TRAVEL GUIDE TO LJUBLJANA

where all of europe meets
Contents

Welcome to Ljubljana..........................P- 2
  – Introducing the
    #TasteLjubljana blogtrip

Duncan’s Ljubljana............................P- 3
  – Metelkova
  – Tzod Bar
  – Centralna Postaja
  – National Gallery
  – Klub Daktari
  – Manna Restaurant

Jaillan’s Ljubljana............................P- 5
  – Flea Market
  – Library Under The Treetops
  – Gostilna Na Gradu
  – Sense Wellness Club
  – Open Kitchen
  – Oxalis Wellness

Pola’s Ljubljana...............................P- 7
  – Spajza
  – Cafe Cokl
  – Bi-Ko-Fe
  – Cajna Hisa
  – LP Bar
  – Lotos

Adam’s Ljubljana...............................P- 9
  – Hotel Celica
  – Tabar
  – Mestna Galerija
  – Kolaz Cafe
  – Jakopic Gallery
  – Lolita Cafe

Monica’s Ljubljana............................P- 11
  – Vander Hotel Rooftop Bar
  – Sax Pub
  – Azil Bookshop Cafe
  – Botanical Gardens
  – Moje Tvoje
  – Jazz Club Gajo

Brian’s Ljubljana..............................P- 13
  – Ljubljana Castle
  – City Museum of Ljubljana
  – Central Market
  – Tivoli Park
  – Traditional Slovenian Dinner
  – Neboticnik Cafe

Best of the Rest..............................P- 15
  – Prulcek
  – Snopc o’Tecca
  – Cook Eat Slovenia
  – Repete
  – Fany & Mary
  – Rog Factory

Practical Advice..............................P- 17
  – Getting There,
    Accommodation & More Info

A Slovenian Cooking Workshop............P- 18
  – A story by Jaillan Yehia

Photo Gallery..................................P- 20
Introducing Ljubljana...

Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, is a city that is hard to pronounce, but easy to fall in love with. Despite a population of just 272,000, its status as the nation’s capital means there’s always a lot going on, especially during summer when the city’s numerous squares, parks and other open spaces host open air cinema, concerts, festivals, food and flea markets and even libraries under the treetops.

One of the joys of the city is its small size and ease of navigation. Geographically it’s dominated by the hilltop castle and the river Ljubljanica that cuts through the city’s historic centre and is spanned by several of its famous bridges, such as the Dragon Bridge, Triple Bridge and Cobbler’s Bridge. Many of these bridges, along with other significant public buildings in Ljubljana (such as the National Library and Central Market arcades) were designed by the “starchitect”, Jože Plečnik, who is to Ljubljana what Gaudi is to Barcelona... so keep an eye out for his work!

Our #TasteLjubljana Blogtrip

The six members of The Travel Mob were invited to Ljubljana to experience everything the city has to offer, but with a special remit to sample Slovenia’s underrated cuisine. We were delighted to discover delicious classic dishes on offer in restaurants around the city, such as the Ljubljana egg dish, cottage cream pancakes with tarragon and flying žganci (chicken drumsticks in breadcrumbs). Moreover we were astonished to find wind-dried pršut ham every bit as tasty as Italian prosciutto, and a wide variety of red, white and rosé wines that no Frenchman would turn his nose up at. Wherever we ate we found a strong emphasis placed on locally-sourced seasonal produce, and the proximity to farms, forests and gardens, and the Mediterranean sea, means Slovenian chefs are extremely well endowed with ingredients to work with.

On our joint website you’ll find a compilation of all the stories we wrote about our time in Ljubljana, which we published across our own blogs. As well as lots of foodie stories, such as our report on the luxury dining scene, and the experience of eating a homecooked meal with locals, you’ll find some amazing inspiration of what the city offers as a whole: from stand up paddling through the city centre, to funky street art and a strong alternative nightlife scene, we discovered so many sides to this diminutive capital that we want to share with you!

The Travel Mob’s Guide to Ljubljana

To complement our collection of stories, we have also produced this practical guide for all would-be Ljubljana visitors, listing the best places to hang out in the city. We love unique, eclectic places brimming with character and we know quality from run-of-the-mill service. With that in mind, each of The Travel Mob have listed their six favourite hotspots and on the following pages you’ll find upmarket restaurants, stylish spas, relaxing riverside cafes, “hipster” bars, cool clubs and intriguing art galleries to spend your time in. We’ve also included some handy advice on getting here (hint: you don’t have to fly to Ljubljana airport!) and some recommended places to stay, plus a section on resources with even more info.

