



Consul's Note

Another beautiful summer in Slovenia – with snow falling throughout half the country in late May. Even our Slovene friends admit this is unusual, and we just hope that was winter's last gasp!

Here at the Embassy, last December we were caught up with the large-scale meeting in Ljubljana of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We were disappointed that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was unable to attend, but all of the participants left with great impressions of Slovenia's hospitality and organizational abilities.

In February, the Embassy and the University of Primorska inaugurated the American Corner in Koper. The Corner is a place where Slovenes and Americans can meet to exchange ideas and learn from each other. It hosts organized events, but it also has a coffee bar and small reading library where anyone can drop in. It is located at 4 Titov Trg in Koper, and is open Monday through Friday from 9-5.

The American Corner's first organized event was a discussion forum in February on "Islam and the West." In addition to emphasizing the need for religious tolerance, several participants held the audience spellbound by telling first-hand what it was like to be a Muslim in Slovenia. We hope we helped open everyone's eyes a little bit.

In May, the Embassy organized the "Bike for Darfur" ride at Kostanjevica na Krki. Over 500 cyclists – including U.S. Ambassador Tom Robertson and Slovene President Janez Drnovšek – turned out and raised over US\$12,000 to aid the plight of refugees in Sudan.

Embassy officers also spread out around the country giving talks to schools, universities, military groups, volunteer organizations, and at cultural events. If you would like someone from the Embassy (maybe even the Ambassador – although we can't promise that!) to speak to a group or organization of which you are a member, please get in touch with the Embassy's Public Affairs Section to pass along the information. Call Breda Popovič 01-200-5663 or email her at PopovicBR@State.gov.

Finally, you should know that we've changed our office hours slightly in the Consular Section. The morning schedule is still the same, 9-11:30am. But in the afternoon, we're now open from 1-3pm, as opposed to our old schedule of 2-4pm.

We look forward to seeing you whenever you have business in Ljubljana!

Cheers from the Embassy,

Paul Schultz
Consul

More Changes to U.S. Passports

Beginning this fall, the U.S. will begin to issue the new so-called “e-passport.” It looks and works just like a regular passport, but in the back cover is embedded a tiny microchip. That chip contains all the same data in the passport (name, date of birth, passport number) as well as an electronic copy of the photograph of the passport bearer.

The e-passport is the next step forward in document security. If someone steals your passport and tries to change any of the information printed on it, like your date of birth, then the changes will be obvious because they won't match the information stored on the chip.

The chip should also make your trip through immigration lanes at airports much faster, since the inspector only has to position the e-passport near an electronic reader, which will automatically scan the data on the chip. The passport cover will include shielding material to prevent unauthorized reading of the data.

The only visible difference between the e-passport and the passport you've got now will be the symbol below, which will appear on the passport book cover:



Your current passport will remain valid until it expires.

To learn more about e-passports, consult the web page of the Department of State: http://travel.state.gov/passport/eppt/eppt_2498.html.

Consular Section

American Citizens Services

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FAX (+386-1) 200-5535
Email: ACSLjubljana@state.gov

Office Hours

Mon.-Fri. 09:00 – 11:30 and
13:00 – 15:00

American Citizen Emergencies

(after hours, weekends, holidays)
Phone (+386-1) 200-5556 or 200-5557

THE CONSULAR SECTION IS CLOSED ON U.S. AND SLOVENIAN NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

<http://slovenia.usembassy.gov/holidays.html>



The Marine Corps Wants You! (To Party!)

The Embassy's Marine Security Guard Detachment is updating its guest list for the social events it hosts throughout the year at the Marine House in Ljubljana center. The Marines periodically host happy hours, barbecues, volleyball games, etc. and would like to invite interested Americans and their families to join them. If you would like to be invited to these events, contact Detachment Commander Staff Sergeant Juan Roque at tel 01-200-5623 or email RoqueJM@state.gov and provide your name(s) and contact number or email address so that you can be added to the invitation list.

Avian Influenza Update

The November 2005 issue of the consular newsletter reported the spread of avian influenza, or bird flu, in several countries in Asia and Europe. In February 2006, the first cases were reported in Slovenia, among a flock of wild migratory swans near Maribor. The last case was reported on March 25, 2006.

In all, there were 44 confirmed cases of the deadly H5N1 strain of bird flu in Slovenia during those two months, all among wild migratory birds. There were no cases reported among domestic poultry, and there were no cases reported among humans. Since the flocks of birds that carried the virus migrated north in the spring, and since those same flocks will migrate south again to Slovenia in the fall, and it is likely we will again see outbreaks of bird flu at that time.

With no cases reported in over two months, the Government of Slovenia has eliminated all of the protection zones and surveillance zones erected around the sites where dead birds were found. Currently, the Government has declared a “high-risk zone” three kilometers wide along the Drava River from the Croatian border nearly to the Austrian border. This area is a traditional path for migratory birds. Poultry breeders in that area must keep their free-range animals in fenced pens. The animals may not have access to water that is home to wild birds. In addition, wild birds must be prevented from coming in contact with open-air water tanks used by domestic fowl, and poultry may only drink boiled water if the water comes from open sources which could be used by wild birds.

There were also confirmed cases of the H5N1 strain of bird flu in wild birds in all of Slovenia’s neighbors: Croatia, Hungary, Italy, and Austria. In addition, Bosnia, Serbia, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia also reported cases in wild birds. France and Germany reported cases in domestic poultry. The nearest case of H5N1 in humans was in Turkey in January 2006, where over a period of several weeks 12 people were infected with the virus and four of those people died. All of those people lived on or near poultry farms. There have been no new cases reported in humans in Turkey since early February 2006. Since the beginning of the year, there have been 81 confirmed cases of bird flu in humans worldwide, and 52 of those people died.

