

## Slovenia

Ljubljana, a city with barely 266 thousand citizens, is the capital of Slovenia (a country with a total population of 2 million citizens) and not only has an Opera house, but important local composers as well, such as Danilo Sveva, famous during the mid-war period, whose opera “Cleopatra” was recently staged. In fact, it was conducted by his son, the permanent conductor of the national opera today.

When he composed this opera, Danilo Sveva certainly never imagined that after a short while, his country would be a proudly decorated candidate for the EU, pursued by two rivals, just like the Egyptian queen.

In this case too, just like with Julius Caesar and Marcus Anthony, two lovers yearn for young and beautiful Slovenia: Europe and America.

However, in the case of Slovenia, we probably won't be witnessing self-destruction, as in the case of Ancient Egypt during Cleopatra's reign.

Slovenia was among the former Eastern European countries candidate for accession, which sided with the United States in the conflict between the US and a French-German axis concerning the war in Iraq.

Slovenia is a truly small, beautiful country with a varied landscape.

Its area is slightly larger than 20,000 km<sup>2</sup>, about 1/6 the size of Greece, and extends from the Adriatic Sea to the Alps.

Nearly half of its land is covered by forests.

Because of its position, it has always been a crossroads of trans-European networks.

The names Slovenia (the former Yugoslav republic), Slovakia (one of the two components of Czechoslovakia) and Slavonia, in eastern Croatia, mean “land of the Slavs”, a fact which often confuses foreigners.

All countries which were under a socialist regime and belonged to federations, such as Slovenia, are wary of unions of states, as they are still in the honeymoon of their independence.

The country's population of approximately 2 million citizens, 87.9% of whom are Slovenians, mainly reside in cities dating back to Roman times.

The population of Slovenia is gradually decreasing and the country is considered to have the lowest birth rate in Europe, if not the whole world. The official language is, of course, Slovenian, but there are two national minority groups of Italians and Hungarians, whose languages are official in the mixed regions they reside in.

Members of other national groups are characterized as economic refugees and mainly come from the land of former Yugoslavia.

In recent times, Slovenia obtained its independence on June 25, 1991, while on the following day, it was attacked by the Yugoslavian army.

The first war of former Yugoslavia lasted ten days, followed by an armistice, until, in October 1991, the last soldiers of former Yugoslavia left the area.

In its historical meeting in January 1992, the European Union recognized Slovenia and in May of that year, the country became a member of the UN.  
In February 1999, the country applied for full membership to the European Union.

Initial negotiator:

Slavs came from Central Europe and began conquering the region of Slovenia and former Yugoslavia around 568 AD. Bavarians and Franks passed through the region at times until the 9<sup>th</sup> century, when Hungarians cut it off from other Slavic peoples. Then came the Hapsburgs in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, who controlled the region until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

After the defeat of the Austrohungarians in World War I, Slovenians, along with Serbs and Croats, formed the first independent state in 1918, which was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929.

After World War II, we had a third attempt by the people of former Yugoslavia to coexist, which lasted until the death of Tito in 1980, followed by financial and political turmoil, with the well-known results after the dissolution of former Yugoslavia.

Ljubljana, the capital, has 266,000 citizens and is the largest city of Slovenia. The river Ljubljanica runs through it and the modern city is built on the location of the ancient Roman city Emona.

Its castle dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and its residents are proud of their city centre, with numerous Renaissance, Baroque and other buildings.

The architect Joze Placnik is famous and worth mentioning for his work that gives the city a modern neoclassic look.

He designed bridges spanning the riverbanks and other important works in the city.

There are numerous museums, galleries, theatres, opera houses and other cultural facilities in Ljubljana, where many events of international interest take place. Cultural life is vivid, although people have begun expressing fears of a cultural degradation.

Slovenia is and wants to remain a Central European country, as it stresses at every opportunity.

It avoids Balkan meetings, although it is not certain if all citizens support the abandonment of old Slavic beliefs and influences, as this economic refugee of Serb origin supports.

In Dostoyevsky's world, a perfect intellectual republic reigns. All his characters, rich and poor, aristocrats and plebeians alike, struggle with the same moral problems. Rich king Mishkin and poor student Rashkolnikov are two homeless tramps, both "déclassés" and living outside the law, having no place in modern urban society. They comprise a classless world where only intellectual relationships prevail.

The Slovenian language is considered one of the foundations of national identity. It is spoken by only 2 million of the population and beyond its various, mainly Germanic influences, it has retained its unique features. According to statistics, more than 60% of Slovenians read at least one book a year, which places Slovenia at the top of European countries list.

Most Slovenians are Catholic (approximately 70%) and the Roman catholic church is very visible in the country.

The Slovenian Academy and the Slovenian Philharmonic Company are among the eldest in the world.

Its honorary members include Joseph Hydn and Ludwig van Beethoven.

An interesting view of Slovenia is its Mediterranean coast on the Adriatic.

The international port of Koper, the capital of Istria during Venetian rule in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, is situated on the Adriatic coast.

Koper, then called Capo d' Istria, is linked with Greece. Ioannis Kapodistrias, the first Greek governor, came from here. In fact, his surname comes from the name of the city: Capo d' Istria.

The initial name of the governor's ancestors was Vittori. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, they immigrated from Capo d' Istria, discarded their surname and catholic dogma, converted into the orthodox dogma and were soon completely Hellenized.

Mt. Triglav is the highest in Slovenia, at 2,864 metres. The first Slavs believed that the mountain was the home of the three-headed gods who regulated the affairs of the sky, the earth and the underworld. Mt. Triglav is a national symbol and is depicted on the country's flag.

Slovenia has a long tradition in skiing. Planica is a site with ski jump tracks and Slovenians have won many Olympic medals in this sport.

Slovenian vineyards are at the same latitude as Burgundy and Bordeaux; Maribor is famous for providing this Dionysian product, besides the princes it offered Slovenia. Also renowned are the white horses of Lipica, Lipizzaners.

Slovenia's income per capita is the highest among transitional economies of Central Europe. However, it is estimated that it should hasten privatization procedures and remove foreign investment restrictions.

Approximately 45% of the economy is in the hands of the state.

GDP is at 31 billion dollars, while income per capita is at 16,000 dollars.

Second to Cyprus, Slovenia was the country most prepared to accede to the European Union.

According to international statistics, inflation is at 8.4%, while unemployment is at 11.5%. However, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs presents different figures.

All countries to accede to the EU were concerned about how a Europe of 25 Member – States would operate. However, at least officially, Slovenia is optimistic.

The same optimism is expressed for the result of the relevant referendum.