You’ll also find all the info in this guide, with more photos, online here: http://www.thetravelmob.com/destinations/ljubljana/guide/
A (self-proclaimed) sophisticated night owl, if you want to explore the best of Ljubljana’s bar scene with just a dash of culture by day, check out Duncan’s top tips...

**METELKOVA** – Ljubljana’s very own Christiania, Metelkova is an autonomous zone that exists through the persistence, creativity and determination of artists and squatters who fought for their right to party, and much more, in this former military barracks of the Yugoslav army following Slovenia’s successful bid for independence in 1991. Almost every facade of every building is covered, ground to gable, with graffiti, trencadis-style tiling or funky artwork of some kind: making Metelkova a street-art skansen by day. By night and a happy mix of students, hippies, hedonists, ravers and misbehavers come to smoke weed, or get drunk, either bringing their own beers, or ordering Bear’s Blood shots from the many bars and clubs. My favourite was Gala Hala (not to be confused with Jalla Jalla, which is also great), an authentic electro club and concert venue with a huge backyard/garden. Members of the LGBT community should definitely drop in on Tiffany’s.

Masarykova cesta 24
metelkovamestro.org

**TOZD BAR** – I fell in love with Tozd immediately, when my new Slovenian friend took me there at the end of our bike tour around Ljubljana together. “It’s one of those hipster bars,” he said, but if hipster means 16 craft beers by local breweries like Bevog, Pelican and Human Fish behind the bar, along with a funky beats on the stereo, fixie bikes hanging from the walls and ceiling, and even a small book-swap library you can dip into, then I’m totally fine with that. I popped back on a second occasion for a delicious strawberry and mascapone tart, and with plenty of outdoor seating by the river it’s hard to see how Tozd could be improved. Caffeine-addicts will enjoy the home roasted and cold brew coffee.

Galusovo Nabrežje 27
+386 40699453

centralnapostaja.com

**CENTRALNA POSTAJA** – I’m pretty sure if I lived in Ljubljana you’d be able to find me almost any night of the week hanging around Centralna Postaja (Central Station). For one thing it’s found on my favourite street, Trubarjeva, a cobbled alley full of cafes, bars, ice cream parlours, sex shops and umbrella lampshades; for another it seems to attract large groups of good-looking girls who aren’t afraid to holla at out-of-towners... and finally there’s a drinks menu so large it requires thick notebook form to contain all the delicious concoctions on sale. Inside the bar and you’ll find a back room with DJ booth and dancefloor, a light and airy cafe area decorated almost solely with wooden finishes, and even an info point with two computer terminals. Outside and trendy young things lounge around on deckchairs, stone-block sofas and pub benches, from brunch-time right until the early hours of the morning, provided the weather holds.

Trubarjeva cesta 23
+386 41889882
centralnapostaja.com
NATIONAL GALLERY – Of the museums I visited in Ljubljana this was by far my favourite... and that’s despite the fact that the building itself was covered in scaffolding. I got soaked by rain on my way there, and a succession of monolingual matrons prevented me from taking any photos during my visit. In fact the first few rooms offer only poor imitations of medieval religious works by the Italian masters, but Slovenian art comes into its own around the 19th Century, and this is reflected in the museum with gorgeous landscapes by Marko Penhart (including a wonderful four painting panorama looking over Ljubljana) and evocative rural portraits by the likes of Tominc, Subic and Kobilca. At the time of my visit there was also a fascinating temporary exhibit on state-bought art during Tito’s reign, which included works of both Socialist propaganda and abstract eroticism by Gojmir Anton Kos. Free admission with the Ljubljana Tourism Card.

KLUB DAKTARI – Daktari has a perfectly nice terrace on Krekov Square, just under the funicular station leading up to the castle, where you can drink choice beverages such as Turkish coffee or Slovenia’s famous Human Fish craft beer. But to be honest, I had no intention of writing anything about this cafe/bar until an impromptu rain shower forced me to take cover inside... at which point I instantly fell in love. The kitsch scarlet paint job, framed art noveau-era posters, hetchpotch living room furniture, shoddy-looking lamps and groaning bookshelves all reminded me of my favourite Krakowian hangouts, and I’m pretty sure that, during a cold dark Slovenian winter, this is the place to mingle with penniless journalists, depressed poets, lecherous professors and other assorted intellectuals/alcoholics.