The U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have not issued any travel alerts or advisories for avian flu-infected areas. CDC advises travelers to clean their hands often with soap and water or waterless alcohol-based hand-rubs to help prevent disease transmission. In addition, as a precaution, all foods from poultry, including eggs, should be thoroughly cooked.

A specific vaccine for humans that is effective against avian influenza has not yet been developed. Based upon limited data, the CDC has suggested that the anti-viral medication Oseltamavir (brand name: Tamiflu) may be effective in preventing or treating avian influenza. The U.S. Embassy has ordered a small supply of Tamiflu for its staff members, but there is no provision or legal authority that allows the U.S. Government to provide American citizens traveling or living abroad with medications, including in the event of a pandemic. The Embassy encourages American citizens traveling or living in Slovenia who are interested in obtaining this medication to consult their physicians.

Embassy Spotlight

This is one in a series of profiles to introduce the staff of the U.S. Embassy in Ljubljana and demystify the work they do on behalf of the United States and American citizens.



In this issue, we turn the spotlight on the Commercial Section, which helps American business people and companies that want to enter or increase their business in the Slovene market. The Commercial Section in Ljubljana has a staff of one American and two Slovenes.

The Commercial Section offers detailed information on the business climate in Slovenia, assisting both exporters and importers of U.S. goods and services to Slovenia. They work actively with Slovene business and government agencies to identify opportunities for U.S. goods and services, and maintain an extensive database of key contacts to assist in identifying potential partners for U.S. businesses.

For American clients who wish to export to Slovenia, the section offers market research, lists of screened or unscreened business contacts, background information on prospective Slovene business partners, and can arrange press releases or even gala dinners hosted by the U.S. Ambassador to promote an American company's introduction into Slovenia. Under the premiere Gold Key service, the section sets up meetings with prospective Slovene business partners and accompanies the American client to the meetings to provide on-the-spot advice and translation service, if needed.

For Slovene clients, the section helps find U.S. products and services and explore new business opportunities through agency or distributorship agreements, joint venture and strategic alliance partnerships, franchising, or direct purchases. The section can develop custom itineraries for Slovene business people interested in attending important trade shows in the United States.

The Commercial Section also produces the Country Commercial Guide, an extensive document that is meant to create an understanding of the Slovenian market and to give insights to investors. It provides in-depth information about national markets on topics such as trade regulation, legal regulations, political climate and financing requirements. In addition, it contains a variety of statistics on market sectors, imports/exports, national trade figures. The Country Commercial Guide for Slovenia is available for free online at http://www.buyusa.gov/slovenia/en/ccg_new.html (opens in Microsoft Word format).

Other than the Country Commercial Guide, the Commercial Section charges for the services described above. For more information, check out the website at <http://www.buyusa.gov/slovenia/en/>, or contact Commercial Specialist Špela Zlatnar at spela.zlatnar@mail.doc.gov or telephone 01-200-5528.



Reminder: Absentee Voting



2006 is an election year in the U.S., and overseas voters can participate in primary, run-off, and special elections, as well as the general election in November. Registration and ballot request procedures and deadlines vary by state. Information about your state's procedures is available online at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/vag/vagchapter3.html>. Information about your state's registration and voting deadlines is available at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/primarycal.html>.

- Complete a ballot application form (<http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/onlinefpca.pdf>) and send it to local election officials in the U.S.
- The local official approves your request, or contacts you for further information
- The local official sends you an absentee ballot
- You vote the ballot and send it back in time to meet your state's deadline (if the deadline is drawing near and you still have not received a ballot from local officials, then you can use the emergency Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot, downloadable at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/ofwab.pdf>)

Some states now will let you complete the entire process (or at least portions of it) via email or fax. To check your state, go to <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/vag/vagchapter3.html>, click on your state, and look for information under the heading "Electronic Transmission." If your state allows materials to be submitted via fax, then use the fax cover page at <http://www.fvap.gov/services/faxtransheet.pdf> and fax it to 001-703-693-5527.

How Long Can American Visitors Stay in Slovenia?

Under Slovene law, citizens of countries with which Slovenia has a visa-free relationship – including the United States – may visit Slovenia for a maximum of 90 days. After that, the visitor must leave Slovenia and cannot return for another 90 days. Then the visitor can come back for a maximum of another 90 days. Anyone who wishes to remain for longer than 90 days at a time must apply for a residence permit at a Slovene Embassy or Consulate before coming to Slovenia.

Useful Links:

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| <p>U.S. Embassy Ljubljana http://slovenia.usembassy.gov/</p> <p>Register with the Embassy https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/</p> <p>Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) http://www.fvap.gov/</p> <p>U.S. Department of Homeland Security http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/</p> <p>Social Security Administration http://www.ssa.gov/</p> <p>List of Slovene Diplomatic Missions Abroad http://www.mzz.gov.si/index.php?id=502&L=2</p> <p>Slovene Ministry of Interior http://www.mnz.gov.si/index.php?id=5414&L=1</p> | <p>U.S. Embassy Ljubljana Page on Bird Flu http://ljubljana.usembassy.gov/birdflu.html</p> <p>U.S. Department of State Bird Flu Fact Sheet http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1181.html</p> <p>Center for Disease Control Page on Bird Flu http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/index.htm</p> <p>World Health Organization Page on Bird Flu http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/</p> <p>Slovene Veterinary Administration http://www.vurs.gov.si</p> <p>Slovene Ministry of Agriculture http://www.mkgp.gov.si/index.php</p> <p>Slovene Ministry of Health http://www.mz.gov.si</p> |
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