



I FEEL  
SLOVENIA



**The destination of the Karst and Brkini**  
**SUSTAINABILITY REPORT 2023**  
of the municipalities Divača, Hrpelje - Kozina, Komen and Sežana

The destination is pursuing the path of its Strategy for the Development and Marketing of the Tourist Destination of the Karst and Brkini for the 2022–2028 period. It was prepared in cooperation with all stakeholders. As part of the design process, we have also carved out a vision for the overall development.

**Short-term vision:**

The destination of the Karst and Brkini, in partnership with key stakeholders, will become a short-stay destination with a sustainable orientation and year-round offer of authentic experiences of the extraordinary above-ground and underground worlds.

**MEET OUR TRUE COLOURS**

**Long-term vision:**

The destination of the Karst and Brkini will focus on discerning boutique tourists who will stay at the destination for several days and get to know the authentic nature of the destination in direct synergy with the local population.

The destination's key competitive advantages will be intertwined in their experience (natural and cultural heritage combined with authentic cuisine).

## THINKING AND ACTING GREEN

Aware of our responsibility to leave a preserved environment and prosperity to our descendants, the Karst and Brkini destination has adopted a green mindset and sustainable tourism approach. We want visitors coming to our destination – to the towns and to our rural villages in the Karst and Brkini – to feel our sustainable/green efforts and to also become involved through our incentives.



## Activities at the destination of the Karst and Brkini

### EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INCENTIVES

The destination has promoted the tourist economy's transition to a green economy and sustainable resource management through the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism, the Kaštelir project ("Prehistoric hillforts and ethnobotany for sustainable tourism and rural development – from the Karst to Kvarner (via Brkini, Čičarija and Istria)"). The destination has organised thematic training sessions for residents, tourist guides, event organisers, tourist societies, caterers, accommodation providers and other tourism stakeholders.

#### CODE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURIST GUIDES

It is primarily intended for local tourist guides, who are usually the first and often the only contact visitors have with local people and have a strong influence on the creation of images and opinions regarding the destination. The Code establishes professional standards and helps to raise the quality of local tourist guides' work.

- It takes modern trends in tourism and sustainable tourism into account.
- It prescribes guidelines for the work of local tourist guides.
- It promotes the green orientation of the destination of the Karst and Brkini.
- It complies with the world standards for tourist guides.

**BY INTRODUCING SUSTAINABILITY CRITERIA INTO OUR TENDERS (programmes, projects, events, catering), we encourage providers to be more environmentally friendly.**

#### THE MOST IMPORTANT SUSTAINABILITY TRAINING FOR THE TOURISM ECONOMY IN 2022:

**April 2022:** Sustainable development of tourist destinations and geoparks, education for the general public.

**April 2022:** The training course "Accessible Tourism in Theory and Practice", co-organised with KSG.

**September 2022:** Introducing the concept of "Cyclist Friendly Providers" to encourage local providers to offer additional facilities for cyclists.

**October 2022:** Round table on "The development potential of restoring cultural heritage for the benefit of the social and economic environment".

**November 2022:** Consultation "Encouraging tourism providers to develop sustainable models – opportunities and challenges for sustainable tourism development in the Karst and Brkini destination"