MANNA RESTAURANT – Situated in a beautiful old building by a babbling brook, Manna serves a mix of contemporary Mediterranean and Slovenian cuisine. Depending on your budget for the night you can opt for anything from a three course meal, to an extravagant seven course tasting meal. We treated ourselves to the latter (€55) which included such delicacies as carpaccio of Adriatic tuna with smoked swordfish, and fillet of sea bass with foie gras and truffles. I was particularly impressed with the service, and the Maitre d’ never failed to present a great Slovenian wine pairing for each of the dishes we were served. A passion-ate man, many of the ingredients used in our meal preparation were sourced from his own garden... as were the flowers on our table. Overall a romantic and homely environs for an upmarket meal.
Jaillan’s Ljubljana

A stylish traveller and lover of luxury, Jaillan handpicks some of her favourite upmarket eats and decadent spas in her Ljubljana highlights, as well as some unique things to do and see.

FLEA MARKET – The Sunday morning flea market on Cankarjevo nabrežje, along by the river, runs from 8am until around lunchtime – depending on the weather. The market is perfect for a browse, whether you’re looking for one-off souvenirs for yourself or unusual retro gifts. There’s a fascinating collection of ex-Yugoslav and German military memorabilia as well as vintage postcards and beer mats, books and home wares, plus jewellery and curiosities. This is also a great place to strike up conversation with one of the stall holders, many of whom have a story to tell that beats anything you can buy.

Cankarjevo nabrežje
www.visitljubljana.com/en/events/24904/detail.html

LIBRARY UNDER THE TREETOPS – The charming Library Under The Treetops is a summer initiative that has been placing books and deck chairs al fresco at selected spots around town since 2005. Choose between stopping for a free literary break by the Roman Walls or taking the funicular railway to read a newspaper or magazine in the castle grounds – or take the weight off your feet and your mind in one of five other Ljubljana locations. The project has captured the national consciousness and spread into the rest of the country and even into Italy, though understandably each location has different opening hours so it’s best to check the tourist board website.

Multiple Locations, incl. Park Zvezda in Congress Square

GOSTILNA NA GRADU – Tanja and Dominic are the husband and wife team running Gostilna Na Gradu, one of three restaurants nestled inside the castle walls overlooking the city. Working hand-in-hand with local farmers they buy the best fresh produce from forest to sea on the day and seamlessly incorporate it into the menu. This is a real family affair: the ice cream and cheese are made in Tanja and Damian’s own home while their parents produce the wine, breed the lamb and bake the traditional fennel bread served as an accompaniment to the many courses of Slovenian-fusion food, served in a contemporary but accessible manner.

Grajska planota 1
+386 82051930
www.nagradu.si/en
SENSE WELLNESS CLUB – This heavenly, Asian-inspired, candle-lit, gilded, underground cavern has a huge jacuzzi, two saunas and a steam room, as well as a chill out zone with a large silent screen projecting images of paradise islands and far flung jungles and beaches to help the holiday mood. Nothing could make you feel more relaxed than being ushered to one of the floor-level massage beds to have every muscle in your body unknotted with coconut oil and soothed by hot banana leafs by expert Filipina hands, as part of the 80 minute traditional Hilot massage treatment.

Dunajska cesta 154
+386 30388388
www.sense-club.com

OPEN KITCHEN – From 8am-8pm every Friday between mid-March and October the Old Town’s Pogacarjev Square hosts a street food market which is the perfect place to soak up the ‘city-as-your-living-room’ vibe and grab some great value traditional food while hanging out with friends. There’s authentic Slovenian fare and world food on offer from some of the top restaurants in the city. Around 50 individual chefs take part and you can also buy produce from local farms and beverage makers. Don’t worry if your tastes aren’t too exotic, one of the most famous local dishes is Flying Zganci: fried chicken wings.

Pogačarjev trg
odprtakuhna.si

OXALIS WELLNESS CENTRE – Located inside the high-end four star Grand Union Hotel in the heart of Ljubljana’s pedestrianised town centre, the Oxalis Wellness Centre and Spa enjoys a calm rooftop setting overlooking the city, complete with indoor pool, steam room and sauna. There are also treatment rooms offering expert facials, manicures and massages and the therapists are keeping it local, using local Slovenian cosmetic brand Afrodita as their product line. Even after a dreamy hour relaxing in the treatment room the real highlight is lounging by the pool and taking in priceless views of the castle while relaxing in your robe.

