer modern sports and accommodation infrastructure, and partnership agencies that organise the preparations. Safety is provided by good international relations with the country and the quality of life of its residents. According to the 2016 Global Peace Index, Slovenia is among the safest countries in the world. In recent years, it has even improved its safety position on the list of 163 countries, drafted by the Institute for Economics and Peace.



Slovenia's brand and positioning makes it highly relevant to the sport and active tourism markets and its asset base is exceptional – from the very diverse natural landscapes to the extraordinary range of man-made facilities for a multitude of sports involving both teams and individuals. In addition, Slovenia

has a very fine reputation for Olympic excellence, some world class training facilities (especially for soccer and rowing) and gastronomy that can deliver high quality nutritious food for athletes. One of the most important assets, often overlooked by other destinations, is the fact that Slovenia has impressive networks of sports clubs and sports specialists that are willing to make themselves available to benefit visiting teams and visitors wanting to participate in all kinds of sporting and adventure activities. Add to this the compact geography and the ease of getting to different facilities and you have a very competitive environment within which to grow these markets.

Prof. Dr. Terry Stevens, strategic sports projects and destination development specialist

Slovenia takes care of all of your sports needs

What you expect: Slovenian sports and recreational centres offer indoor facilities for numerous team sports, modern gymnasiums, fitness centres, and other facilities for the basic training of athletes from various sports disciplines. For professionally led basic preparations and training, you may select Slovenian cities with the largest stadiums and halls as well as their additional facilities, or choose to carry out your preparations in Slovenian natural health resorts and mountain centres that are inseparably connected with sport.

What you need: Slovenia has attractive summer and winter outdoor sport locations in places with exceptional natural features. They are complemented with stadiums, tracks, equipment, and accompanying indoor facilities intended for the specific needs of individual sports disciplines. Slovenia is home to the legendary victors in Alpine skiing, in various Nordic disciplines, from ski flying to cross-country skiing, biathlon, snowboarding, and it has excellent conditions for the preparation of winter athletes. In Planica, snow conditions for cross-country skiers are available all year round in indoor facilities. Due to the diverse bodies of water and water sports facilities, Slovenia is well known by rowers in various disciplines, sailors, swimmers, and other water-oriented athletes. Various centres offer modern facilities for gymnastics, track and field, judo and other martial arts and various sports, for which dedicated facilities are required.

What you can feel and measure: Slovenia's new Planica Olympic Sports Centre boasts the first gymnasium in Europe where desired altitude conditions up to the elevation of 3000 metres can be simulated in a controlled manner. Altitude rooms around Slovenia also enable the simulation of conditions typical for an elevation of up to 7000 metres. Altitude and hypoxic rooms are available at multiple sports centres in Slovenia. Altitude training is inseparably connected to the performing various measurements and testing, carried out by professional institutes for kinesiology and other institutes, and in many places world-class medical experts and physical therapists also take care of athletes' needs.

What makes the will victorious

Various youth teams and young athletes can enjoy excellent training conditions in Slovenia as well, and they can also choose one of the individual options for serious competition preparations and various sports camps. In selected locations, Slovenia is also the right place for disabled athletes. Services provided for them are connected to the centres known for rehabilitation and preventive programmes for athletes.

The best Slovenian indoor sports venues and stadiums that host international sporting events are also available for matches between various teams that know just why they carry out their preparations in Slovenia, their choice amongst all other



Rowing with the view.

places. Professionalism, expert knowledge, and hospitality are often complemented by the willingness of Slovenia's best athletes to take part in friendly matches or competitions.

Track and field, gymnastics, rowing, shooting, judo, sailing, swimming, motocross, biking, snowboarding, cross-country skiing, Alpine skiing, ski jumping – these are just some of the sports in which Slovenians have been winning medals at the largest international competitions. Slovenia is a country that respects individual achievements. Slovenia's sports destinations are known for their adaptability to individual needs and wishes.

Miha Renko / STB

📷 Mirko Kunšič, Iztok Medja, Nea Culpa / STB, Tadej Tinev



The winner of the 25th Tour of Slovenia was Slovenian Primož Roglič.

Message of sustainability FIGHT FOR GREEN

The high-profile and globally recognised sporting events hosted in Slovenia this year are, in addition to the promotion of sports and tourist products, an excellent opportunity to expand and enhance the message of sustainability of Slovenia and its tourism, including their fight for green.

Tour of Slovenia

The jubilee 25th Tour of Slovenia (tourofslovenia.si/en) took place between 13 and 17 June. Interest in the race was exceptional; the organiser, Adria Mobil



Cycling Club, even had to reject applications. The race was contested by 22 teams with 154 cyclists, including the 9 World Tour teams. There were Bora-Hansgrohe team with the last year's winner of the Tour of Slovenia, Rafal Majka, the LottoNL-Jumbo team with Primož Roglič, the Dimension Data team with Mark Cavendish, as well as the teams Katusha Alpecin,

Mitchelton-Scott, Bahrain Merida, EF Education First-Dracpac p/b Cannondale, UAE, and the Sunweb team, which is the current world champion team in road cycling.