**November 2022:** Workshop "Zero-Waste Events" with Ecologists without Borders to introduce the concept of zero waste

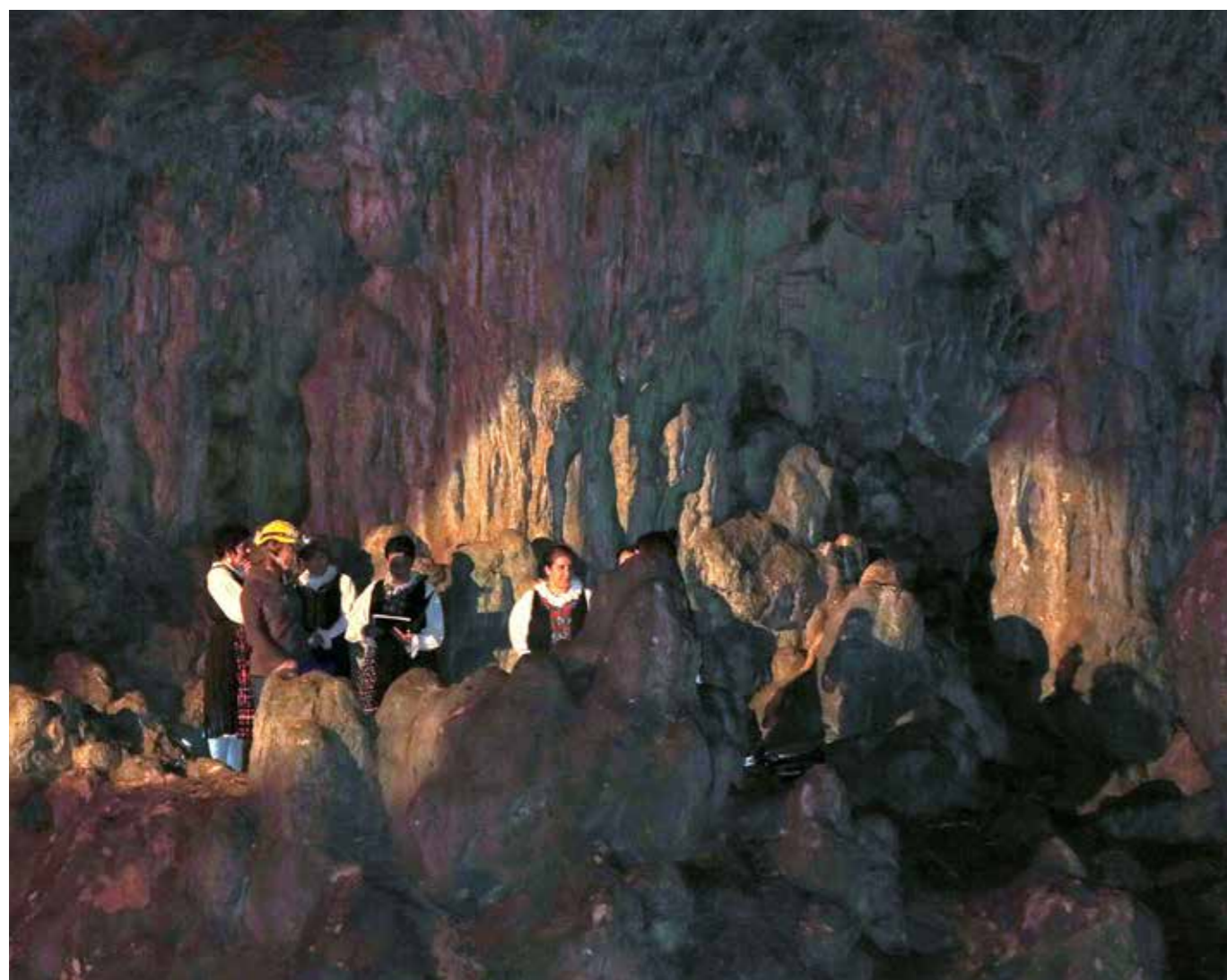
## TRADITIONAL/SUSTAINABLE EVENTS, FESTIVALS AND CAMPAIGNS 2022

The following are some of the biggest events/festivals traditionally held in the Karst and Brkini:

### 1. Cultural events in the Tinjelova pečina cave

#### Environmentally friendly music event

Tinjelova pečina is a natural karst 'amphitheatre' in the heart of Brkini. For many years, the organiser, the Municipality of Hrpelje-Kozina, has been organising concerts in this open cave. It performs them under the glow of LED lights, without use of a sound system. The cave itself has not been tampered with, only the wooden steps on the steep access to the entrance were built. The organiser wants to preserve the natural environment without too much interference, and the visitors who come to the concerts agree. It is not a mass event, but more of a boutique event with a focused audience and a more exclusive selection of musical performers whose priority is to preserve the cultural heritage.



## 2. The Gledanica Festival at Štanjel Castle

### Reviving prehistoric cultural heritage

The Gledanica Festival is an achievement of the Kaštelir project, involving all municipalities in the destination as associated partners. The festival has become a tradition, being held this year for the 3rd year in a row. It takes its name from the prehistoric lookout at the top of Štanjel's Turn Hill. The event is entirely dedicated to the preservation of the rich cultural heritage, with an emphasis on prehistoric heritage.



The varied all-day events in Štanjel again included several individual events, such as the traditional St John's wreath-making workshop, an ancient musical instrument-making workshop, guided tours of the Kamenica sound gallery, a guided tour "Through Štanjel over time", a guided walk along the fairy-tale adventure trail "The Karst of the Dwarfs", and an evening of dialectal kamishi-bai, which made that June day in the pearl of the Karst a different and interesting one. The day ended with an evaluation of the most beautiful St John's wreaths and the traditional ceremony of taking the wreaths across the village, removing the old ones and placing the new ones on doors.



