

# New Developments Bringing in More Business

*A raft of refurbishments and new developments are starting to draw the attention of international conference organisers towards Slovenia. Ever since the country entered the European Union in 2004, Slovenia's meetings industry has been steadily gaining momentum and with the establishment of the Slovenian Convention Bureau in 2005, it has now built up a real head of steam. Let's have a quick look at some of the more significant recent developments.*

By IGOR DRAKULIČ

## Ljubljana

Cankarjev dom ([www.cd-cc.si/](http://www.cd-cc.si/) congress), the principal congress centre in Ljubljana and Slovenia, continued to gradually refurbish its facilities in 2006, including the 1,200 m<sup>2</sup> 2nd Foyer. It is now a multi-purpose hall with seating for up to 400, which can be partitioned into 3 smaller rooms or a single exhibition hall. Additionally, the CD Club on the top floor is to be completely renovated in November 2007 and will be an attractive entertainment area catering for banquets of up to 255 guests.

The City Hotel ([www.cityhotel.si/](http://www.cityhotel.si/)), a centrally located 3-star hotel in Ljubljana, is undergoing a complete facelift. Upon reopening in July 2007, it will offer 209 rooms and 4 meeting rooms for up to 200 delegates.

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## The Coast

LifeClass Hotels & Resorts in Portorož ([www.lifeclasse.net/](http://www.lifeclasse.net/)) is completely restoring one of the jewels of the Slovenian coast, the old Palace Hotel. It dates back to the beginning of the 20th century and was built in a magnificent art nouveau style.

## Slovenian Convention Bureau

The Slovenian Convention Bureau, a body set up to promote and market Slovenia as a meeting and incentive destination and to attract business from the international meetings industry to the country, became fully operational in September 2005. This non-profit organisation is a useful source of expert and objective information on destinations, meeting venues and service providers. The Slovenian Convention Bureau acts as a professional intermediary between meeting organisers and suppliers, assisting organisers to select the most appropriate solution for their event.

The new 5-star hotel, which is scheduled to open by the end of 2007, will boast 174 luxurious rooms and its largest ballroom will have capacity for up to 200 guests. The company is further developing its Thermal & Wellness Palace, with a complete renovation of the Thalasso centre and the addition of a new Pilates holistic centre. The hotel, which has the largest Wai Thai centre in Europe, also offers the newly opened Ayurveda centre. The health & spa resort, Terme Čatež, has concluded the building of 40 self-catering apartments in Marina Portorož.

## Bled

The Park Hotel ([www.hotelbled.com/](http://www.hotelbled.com/)), a popular venue with 217 guestrooms in the heart of Bled, is operated by Sava Hotels and Resorts and has recently undergone extensive renovation. The hotel now offers high-quality conference services based around four multi-functional halls for 60 to 120 delegates and four boardrooms, each seating up to 45 people.

## Elsewhere in Slovenia

A number of other health & spa resorts have also announced plans to upgrade their meeting

facilities. Most notably, Terme Čatež opened a new function room for 150 guests in the historic Mokrice Castle & Golf Hotel ([www.terme-catez.si/](http://www.terme-catez.si/)), which will also increase its accommodation capacity by 10 rooms. HIT ([www.hit.si/](http://www.hit.si/)), the largest Slovenian gaming corporation, has invested over EUR 50 million in its properties in Nova Gorica and Kranjska Gora. In December 2006, HIT opened the new wing of its 5-star Perla hotel and casino complex in Nova Gorica. It now offers 237 rooms and 19 apartments. The convention hall was also enlarged and now has seating for 335 people. The company is also investing heavily in Kranjska Gora, where it is redeveloping its accommodation, tourism and sports infrastructure.

## Ljubljana Airport

Ljubljana Airport ([www.lju-airport.si/](http://www.lju-airport.si/)) is gearing up for a major new investment cycle – the building of a new passenger terminal to be ready for Slovenia's EU Presidency in 2008. The terminal is a major component of a comprehensive development plan to reinforce the role of Ljubljana Airport in the Alps Adria region. New services connecting Ljubljana to Rome and Barcelona, as well as more frequent flights to existing destination such as Brussels began in 2006 and more routes will be added during 2007. Two low-cost airlines now fly into Ljubljana – EasyJet from London/Stansted and Wizzair from Brussels/Charleroi and London/Luton.



## A New Bank Comes To Town

Slovenia has just welcomed its latest arrival on the 'banking' scene – the Bank of Tourist Opportunities of Slovenia. The newly established 'bank' is the first to service the tourist trade in Slovenia; its primary task will be connecting innovative tourist ideas with potential users and other players in the tourism industry.

