



Case Study

The Tominc – Frelih Farm

Tourist farmhouse Tominc – Frelih (photo by Juan Carlos Muñoz Flores)

1. Introduction

The Tominc – Frelih Tourist Farm is located on the outskirts of the village of Brezje, which is known as one of the main pilgrimage centres in Slovenia. In addition to pilgrims, the village is also visited by foreign guests who want to get to know Slovenia and want to be in the immediate vicinity of Bled and other tourist attractions in the surrounding area.

The most frequent visitors are foreigners, who choose the farm not only because of its location but also because of what it offers. They are most attracted by the breakfast, which consists of homemade or local ingredients. Bread, homemade marmalades, vegetables and fruit, meats, eggs, juice, milk, daily fresh homemade pastries, and much more can be found on the table. They are also fascinated by the farm, as few people get to interact with farm animals in this way and see how a farm works up close. This is especially exciting for children. The farm started operating as a tourist farm in 2008. However, tourism has been taking place in various forms at the farmhouse address since 1903.

NAME OF THE BUSINESS

Tominc – Frelih Tourist Farm

LOCATION

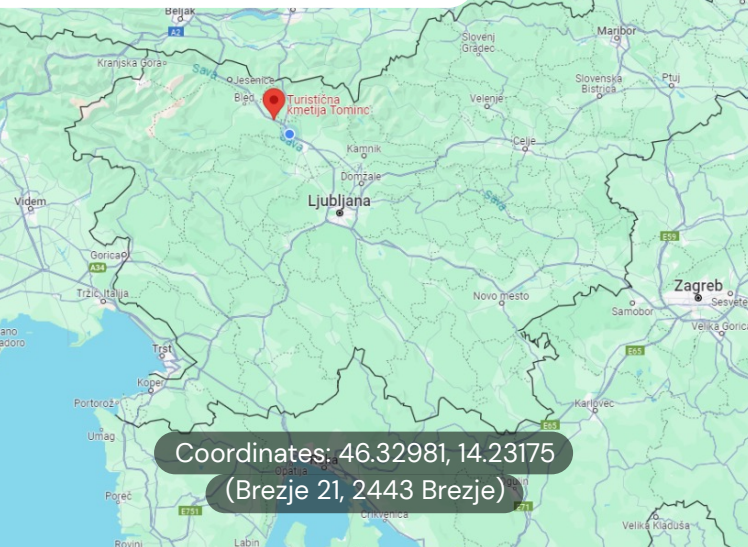
Brezje 21, 2443 Brezje

It can accommodate 12 guests in five rooms, plus 3 extra beds. Recently they have decided to convert to organic farming. Dairy farming was presenting a challenge to economic feasibility. Due to the lack of space and outdated equipment, conversion was the most sensible choice, so they decided to stop producing dairy products and focus on fruits and vegetables. The current aim is to be self-sufficient for tourism purposes and then gradually introduce fruit and vegetable production, with processing if necessary.

The farm is run by the owner, Vid Frelih, as the operator, along with his partner and his father. When the volume increases, the extended family or seasonal workers also help. All of them are employed in addition to their work on the farm. The owner is involved in sports training (S/E). They intend to employ a family member if the workload increases.



The Tominc – Frelih tourist farm (photo by Juan Carlos Muñoz Flores)



Some tourist data from the agrotourism

Short description of the tourist supply

The tourist farm offers bed and breakfast accommodations. There are 5 rooms, which sleep 12 people in total. With extra beds, they can accommodate a maximum of 15 guests. Most of the guests come from abroad and are of all ages. There are fewer Slovenian guests, but they are more frequent in the low season. They are open all year round, except for holidays and minor renovations of the house every year. For the time being, their service only consists of bed and breakfast. All the produce from the farm is served to the guests in the form of breakfast. Guests are not offered the possibility to participate in farm work. However, they can walk around the farm and interact with the animals and other farm processes if they are interested.