### 3. The Karst Gmajna Festival



In spring and autumn, the traditional festival of nature and heritage tourism takes place in the Karst and Brkini. The festival aims to stimulate interest in learning more about this remarkable biodiversity and cultural heritage, scientific pursuits and creativity, as the gmajna grasslands in the Karst is considered one of the oldest cultural landscapes and one of the biodiversity hotspots in Europe and the world. The festival includes various thematic hikes, creative workshops, cultural events and culinary experiences.

### 4. Spring colours of the Karst and Brkini

Between 15 April and 5 June, we invited tourists to actively relax among the wonders of nature, to wander in the footsteps of ancient settlements and their stories, and to discover the original flavours of the Karst gmajna grasslands and Brkinian hills.



### 5. St Martin's Festival in the Karst

St Martin's Festival is a traditional event taking place in the Karst for many years. The St Martin's Festival, held from 5 to 13 November 2022, promoted indigenous wine varieties and traditional and local cuisine. Only biodegradable packaging is used at such events, and drinking water from the tap or drinking fountain (Štanjel, Sežana) is encouraged.

### 6. KrasPass Gourmet

For the third year in a row, a networking event was organised in the summer months to promote the local cuisine and natural and cultural heritage in the Karst and Brkini. In addition to culinary experiences, creative stone-cutting workshops and guided tours of natural wonders took place at the destination.



### 7. The Teran and Prosciutto Festival

The Teran and Prosciutto Festival is the main festival of the Karst people and all lovers of its local cuisine and customs. It boasts rich cultural, sports, ethnological and entertainment programmes, attracting a great many visitors from the region and abroad. During the festival you can try the famous Karst cuisine, including prosciutto and Teran wine, and be pampered by genuine Karst hospitality.



## SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

The destination places great emphasis on sustainable mobility.

### AUTOMATIC E-BIKE SHARING SYSTEM

The system includes 9 stations located in Kozina, Rodik, Komen, Stanjel, Pliskovica and 2 each in Sežana and Divača. Registration and purchase of an e-bike package can be arranged at the TICs of the administrative centres or via the mobiln.si mobile app. Registration is free of charge; €25 for an annual package and €5 for a daily package. There are 12 regular bikes and 33 e-bikes. In the interest of an active life for locals and visitors, and in order to BE CLOSE TO NATURE, several bike rental providers (electric or regular) are adding to the bike rental options available:



(electric or regular) are adding to the bike rental options available:

- Astraea tours,
- Lipica Stud Farm,
- Admiral Kozina,
- Rodik Mythical Park,
- Rent a bike Mitja Furlan,
- Mathtech bike Center Sežana,
- Core riding, AP Aljoša Pirjevec,
- Škocjan Caves Park,
- MG Šport and
- SloActive, which also offers guided tours for cyclists.



### Using a bus shuttle to get to an event

Event organisers in the destination have started to offer an organised bus service between settlements to event venues. The bus service was free of charge and accessible to most of the places in the vicinity of a given event. Visitors to events like the Municipal Festival of Hrpelje-Kozina, St Martin's Festival in the Karst, and the summer patron saint's festivals in Rodik and Prešnica made good use of the offer and expressed their wish for a connecting occasional bus service to be organised again.

NAZIV KAZALNIKA	VREDNOST KAZALNIKA				CILJ	
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>1</b> % zavarovane narave v površini destinacije						
Občina Divača	48	48	48	48	48	48
Občina Hrpelje - Kozina	53	53	53	53	53	53
Občina Komen	82	82	82	82	82	82
Občina Sežana	98	98	98	98	98	98
<b>2</b> % odplak, očiščenih do sekundarne stopnje	53	53	53	53	53	60
<b>3</b> % trdnih odpadkov, ki so ločeno zbrani za predelavo	69	69	69	69	72	74
<b>4</b> število mest za izposajo koles	5	15	15	19	19	19
<b>5</b> število koles za izposajo	30	98	98	118	118	118
<b>6</b> število muzejev	17	17	20	22	22	23
<b>7</b> število znakov Slovenia Green Accomodation	1	1	4	7	9	11
<b>8</b> število znakov Slovenia Green Travel Agency	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>9</b> število znakov Slovenia Green Cuisine	0	0	4	7	8	9
<b>10</b> število znakov Slovenia Green Attraction	0	0	0	1	1	2
<b>11</b> število znakov Slovenia Green Park	0	1	1	1	1	1
<b>12</b> število znakov Slovenia Green Beach	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>13</b> število mesecev, v katerih pripotuje 80 % ljudi	9	9	9	9	9	9
<b>14</b> Ekonomski kazalci v gostinstvu Kras in Brkini						
Število zaposlenih	490	502	459	456	505	530
Dodana vrednost	13.663.879	10.762.650	12.133.635	13.854.998	13.346.990	14.014.340
Prihodki	37.899.637	28.112.584	29.909.235	44.260.296	32.900.159	34.545.167
Število podjetij	459	505	550	612	605	635