The race took place in various parts of Slovenia: it started in Lendava in the east and it ended – as tradition has it – in Novo mesto in the south, where the idea of the race was born in 1993 to commemorate the anniversary of Slovenia's independence. The cycling caravan also visited Murska Sobota, Maribor, Rogaška Slatina, Slovenske Konjice, Celje, Ljubljana, Kamnik and Trebnje. The total length of the course was 664 kilometres. The race highlighted the spirit of green, active and healthy Slovenia and its orientation towards environmental protection and sustainable development, which was marked by the motto of the race, *Fight for Green*, denoting the commitment of all of us and not only symbolically the cycling competition. The competitors raced for the green jersey and a unique award: a replica of a 5,200-year-old wheel. The wooden wheel with an axle was found in the Ljubljana Marshes and is considered the oldest known wheel in the world. It is displayed at the City Museum of Ljubljana (mgml.si/en/city-museum). At the end, the wheel's replica stayed at home, since the winner of the 25th Tour of Slovenia was Slovenian Primož Roglič.

Since last year, the attractiveness of the race has been increased by its live broadcast on Eurosport channels, which also included exceptional footage of the diverse Slovenian landscape with an emphasis on key natural, tourist and cultural sights. "This was an excellent opportunity to raise Slovenia's recognisability and reputation as a tourist destination for an active break. Active holidays and sports tourism are among key products of Slovenian tourism, which is why I am certain that the direct broadcast of the cycling race and advertising in the Eurosport media contributed immensely to introducing Slovenia to the millions of lovers of active breaks around the world," believes Maja Pak, MSc, Director of the Slovenian Tourist Board, which together with its partners had managed the international promotion of Slovenian tourism within the framework of the Tour of Slovenia, too.

The honorary patronage of this sporting event was held by Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia.

Vino Euro 2018

IN VINO VICTORIA (there is victory in wine) is the motto of the event bringing together those who love green fields and producers of supreme wines. The European Football Championship of Winemakers (www.vinoeuro2018.com) took place in Slovenia this year between 29 May and 2 June in the Goriška Brda Hills, Beltinci, Maribor and Murska Sobota. The event was attended by over 200 competitors and their accompanying staff, who discovered three Slovenian wine-producing regions and over 300 wines.

The event combines sport, football fans and producers of supreme wines in a unique way. The 2018 European Football Championship of Winemakers was a platform to raise wine culture in Slovenia and the recognisability of the places that

have hosted the event as well as Slovenia as a sports, wine and culinary destination. On this occasion, the representatives of renowned foreign media visited Slovenia, who discovered the flavours of Slovenia and learnt about its unique pristine nature and attractive tourist offer.

The Slovenian team has won at Vino Euro three times, and it has been considered a serious contender to win on home turf, too. At the end it fulfilled all the fans' expectations.

Maribor, European City of Sport 2018



Slovenia's second city and the capital of the north-eastern part is an excellent tourist and sports destination. The city of Maribor (maribor-pohorje.si/best-choice) is widely known for its many international sports events, from the famous Golden Fox FIS Ski World Cup competition to high-profile matches by the most successful football club in Slovenia. According to estimates by the Maribor – Pohorje Tourist Board, sports tourism in the Maribor – Pohorje tourist destination accounts for a great share of all revenues from overnight stays and wants to further consolidate its position as an idyllic location for the performance of top sporting events and unforgettable actively coloured tourist experiences. Besides the promotion of Maribor as a destination for sports tourism home and aboard, the goals of the obtained title are also to attract the participants of sports events in the city and to overall increase the number of active residents who will also use public sports infrastructure – and on the top of that, the city is eager to prove and excellent host and organizer of competitions, tournaments, and championships on the highest levels.

"Maribor and its surroundings are already one of the key tourist destinations in Slovenia and the title of the European City of Sport is an exceptional promotional opportunity – and a commitment – for all of us who work in the development and promotion of such tourism related products. Naturally, local public awareness about a healthy lifestyle and the preservation of health through sports is here also of key importance, which we will promote through numerous sports events," says Doris Urbančič Windisch, director of the Maribor – Pohorje Tourist Board.

FIMBA European Maxibasketball Championship



Between 22 June and 1 July, Maribor will be hosting a jubilee 10th FIMBA European Maxibasketball Championship (maxibasketballmaribor2018.com), organised by the Maxibasketball Club VKD Štajerska in cooperation with the

FIMBA International Maxibasketball. Some 130 teams or over 1,500 former active basketball players from all over Europe will gather at the event. The competitors will occupy Maribor hotels and catering facilities for ten days, and they will also visit tourist sights in the region and the rest of Slovenia.

The organisers have attracted a record number of teams to the city on the Drava River with a well-set promotion strategy. By communicating the I feel Slovenia brand, the organisers also promoted the competition at the previous European championship that took place in Novi Sad two years ago, last year's world championship in Montecatini and at numerous maxibasketball tournaments around Europe.