Miklošičeva 1
+381 13081702
www.oxalis-wellness.si
As a caffeine-addicted urbanite, Pola can track down a good cup of coffee anywhere in the world. She loves authentic and original places, so if sipping a cold brew in a funky hip locale is what you’re after check out her Ljubljana hotspots...

**SPAJZA** – Špajza is a high-end restaurant located on a quiet street at the edge of Old Town. It serves traditional Slovenian cuisine, as well as international dishes, Mediterranean food, seafood and game. Their specialty is homemade pasta, and the expansive wine list features premium wines from Slovenian winemakers. There are several cozy candle-lit rooms, decorated in a rural cottage style (wooden floors, white-and-red table cloths, cast iron accessories on window sills). In the summer guests can enjoy a charming outdoor patio.

Gornji trg 28  
+386 14253094  
www.spajza-restaurant.si

**CAFE COKL** – The little café with a large outdoor patio is located steps from the Ljubljana Castle funicular. Owned and operated by a self-proclaimed coffee nerd, Cafe Cokl takes the coffee business seriously. It features fair-trade, organic coffees that are roasted in-house and consumed within a week to preserve freshness. The owner is also involved in promoting fair-trade practices and locally-made Slovenian products. In June 2014, Cafe Cokl launched its cold brew coffee. Also available: cocoa and homemade iced tea.

Krekov trg 8  
+386 41837556  
cafeckl.si

**BI-KO-FE** – The inviting name of the café means “Would you like some coffee?” in Slovenian. This funky spot on a narrow, cobbled street in the city center attracts a diverse crowd of hipsters, students, musicians, and other artists, and as such is credited as being something of a social hub of intellectual thought. The interior, which has been decorated with recycled furniture and materials, features bar seating and additional tables in the back room. There is also an outdoor patio in the summer. Besides coffee, Bi-Ko-Fe serves alcoholic beverages and light snacks.

Židovska stëza 2  
+386 40296356  
www.nagradu.si/en
CAJNA HISA – This charming tea room and restaurant on one of the main streets of Old Town features a wide assortment of specialty teas (including matcha – Japanese powdered green tea), plus breakfast, sandwiches, salads, desserts, wine and beer. The spacious interior is decorated with dark wood furniture. There is also a loft area in the back of the room and bench seating next to the front window. In the summer guests can dine outside.

LP BAR – LP is a bar and coffee shop located in downtown Ljubljana inside a century-old building. It features a couple of bar rooms and an interior courtyard with arched ceilings and comfortable couches, perfect for a large gathering of friends. There is also a summer/winter garden. In addition to coffee and alcoholic beverages, LP serves tea, sandwiches, croissants, homemade pies, and a variety of Slovenian wines. Guests can enjoy international and local magazines/newspapers and take advantage of free WiFi, and the bar also hosts live music, art exhibitions and screenings of sporting events.

LOTOS – This small pastry and marmalade shop in the historic city center opened in June 2014. Lotos specializes in gourmet cupcakes in several sizes (including gluten-free and lactose-free varieties), as well as a wide selection of jams with a 70% fruit content. All products are made from natural and (whenever possible) locally-sourced ingredients. The shop also sells muffins, shortbread cookies, fruit tarts, baklava and gift items. Limited seating is available outside, overlooking the Ljubljanica River.
Adam’s Ljubljana

Hipster is the leitmotif that follows Adam on his travels, so check out his tips for some of the most intriguing galleries, cafes and hangouts in the Slovenian capital.

**HOTEL CELICA** — Ljubljana’s coolest hostel, the Celica is built in a renovated prison in the independent Metelkova City. Each room was designed by different local and international artists and the hostel includes several restaurants and cafes on the ground floor. A small museum in the basement gives a brief historical overview of Metelkova’s history, including information about Ljubljana during Yugoslavic times. It’s possible to visit the hostel each afternoon at 3pm for a free tour and history lesson about both the hostel and the district.

Metelkova ulica 8
+386 12309700
www.hostelcelica.com

**TABAR** — This tapas and wine bar doesn’t serve typical Spanish cuisine as you might expect. Rather, the trendy restaurant serves local Slovenian delicacies, in bite-size “tapas” form. Fresh, locally-sourced ingredients make up most of the selection and the restaurant’s location off a side street in the city center makes it a great place to relax with a glass of wine away from the melee. Some of my favourite picks from the menu were the prosciutto (which is wind-dried and regionally sourced) and the fish dishes.