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, CARE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The following activities were carried out to improve accessibility:

- In urban centres, **disabled-friendly access** is provided in most public facilities for basic living services, as well as pavements. The Municipality of Komen additionally purchased an electric vehicle to facilitate access to the old part of Štanjel for people with reduced mobility. In Štanjel, an access path to the top of Štanjel – to Gledanica – was also made accessible to people with mobility problems.
- **Defibrillators** have a special place in the destination and therefore a special focus for all the municipal administrations involved. More than 30 defibrillators have been installed at various locations – administrative buildings and tourist facilities, such as the Visitor Centre of the Rodik Mythical Park.
- **Adjusted guidance for people with intellectual disabilities – Dom na Krasu**
- Guided tours of museums, collections, centres ... **in Slovenian sign language** (by prior arrangement).
- The Mythical Park Visitor Centre prepared all the materials for the exhibition at the Centre, entitled “Mythical and Other Realities”, also in Braille. In this way, blind and partially sighted people can also read the stories of the Mythical Park and all the exhibition contents.
- The Karst shops, managed by ORA Krasa in Brkinov, sell products from the “Dom na Krasu” Institution for people with special needs and the Vezi society.



## THE BOUTIQUE AND GREEN KARST AND BRKINI

The pristine nature of the Karst and Brkini offers a wide range of opportunities for relaxing and exploring. Special sights linger in the memory. In the Karst, visitors can be active and very curious, or they can just enjoy the peace and quiet, or simply the sounds that nature provides.

Anywhere they go, they meet genuine Karst hospitality. This can be especially felt in the many small villages of Karst and Brkini, which are protected as cultural monuments.

Visitors can find information and descriptions of experiences in the Karst and Brkini at the [www.visitkras.info](http://www.visitkras.info).

Aware of our responsibility to leave a preserved environment and prosperity for our descendants, the Karst and Brkini destination has taken the approach of promoting a green mindset and green tourism. We want tourists coming to our destination – to the towns and to our rural villages in the Karst and Brkini – to feel our sustainability efforts and get involved in them.

Establishing a certified environmental management system and obtaining one of the internationally recognised eco-labels is the most effective mechanism for tourism operators to communicate their sustainability credentials to visitors, partners and communities, while reinforcing their own commitment.

Environmental certificates create a sense of well-being, an expectation of healthy accommodation, healthy food, and a healthy environment for tourists and employees.

## WE ARE PROUD OF OUR TOURISM PROVIDERS HOLDING SUSTAINABILITY LABELS

The destination encourages providers to operate sustainably and obtain sustainability labels – through workshops, subsidies and promotion.



Hotel st. Daniel, Hruševica



Gostišče Risnik s prenočišči



Bistro grad Štanjel



Gostilna Mahorčič, Rodik



Hiša posebne sorte



Tmbin's barn



Mladinski hostel Pliskovica



Špacapanova hiša Komen



Park Škocjanske jame



### COOPERATION WITH PROVIDERS – NETWORKING AND PROMOTION

Initially four municipalities – today one Karst and Brkini destination and the tourist organisation ORA Krasa in Brkinov, which connects providers without administrative borders! The Karst and Brkini and their comprehensive and attractive offer of delicacies and experiences. Good knowledge, cooperation and co-creation, along with the marketing of tourism products and services are vital for raising visibility. This year, for the third year in a row, the KrasPass Gourmet network has brought together over 30 tourism providers from the Karst and Brkini to increase visibility and enable visitors to discover the uniqueness of the Karst and Brkini every day of the week through cuisine, wine, creative stone workshops and guided tours of the wonders of nature.



