

Slovenia

Facts and Statistics

Location: Central Europe, eastern Alps bordering the Adriatic Sea, between Austria and Croatia

Capital: Ljubljana

Climate: Mediterranean climate on the coast, continental climate with mild to hot summers and cold winters in the plateaus and valleys to the east

Population: 2,009,245 (July 2007 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: Slovene 83.1%, Serb 2%, Croat 1.8%, Bosniak 1.1%, other or unspecified 12% (2002 census)

Religions: Catholic 57.8%, Muslim 2.4%, Orthodox 2.3%, other Christian 0.9%, unaffiliated 3.5%, other or unspecified 23%, none 10.1% (2002 census)

Government: parliamentary republic

Language in Slovenia

Slovene or Slovenian is an Indo-European language that belongs to the family of South Slavic languages. It is spoken by approximately 2 million speakers worldwide, naturally the majority of whom live in Slovenia. Slovene is one of the few languages to have preserved the dual grammatical number from Proto-Indo-European. Also, Slovene and Slovak are the two modern Slavic languages whose names for themselves literally mean "Slavic". Slovene is one of the official languages of the European Union.

Although the country is relatively small, there are over 32 different dialects spoken, which can be grouped into 7 larger dialect segments. The diversity in language is due to the influences of neighboring countries as well as the mountainous nature of the country, which has led to isolated language development.

Slovenian People, Society and Culture

The Role of Religion

Over half the population is Roman Catholic, although there are approximately 38 religious groups or sects officially registered within Slovenia. The Office for Religious Communities maintains a list of active religious communities. There are a large number of Evangelical Lutherans residing near the Hungarian border. Those who call themselves Catholic are very heterogeneous, with very few adhering to all the precepts of the church. In fact, the majority are quite selective in what aspects they follow and often combine their religious beliefs with secular beliefs.

Despite the secularism of many people, many public holidays are also religious in nature.

The Family

The family is at the centre of the social structure. However, over time this is changing. Only a decade ago, one could find several generations living together; nowadays not only are young people moving away but families are splitting due to a move to urban centers. Nonetheless, the family itself remains strong.

Slovenians sense of "home" is also very strong. As a rule, when they are not working, they embark on home based activities such as gardening projects (a visitor will notice that having flowers around the house is something of an art form in cities) or renovation. They see their home and its surroundings as an extension of themselves. People take care to sweep their paths and ensure that the streets remain free of litter and parks are well-maintained.

A Polycentric Culture

Slovenia has a polycentric culture. This means people will go out of their way to change their natural behavior to mirror that of the person with whom they are interacting. So for example, Slovenians are

naturally indirect communicators but can moderate their behavior when dealing with people who come from cultures where more direct communication is the norm.

This ease of adaptation makes Slovenes easy to work with, although it also makes it somewhat difficult to know exactly what to expect when dealing with people since some may be more adept at moderating their behavior than others.