European Masters Championships Slovenia



For the first time in history, the European Masters Championship in Water Polo (www.emc2018.com/sl/discipline) will be organised together with the European Championship in Swimming, Diving, Open Water Swimming and Synchronised Swimming, and all championships will be held in Slovenia. The championships will take place between 26 August and 9 September at various locations: water polo and swimming in Kranj, diving in Jesenice, synchronised swimming in Kamnik and open water swimming in Bled.

The event is a perfect opportunity to discover the sights of Slovenia, one of them being the iconic and renowned Bled with a picturesque church on the island in the middle of the lake. Bled is known to be an excellent host of global sports competitions, among which water sports, such as rowing and swimming, stand out in particular. In September 2017, Bled hosted the World Rowing Masters Regatta, which was attended by 4,700 competitors from 46 countries and many other visitors. Bled and its region of Gorenjska hosted over 6,000 visitors generating over 40,000 overnight stays. This was a record Masters Regatta from all aspects since the participants competed in 18,000 seats and in 2,600 rowing crews.

I FEEL SLOVENIA IRONMAN 70.3 Slovenian Istria



World-famous triathlon challenge IRONMAN that was held for the first time in Hawaii, exactly 40 years ago is finally coming to Slovenia. I FEEL SLOVENIA IRONMAN 70.3 Slovenian Istria (www.ironman.com/slovenia70.3) will take place on 23 September in the truly stunning Slovenian Istria.

The swimming challenge (1.9 km) will start in Koper and athletes will swim in the salty waters of Adriatic Sea. The unique cycling challenge (90 km) will take athletes not only through different astonishing landscapes but through different countries as well since athletes will cross the border and cycle along the Italian coast for a while. The running part (21 km) will start in Koper and then it will continue on the picturesque coastal road to Izola and back. This is a route with truly unforgettable views. The inaugural Slovenian Half IRONMAN is of great importance not only for Slovenian athletes but also for tourism and the economic promotion of Slovenia. Slovenian President, Borut Pahor, officially announced honorable patronage and expressed his support of the event.

There will be many side events to the main competition in September. On Thursday, 20 September, the regional business conference will take place, bringing together over 100 relevant companies from the region and beyond, including representatives from the Gulf countries. The popular IRONKIDS race will be held on the eve of I FEEL SLOVENIA IRONMAN 70.3 Slovenian Istria. IRONKIDS has a long tradition in several countries and it promotes the healthy lifestyle that is at the center of the IRONMAN philosophy. All the young athletes will, of course, receive a medal. There will also be various workshops and activities organized for the whole family. A great day full of outdoor fun.

The four coastal cities – Koper, Izola, Piran, and Ankaran – that will host triathletes and IRONMAN fans from all over the world contributed greatly to the realization of this project

Slovenia has been named the Undiscovered Golf Destination of the Year 2015.



The presentation of Slovenia as an attractive tourist destination also took place at the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang in South Korea. To this end, the Slovenian House I FEEL SLOVENIA was set up, which hosted numerous tour operators and tourist agents in addition to successful sportspeople.

that will promote Slovenia in all corners of the world. Slovenian Tourist Board as title partner also contributed a lot to make this event possible. The name of the event itself communicates the I feel Slovenia brand, which represents Slovenia as a green, healthy and active destination – everyone's shared goals and values.

International Golf Travel Market



Members of the International Association of Golf Tour Operators (IAGTO) meet every year at a different location, and Slovenia was selected to host the 2018 International Golf Travel Market. Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, will host the largest International Golf Travel Market – IGTM (igtm.wtm.com) in the world between 15 and 18 October, which is annually attended by approximately 1,300 professionals from the golf travel industry. Its members attain an 80 per cent share in the sale of entire world golf tourism. At the event, which marked its 20th anniversary in 2017, over 500 providers of golf courses, resorts, hotels and destinations, over 450 golf tour operators and approximately 100 specialised media in the field of golf from 65 countries met at business meetings and presentations.

The specialised event is organised by Reed Exhibitions. In the past, IGTM has taken place in the Dominican Republic, France, Italy, South Africa, Spain, Portugal, the USA and Mexico. By hosting such an important business event in the golf tourism branch, Slovenia wishes to enhance and strengthen its visibility and reputation as an excellent 5-star destination for golf experiences in connection to other tourist products, which are closely intertwined due to short travel distances and enable unique experiences.

In 2015, Slovenia obtained the title, *Undiscovered Golf Destination of the Year 2015*, positioning itself on the map of most desired golf destinations in Europe.

Livija Kovač Kostantinovič, Lucija Jager / STB, H. K., Medimat
☒ Aleš Fevžer/STB, Vid Ponikvar/Sportida

Tomaž Ambrožič

SLOVENIA IS IDEAL FOR SPORTS PREPARATIONS

For almost 20 years, the managing director at Sport Media Focus from Ljubljana has been taking a comprehensive approach to different challenges with regard to marketing and sponsorships in sport. Pioneering experiences in areas such as media rights, sponsorship concepts and activations, developing marketing products in different sports, management of an athlete's personal brands, event concepts and organisation among other things, brought him to large projects in Slovenia. He was the head of marketing activities for Eurobasket 2013, he was responsible for the promotion and marketing of UEFA Futsal EURO 2018, he is partner to I FEEL SLOVENIA IRONMAN 70.3 Slovenian Istria, and he will also participate in the promotion and marketing of EuroVolley 2019. To him, Slovenia is a destination, where sports and tourism connect excellently.