Ribji trg 6
+386 31764063
www.tabar.si

**MESTNA GALERIJA** — The “Town Gallery” in Ljubljana’s city center features regular exhibitions on contemporary art, with a small shop on the ground floor. The exhibition space is large and the staff is friendly, making this a great (and free!) place for an afternoon of art. When we visited in July 2014, there was an exhibition on about Internet art featuring international and Slovenian artists and their works representing the digital age.

Mestni trg 5
www.mgml.si
**KOLAZ CAFE** – The gay-owned Kolaz Cafe is a popular meeting spot for the city’s LGBT residents and tourists. The small cafe and bar provides space for local artists and serves daily, healthy lunch specials. It’s an affordable place to eat in the city center and the patio is popular on summer evenings. Vegetarian-friendly!

**JAKOPIC GALLERY** - This photo gallery is situated on the site of the one-time Roman forum from the ancient Roman city of Emona. The underground exhibition space regularly features international exhibitions. When we visited in July 2014, there was an exhibition featuring photos from Josef Koudelka of ancient Roman and Greek archaeological sites. Entry is free with the Ljubljana tourist card.

**LOLITA CAFE** – The Lolita patisserie right on the riverfront, near the Triple Bridge, serves some of Ljubljana’s prettiest (and tastiest!) cakes and pastries. The beautiful atmosphere on the inside is matched by the delicately designed and decorated cakes. It’s a great place to visit on a rainy afternoon, or enjoy the outdoor patio when it’s bright and sunny.
Monica’s Ljubljana

Cosy bookshops and jazz clubs feature highly on Monica’s list of favourite venues in Ljubljana. If you like relaxing in places full of character and panache, check out her top tips.

VANDER HOTEL ROOFTOP BAR – For a secret oasis of luxury in Ljubljana, head to the rooftop of Vander Hotel. You’ll find a stylish bar where you can sip champagne with panoramic views across the city and overlooking the tiled roofs. The views may be incredible but the real attraction here is the infinity pool where you can cool off on a hot summer’s day. Head downstairs to the restaurant where you will find some of the best food in the city. And if you’re looking to relax you can’t miss the early morning yoga sessions or a treatment in the spa.

Krojska Ulica 6–8
+386 12009000
vanderhotel.com/eng

SAX PUB – Sax Pub may play second fiddle to Jazz Club Gajo in terms of musical fame, but I liked the fact that it is quirkier, with a young twist. Apparently, the owner inherited the house from an aunt and opened it up to his friends as a pub. Before long the outside was covered with graffiti and it was the place to be seen in Ljubljana. Visit during the day for a quiet coffee and some lunch in the sunshine and watch it come to life at night as the beers flow and the music begins.

Eipprova ulica 7
+386 51804450
www.saxhostelljubljana.com

AZIL BOOKSHOP CAFE – This cozy bookshop in Novi trg, or New Square, combines two of my favourite things, books and coffee. The square is surrounded by beautiful baroque buildings and while visiting this café you can see these impressive edifices from the inside. Azil is predominantly an academic bookshop, so you won’t find many thrillers or novels, but you can soak up that wonderful atmosphere of peaceful concentration. All in all the perfect place to take a break from sightseeing and stimulate your grey matter.

Novi trg 2
+386 14706475
zalozba.zrc-sazu.si
BOTANICAL GARDENS – Founded 200 years ago, Ljubljana’s Botanical Gardens continue to attract nature lovers and anyone looking for a peaceful place to escape city life for a while. There are over 4,500 species and subspecies of flora and fauna to be discovered, as well as a pond and huge greenhouse filled with tropical plants. Stop at the café for cakes and coffee or at the glasshouse to buy beautiful flowers. The gardens are open every day and free to enter.

IZANSKA ČESTA 15
+386 14271280
www.botanic-gardens-ljubljana.com

MOJE TVOJE – I found this vintage and second-hand fashion store to be a welcome addition to the more typical high street stores of Ljubljana. The name means ‘Mine and Yours’ and you’ll find a great selection of vintage fashion and accessories at great prices. Many accessories have been handmade by young Slovenian designers. The shop has an ethical ethos and won’t sell anything believed to have been made in countries with poor labour and human rights conditions, or anything low quality or in need of repair.

