

Case Study

The Dovar Tourist Farm

Pr Dovar Tourist Farm with surroundings

1. Introduction

The Dovar Tourist Farm is a mountain organic farm located in the village of Ambroz below Krvavec at an altitude of 1000 m, 6 km from the Krvavec ski resort. It is surrounded by forests, meadows, and beautiful nature. The farm offers an ideal opportunity to escape the hustle and bustle of the city and relax in nature.

The farm does not flaunt its size. With a few hectares of forest, a few heads of cattle, a herd of small livestock, and an apiary, it is a small farm that aims to breed indigenous species of farm animals. Its interests are mainly focused on a qualitative, self-sufficient life in touch with nature.

The farm's main activity is livestock farming, mainly cows and sheep, primarily for the production of meat (the meat is consumed in the restaurant they own on the ski slope, and dried meat products are available to the guests for breakfast). They are also involved in beekeeping (less for the honey and more for the guests) and herbalism (teas).

NAME OF THE BUSINESS

The Dovar Tourist Farm (Pr' Dovar in Slovenian) (Polona Kuhar, holder of a supplementary activity on the farm). They are part of the Association of Tourist Farms. They are also part of KONCERT – an organic farm association.

LOCATION

Ambrož pod Krvavcem 5, 4207
Cerklje na Gorenjskem

They serve homemade delicacies for breakfast, which is their staple and which they advertise well. They also sell a considerable number of products at their home.

They offer comfortable and well-equipped accommodations near Krvavec. The rooms are furnished with natural materials to create a homely atmosphere. All rooms include a desk, wardrobe, satellite TV, and a private bathroom with a shower and slippers. They offer a garden, a tobogganing area, and contact with farm animals. They also offer ski storage, ski equipment rental, a ski school, and ski passes for purchase. Laundry, an ironing service, and cooking lessons are also available. They offer homemade delicacies, celebrations for private parties of up to 60 people, and a wide range of recreational activities (mountain climbing, cycling, skiing, etc.).

The farm is visited mainly by guests who value nature, homeliness, and the rural environment and who are interested in relaxation and local, homemade delicacies.

2. About the agrotourism

The farm is located in the municipality of Cerklje na Gorenjskem, in the village of Ambrož pod Krvavcem, 1000 m above sea level, in the Gorenjska region. The location of the farm offers not only peaceful surroundings and fresh air but also many possibilities for recreation. The surrounding area offers opportunities for nature walks, mountaineering, and cycling. A visit to the farm in the winter offers you the chance to go skiing or sledding on Krvavec.

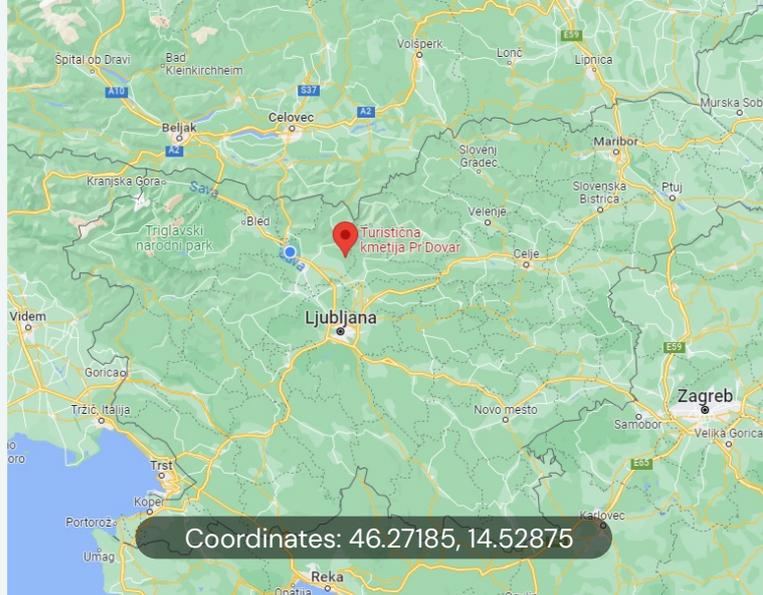
The location of the farm offers not only peaceful surroundings and fresh air, but also many recreational opportunities throughout the year.