Which sports events should Slovenia focus on based on its natural features and the existing infrastructure and investment plans?

Unquestionably, first of all are recreational sports, such as cycling and marathon running, interest in the Ljubljana Marathon has been constantly rising and there have already been over 20,000 participants, which is an outstanding number for such a small capital city. It would be optimal if we could manage to bring in the UCI Road World Championship in addition to the already established Tour of Slovenia and new this year, Ironman. It is quite a complex project in terms of finance; however, not as impossible as the European Football Championship. We have an ideal landscape for cycling races, watched all over the world, and it would not be necessary to invest in any special infrastructure. All we need is innovativeness. We have already discussed with the Slovenian Cycling Federation the possibility of carrying out the start of the time trial in Postojna Cave, which would indeed be something special. The Eurobasket draw ceremony was held in the cave and we even made a small basketball court, where a promotional game of three on three was played. This was the

first underground basketball game and the television images were broadcast all over the world.

Some excellent news is our successful candidacy to hold the FIS World Championship for Nordic disciplines in 2023 in Planica which has all the appropriate infrastructure for the purpose. Its location at the tripoint also enables us to resolve any issues relating to accommodation, since our accommodation capacities are not sufficient.

Our special advantage is that Aleksander Čeferin who is a Slovenian is the president of the Union of European Football Associations. This of course does not mean that he would be the one to take care of our organisation of events or that we could host the finals of the UEFA Champions League, as we simply do not have the infrastructure for that. Nevertheless, a word from him, his recommendation that Slovenia is suitable for sports preparations and for event organisation, is sufficient.

How do you see Slovenia as a destination for the preparations and rehabilitation of athletes? After all, we pride ourselves on quite a number of natural health resorts.



where they have an exceptionally well-developed base of supporters. Beside preparations, we can also offer products for supporters, who could watch training sessions of their favourite teams and enjoy holidays in Slovenia at the same time and at a more favourable price than in Austria. Slovenia is famous for its hospitality and our guests feel great here. Because of its position in Central Europe, it is also accessible by car.

And the greatest value of Slovenia is that it provides privacy and peace to the teams during their preparations.

Which event would you wish Slovenia to host?

It would be excellent to hold the European Under-21 Championships in 2021 and the Football Association of Slovenia and Hungary are bidding together for this. UEFA has decided to offer the opportunity to host the UEFA Super Cup, where the winners of the UEFA Champions League and the UEFA Europa League contest, to smaller countries that cannot host big matches. Last year, the match took place in Skopje. This is a beautiful opportunity for us. It would also be exceptional if we got to host the World Handball Championship and the world championship for bicycle road racing. The latter is an event that can be beautifully linked to tourism.

Given the fact that basketball stars Goran Dragić and Luka Dončić come from Slovenia, I also see an opportunity in NBA preseason matches, hosted around European cities in the autumn.

Hermína Kovačič
 Vasja Ambrožič

Yes, this part has developed quite well in the last years. We have improved playing surfaces and we have increased accommodation capacities. In this area we can learn a lot from our neighbour Austria, which has managed intentionally and with proper policy and support from business to attract the largest world class teams. Namely, they are aware that teams also bring along numerous supporters who follow the preparations of the club and who spend their money on both accommodation and catering and other things. An interesting source of income for both the team, which can cover a part of the costs for preparations, as well as for the destination can be appropriate attractive package tours for fans, formed by the two together. A certain income also comes from friendly matches with local teams. In Slovenia, there is the fantastic sports complex of the National Football Centre of Brdo pri Kranju with its wonderful nature – there's nothing like it even in Austria – with a nearby four-star hotel.

Most supporters usually come with football teams; however, basketball and handball teams are not to be neglected. Here, we have even more opportunities with regard to the number of suitable sports centres.

Where is the greatest potential of Slovenia? What are its advantages over other countries?

It is definitely an excellent destination for preparations for team sports, such as football, basketball and handball,

Because of its central position, Slovenia is an ideal country for sports preparations. It is in the vicinity of several clubs that could practice here, and they could also go to other countries for a friendly match.

Cycling Ambassadors of Slovenia

MANY ACTIVITIES AND CULINARY SURPRISES

Slovenia's excellent location in the neighbourhood of the surrounding large countries makes it easy to access, and at the same time has enough space that nature lovers, as well as recreational and professional athletes, look for in their sports challenges. Slovenia's visitors are also impressed by the spirit of homeliness and hospitality of Slovenes that originates from an exceptional sporting culture which is traditionally passed on from generation to generation as one of the most important national values.

Among the various activities, cycling is something children learn soon after making their first steps and something that lives with all generations in Slovenia. Many cycling events in various disciplines throughout the year, as well as outstanding internationally successful cyclists, such as Primož Roglič, Luka Mezgec and Tanja Žakelj, prove that Slovenia is a cycling country.