Grad Štanjel



Hiša Krasna



## CARING FOR THE CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Karst and Brkini destination has a rich cultural heritage of which it is proud. It actively cooperates with the competent Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, Nova Gorica Regional Office, as well as with museums in Nova Gorica and Koper. The destination maintains the condition, authenticity and aesthetic appearance of its cultural heritage, such as landmarks and built heritage, typical or traditional architecture, settlement design, cultural vibe, urban vistas and archaeological sites, according to national and international standards. Through a number of projects, particularly intensive in the last 5 years, it protects and preserves the cultural heritage and integrates it into attractive and new tourism products. It works with the population and local organisations.



Over 900 items of **immovable heritage** have been listed/protected in the destination's cultural heritage register, including **archaeological sites, buildings, memorials, settlements, parks and cultural landscapes**, as follows: MUNICIPALITY OF DIVAČA 275 in total, MUNICIPALITY OF HRPELJE-KOZINA 160 in total, MUNICIPALITY OF KOMEN 162 in total, MUNICIPALITY OF SEŽANA 336 in total, i.e., a total of over 900 protected cultural heritage sites.

Some of the cultural heritage units (EID – uniform heritage ID) have several protection regimes (Legal Regimes for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (eVrD), Register of Immovable Cultural Heritage (Rkd), Ministry of Culture, local monuments – municipal ordinances and several levels of protection (national, local)).

In addition to its movable and immovable cultural heritage, the destination is particularly proud of its intangible heritage. The destination values and preserves its intangible heritage in various ways – by promoting and funding societies and activities, by participating in its research, by co-funding the publication of books and other resources for studying, learning about and preserving its heritage, by registering it in special registers and, of course, through a wide range of training courses, workshops, traditional and sustainable events, experiences, festivals, along with local gastronomy. The destination gives special emphasis to the promotion of heritage listed in the Register of the Intangible Cultural Heritage:

1. The making of St John's wreaths and hanging them on the front doors of all homes in the old Stanjel village and the surrounding area on Midsummer's evening. Registration: 2-00020: Making of St John's wreaths



2. Art of dry-stone walling, knowledge and techniques – the building of a dry-stone wall is included on UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity; registration: 2-00051: Dry-stone walling.

The mastery of dry-stone walling was included on UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in on 28 November 2018

3. During the Shrovetide carnival called "Škoromatija" the carnival characters, the "Škoromati", go around the village on Carnival Saturday: going around from house to house and collecting gifts. Registration: 2-00005: Škoromatija



4. Traditional breeding of Lipizzan horses at the Lipica Stud Farm – it includes the breeding of Lipizzan horses for classical dressage riding and carriage driving. Registration: 2-00054: Traditional breeding and raising of Lipizzan horses



The Karst and Brkini destination places heritage conservation among the priorities for tourism development. It is integrated into sustainable forms of the tourist offer, such as thematic nature trails that feature landmarks of the past. With the help of grants through European projects, we are making sure that our path to the future is a solid one, not the least by respecting our past.



## CARING FOR NATURAL VALUES

The green Brkini and the exceptional nature of the Karst require the destination to preserve its natural heritage.

With the help of grants through European projects, we are making sure that our path to the future is a solid one, not the least by respecting our natural assets.

### Protected areas:

**The Škocjan Caves Regional Park** – an area within a public institute with a fully regulated visitor regime, guided tours for visitors, an interpretation centre, information boards and marked trails. It is also protected as a Karst Biosphere Reserve. The Škocjan Caves Regional Park is located in the classical Karst. As a key natural monument of the park, the caves have been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1986, with their vast halls and a veritable underground canyon that leaves no visitor unimpressed.

<https://www.park-skocjanske-jame.si/>

The Škocjan Caves carry a number of sustainability and environmental labels:



**Special protection area: Natura 2000** – sites are designated by the Special Protection Areas Regulation, established to conserve biodiversity. In the whole destination, most of the area is under Natura – the entire Karst, the Branica Valley and four smaller areas, with the exception of the Vreme Valley and Brkini.

### Natural values:

47 protected areas

43 natural values – areas

1092 natural points – caves

147 other natural values – points (gorges, valleys, sinkholes, century-old lime trees, chestnut trees, beech trees, plane trees, blind valleys, fossil sites, limestone deposits, pastures, forests etc.) of which the following are accessible and managed for tourism:

**Beka Landscape Park** – a coherent area that has not yet been specially arranged or organized. The park is open to all visitors, especially hikers and runners. The paths are partly signposted. A management centre was built in Klanec near Kožina and completed in 2022.