Whether it's just a short walk in the countryside, a longer hike to Krvavec, or for those that are more adventurous, given the appropriate season and weather, a climb up one of the giants of the Kamnik-Savinja Alps, those with a thirst for adrenaline can enjoy a tandem parachute jump or a breakneck bike ride down the mountain Krvavec.

Cyclists who prefer asphalt to off-road are also catered for, as the farm lies in close proximity to the track where the last stage of the famous Tour de Slovenia cycling race takes place every year.

Visiting the farm in the winter is a special experience. During the day, you can enjoy skiing at Krvavec, and in the evening, you can relax in the nearby Snovik Thermal Spa. There are also plenty of opportunities for children who can go tobogganing in a specially designed area near the farm.

It is just 25 km from Slovenia's largest airport, Jože Pučnik Airport.



When did the agrotourism business start?

The development of the tourist activity started with the granting of an operating permit in 2005; this was also the year when the first tourists started visiting the farm. The farm experienced a major development in 2015 when they joined the platform Booking.com and so started to offer their accommodation more widely.

Number of workers

The farm is a family-run tourist farm (parents and four children). The parents, son, and daughter are actively involved in the farm work. They do not have any employees, as they are still able to do everything themselves. Only occasionally do they get help from relatives. They do not have defined working hours as they live on the farm, are tied to the tourist season, and live off the farm.

During the tourist seasons, there is less tourist work (autumn), so they devote themselves to other activities and work on the farm (picking herbs).

During autumn and spring, they also have more work with livestock; during the summer, they put their livestock on the mountain at Krvavec.



Cattle are also kept on the farm

Some tourist data from the agrotourism

Short description of the tourist supply

They offer bed and breakfast, apitherapy, teambuilding, camping, herbalism, and a bread and yeast bakery. They also offer accommodations for two or more nights. The farm has a garden, a tobogganing area, and the possibility to interact with farm animals. They also offer ski equipment storage or rental, a ski school, and ski passes for purchase. There is also a laundry room where guests can wash their clothes, as well as an ironing room. They also offer cooking lessons.

They serve homemade delicacies such as homemade bread from the wood-fired oven, cheese rolls, various types of cakes, etc. The rooms are beautifully decorated and furnished with natural materials that provide a homely atmosphere.

Apitherapy is becoming an increasingly established and recognised therapy for well-being and relaxation, as well as for treating neuroses, depression, anxiety, weakened immune systems, lung diseases, and recovery after intense sports. Inhaling the air from the beehives is extremely beneficial for psychophysical well-being and is suitable for all age groups. As part of the treatment, clients or guests are also served homemade gingerbread, homemade eco-herbal tea, and mead.

Number of beds

They offer a total of 20 beds. There are 8 rooms in total (5 rooms for 2 people, 2 rooms for 3 people, and another for 4 people). There are also 6 pitches for camping.

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

In 2022, they had a total of approximately 1,189 guests from different countries. This year, until October 2023, they have had a total of 1,166 guests.

Tourists profile (age, nationality,)

Guests are of all ages and nationalities. Most guests come from: the Czech Republic (17%), France (14%), Germany (8.9%), Poland (8.4%), Belgium (6.9%), Hungary (5.9%), Turkey (5.9%), Italy (4.95%), Spain (4.46%), the Netherlands (3.96%), Croatia (3.47%), Romania (3.47%), Slovenia (2.97%), Australia (2.48%), Sliwa (2.48%), Israel (0.99%), Russia (0.99%), Malta (0.99%), and Austria (0.99%).