Attention-grabbing Tour of Slovenia

Slovenes are proud that the internationally known cycling event, Tour of Slovenia, which celebrates its silver jubilee this year, took place in their country. Last year and this year, the Slovenian Tourist Board (STB) rewarded the promotion of Slovenia with an advertising campaign in Eurosport media which broadcasts the race live, allowing it to be followed by more than 113 million cycling enthusiasts around the world.

"High-profile sport events, like the Tour of Slovenia and direct broadcasting on the global Eurosport, are of the utmost importance in positioning Slovenia as an excellent destination for sports tourism, the preparations of athletes, and the organization of international sports events," says Msc Maja Pak, the director of the STB. "Intact nature, pleasant climate, good infrastructure for active vacations, and expert knowledge rank Slovenia among the increasingly desirable green and active destinations."

In order to present the green European pearl in a different, innovative way through social media, last year the STB launched the Cycling Ambassadors of Slovenia project, where selected cycling enthusiasts get to know some natural and cultural sights of Slovenia, its culinary offers, spa programs, and boutique accommodation. They share their impressions through social media and enthrall others to visit Slovenia as an interesting destination for active holidays, where guests can also experience culinary and cultural surprises.

Goni Pony

Last year, the STB selected four influential members of social networks, who summed up their 6-day experiences in stories to enthrall readers about active holidays in Slovenia, especially those to whom cycling is a lifestyle and represents an important criterion when choosing holidays.

"Ljubljana really is a cycling-friendly city. Cycling is a great way to get to know the city and enjoy the banks of the river that runs through it. People are very friendly and welcoming to cyclists," is how the blogger and cycling enthusiast Rachel Wilson from Great Britain experienced the Slovenian capital.

"Slovenes are exceptional cyclists. In addition to all the natural beauties and extremely hospitable people, I will definitely never forget the most special event, when we cycled to the Vršič Mountain Pass with special Pony bikes that have true historical value. This is a traditional event, and Slovenes dress in retro style for this occasion; for months before the



event, they renovate and decorate their Pony bikes. It is all like a big carnival party," said the Dutch traveller and blogger, Danielle Antonia van der Spek, about her participation at the Goni Pony race.


Ljubljana through the new Moustache cycling tour, which was named after three moustachioed artists who strongly marked our capital: Jože Plečnik, Ivan Cankar, and Rihard Jakopič.

From the Sea to the Mountains and Everything in Between

The first group continued over the hills to Novo mesto, which is considered to be the Slovenian cycling capital and home of the Tour of Slovenia, and to the east of the country, to Rogaška Slatina, which they got to know through its local glassware tradition and exceptional thermal facilities. They first explored the surroundings of the second largest Slovenian city, Maribor, on the hill of Pohorje, which offers a variety of cycling routes, and then on rafts along the wide Drava River.

The second group used e-mountain bikes and went to the other site of the country on a demanding tour across Alpine Slovenia. After their cycling feats, they tasted Bohinj cheese and attended a chocolate workshop in Bohinj. Then they went to a completely different world, to the Karst region, where cycling routes through meadows led them to the Lipica Stud Farm with its famous white horses and to the magnificent Štanjel Castle. On the Slovenian coast, between the Piran and Sečovelje salt pans, they got to know the locations of the first I FEEL SLOVENIA IRONMAN 70.3 Slovenian Istria, which will take place here in September.

Both groups then met in the mountains: they saw the Kranjska gora ski resort and the nearby Planica ski jump, and attended the Goni Pony race on the Vršič Pass with the legendary Slovenian Pony bikes. The Bike Park Krvavec took care of the last action of their cycling experience in Slovenia, while the final gathering was held in the idyllic area of Bled.

Rebeka Kumer Bizjak / STB
 Jurij Pivka / STB

Information on the destinations mentioned in this article can be found at:
www.slovenia.info

Ambassadors of 2018

Almost 400 influential people from social media have applied for the title of the Cycling Ambassador this year. The STB selected five of them. An American, Alejandro, a former medical student, impressed with the most unusual traveller selfie a few years ago, which was seen by more than 14 million people. A Spaniard, Orion, who shares his BMX tricks on YouTube and has more than 64 million views. Sabrina from Italy who has been living as a digital nomad for several years, and her great passion is also culture. Pierre, a French amateur photographer, who likes to go to the mountains. Belgian Kris Clerckx is a freelance travel writer and active sportsman. He has recently launched his personal blog, where people can follow him on his journey around the world.