MESTNI TRG 8
+386 40127973
mojetvoje-second-hand.si

JAZZ CLUB GAJO – Find a table beneath the treetops and enjoy the good beer, good company and great jazz in this relaxing yet buzzing atmosphere. Summer evenings are busy and Mondays are packed thanks to the student jam sessions where you can see up-and-coming artists on the stage. Choose a deckchair on a hot summer’s day, sit back and enjoy the sounds. Appropriately enough this music venue is situated on Beethoven Street!

BEOTHEVNova ulica 8
+386 14253206
www.jazzclubgajo.com
Brian’s Ljubljana

With a videographer’s eye, Brian has selected places with the best panoramas in the city, along with some essential activities and sights for any first time visitor to Ljubljana.

**LJUBLJANA CASTLE**  — The Ljubljana Castle is a must see when visiting the Slovenian capital. From the castle viewing tower you will have the best aerial view of the city and can see for miles in all directions. There is a funicular that takes you from the city center to the top of the castle. Once at the castle you can visit one of the oldest parts of the medieval construction, St. George’s Chapel, which is decorated with frescos from the 15th century. There is a permanent exhibition on Slovenian history, displays of 300 million-year-old fossils, a 12 minute virtual tour, a cafe, several great restaurants (including Gostilna Na Gradu) and even a guesthouse.

Grajska planota 1
+386 13064293
vanderhotel.com

**CITY MUSEUM OF LJUBLJANA**  — This museum charts the history of Ljubljana going right back to its early incarnation as the Roman fort town of Emona (which was founded around 14 AD) and beyond. In fact one of the highlights of the museum is the world’s oldest example of a wooden wheel, which was found preserved in mud in the marshes just outside Ljubljana and is around five and half millennia old (although due to its historical significance the wheel is sometimes exhibited abroad, so check ahead before you go). As you make your way through the building, you will also witness artefacts and events from Ljubljana’s more contemporary history, including many items from the Yugoslavian era, such as the once ubiquitous Fiat car. Naturally, I took a ride!

Gosposka ulica 15
+386 12412500
www.mgml.si

**CENTRAL MARKET**  — You will quickly notice that Plecnik’s Covered Market is not your typical market. It was designed by Ljubljana’s famous architect Jože Plecnik between 1940 and 1944 and is located next to the Ljubljana River. Here you can find various types of seafood as well as a variety of meats, including horse meat. Other things you will see at the market are dry-cured meat products, baked goods, dairy products, dried fruits, nuts and herbs. Together with the open-air markets located in the Vodnikov and Pogacarjev squares, and a covered market in between, it makes up what is known as the Central Market. Open every day except Sunday.

Pogacarjev trg
+386 14259437
**TIVOLI PARK**  – If you are looking for some green space you do not have to go far from the centre of Ljubljana. Tivoli park is located just a short walk from the old town and has over five square kilometers of woodland, lawns, fountains, gardens and even a lily-decked, man-made pond. Here you will also find a promenade where large format photography is exhibited. On sunny days during summer you will also find one of the city’s famous **Libraries Under The Treetops**. A great place to relax, read a book, picnic with friends or play some sports.

**TRADITIONAL SLOVENIAN DINNER**  – Enjoy a fine repast and gain an insight into the Slovenian folk culture that inspired some of the country’s greatest intellectuals at the same time, during a Traditional Slovenian Dinner. As much an experience as a meal, your hosts will be wearing traditional outfits, playing traditional games, singing, dancing and even eating in the traditional Slovenian manner. The venue changes depending on the size of the audience and the evening generally takes 2.5 hours.

**NEBOTICNIK CAFE**  – The Neboticnik cafe and terrace is a great place to unwind after a hard day’s sightseeing and admire a spectacular sunset from the top of one of the city’s tallest buildings, while sipping on your favorite beverage – I recommend a Union or Lasko beer. Bring your camera because this is the best angle of both the city and the castle. The building itself was once the tallest in Slovenia, and is a wonderful example of neoclassical and art deco architecture. Aside from the cafe you’ll also find a restaurant and a swanky lounge bar onsite.
Best of The Rest!
Such a small city, but so many cool places! Here are a few extra recommendations that we couldn’t fit above...

