


Case Study

The Šenk Homestead



The Šenk farm with beautiful surroundings.

1. Introduction

Tourist farm and camp Šenkova domačija or The Šenk Homestead is a tourist farm in Jezersko, which began operating in 2011. They initially started their tourist activities with a campsite as well as renting out a picnic area. In 2014, the first two rooms and apartments were built, and in 2019, 7 extra accommodation units were added.

The Šenk Homestead has been protected as a cultural monument and a cultural heritage site since 1949. With its renovation over the last ten years, it has been restored as a farm and reopened as a tourist farm. Their farm is located around 900m above sea level. It is an excellent starting point for hiking, mountain biking and cross-country skiing in winter. Their offer is very comprehensive, including accommodation in rooms, apartments and a campsite, as well as dining for both boarders and non-boarders. In addition, they offer sports equipment hire for cross-country skiing, touring, climbing and cycling. They specialise in outdoor sports and have been awarded the Slovenia Green Label for both accommodation and cuisine.

NAME OF THE BUSINESS

Tourist farm and camp Šenkova domačija, Polona Virnik Karničar registered as the owner of the farm. They are involved in many different organisations: The Association of Tourist Farms of Slovenia, Slovenia Outdoor, Cross country ski holidays, Green Key, Slovenia Green, Bergsteigerdörfer/Gorniške vasi, the Jezersko Tourist Association...

LOCATION

Jezersko, Gorenjska, Slovenia.

The farm is certified in organic vegetable, fruit and livestock production. They are green-oriented, as confirmed by the Green Key certificate and their inclusion in the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism.

2. About the agrotourism

The farm is located in the municipality of Jezersko, in the village of Jezersko (Zgornje Jezersko 140, 4206 Jezersko), which is in the Gorenjska region. The municipality covers 68.8 km² and has two settlements, called Upper Jezersko and Lower Jezersko. Its northern location borders Austria. The main economic sectors are forestry, (rural) tourism and livestock farming.

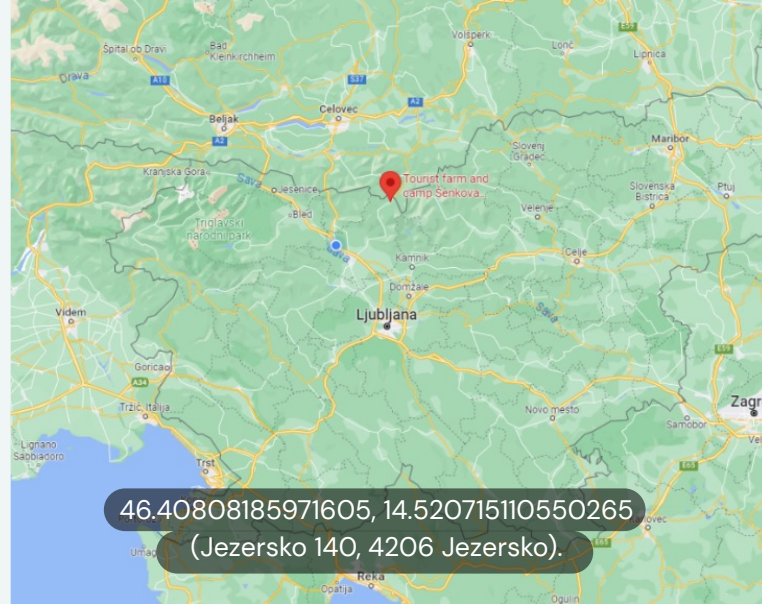
It is a mountain resort in a valley below the Karavanke and Kamniško-Savinja Alps, close to the Slovenian-Austrian border at an altitude of about 900 metres. The Kokra River rises in Jezersko and flows into the Sava River in Kranj.

In Jezersko you can visit the Planšarsko Lake, which is suitable for boating, and the bravest can even swim in it. During the winter, if it is cold enough, it can also be used for ice skating. The lake is also close to the Mali vrh ski lift and a cross-country skiing trail. The village is very tourist-oriented, with large hotels and many tourist farms.