Number of beds

They have 12 beds in the 5 rooms they offer. With extra beds, the farm can sleep 15 people.

Number of tourists (yearly, monthly / high season vs. low season)

Guests stay around 550 nights a year, 450 nights in high season and 100 nights in low or low season.

Tourists profile (age, nationality,)

Guests are of all ages and nationalities. Families and middle-aged couples predominate.

Most guests come from Austria, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, the Netherlands, England, America, Israel and the Middle East.

Opening calendar

The Tourist Farm is open and available all year round.

Services and activities provided, whether the tourists participate in the farm daily work (and how), etc.

Tourists do not take part in farm chores, as that would take too much time. They are afraid that they would end up having to do more work dealing with the tourists than with the work itself.

2. About the agrotourism

When did the agrotourism business start?

After their redevelopment in 2020.

Number of workers

It is a family-run tourist farm. There are no employees on the farm. There are 5 family members and 4 helpers involved in the work and activities on the farm. They do not have defined working hours, as they live on the farm, are fully tied to the tourist season, and live off the farm's activities.



Tourist farmhouse and surroundings (photo by Juan Carlos Muñoz Flores)



Picture of one of the accommodation rooms.

About commercialisation

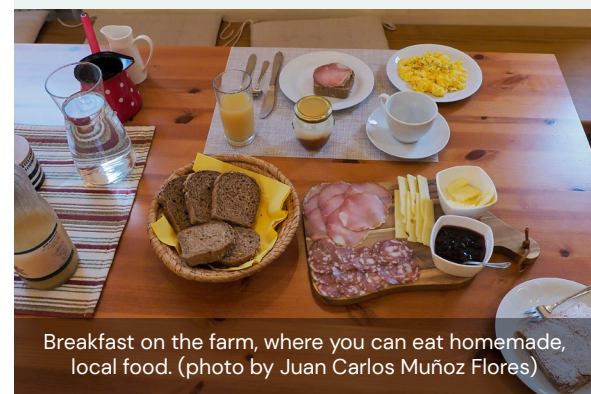
The booking system is managed by the owners for the time being. Most of the year, they are available on Booking.com and turističnekmetije.si. Reservations can be made by phone and email as well.

On the farm, they market only the accommodation. It is led by the owner, Vid and his partner. As they do not have a website, they rely on “spreading the word” domestically with business cards and the Association of Tourist Farms of Slovenia website even though most guests are foreigners.

The farm head expressed his concern about marketing their products and offerings as there is a lot of competition in the market and without proper marketing it is very unlikely to survive.

About advertising

The farm’s website is still in development. They carry out their marketing activities through an organisation – the Association of Tourist Farms of Slovenia. The association gives them space on the website where they can add pictures, change the price, add descriptions and promotions but things like text font, colour or sizes are standardized across the platform. They use Facebook (facebook.com/TuristicnaKmetijaFrelihTominc) where they do not post as often but still reply to any incoming messages as well as on Booking (booking.com/hotel/si/tourist-farm-tominc) and turističnekmetije.si (turisticnekmetije.si/kmetija/pr-tominc-frelih). They can be found on Tripadvisor (tripadvisor.com/Reviews-Guest_House_Kmetija_Tominc-Brezje) and the municipality website (radolca.si/turisticna-kmetija-tominc-frelih-brezje). They do not yet have leaflets or catalogues but have been mentioned in the I Feel Slovenia catalogue (slovenia.info/turisticne_kmetije_slo.pdf) in 2020. They spend about 500€ each year (as a membership fee in the Association of Slovenian Tourist Farms), and they are also members of the Booking service, who take about 15 % percent of the turnover.



Breakfast on the farm, where you can eat homemade, local food. (photo by Juan Carlos Muñoz Flores)

About starting up the business

Tourism has been taking a different form on the farmhouse site throughout its history. “Later on, our ancestors also became more active in agriculture. Agrotourism itself has been present at the house for at least two generations, I grew up with it, and then inherited it from my father. We are continuing in this form because we see a niche market but also a mission to preserve cultural heritage” says the farm owner.