Opening calendar

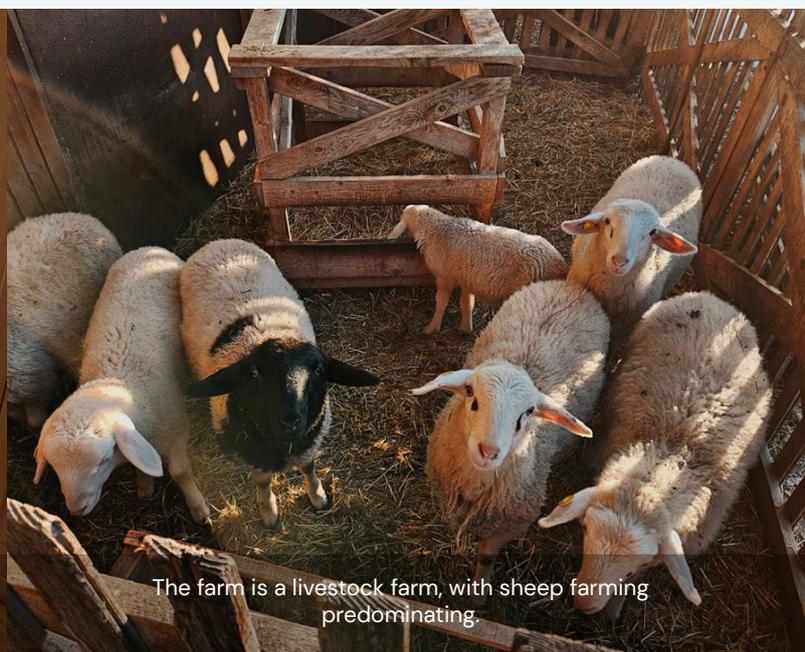
The peak tourist season is during the 3 months of summer (June, July, and August); this is when they are fully booked. They close in the off-season, i.e., in the spring (April, May) after the winter season and in the autumn after the summer season (September to early December).

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

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A picture of one of their accommodations, where homeliness and natural materials prevail.



The farm is a livestock farm, with sheep farming predominating.



A picture of a farmhouse dining room, where homeliness and wooden materials predominate.

About commercialisation

They used to go to markets but have since given up. Instead, they advertise their farm in their chalet named Sunshine at the ski resort of Kravavec, where they serve their homemade products produced on the farm. However, despite all the advertising, they still do most of their sales at home.

The central homestay reservation system is managed by the farm itself, the responsibility for which falls to the son, Štefan. They also take bookings on Booking.com and reservations over the phone and via email. Booking.com ([booking.com/hotel/si/turistiana-kmetija-pr-dovar](https://www.booking.com/hotel/si/turistiana-kmetija-pr-dovar)), Airbnb, and Expedia ([expedia.co.in/Ambroz-Pod-Krvavcem-Hotels-Pr-Dovar-Guest-House](https://www.expedia.co.in/Ambroz-Pod-Krvavcem-Hotels-Pr-Dovar-Guest-House)).

About advertising

They use Facebook ([facebook.com/Turisticna-kmetija-PrDovar](https://www.facebook.com/Turisticna-kmetija-PrDovar)), where they post picturesque photos of surrounding nature and promote their farms products, and their website (turizem-kuhar.si/) to advertise. The farm is advertised on the Association of Tourist Farms of Slovenia (turisticnekmetije.si/kmetija/pr-dovar) and Cerklje Tourist Board (visitcerklje.si) website and many more. They used to manage an Instagram page but have deleted it since. Flyers are in production. They have been attending trade fairs since the beginning of their business-tourism career.

About starting up the business

Why did they choose agrotourism?

From the point of view of the location, the place, and the family, the farm had a very high potential for the development of a tourist activity. Their son Stefan, who has been the most involved in tourism on the farm, has been particularly influential. Over time, they realised that they could not survive on the farm alone, so they merged it with tourism.