Divided into two groups, they got to know the diversity of Slovenia in May, which is reflected in natural as well as culinary and cultural features. Together they discovered

High-profile Events in Slovenia

A STAR ON THE MAP FOR LOVERS OF SPORT AND ACTIVE HOLIDAYS

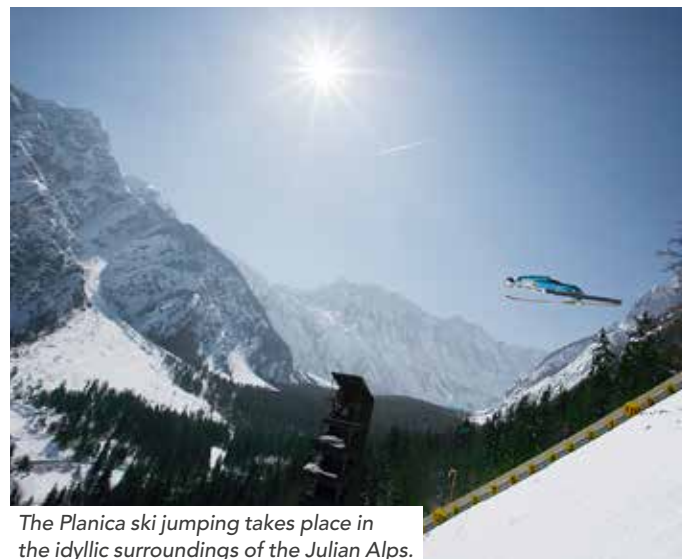
Slovenia is becoming increasingly more recognisable as a green, active and healthy boutique Central European tourist destination for high quality individual five-star experiences. It is also well known on the global map to lovers of sport and active holidays in unspoilt nature and as an excellent host of major international sporting events and preparations for athletes.

In tourism, sport plays at least a dual role: on the one hand, it is an important tourism product which provides opportunities for successful marketing on the domestic and international market and on the other hand, it is an excellent tool for presenting our country and its beauties around the world. In addition to this, our sportsmen with their successes act as opinion leaders and ambassadors of Slovenia and its tourist offer. In light of the above, the Slovenian Tourist Board also closely involves high-profile international sporting events in Slovenia in its promotional activities. Namely, we are aware that these are our opportunities for a successful promotion and better positioning of Slovenia on the global tourism market and for its better recognisability. Last but not least, Slovenians are a traditional sports nation, be it as active athletes or as supporters at sporting events or merely at home in front of television screens.

Sport for Increasing Recognisability

Successfully implemented and high-profile international sporting events contribute to the recognisability of the event location, the destination and of Slovenia as a whole, and at the same time they have a direct positive effect on the tourism of the location and destination hosting the event, particularly with the growth in the number of tourist arrivals, overnight stays and tourist spending.

In recent years, the Slovenian Tourist Board, which is aware of the importance of globally recognisable sporting events and competitions in Slovenia. Particularly the incidence of video advertisements in the context of television broadcasts of major sporting events represents an extremely large potential for the presentation and promotion of Slovenia in the global sense.



The Planica ski jumping takes place in the idyllic surroundings of the Julian Alps.

The Golden Fox and Planica

Slovenian Tourist Board participates with the I feel sLOVEria brand in the Golden Fox competition (www.goldenfox.org), which is the first among the major sporting events of the year. A two-day performance of the best female slalom and giant slalom skiers in the world attracts more than 20,000 spectators and more than 100 foreign journalists to the ski arena of the Snow Stadium under the Maribor Pohorje.

With more than 60,000 visitors, major and internationally recognisable sporting events, such as the FIS Ski Jumping World Cup (www.planica.si/en), are an excellent opportunity to promote Slovenia, Slovenian tourism and the I feel sLOVEria brand to the representatives of the global media. Like many modern sports centres around Slovenia, the Planica Nordic Centre (www.nc-planica.si/en) offers a variety of opportunities for sport preparations.

In 2023, Planica will host the FIS Nordic World Ski Championships.

Ski Jumping for Women

In January, Ljubno ob Savinji (ljubno-skoki.si/en) becomes the scene of the FIS Ski Jumping World Cup Ladies, which is a globally recognisable and most viewed competition of ski jumping for women.

Slovenia is a boutique Central European tourist destination with a recognisable and successful tourism brand with its strong positive sport and emotional charge communicating a high-quality and individual experience of guests in Slovenia. The Slovenian Tourist Board includes Slovenian athletes, high-profile international sporting events and important sports facilities in its promotional activities. More information on www.slovenia.info.

Down the Snow-covered Slopes

The Vitranc Cup (www.pokal-vitranc.com/en) and its rich accompanying events at the slopes of Podkoren are one of the winter sports highlights in Kranjska Gora.

In January, the World Para Alpine Skiing World Cup with over 80 competitors from more than 20 countries also takes place here (www.hit-alpinea.si/en/).

At the other end of the country, in Rogla, in January the FIS Snowboard World Cup (www.rogla.eu) attracts the attention of snowboarding fans all over the world.



Rogla attracts numerous skiers and once a year, snowboarding lovers from all over the world compete here.

UEFA Futsal

Between 30 January and 10 February, Slovenia hosted the UEFA Futsal EURO 2018 (futsaleuro2018.si), futsal championships, which is played by as many as 30 million futsal players around the world and is one of the fastest growing sports in the world.



UEFA Futsal EURO 2018 in Ljubljana.

Livija Kovač Kostantinovič / STB
 ☒ Aleš Fevžer, Iztok Medja/STB, Damjan Končar

Slovenian chefs

ENJOY LOCAL DISHES, THEY ARE THE HEALTHIEST FOR YOU

Slovenian chefs are among the best in the world of cuisine. Their creativity, which is based on the use of fresh, first-class, locally produced ingredients and the characteristics of the environment from which they come, has earned them various awards; the title of the World's Best Female Chef certainly stands out among them. On their menus and also in the generally rich Slovenian culinary tradition, you can find dishes that are also suitable for people actively involved in sport.



