

LJUBLJANA

→ SOUNDING OUT

IS THE RHYTHM CALLING YOU?

Check out www.songlines.co.uk/musictravel to seek out the trip that will tickle your musical tastebuds



Igor Basin is your guide to the sounds to be sought out in the compact and cosmopolitan capital of Slovenia

Ljubljana lies between the cities of Venice and Vienna – on a crossroads of Germanic, Latin and Slavic cultures. Its contrasting neighbours have shaped the capital of Slovenia, a central European state with a population of around two million. Ljubljana castle and the old town surrounding it, renovated Roman walls and the architecture of locally-born Jože Plečnik (1872-1957), and romantic bridges over Ljubljanica river all contribute to the city's rich history. This lively but tiny middle European city is charming and attracts visitors from all over the world.

Ljubljana is often bypassed by the big names of pop and rock, but for a city of just over a quarter of million people, the diversity of its musical offerings is striking. The image of Ljubljana as an urban city has been greatly shaped by its years of socialism. The socialist republic of Slovenia was at the forefront of Yugoslavia's unique version of Communism and, unlike

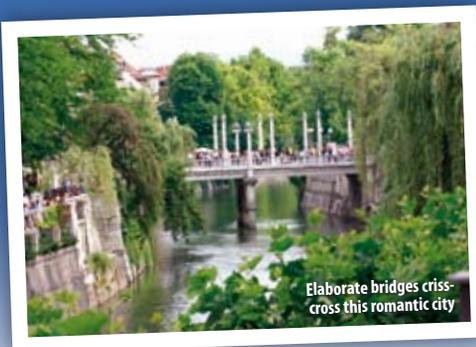
many Eastern Bloc states, its borders were open and people were able to travel outside and follow events happening in the West. 1969 saw the launch of Radio Študent (www.radiostudent.si) – a really important source of information and cultural diversity – and one of Europe's oldest non-commercial radio stations. As the world music trend was breaking out in the mid-70s, this Ljubljana-based station hosted a show called 'Zvok Sveta' (Sound of the World), playing a range of music from other states and continents. This set a benchmark and helped develop the musical tastes of its listeners.

The most significant shift in the cultural

scene happened during the 80s when culture in all its forms intensified the process of political democratisation and liberalisation. With bands like Pankrti, Laibach and Borghesia, Ljubljana became the centre of the Yugoslavian new wave scene and was often compared to Berlin. This was a period when traditional Slovene folk was re-established, encompassing the various dialects and communities of the region. Tolovaj Mataj, Beltinška banda and Bogdana Herman all launched around this time.

Today the folk scene has further developed with a new generation of bands such as Kurja koža, Orlek, Kvinton and Čompe bringing a fresh sound. In the clubs, Balkan beats are popular but 'Yugonostalgia,' rules: turbo-folk sung by ex-Yugoslav pop and rock stars.

Music in Ljubljana would not be the same without Metelkova, an autonomous centre in a former military barracks. Similar to Copenhagen's Christiania district [see Sounding Out in #64], Metelkova is seen as a cultural paradise with a host of clubs and art spaces. Overall, Ljubljana's music scene benefits from its relatively cosy feel and mix of contemporary local styles with global traditions, offering concerts to suit all tastes.



Elaborate bridges criss-cross this romantic city



Ljubljana is a leafy, picturesque city flanked by majestic mountains



Mosaics line the walls of the Galerija Alkatraz in the Metelkova centre

VENUES AND CLUBS

AKC Metelkova mesto

Metelkova is the alternative cultural centre. Based in former Yugoslav army barracks, nowadays creativity and political activity converge. Diverse live events have featured eminent guests such as Taraf de Haidouks, Getatchew Mekuria & The Ex, Etran Finatawa, Gogol Bordello and Kultur Shock – be sure to make the Masarykova 24 complex part of your visit (www.metelkovamesto.org). On the same premises, situated within a former military prison, is the famous hostel Celica (www.souhostel.com). There are numerous clubs in AKC Metekova mesto, including Gala hala, (www.galahala.com), a great venue with a capacity of around 900 people. You should also check what's happening at these clubs during your stay: Klub Gromka (www.klubgromka.org); Channel Zero (www.ch0.org); Mladinski klub Menza pri koritu (www.menzaprikoritu.org).

OTHER VENUES

Etno Klub Zlati Zob

With its traditional interior design, this club has a relaxed and warm atmosphere. It's worth reserving a table for one of the special evening performances. The club puts on concerts of traditional musicians, cultural presentations, dance performances, workshops and exhibitions. It's predominantly Balkan and Roma music but African, Cuban and Spanish can also be heard here. Zaloška 69, +386 59139552, www.myspace.com/etnoklubzlatizob

Cankarjev Dom

Since the early 80s this has been the major cultural institution in Slovenia. It hosts concerts, theatre, dance and film productions of various genres. Its biggest venues are the Gallusova Hall, with capacity of 1,500 people, and Linhart Hall for 600 people. Its CD Club cafe has become famous for its Tuesday night clubbing events. Prešernova 10, +386 (0)1 241 7100, www.cd-cc.si



Ship-shape'n'shine: the fresh interior of the Urban Cultural Centre



Blue-sky thinking: head uphill to get a fine view

Urban Cultural Centre Kino Šiška

This is the newest cultural centre in town. With its grand concert hall called Katedrala, with a capacity for 935 people, and a much smaller Komuna venue for about 100 people, it has become one of the most lively cultural spaces in the city. It programmes 200 different events a year, including monthly nights hosted by famous Slovenian DJ Haris Pilton, under the BalkanBeats label.

Trg prekomorskih brigad 3, +386 3031 0100, www.kinosiska.si

Other venues and clubs:

Cvetličarna, Kranjčeva 20

www.cvetlicarna.info

InBox, Jurčkova 224

www.inbox-club.si

KUD France Prešeren, Karunova 14

www.kud-fp.si

Tovarna Rog, Trubarjeva 72

www.tovarna.org

Variete, Hotel Union, Miklošičeva 1

www.variete.si



Local band Terrafolk, Radio 3 Awards for World Music winners in 2003

FESTIVALS

Druga Godba

World music artists perform at numerous summer festival stages around Slovenia but Druga Godba is the ambassador of them all. Former performers over the past 25 years have included Ferus Mustafov, Papa Wemba, Huun-Huur-Tu, Salif Keita, The Klezmatiks, Youssou N'Dour, Khaled, Cesaria Evora, Tinariwen, Boban Marković, Gotan Project, Orchestra Baobab and many others. This year's highlights include Mariza and Mahmoud Ahmed. See p55 for more details about this year's event.

May 19-25, <http://festival.drugagodba.si>

Trnifest

Open-air festival at the KUD France Prešeren venue. It's been going for over 20 years, with music from both Slovenia and foreign bands. It hosts theatre, film and DJ nights as well.

Every August, www.kud-fp.si

Festival Sanje

This is primarily a literature festival in the centre of Ljubljana, but they also host concerts of folk, rock, jazz and ethno music.

August, www.festivalsanje.net



Shaggy happy people shake it in the square for Karneval (carnival)

RECORD SHOPS

There are a few second-hand shops in the old town but the two really worth visiting are the world music record shop Koromandija on Gallusovo nabrežje (www.koromandija.si) and Jazz & Blues on Trubarjeva (www.jazzandbluesweb.com).

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Visit Ljubljana

www.visitljubljana.si/en/events/

In Your Pocket

www.inyourpocket.com/slovenia/ljubljana

Slovenian Music Information Centre

www.sigic.si