

Slovenia Green turns sustainable tourism into a national success model

With its emerald rivers, scenic landscapes and well-preserved heritage sites, Slovenia is considered one of Europe's green gems for a good reason. But while sustainability is an essential part of national legislation and recently lifted the country to fifth place on the Environmental Performance Index, practitioners of the country's important tourism industry found themselves lacking specific tools and knowledge to implement green policies in tourism development. In cooperation with the sustainable tourism factory GoodPlace, the Slovenian Tourism Board is implementing the ambitious *Slovenia Green* programme to improve the competitiveness of local destinations.

Under the green scheme, the tourism board has been implementing the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) since 2015 and uses the criteria of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) to set up a holistic certification scheme that takes into account Slovenia's national characteristics on the level of destinations and tourism providers. GoodPlace provides education and networking services and invited tourism coordinators to take part in a targeted training programme. Jana Apih is the Managing Director of GoodPlace: *"We wanted to use the ETIS indicators not just as an evaluation tool, so we broadened the formula using the Global Sustainable Tourism Review tool and introduced scores that tourism coordinators could apply at their destination to obtain the Slovenia Green certification. The scheme is quite complex, but in the first edition of our training in June 2015, we had 15 destination coordinators motivated and ready to enter the race for the greenest destination – with success! So far, 7 destinations and 6 hotels have been awarded Slovenia Green certificates."*



Each destination that wants to receive the Slovenia Green label is required to sign a green development policy as a sign of official commitment, and carry out a 7-step process including raising awareness, creating a destination profile, and collecting statistical data. Once certified, destination coordinators have to submit annual progress reports and enter a re-evaluation phase every two to three years. According to the level of sustainability that can be proven, destinations can rise up from bronze to platinum in their certification. Hotels are encouraged to obtain an internationally recognised green certification such as Green Globe, Travelife, or the EU Ecolabel, before they qualify for the Slovenia Green certificate.



But for Jana and her team the current mind set is not yet sufficient. *"We need suppliers and destination managers to think very hard about the sustainable tourism products they want to develop and promote. Each destination has to find a unique and authentic local story behind its green product to offer a distinct experience to its visitors. The lion share of our work will lie in helping destinations find exactly that"*, Jana sums up the future direction of Slovenia Green.

GoodPlace also makes its own contributing to the development and promotion of destination Slovenia: it has created the travel agency VisitGoodPlace in 2015, which specialises in cycling tours for tourists that want to combine active holidays with the discovery of local values and cultural heritage.

More information:

Slovenia Green, Slovenian Tourism Board

All studies and downloadable materials in Slovene: <http://www.slovenia.info/zelena-shema>

General information page in English: http://www.slovenia.info/en/SLOVENIA-GREEN.htm?ps_aktivnosti_eko=0&lng=2

GoodPlace

<http://www.goodplace.si/>

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<http://www.greenljubljana.com>