Jezersko is characterised by its original shingled farmhouses, which are an ethnographic monument. The village is adorned by the 15th-century Church of St. Ožbolt.

Hiking is the most widespread activity in Jezersko, with the terrain in Jezersko being very varied. There is a thematic trail through the Ravenska Kočna Valley, which is easily accessible and intended for all walkers. For moderately fit hikers, the Karavanke Mountains wind along the border with Austria, with peaks just above the forest line, accessible by less demanding and shorter trails, but still offering outstanding views of the Kamnik-Savinja Alps. Experienced mountaineers are drawn to the highest peaks of the Kamnik-Savinja Alps, where challenging and exposed paths lead over rocky terrain and scree. The Czech Lodge at Spodnje Ravni and the Kranj Lodge at Ledine offer shelter and food for mountaineers on the isolated slopes. For adrenaline-seeking, physically fit hikers, there is also a protected climbing route, the Ferrata, leading to the Czech Lodge. Don't go there without a climbing kit, which you can also rent at the Šenka Homestead.

Cross-country skiing is one of the most popular winter activities in Jezersko. If there is enough natural snow, you can put on your cross-country skis in the courtyard of the Šenka Homestead. In optimal conditions, up to 15 kilometres are available. The Šenk Homestead offers cross-country skiing equipment rental (boots, skis, poles). Park Jezersko also offers sledding and toboggan hire. There is an artificial ice rink at Planšarsko Lake for all ice-skating and hockey enthusiasts and a natural ice rink during cold winters. The lake also attracts hikers and cross-country skiers in the winter.



When did the agrotourism business start?

They started operating in 2011, initially with a camping and picnic area. In 2014, they started renting out their first two rooms and apartments, and in 2019 they added 7 more units. The Šenk Homestead has been protected as a cultural monument and cultural heritage since 1949 and, with its renovation over the past ten years, has been revitalised as a farm and reinvented as a tourist farm.

Number of workers

Three generations live on the farm. Polona is the main driving force behind the farm, never running out of ideas and relishing her role. Her right-hand man is her husband, Drejc, who is the current mayor of Jezersko and has no problem taking care of any work on the farm. Their three children, Luka, Kristjan, and Maša, are also a great help and are very actively involved in the activities on the farm. Their eldest son Luka is skilled in woodwork, and he also takes care of the animals on the farm and provides massage services to the guests. Their son Kristjan is a zoology student and enjoys helping out with various tasks on the farm, including caring for animals and catering. Their daughter Maša is the most active in reception. Polona's mother, Brigita, and Polona's father's wife, Majda, also help as well. The farm employs six women, all of them from Jezersko. During the summer season (June to September), students and volunteers from all over the world also help them.



The reception on the farm.

Some tourist data from the agrotourism

Short description of the tourist supply

The Šenk Homestead offers accommodation in four apartments. All apartments are spacious and have a separate living area and bedroom. The apartments have all the necessary equipment for a comfortable stay, such as bed linen, towels, toiletries, a hairdryer, a TV, a safe for storing valuables, and a well-equipped kitchen. Two apartments can accommodate from 4 to 6 guests; one apartment can accommodate two people; and one apartment can accommodate 4 guests.

Tourists can stay in rooms, apartments, camping, breakfasts made with local and local ingredients, dinners, lunches, and equipment rental.

They strive to preserve the old home-style dishes cooked by our grandmothers, which are inextricably linked to farm life, celebrations, and the changing seasons. They also adapt their cuisine to the wishes of their guests and try to give new meaning to old dishes.

In one of the houses on their farm, the basement is almost entirely dedicated to pampering and relaxation. Their wellness area consists of two saunas, Finnish and infrared, a large relaxation area with a view of the green surroundings and access to the outdoor terrace, and a massage room.

Number of beds

The farm offers several accommodation options. They have 29 beds in rooms and apartments, which are available all year round, except in November and April. There are also 40 camping units available from May until the end of October.

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

In 2022, the farm was visited by 2905 domestic guests (31%) and 6368 foreign guests (69%), for a total of 9273 overnight stays in rooms, apartments and camping. In 2022, a total of 4229 guests stayed in the rooms (2195 domestic and 2034 foreign) and a total of 5044 guests stayed in the campsite (710 domestic and 4334 foreign). The average annual number of guests in the period 2013 to 2021 was 3873.

