



## SUSTAINABILITY MONITORING REPORT INDICATORS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BREŽICE -GREEN SCHEME FOR SLOVENIAN TOURISM

In 2018, the Municipality of Brežice started to verify the fulfilment of the standards and performance indicators in the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism (GSTS) with the aim of using an internationally recognised tool for the development of green destinations to create a sustainable tourism model that will valorise potentials (natural, social and cultural) and integrate them into a unique offer. The aim of the GSTS is to create a sustainable tourism model that will valorise potentials (natural, social and cultural) and combine them into a unique offer. In 2019, it was awarded the Slovenia Green Destination Silver label. In 2022, we will proceed to the assessment of the label. To improve the baseline, it is important to monitor relevant sustainability indicators in six areas: destination management, nature and landscape, environment and climate, culture and tradition, social climate and tourism business performance.

Within its remit, the ZPTM Brežice monitors, collects and evaluates data for the areas under discussion, or obtains it from publicly accessible records of institutions and institutions covering specific topics. We will continue to monitor the areas in question in the future with the aim of monitoring the situation and, through the adoption of appropriate measures, maintaining or improving it in the long term.

The municipality of Brežice is surrounded by hills, the green world of the confluence of the Sava and Krka rivers, vineyards, waters and castles, and to the south, the Gorjance Mountains. The richness of the natural and cultural heritage allows for the sustainable development of tourism and other related activities. The municipality of Brežice covers an area of 268.1 km<sup>2</sup>, the highest point being Veliki Špiček, at an altitude of 668 m. The municipality as a whole is inhabited by 24346 people (SURs, 2021). Natural areas (terrestrial nature) include non-intensive agricultural areas, forest, wetlands, low vegetation and uncultivated areas.



The destination contains 21% or 56.3 km<sup>2</sup> of protected area, namely the Kozjanski Regional Park, which has the Slovenia Green Park gold label, and 4.6 km<sup>2</sup> of protected area - Jovsev (one part of a natural monument, which is protected). Thanks to the activities of a sufficient number of competent services, the negative impacts of tourism on nature, fauna and flora are successfully prevented. Land use in nature is mosaic, which means that within one square kilometre, animal and plant species of several biotypes can be observed, which interact with each other. They dominate agricultural and forest areas, where several observatories can be found. In each local community, the observatories are managed by hunting families.

All natural and cultural heritage tours in the municipality of Brežice are possible on your own or with a licensed guide. During the training, the tourist guides were familiarised with the Code of Ethics for Tourist Guides, which is sustainability oriented, as educated guides are one of the pillars of sustainable development.

So far, studies have shown that tourism has no negative impact on the environment. In the field of environmental protection, the level of waste water management is an important indicator. In the destination, the proportion of sewage treated to at least secondary level before discharge is around 33%, and the proportion of solid waste collected separately for treatment is 61.71%, which is above the national average. Due to the location of the destination, most visitors still come by car. Public transport in the destination itself is not the best, but there are frequent and coordinated lines to the destination, both rail and bus.

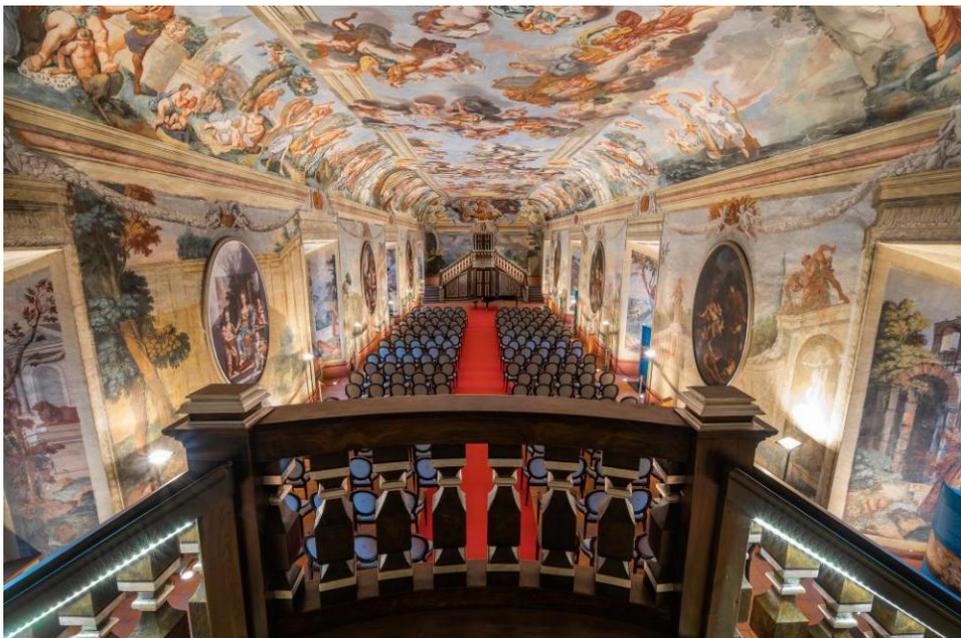
The destination has a unified system of BržKOLO rentals, with 6 stations (Brežice Market, MC Brežice, Brežice Railway Station, Brežice Gymnasium, Trnje, Bus Station), with 32 bicycles. Local residents and tourists can cycle from point to point in the city in a sustainable way. Starting this year, guests will be able to rent 10 electric bicycles at the Brežice Hostel, and explore even more remote points in the destination or neighbouring regions. The municipality of Brežice has started the construction of two cycle links in 2022; Brežice-

Dobova and Brežice - Krška vas. This type of infrastructure is essential for safe driving for both residents and visitors.