The opening of the 'tourist bank' will give the Slovenian tourism industry an opportunity to lift its level of innovation and with it, its global competitiveness. At the same time, it answered one of most frequently asked questions around the country – which new bank is opening in Slovenia?

## Hola, Barcelona

Both the Slovenian Tourist Board (STO) and the Slovenian Convention Bureau (SCB) sent representatives to the recent EIBTM fair, the annual global meetings and incentives exhibition held this year in Barcelona between 28th and 30th November 2006.

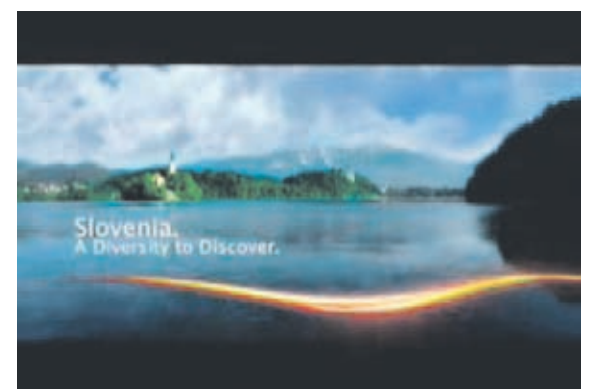
Besides the STO and SCB representation, EIBTM attracted a record number of Slovenian exhibitors from the tourism industry (16). The event was well attended and the level of interest in the Slovenian exhibits indicates that Slovenia is becoming increasingly popular as a business tourism destination. The Slovenian stands attracted attention from organisers of scientific/expert conventions, business conventions and incentive programmes through group presentations and pre-arranged meetings with hosted buyers from around the world. The introduction of the euro, Slovenia's presidency of the EU in 2008 and other international activities are all helping to raise awareness of Slovenia, which is a key factor in enhancing Slovenia's standing in the global meeting and incentive tourism market.

## New Business Hotel

The Jezeršek House of Cuisine recently underwent a complete refurbishment, during which the old farm estate, which dates back to 1768, was transformed into a charming baroque mansion. The property is located in the beautiful surroundings of the Carniola Alps only 3 km from Ljubljana airport. The venue features 18 hotel rooms, a guesthouse with Slovenian specialities, a restaurant and a special events room for up to 150 guests. The total cost of the renovation was EUR 4m.

## Advert on CNN Deemed a Success

An advertisement promoting Slovenia on the cable news network CNN International Europe last year seems to have achieved the goal of raising Slovenia's profile internationally. According to a survey by the Slovenian Tourism Board (STO), some 16% of viewers in key markets were encouraged to visit the country, while 15% had been to Slovenia already. The advertisement "Slovenia: A diversity to discover" was aired on CNN between 8 May and 18 June last year, and again between 18 September and 6 November.



## Airlines

# First Choice Launches Ljubljana - Gatwick Charter Flights

*Slovenia was a new destination offered by the First Choice Snowsports programme last winter, when flights to Kranjska Gora were introduced.*

For this winter, First Choice Holidays was delighted to announce the launch of the first ever UK charter flight to Ljubljana for the Winter 2006/2007 ski season. First Choice Airways will operate an Airbus A320 aircraft weekly from London Gatwick, departing at 6.55 AM and arriving into Ljubljana at 10.00 AM local time every Saturday. The return flight will depart Ljubljana at 11.10 AM and will return to London Gatwick at 12.20 from 23 December 2006 to 24 March 2007.

First Choice continues to invest in Slovenian ski resorts with the introduction of the charter flight with 150 seats and a brand new First Choice run Kids Club at the Hotel Alpina in Kranjska Gora. The Kids Club is a brand new programme in Slovenia which includes evening events and half or full day childcare with qualified and experienced nannies. A special Slovenian package including instruc-

tion and a daily escort to the slopes has also been developed by First Choice, working with the local ski schools. This season First Choice will have seven staff based in the resort of Kranjska Gora, under the management of Simon Sharpe, Area Manager for Italy and Slovenia, and Petra Kržan, Resort Supervisor for Slovenia. First Choice expects to bring over 2000 customers to Slovenia this winter. Simon Pepperdine, Head of First Choice Snowsports, comments, "Slovenia is a fantastic country and we at First Choice are delighted to be launching our charter flight with First Choice Airways and Kids Club this season. We are also very pleased to announce that for the Winter 2007/2008 ski season, we will continue to operate our flight from London and intend to add a second charter from Manchester, the UK's second larg-

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