Tourists profile (age, nationality,) Represented in the table

The farm is visited by guests of all ages, from all over the world. Families and middle-aged guests are predominant. In 2022, their accommodation hosted 1,584 guests, generating a total of 4,229 overnight stays. The campsite hosted 2193 overnight guests, generating 5044 overnight stays.

ROOMS, 2022	TOURISTS	ACCOMMODATION	CAMP, 2022	TOURISTS	ACCOMMODATION
COUNTRIES	TOTAL		COUNTRIES	TOTAL	
SLOVENIA	963	2195	SLOVENIA	409	710
ARGENTINA	1	1	AUSTRALIA	1	1
AUSTRALIA	6	12	AUSTRIA	69	112
AUSTRIA	45	112	BELGIUM	83	266
BELGIUM	32	108	BRAZIL	1	2
BRAZIL	3	7	BULGARIA	1	4
BULGARIA	1	4	BOSNIA	2	4
BOSNIA	2	4	CROATIA	34	78
CROATIA	34	78	CZECH REPUBLIC	493	985
CZECH REPUBLIC	119	468	DENMARK	8	14
DENMARK	5	17	ESTONIA	1	3
FRANCE	25	82	FINLAND	3	9
INDIA	2	4	FRANCE	51	74
ITALY	27	120	CROATIA	8	11
IRELAND	6	12	IRELAND	1	2
ISRAEL	4	8	ITALY	28	51
CANADA	12	34	ISRAEL	3	5
HUNGARY	12	28	SOUTH AFRICA	1	2
MALTA	4	12	CANADA	2	3
GERMANY	133	512	LATVIA	1	1
NETHERLANDS	21	85	LIBANON	1	2
POLAND	10	29	LUXEMBOURG	1	1
ROMANIA	8	26	HUNGARY	17	27
RUSSIA	2	4	GERMANY	342	802
SAN MARINO	2	4	NETHERLANDS	383	1487
SLOVAKIA	9	21	NEW ZEALAND	9	31
SERBIA	7	17	POLAND	118	179
SPAIN	1	4	ROMANIA	58	93
SWEDEN	1	4	RUSSIA	3	6
SWITZERLAND	3	7	SLOVAKIA	25	46
UK	28	72	SERBIA	3	6
USA	50	123	SPAIN	25	30
TOTAL	1584	4229	SWEDEN	2	8
			SWITZERLAND	29	54
			UK	6	10
			USA	8	11
			TOTAL	2193	5044

Opening calendar

The farm is open all year round, closing only in November and April. The busiest time of the year is during their peak season, from June to September.

Some tourist data from the agrotourism

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

The farm tries to be as sustainable as possible, with respect for nature and tradition. It specialises in accommodation for cyclists, hikers, and cross-country skiers and has been awarded the Slovenia Green Label for both accommodation and cuisine. They are happy to take advantage of the possibilities and opportunities offered by nature, but in an ecological and sustainable way, never beyond the self-renewing capacity of nature.

The farm is certified for organic vegetable and fruit production, as well as livestock farming. They are green-oriented, as confirmed by the Green Key certificate and their inclusion in the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism. The food sold and processed on their farm is also produced in a completely organic way. The food on the menu is, of course, seasonally coloured, in line with what is available in their gardens, freezers, and cellars. What they can't grow enough of, they buy from farmers in the surrounding area.

The vegetables are grown and raised in three greenhouses on the farm, which allow them to produce fresh, home-grown vegetables from mid-spring until late autumn. During the warmer months, they also use their outdoor gardens to grow vegetables. In the summer, they also pick berries, and in the autumn, apples and plums. They also make sauerkraut, pickled vegetables, jams, spreads, and various fruit and vegetable juices and syrups made from local herbs.