The Youth Centre Brežice is home to the Posavje Multigenerational Centre, where SOPOTNIK has its offices. This is a project that provides free transport for older people, enabling them to be mobile throughout the municipality.

Brežice is characterised and dominated by thermal / spa tourism due to the presence of thermal water. The largest provider of these services is Terme Čatež, which is the largest spa in Slovenia, with three hotels and the largest campsite in Slovenia. Visitors can enjoy a wide range of water activities 365 days a year and a wide choice of accommodation to suit all tastes. In addition to the largest thermal complex in Slovenia, Dobova has also been home to the youngest thermal spa in Slovenia - Terme Paradiso - since 2011. The latter boasts an excellent wellness offer, and their efforts have been recognised several times, as they have been the winners among the small bathing resorts in Slovenia in recent years. The peak months are in summer, August is the most visited month, the municipality has 9 months of seasonality, and the destination tries to attract guests even in the "dead season" with various packages and events.

The destination has a rich variety of historical and cultural attractions. The Posavje Museum Brežice is one of the main attractions in the municipality, preserving the heritage of the whole Posavje region. The museum, which is located in the Brežice Castle, has a positive impact on culture, as various events are held in the castle courtyard. There are four castles in the municipality, Brežice Castle is owned by the municipality, Mokrice Castle is owned by Terme Čatež, while Bizeljsko Castle and Pišece Castle are owned by the state, and we would like the latter to be open to the public in the future.



In Brežice there are 256 accommodation facilities, of which 199 in Terme Čatež (e-Turizem, 2022). There are 6 hotels (3 in Terme Čatež and 1 in Terme Paradiso), 2 hostels, 2 pensions, 2 tourist farms with accommodation and 4 private rooms, the rest are apartments. Campers are welcome both at the Terme Čatež campsite and at the camper stop in town. In 2021, three providers obtained the Green Key sustainable environmental labels: Ošterija Debeluh and Gostilna in Pension Les, the latter, in addition to the Green Cuisine label, also obtained the Green Accommodation label. Hostel Brežice obtained the HI Q&S label, which means that the Slovenian Tourist Board awarded them the Slovenia Green Accommodation label. The Green Team aims to motivate providers to act in a green and sustainable way.

There are many opportunities for green tourism. A large number of well-maintained hiking and cycling trails make the destination increasingly attractive for recreational hikers and cyclists. With a hiking and cycling map, even places further away from the centre are brought closer to guests. The plan is to digitise the routes and put them on the website in the near future.

The destination is permeated with walking trails such as the Bizeljské pedestrian routes (Grajska cesta, Pot k k repnicam, Pot ob Sotli, Pot po Orešju and Vidova pot), the Koščeva pot po Jovsih, the Artiška sadjarska pedestrian route, Čateže's energy trail, Brežiška and other mountain trails along the Gorjanci and Orlice rivers, the Sromlje Wine and Sun Trail, the Pišce Forest Nature Trail, the Trail of Gad, the Gabernica Water Nature Trail and walking trails along the Sava River. All the trails are safe, as they follow local roads, forest and pasture paths or forest tracks. Maps and instructions have been produced for all routes, depending on the difficulty of the orientation. The municipality of Brežice also has several cycle routes and cycling guides who are trained and experienced. The most important cycling routes are the Secrets of the Brown-Yellow Sands, the Orlov Tour, Let's Listen to the Murmur of the Wetland Forests, the Journey through the Land of Cviček and many other thematic route.



According to the results of the analysis of the visitor surveys (July 2021), the majority of tourists (60%) arrive at the destination by car, and the destination is well served by public transport; this was observed for day visitors who arrived by train-Terme Paradiso is located next to the train station. The main purpose of the visit is rest (80%) followed by entertainment and gastronomy. Less than half are familiar with the Slovenia Green brand, and, predictably, a smaller proportion of foreign visitors are familiar with it (with the Austrians standing out as the most prominent).

- 8 out of 12 are familiar with the brand), but at the same time only a good half (51%) of Slovenian guests are familiar with the brand. The respondents feel safe at the destination and feel the hospitality and friendliness of the locals. Shopping and public transport are at the bottom of the satisfaction charts. They were also asked about their recognition of the destination's sustainability efforts.

There is no doubt that confidence in drinking water is high, especially compared to other categories in the sustainability field. The two statements that should also be interpreted in the light of current health issues (information on responsible behaviour at events, when visiting attractions, health care and access to health care) were rated with an average of 3.87 and 3.83 respectively on a 5-point scale. It can be concluded that the relatively high score is indeed related to the current situation. The most worrying is the rating of the statement on the availability of information on local gastronomic offer and local products. The Brežice Town Hall houses a tourist information centre, a wine bar and a shop with local products at the same time. With the cooperation of different providers and the establishment of a collective brand, we believe that this will improve in the future.



The team of the Institute for Entrepreneurship, Tourism and Youth Brežice, the municipality of Brežice and the Green Team strive to ensure that every member of the team acts in an environmentally friendly way, that we raise awareness among our friends, relatives and visitors, and that we follow as much as possible the tips and solutions for efficient management of natural resources and energy. We are aware of the green capital that the destination has. We want to preserve this precious heritage for future generations through sustainable development in all areas, including tourism, and by following the guidelines of the Slovenian Green Tourism Scheme. We do not have to give up the comforts and things we love to do in order to act in an environmentally friendly way. To this end, we have also prepared green tips for visitors to open our hearts to green habits, not only when travelling but also at home.

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