Ana Roš
HIŠA FRANKO,
STARO SELO

This self-taught chef grows some of the ingredients that she puts on her plates and that are based on the tradition of the Soča Valley in her own garden or finds them in the nearby forest. She was catapulted into world stardom by the TV show on top chefs, Chef's Table, shown by the American production company Netflix. Since receiving the prestigious title of the World's Best Female Chef in 2017, given by the The World's 50 Best Restaurants academy, the interest of world media and guests from all over the world has not died out. She is also still flooded with invitations to be a guest chef at world-renowned restaurants and events.

In the past, Ana Roš was a keen sportswoman. Supposedly, she was a talented Alpine skier. Now, her children are actively involved in sport. "In my childhood, food was not discussed much or thought about like it is now when the situation is completely different. I make sure that my children have balanced and properly structured nutrition," says Ana Roš, who cooperated for a few years with the organiser of the Soča Outdoor Sports Festival, which also places a lot of

emphasis on nutrition. Dishes based on local tradition, which were rich in calories and protein content, were prepared for the participants. "Every athlete could eat corn polenta with skuta curd cheese, which contains a lot of good protein, just like whey, of which it is made, and is a very fitting food for consumption following sports activities. A nice plate of pasta or žlikrofi dumplings, a Slovenian speciality, are also suitable. I would also recommend the frika omelette made of potatoes, cheese, and herbs, but it is a somewhat heavier dish. Lighter dishes include soups, such as jota, which is a very energising and healthy dish due to the content of sauerkraut or turnip, which contain a lot of vitamin C."

Ana Roš
A refreshing soup with tortellini



Janez Bratovž
Polenta with tomatoes and a smoked home-made skuta curd cheese cream



Janez Bratovž
JB RESTAURANT,
LJUBLJANA

As a very young man, he wanted to be a mason, but his grandmother told him that it was much better to be a cook because "why be out in the cold when you can be in a warm place where you can also eat and drink?" In the early 1990s, after his schooling in Austria and learning under Alain Ducass, he opened his first restaurant in Slovenia, in which he taught Slovenians to enjoy the pleasures of haute cuisine. He smiles as he remembers how he was in last place at a competition because he prepared pink-roasted game. He was told that he did not know anything about cooking.

The backbone of his cuisine are world-class ingredients produced in Slovenia, as he bases his work on the "0 kilometre" philosophy. This placed him of the S. Pellegrino World's 50 Best Restaurants list, he was given Falstaff points, and Gault & Millau toques, etc.

When it comes to sport, Janez Bratovž says that he has cooked at many sporting events: "The most memorable was the invitation by my friend Enrico Cerea from the Da Vittorio restaurant near Bergamo. We prepared food at a golf tournament in Italy at every other hole, and the food was very light and simple, but made of first-class ingredients, mainly seafood and fish. I think that food during competitions or sports activities must be light, and the food consumed before such activities should include more carbohydrates. For example, polenta with tomatoes and a smoked home-made skuta curd cheese cream is ideal."



Tomaž Kavčič
PRI LOJZETU –
ZEMONO CASTLE

As a representative of the fourth generation, the very innovative chef creates the dishes available at the Pri Lojzetu restaurant. He says that he loves the Vipava Valley where the restaurant is located, so he proudly demonstrates it on every

plate that he prepares. Lonely Planet, the largest and one of the most influential media companies in the world in the field of travel publishing and travel guides, recently placed the valley that is the home of Tomaž Kavčič on the Lonely Planet's Best in Europe 2018 Top 10 Destination list.

The chef is also a member of the international gastronomy associations Chaîne des Rôtisseurs and Le Soste, among others, he was the first and long-time president of the Slovenian division of Jeunes Restaurateurs d'Europe, and last year he received the JRE Innovation Award 2017 in Switzerland.



Tomaž Kavčič
Beef stock soup

When asked about sporting events, he says that he loves responding to invitations of event organisers, because he likes participating in them, having once been an active athlete himself. "As Bojan Križaj, who won Alpine skiing world cup points as an Elan skier as early as in 1976 and transformed Slovenians into a skiing nation, said goodbye to competitive sport, I was entrusted with the catering in the wonderful ambience of Bled Castle. One of the first important events in my career as a chef was the conclusion of the ski jumping world championships in Planica, soon after Slovenia gained its independence, where I was in charge of VIP catering. I cooked for the humanitarian football spectacle in Bilje at the invitation of the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, and also played in a match with well-known personalities of Slovenian sport, business, and show business, as well as Prince Albert of Monaco." He also has fond memories of the Emirates Golf Club Dubai to which he was invited last year to share a piece of gourmet Slovenia with eminent guests. "I prepared traditional Slovenian dishes in an innovative way, using the best ingredients that I brought from Slovenia. For example, guests from all around the world were able to taste bean cream, smoked Vipava trout, celeriac with powdered vegetables, and a version of the Potica cake in the form of a praline." He also made home-made beef stock soup, which is an indispensable part of a Sunday lunch in Slovenia. "I would certainly recommend to people who are actively involved in sport to have some beef stock soup with a piece of beef provided by a local farmer. Mostly, they should enjoy local dishes made of fresh high-quality ingredients, as they have proved to be the healthiest throughout the history," says Tomaž Kavčič.