The combination of tourism and farming is widespread in their area. They are very close to the Krvavec ski resort and close to the motorway, which gives them a great advantage. The key for them is to mix and combine multiple activities simultaneously. They are also close to Slovenia's main airport, Joze Pučnik Airport.

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

They regularly upgrade their knowledge through additional training.

They have no previous experience, as they live on a farm. They obtained co-financing for the construction of the buildings in 2005. Two of their children went to a school for catering and tourism in Radovljica. Only one of the four children, the son Stefan, lives on the farm with his parents; the other children have already moved away.

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

Improvements in tourism itself have focused on summer tourism and on maximising the number of foreign visitors. In the beginning, most of the visitors were Slovenian, which was very limited. There are also developments to expand the offer (apitherapy, camping).

The main obstacles to their operation have been the distance from the nearest shops, restaurants, and pubs. No other serious obstacles to the development of the farm itself have been identified.



The farm is also an herbalist and produces its own homemade teas.

About managing an agritourism business

Agricultural production

They produce herbs (15 kg of dry herbs) and collect a large amount of them in the wild. They produce their own homemade honey, meat and meat products from beef and lamb. They grow vegetables only for their own needs. They have 11 cows, 10 calves which they sell and 40 sheep. They rear 40–50 lambs a year. Agricultural production depends primarily on the year and the weather conditions.

How do you manage your farm and tourism business?

It is very difficult for them to run a farm and a tourist business, but they are trying and they are on the right track. The transitions from the older generation to the younger generation are particularly difficult because they switch from a very operational to a very managerial aspect. The first generations used to do most of the work manually and all by themselves. Now we are at a stage that is evolving in the direction of relieving family members of the burden of having employees on the estate, the integration of new technology and digitisation. The most expensive aspect of this business is the workforce and the high-quality and efficient organisation and distribution of working time.

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 (meat production and processing, herbs).

Additional income is also generated by the Sunshine chalet – their independent business (s.p.) directly on the Krvavec ski resort, but we have not counted this as a share of income.

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

“First of all, strengthening knowledge in the field of agricultural development, as very little information is given on high mountain farms – OMD (areas with limited potential for agricultural activity), keeping up to date with technological advances, advances in digitalization and support from best practices in order to experience the workings of other farms first-hand. Each farm has its own story, is unique and has its own systems that are best suited to its operation. Developing these operating systems is the key to a successful business. A great many problems arise because of the influence of so many factors, and it is very difficult to find a good system. However, each operator knows for himself what he needs to invest in.”

When in doubt, they consult the Association of Tourist Farms and various other institutions.

What skills and knowledge would they like to acquire?

The main skills they wish to acquire are in the areas of marketing, sales, merchandising, appropriate and high-quality communication, and the study of and knowledge of foreign languages. They also believe management skills, food and nutrition production skills, and economic and accounting skills are important.

Expectations for the near future?

They hope to see less mass tourism at the national level and more focus on boutique tourism.

Expectations for their farm are positive, as they really have a lot of possibilities and opportunities to continue their tourism activities. Slovenia really has a lot of different attractions and is fantastic for foreigners. If this is done well, the whole of Slovenia can have excellent tourist and agricultural coverage. “We have huge potential for tourism development all year round.”

Advice for new entrepreneurs

As the owner of a tourist farm, Stefan says it was much easier for him to take over an established business, having grown up in such an environment all his life. He is used to working, interacting with people, attending education and training courses, and sees the potential of their farm.

“It must be difficult for someone who is starting from scratch. It takes a lot of courage. First, to establish yourself in the tourism market, and then later, to generate great ideas about the range of your offer.”

“First and foremost, you have to be a person with a flair for running a tourist farm. You must not be preoccupied with the competition, because every tourist farm has its own story to tell. However, it is necessary to follow the trends of tourist farms and the wishes and interests of the guests.”

“The main thing is to enter the tourism market with confidence, to impress with your range of activities and your cuisine, and to exploit all the potential that the farm and the environment have to offer.”