**Štanjel Landscape Park** – fully developed into a tourist product with a castle. It is equipped with directional and explanatory signs, a tourist information centre, it features catering and accommodation, a wine bar, a wedding hall, a gallery and the Ferrari Garden which is specially protected. It is constantly being upgraded: in 2021, the Gledanica lookout point and museum were arranged.



Vremščica Hill



Sežana – Botanical Park



Tourist caves: Vilenica, Dimnice, Divača Cave



Lipica – pastures and forests

## TOURIST EXPERIENCES – NEW TOURISM PRODUCTS

In the framework of the digitisation project of cultural heritage sites, four new products were developed at the beginning of 2022 and upgraded to 5-star experiences; for more, see [visitkras.info](http://visitkras.info):

- Horse riding tour with a Lipizzan horse and tasting of local delicacies (**Royal Experience of the Karst** – Pampering in the company of a Lipizzaner)
- Wild Flavours of the Karst and Brkini (**Living Stone and Wild Flavours** – Across the Karst by e-bike)
- Culinary tour: From soil to plate (**Kras Masterclass** – Culinary and architectural highlights of the Karst)
- Experience of the Karst through nature, culture and cuisine (**Mythical Park** – Discovering stories)
- Sustainable experience “Through Štanjel through time” (Kaštelir project): visitors are guided by a virtual tour guide Aviko, a boy from prehistoric times who remained in Štanjel “forgotten in prehistoric time and space” (augmented reality app); <https://www.visitstanjel.si/skozi-stanjel-skozi-cas>, where the environmental and social aspects of sustainability are included:
  - Upon arrival in Štanjel, visitors are informed about the Green Sparks by the guide or information officer at the TIC, which are also published on the destination’s website: News | Information | Plan your visit | Visit the Karst
  - Two drinking fountains are available to visitors (in the castle courtyard and at Gledanica).
  - The experience includes the local catering service provider Bistro Grad Štanjel, with its sustainable Green Cuisine label and the serving, in a reconstructed bowl, of a prehistoric dish, recreated by following the recipe for a Primorska-type minestrone.
  - The experience is free of single-use plastics.
  - The experience includes a prehistoric souvenir made by people with special needs at the Dom na Krasu Institution. Their purchase price is fully refundable to the Institution. This gives the experience an extremely important social and humanitarian dimension.
- Within the framework of the LAS project “The Gardens of the Karst”, a new sustainable experience, “Exploring the Karst with Pepa”, is in the final stages of preparation – an authentic experience of the Karst, with an exceptional sense of respect for the local people and vulnerable groups, and responsibility towards the environment.
- **Karra** – gamified experiences of the authentic Karst,

At the same time, we are launching a new product, the digitised cycling app “The Trail of Stone” in three stages, which encourages multi-day stays and digitises three cultural heritage units typical of the Karst and Brkini: the Karst homestead “Slamčeva domačija” in Pliskovica, the dry-wall building mastery and the Ajdovščina hillfort above Rodik.