They bake their own homemade bread and have their own meat production, raising a variety of animal species that provide them with a high-quality and varied range of meat products. The animals on their farm (chickens, ducks, cats, and dogs) are free to roam around the property. Cows, pigs, and sheep are kept in outdoor pens. They are also members of the ARK Farm Association, which is a gene bank of indigenous farm animals. This allows them to breed cows, the indigenous Krškopoljski pigs or black-belted pigs, the traditional breed of the Lake-Solčava sheep, and Styrian hens.

They do not involve tourists in their work on the farm, as this would mean extra work for them.



Dining room on their farm.



Picture of one of the accommodation rooms.

About advertising

They have their own website (senkovadomacija.si) where they post promotional photos, videos, leaflets and give ideas for outdoor activities with all the necessary information. They are active on their social media profiles such as Facebook (facebook.com/SenkovaDomacija) and Instagram (instagram.com/senkova_domacija_jezersko), and have a large following as they post scenic photographs and videos as well as share news about their business and fellow businesses in the region.

They use the Bentr reservation system, which they run themselves. They have many partners in the region and across the country. They are featured on several platforms, catalogues: for example in the regional museum (gorenjski-muzej.si), leaflets (senkovadomacija.si.pdf), brochures which they produce themselves, and on portals. They have appeared in many newspapers as well as on TV (rtvslo.si/arhiv).

They also appear on the following portals:

Tourist farms turisticnekmetije.si/kmetija/senkova-domacija

Booking booking.com/hotel/si/senkova-domacija

Slotrips slotrips.si/slo/galerija/332/Senkova-domacija

Campsites avtokampi.si/kampi/kamp-senkova-domacija

ANWB camping anwbcamping.nl/slovenie/camping-senkova-domacija

Trip advisor tripadvisor.com/Tourist_Farm_Senkova_Domacija-Zgornje_Jezersko

Sloveniaholidays - rooms sloveniaholidays.com/senkova-domacija-zgornje-jezersko

Sloveniaholidays - camping sloveniaholidays.com/kamp-senkova-domacija-zgornje-jezersko

Discover Slovenia objevuj-slovinsko.cz/ubytovani/senkova-domacija/

Rustiek kamperen rustiekkamperen.com

SecureHoliday (Ctoutvert) ctoutvert.com

THE GIFTS OF SLOVENIA pincamp.de , pincamp.ch

STO business profile jetcamp.com/en/slovenia/camping-senkova-domacija/

Experience Slovenia darilaslovenije.si

Roadsurfer manager.etrrips.info

Zvezdar slovenia.info

Campsites STO catalogue manager.experience-slovenia.si

Slovenia Outdoor spots.roadsurfer.com

Cross-country skiing (MTS) zvezdar.com

Stellplatz.de slovenia.info

Slovenia A unique experience slovenia-outdoor.com

Pitchup mts.myincert.com

Restaurant Guru stellplatz.info

THE GIFTS OF SLOVENIA unique.slovenia.info

e-tours Campsites, Glamping and Holiday Parks in UK, Europe & Americas (pitchup.com)

STO business profile restaurantguru.com

About commercialisation

One of their most important portals is Booking.com, where they are rated at 9.9. (booking.com/hotel/si/senkova-domacija). They also take reservations over the counter on their website, by phone and email.

Through the years the Šenk homestead accommodated more domestic tourists but lately the reach has spread to foreigners who are especially keen on their camping offers. Their occupancy varies depending on the season. Domestic tourists are much more likely to visit in the winter months and less likely to visit in the summer high-season months, whereas the foreign visit mostly in July and August.



Animals on the their farm.

About starting up the business

In 2010, the farm was taken over from her grandmother Mimi by the current owner, Polona, who, together with her husband Drejc, set out to restore the traditional homestead. The first plans for restoration and conversion date back to 2004, but they had to mature and find the right image. Priorities had to be set for the renovation of the buildings on the farm, and their new purpose had to be determined. The old workshop in the central courtyard and the chicken and pig barns were also renovated, followed by the cow and sheep barns.

A decision on the co-financing of the renovation was pending in 2012. At that time, construction of the new building started; the old building was demolished, the vital wooden parts were preserved, and, after a very long winter and spring of 2013, construction of the new building started. Within a year, the building was completed and inaugurated in May 2014.