**PRULCEK** – When you are meeting the editor of the excellent *Ljubljana In Your Pocket* for a beer, it goes without saying that you let him choose the venue. Hidden away in an unassuming location, opposite a Communist era block of flats, Prulcek is patroned almost exclusively by locals, who come to drink a wide range of international/artesan beers out on their terrace, underneath a canopy of coloured umbrellas. With curved bar and glitter ball, there’s a waft of provincial 1980s UK nightclub about the venue’s interior, but here is where you’ll find jazz, rock, blues and cabaret performances almost every evening.

Prijateljeva 2
www.prulcek.si

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**SNOPC O’ TECCA** – This little spirit shop, located just north of Ljubljana’s central square (Prešernov trg), specializes in quality Slovenian schnapps (*šnopc*) and is the first business of its kind in the capital. Their spirits are made from natural ingredients, such various local fruits and herbs. Šnopc o’ tecca sells over 70 varieties of beverages (some of them invitingly displayed in the shop window), in addition to distributing about 200 types around the country. The owners hope to restore interest in Slovenia’s distilling tradition, which was once commonplace in the countryside.

Miklošičeva 2
+386 14251706
www.snopcotecca.si

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**COOK EAT SLOVENIA** – Slovenia, country of 2 million, has a whopping 25 different culinary regions: you learn this at *Culinary Slovenia’s* interactive, fun class led by local lady, Spela, and dedicated to the art of the national cuisine. Slovenians will tell you their country is shaped like a chicken and their food obsession doesn’t end there: during this relaxed and hands-on evening you cook up the famous Kranjska Klobasa sausage and four other classic dishes, while washing down each courses with world class local wines, including Cvicek, a red and white blended Chianti served chilled. The evening is rounded off with Spela’s mum’s home-made schnapps.

Gostilna Dela, Poljanska 7
+386 40503504
www.culinaryslovenia.com
REPETE – The small, slightly off-the-beaten-path restaurant ("an appendix to the Old Town," in the words of its owner) serves fresh soups, sandwiches, and generous portions of hot and cold dishes. The small menu, written outside the entrance on a chalk board, changes frequently and is vegetarian/vegan-friendly (although meat options include burgers made with meat ground onsite). There is live music on select evenings (outdoors in the summer), featuring mostly jazz and acoustic performers. A full bar and wireless internet access is also available.

FANY & MARY – This cute burger joint, appropriately enough just a few steps from the “Butcher’s Bridge”, is a great, informal place to enjoy a meal outside by the river. While the menu includes pizza and salads, come here for the burgers, which are the size of a soccer ball. Prices are reasonable, especially given the hefty portions.

ROG FACTORY – This industrial behemoth on the banks of the Ljubljanica river churned out the iconic Communist-era Rog bikes from 1951 until the break up of Yugoslavia, when the business went bust. These days the factory building is in a pretty sorry state of repair, but that hasn’t stopped several artists setting up their workshops here and giving full reign to their artistic visions. If you’re lucky you can pop your head in and visit, or else keep your ears and eyes peeled for one of their open days. The factory is also home to a vast skate park, a dance studio and various other participant friendly facilities, but opening hours are ad hoc to say the least, so you’ll need a slice of luck or some local help to get involved.
**Practical Advice**

### Getting There

Both Easyjet and Wizzair offer affordable direct flights from London, whilst Adria airlines also offer flights from Manchester, plus 20 more European cities. By taking advantage of the clever GoOpti services you can also easily reach Ljubljana by flying to one of Zagreb, Bergamo, Milan, Bologna, Munich or Vienna airports (all are relatively nearby) and taking an affordable shared transfer. To check which routes work out cheapest for you try Momondo’s flight engine, which compares prices on different routes/airlines.

### Accommodation

Those on a backpacker budget should investigate Tresor, Alibi M14 or Celica Hostel, whilst those searching for a bit more luxury should book into Hotel Meksiko, which has everything you need for a pleasant stay. Further upmarket and Sheraton recently opened a Four Points on the outskirts of the city. Apartments-wise and you can choose from local companies like Fine Ljubljana Apartments or Central Apartments, whilst global operator Only Apartments offer a smart platform for booking locally-owned flats.

### Useful Resources

Do check out our stories page, which includes the likes of a hipster’s guide, stylish travel guide and gay guide to Ljubljana, all of which feature some fantastic insider tips. In Your Pocket also do a great guide to the Slovenian capital, and of course Visit Ljubljana has oodles of info, including a festivals and events section. They also have several tourist offices you can drop by. To book a good tour guide check out Get Your Guide. For something hip and alternative check Ljubljana Magazine (in Slovenian with some English entries).