Hermina Kovačič

📷 Dean Dubokovič/STB, Chefs' Archives

Different possibilities in Slovenia MADE US SPORTSWOMEN AND MEN WHO WE ARE.



Dear Reader,

As I travelled the world as a professional Alpine skier, I had the chance to see many different lands, cultures and systems and compare them to what I had as a child growing up in Slovenia. I am convinced that nature in Slovenia is something extraordinary.

I grew up in an environment where I had the chance to develop my sports intelligence in a very spontaneous way. In primary school, we had a lot of sports activities (at least an hour a day, sometimes two), but this changed with time. I believe this was fundamental for my generation, which developed notable excellence in world-class competitions in so many different sports. Hiking, biking (road bike or mountain bike), football, basketball, tennis, swimming (swimming pool, lakes, rivers or sea), skiing or snowboarding, fitness, volleyball, rowing, judo, karate, cross country skiing, running, fishing, climbing or adrenaline parks are some of the sports activities that are

available in almost every region of Slovenia. In certain areas people are even luckier as they are able to also enjoy hobbies such as kayaking or kite-surfing/windsurfing.

All these possibilities made us sportswomen and sportsmen who we are. We proudly represent our country to the world and I am sure that with our world-class sports successes, many people have identified Slovenia as their next travel destination. I am specially honoured to be a long-term ambassador for #ifeelsLOVEnia as my success would not be the same if I had not grown up in this setting, and also if I had not felt the love of Slovenians while winning in sport. I really like to share with my fans moments that were made in Slovenia and the feedback over past few years has been amazing. I believe we have made big steps in developing and promoting our beautiful country.

Slovenia is closer to the world than ever. But just like in sport, in tourism there is no success without teamwork; the key to success connecting promotion with the restaurants, hotels, infrastructure, PEOPLE and services that make a visit memorable.

As we become more and more open to the world, and not just top destinations like Ljubljana, Bled or Piran, excitement in botanical tourism is growing and it is also fascinating to me. It's just like Slovenia – small and unique.

My goal is to share my winning and positive spirit with Slovenians that will welcome you in the future, along with my passion for our beautiful country with you, as you will hopefully love it as much as we do.

I wish you a great and unique stay.

With positive vibrations,

Tina Maze
Aleš Fevžer



TOUR EVENTS

- 1 Tour of Slovenia**
13.–17. 6.
① 1st stage: Lendava–Murska Sobota
② 2nd stage: Maribor–Rogaška Slatina
③ 3rd stage: Slovenske Konjice–Celje
④ 4th stage: Ljubljana–Kamnik
⑤ 5th stage: Trebnje–Novo mesto
<https://tourofslovenia.si/en>
- 2 I FEEL SLOVENIA IRONMAN 70.3 Slovenian Istria**
23. 9.
① Cycling stage: Koper–Ankaran–Milje–Črni Kal–Koper
② Running stage: Koper–Bertoki–Izola–Koper
www.ironman.com/slovenia70.3

SPORTING EVENTS

- 1 Maribor – European City of Sport 2018**
<https://maribor-pohorje.si/best-choice.aspx>
- 2 Golden Fox**
Audi FIS Ski World Cup
Maribor
www.goldenfox.org
- 3 World Para Alpine Skiing World Cup**
Kranjska Gora
www.hit-alpinea.si/en/
- 4 FIS Snowboard World Cup**
Rogla
www.rogla.eu
- 5 UEFA Futsal**
Ljubljana
<http://futsaleuro2018.si/>
- 6 Ljubno FIS Ski Jumping World Cup Ladies**
Ljubno ob Savinji
<http://ljubno-skoki.si/en/>
- 7 Vitranc Cup**
Audi FIS Ski World Cup
Kranjska Gora
www.pokal-vitranc.com/en
- 8 FIS Ski Jumping World Cup**
Planica
www.planica.si/en
- 9 VINO EURO 2018**
European Football Championship of Winemakers
Goriška Brda Hills, Beltinci, Maribor, Murska Sobota
www.vinoeuro2018.com
- 10 FIMBA European Maxibasketball Championship**
22. 6.–1. 7., Maribor
<http://maxibasketballmaribor2018.com/>
- 11 European Masters Championships Slovenia**
26. 8.–9. 9., Kranj, Kamnik, Jesenice, Bled
www.emc2018.com/sl/discipline
- 12 International Golf Travel Market**
15.–18. 10., Ljubljana
<http://igtm.wtm.com/>

Tina Maze won 26 World Cup races in her career, which makes her the best Alpine skier in the history of Slovenia. Together she won 13 medals in the World Championships and Olympic games. She is the world record holder with 2414 points in just one World Cup season (male and female). You can follow her on various social media: www.instagram.com/tinamaze83; www.facebook.com/tinamaze; twitter.com/TinaMaze



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