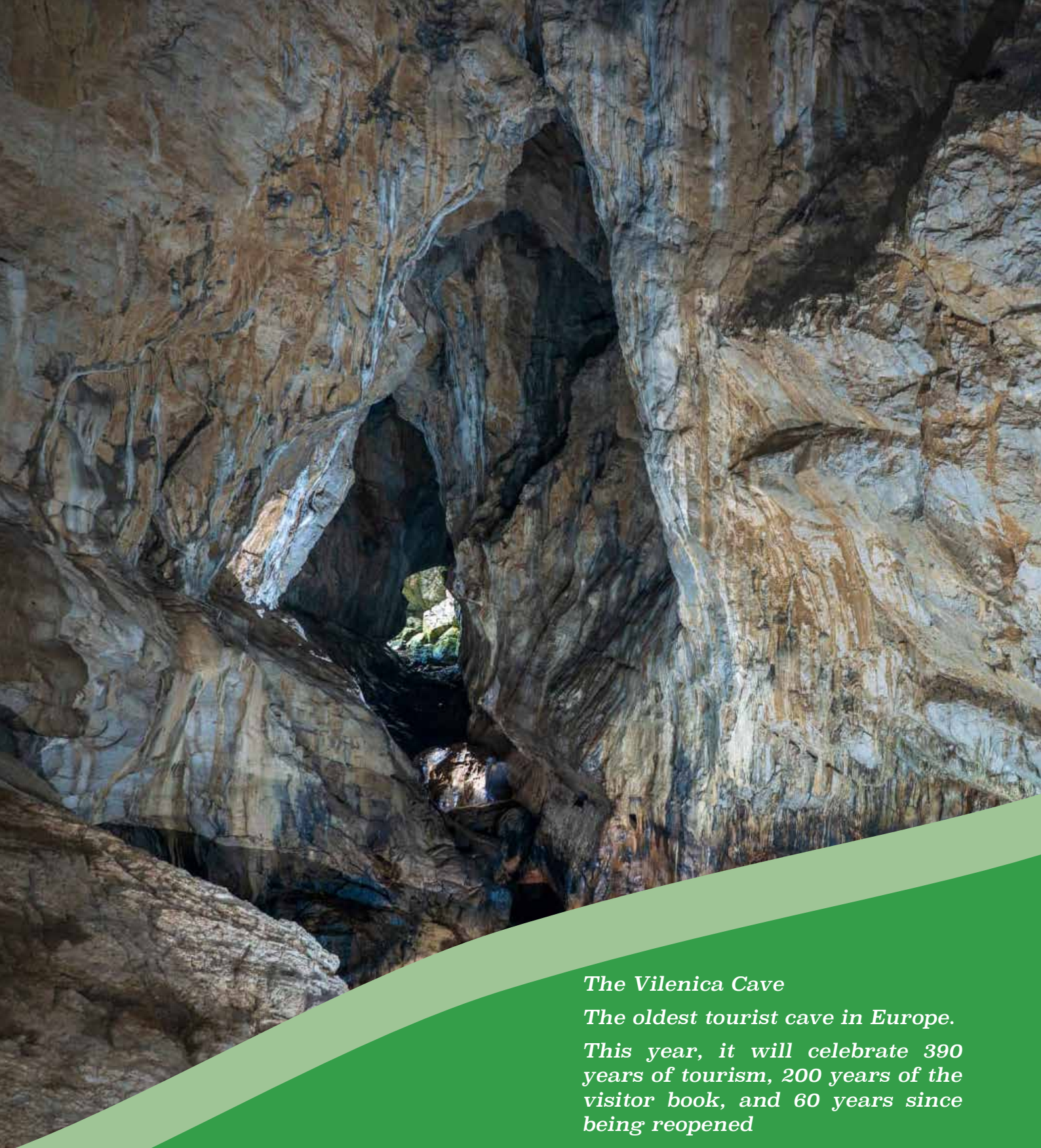


## WE ARE PROUD OF:

- the creation of new modern camper stops (Hrpelje, Divača)
- the new playgrounds for children
- the new recreational green spaces (Park Žaga in Kozina, Disc Golf in Lipica, Intergenerational Parks in Sveto and Komen)
- the new thematic trails (“The Karst of the Dwarfs” in Štanjel, “Through Štanjel through time”, Lintver’s and Baba’s trails in Rodik, Botanical trail in Štanjel)
- the new Karst vegetation interpretation centre
- the events based on intangible cultural heritage (Belajtnga, Gledanica, Researchers’ Night in the Mythical Park, Museum Night in Divača, Karst Gmajna Festival, Stone Festival)
- the new Štanjel Castle Museum: the “Nature and Man in the Karst” exhibition
- prizes such as: Hidden gems 2022: By Bike from Fort to Fort – an Expedition into the Past in the Karst and the Honorary Valvazor Award for the Mythical Park for the special presentation of the narrative tradition; second prize for the best excursion destination in Štanjel in the “My Municipality, Beautiful and Tidy” campaign.

As a proud member of the Slovenia Green family, the destination is fulfilling its promise to operate according to sustainable principles and is committed to continuous green improvements, about which it keeps the public/tourism stakeholders informed through the websites [visitkras.info](http://visitkras.info) and [ora.si](http://ora.si), social networks and the e-newsletter.





### *The Vilenica Cave*

*The oldest tourist cave in Europe.*

*This year, it will celebrate 390 years of tourism, 200 years of the visitor book, and 60 years since being reopened*

*Text: Green team of the Karst and Brkini*

*Design: Tiskarna Vek*

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