### Tours, Trips & Activities

Aside from checking out our favourite haunts and hang outs (above), there’s a wealth of fun things to do in and around Ljubljana. A number of creative tour operators offer diverse activities ranging from epicurean (for example craft beer tasting) to adventurous (such as stand up paddle boarding). Many of the best experiences we blogged about in our Stories section, so be sure to check it out! Otherwise we suggest you visit the individual websites of companies such as Watermelon Bike Tours, Ljubljananjam (food & drinks tours), Slocally (local experiences), Sightrunning Ljubljana, Luxury Slovenia, Bananaway (SUP and outdoors) and Roundabout (day trips to other parts of Slovenia). You can also find a comprehensive list of tours and trips on the Visit Ljubljana website.
Discovering Ljubljana’s Cuisine At A Slovenian Cooking Class

Slovenians will tell you their country is shaped like a chicken, and their food obsession doesn’t end there as I discovered when I attended a Slovenian cooking class in the capital. Being let loose in a Ljubljana kitchen with five different dishes taught me a lot about a national cuisine to which I was totally new — and drinking double that number of alcoholic accompaniments may just have helped me forget a few of the lessons, but I’ll never forget how much fun the class was...

Given the fact that Slovenia as a country is only 23 years old (my age; shocking coincidence that) the ex-Yugoslav Republic has a surprising number of moreish signature dishes to which I am introduced for the first time at a cute, homely wood-panelled bistro in Ljubljana’s town centre after the customers have cleared out for the day.

Even more surprisingly this new-to-most national cuisine also excels at producing an embarrassment of dishes indelibly linked to neighbouring nations and then out-doing them.

Italians: look away now — the ham I’m served on arrival at Gostilna Dela, as a sort of rustic amuse-bouche to kick off the class, is as good as any I’ve had in Parma. Slovenia’s Karst region prosciutto is delicious, somewhat sturdier and more smoky than its Italian counterpart but a total revelation to a committed deli food devourer like me.

When it’s time to get down to some serious cooking, the famous Kranjska Klobasa sausage we make as one of the main dishes rivals any German Bratwurst, and the Gouda and goulash I encounter during the rest of the week just back up my notion that the Slovenians are quietly cooking up a storm without most of Europe batting an eyelid.

But unique and exotic-sounding national dishes are what I’m here to learn about during the relaxed, enjoyable and hands-on evening with my cookery teacher Spela — who isn’t too shy to help me wash down each course with any number of different world class Slovenian wines, including Cvicek, a Chianti which is uniquely made from a blend of red and white grapes and is consumed chilled.

My favourite dish is the Ajdova Kasa Z Jabolkom, Mladim Sirom In Orehi — that’s a Buckwheat Kasha, a salad with apple, fresh cheese and walnuts that I keep cheekily spooning into my mouth while we carry on cooking.

After a further feast of Piran sea bass, chard with potatoes, and Trieste sauce, followed by our hand-made Štruklji and preserved fig pralines as a final sweet course, I think I can’t consume any more.

Then Spela brings out bottles of her mum’s home-made schnapps to finish off the evening,
Discovering Ljubljana’s Cuisine At A Slovenian Cooking Class

along with a local brand, Krucefix, also a family affair, produced in the foothills of the Alps near the Austrian border – and I’m asked a dangerous question, but one I wish was put to me more often: ‘Do you want 20% alcohol or 40% alcohol.’ The class just got even better.

So as they say in Slovenia Dober tek – Bon Appetite. Or maybe at this cooking class it’s more like Na zdravje. That’s cheers to you and me.

For more information about Culinary Slovenia’s cooking classes, food tours and tastings visit their website www.culinaryslovenia.com.

Classes are held at Gostilna Dela, at 7 Poljan-ska on the cusp of Ljubljana’s pedestrianised town centre, meaning that if you’re staying centrally you can easily walk or cycle to the class.

The cooking workshop I attended costs a very reasonable 60 Euros per person (maximum of 12 participants) which includes all food and drinks.

Ljubljana’s Tourist Board also has information and ideas about discovering Ljubljana through its food on their website www.visitljubljana.com.

This story first appeared on SavoirThere. Words and photos by Jaillan Yehia.

For many more stories by Jaillan and the rest of The Travel Mob, head to this page: http://www.thetravelmob.com/destinations/ljubljana/stories
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