Do they have any tourism or business training, previous experience, or any help (advice, consultancy, mentoring, funding, donations)?

Growing up with an activity was the biggest lesson, as the owner was already active as a child, both on the farm and in the tourism business. He has a degree in agriculture. New knowledge is acquired

from various courses and seminars. Many of these are organised by the Association of Tourist Farms of Slovenia, as well as by the Naklo Biotechnical Centre.

What have been the improvements over time/ barriers to implementation?

A major improvement was made in 2007 when the guest areas were renovated. The next was around 2020, when they started to design a new look for the activity, which has been delayed until now, as the pandemic presented new challenges that slowed down the process.

The owner, Vid, took over the business and the farm from his father, who still works on the farm. The transfer of work was gradual. Over the years, he took on more and more responsibility for tasks and then for management and decision-making. Now his father, the owner, and his partner are active on the farm.



Livestock on the farm (photo by Juan Carlos Muñoz Flores)

Knowing the legislation and the requirements makes it easier for them to choose the right way of doing business for their needs. How to sell your product is the biggest challenge these days anyway, because there is so much competition in the market and without marketing it is very unlikely to exist. If the farm is also involved in the culinary sector, it is important to be familiar with this area.

What are the skills you want to acquire?

The most important skills for them are knowledge of agriculture, agriculture and tourism-related legislation, marketing, and entrepreneurship. Knowledge of foreign languages is also desirable, at least English, and German are all very welcome.

They do not themselves know of any programme that focuses solely on agri-tourism, except for various occasional seminars, training courses or good practices organised by schools or associations. Such training is extremely important, as it helps them to improve their activities and to acquire new ideas and skills, which is something special because of the link between tourism and agriculture.

Expectations for the near future?

In the near future, they want to complete their goal of transforming their business and start operating at the level they have set themselves. In the agricultural field, they want to increase production volumes through tenders and, if necessary, to set up processing facilities on a larger scale.

About managing an agritourism business

Agricultural production

Until recently, the farm was a dairy farm. Last year, however, they have stopped and are currently converting to organic farming. At the moment, they produce and process only as much as they need for the needs of their guests and for their own personal consumption. The farm is a cattle and pig farm. They produce beef and pig meat. The fruit produced includes apples, pears, strawberries, and apricots. They also grow their own cereals for fodder and for baking bread, such as wheat, buckwheat, etc.

How do you manage your farm and tourism business?

Everybody goes to work as well as farming and tourism, so it's all very challenging, especially during the high season. They solve this situation by dividing labour and organising their work. The progress of the activity suffers the most, but the current financial situation does not yet allow them to change.

What share of family income does tourism account for (< 25% / 25-49% / 50-75% / > 75%)?

Tourism accounts for 25-49% of their income, the rest is agricultural activity.

Which topics and needs do you consider to be priorities for training programmes?

The most important thing for them is to have knowledge of the agricultural field in which the farm is involved, so that they can have better crops or products and can more easily strive for innovation. Knowledge of legislation and commercial skills are also very important. This makes them more aware of the requirements and makes their work easier.



Picture of one of the accommodation rooms.

Advice for new entrepreneurs

The owner would advise new entrepreneurs in this field to start from the potential of their own farm and to find a place for their guests in the surroundings of their homes and their work. "Let us not take any work or product for granted but let us have some value that we can show, give or sell to our guests."

After all, every tourist farm is a story, which they must be able to tell and sell later on so that the farm is more attractive to guests. If they don't have a farm yet and are just a tourist worker who also has the opportunity to farm or something similar, they should start from what they enjoy, because that will make it easier for them to integrate the farm into their everyday life and also into their tourism activities.

And they should not stop educating themselves, because that is the only way they can keep up with the times and be in the same class as the competition.