The old house, which has been protected as a cultural monument since 1949, was restored. It has been under strict supervision for many years, precisely because of its status as a heritage site, and has not undergone any changes that would in any way affect its architectural features.

A third building permit allowed them to renovate the attic of the old house in 2019. The large square floor plan of the building allowed for seven rooms and a larger social space to be placed in the attic. The construction is entirely wooden. The rooms are named after the activities or trades practiced by their ancestors.



The owner Polona.

Why did they choose agrotourism?

They decided on agritourism because of the idyllic location, which gives them beautiful views of the nearby mountains. The beautiful nature and the basic facilities available in Jezersko and especially in their location (tourism, extended sports activities).

Did they have any tourism or business training or previous experiences? Have they had any help (advice, consultancy, mentoring, funding, donations)?

The owner studied tourism at the School of Economics and Business at the University of Ljubljana after high school and graduated in 2004 with a business plan for the farm. In 2009, she enrolled at the Naklo Biotechnical Centre, majoring in Rural and Landscape Management. The owner has a degree in economics, tourism, and agriculture. During her studies, she gained work experience in a nearby alpine chalet and in two other international companies, where she mainly gained business experience.

The development of the homestead has been financed by the Rural Development Programme and has also included income from the farm and the bank.

What have been some improvements/obstacles to implementation?

“The biggest obstacles to the development of the homestead and the subsequent business were bureaucratic matters, the long timeframe for obtaining building permits, and, above all, the long timeframe for obtaining Rural Development funding.”

The farm is very cohesive and organised. Passing on all the experience they have gained to their children is also very important, as they already have a future successor who works on the farm and is already aware of his future role. The main keys to their success are good organisation, experience, courage, the cooperation of their colleagues, and the involvement, participation, and excellent communication of their family members.



Homemade food from the farm.

About managing an agritourism business

Agricultural production

The farm offers a huge variety of complementary activities.

They are involved in the production and processing of vegetables and fruit, the drying of herbs, cereal (bread), and dairy products (yoghurt, sour cream, cottage cheese), meat processing (sale of lamb, lard, lard grease, pâté, sausages, pork, and ham), and egg production.

In 2022, they sold (their own products and local products): about 4000 kg of vegetables, 483 kg of fruit, 7 kg of dry ingredients (herbs, spices), 1758 kg of cereals and dairy products, 5130 eggs, 1705 kg of meat products, 730 litres of fruit drinks, and 33 bouquets of flowers.

The farm keeps chickens, ducks, cows, pigs, and sheep. They also have cats and dogs. The farm is part of the ARK Farm Association, which is a gene bank of indigenous farm animals. This allows them to breed indigenous breeds of domestic animals: cows, the indigenous Krškopolje pig or black-belted pig, the traditional breed of the Lake-Solčava sheep, and Styrian hens.

How do you manage your farm and tourism business?

Running a farm works best with good organisation, experience, and the right amount of courage. Without the help of colleagues and the involvement of the whole family, it would not work so well. Family togetherness and, of course, business skills are important.

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

Tourism accounts for more than 75% of the family's income.

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

Business, management, agriculture, and marketing.

What are the skills and competencies you would like to acquire?

Primarily in the areas of culinary excellence or optimising the use of raw materials, as well as continuous learning of foreign languages.

Expectations for the near future?

Our expectations for the future are very positive, given our current situation and performance.



The farm grows food all year round its own greenhouse.

Advice for new entrepreneurs

“Go out into the world, look at examples of the best practices, and dare to do something good.” – Owner Polona.

“Guests need hospitality in the form of quality accommodation, good food, and a personal, genuine, and friendly approach. No false promises and no artifice. And, of course, well-maintained surroundings and plenty of your own varied produce.” – Owner Polona.

“Be innovative, bold, brave, confident, and well-organised. Cooperate and communicate with people and be open to new ideas. Be assertive and work on cooperation with your colleagues. Be curious and hard-working; participate in additional training and education. The main quality for success is good communication, and you should not be bothered by competition because every tourist offer has its own strengths.” – Owner Polona.