



Case Study

Matijovc Tourist Farm

Matijovc Farm outer courtyard

1. Introduction

The Matijovc Tourist Farm (Pr`Matijovc) is located in the village of Podbrezje, which belongs to the municipality of Naklo in the Gorenjska region. The farm has a long family tradition, as it is now being managed by the sixth generation. The farm was taken over by Janko Jeglic in 1995, and he continues to successfully run it with his wife Anna and their three children—two sons and a daughter.

The farm’s focus is on horticulture, arable farming, fruit cultivation, and supplementary activities. Their main activity is fruit production and processing as well as tourism. The farm consists of 24 hectares of owned and rented arable land and 15 hectares of forest. They have been operating a complementary activity on the farm for more than 20 years. They have 2 hectares of orchards where apples, pears, cherries, plums and walnuts are grown in an integrated way for the purpose of fruit production and processing.

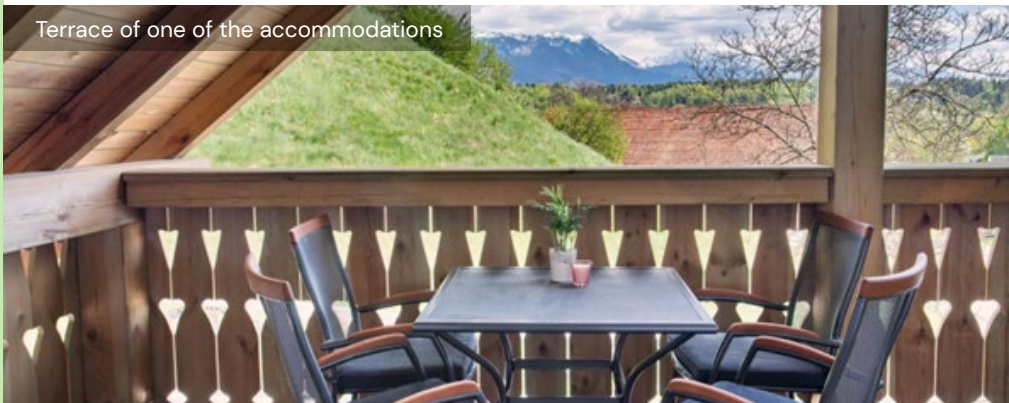
NAME OF THE BUSINESS

Matijovc Tourist Farm;
Pr` Matijovc in the local language.

LOCATION

The farm is located in the municipality of Naklo in the village of Podbrezje (Podbrezje 192, 4202 Naklo), which is in the province of Gorenjska Region.

Until 2012, the farm was also a livestock farm, producing milk that was sold to a dairy. In that year, they abandoned livestock farming and turned to their current main tourist activity on the farm - residential tourism, where they have been operating 6 modernized guest suites, which have received the highest rating for a tourist farm (4 apples), as well as a well-equipped space for caravans. In 2013, they welcomed their first guests as this was when they registered a new supplementary activity - a tourist farm with accommodation. The tourist season runs from May to September, and most of the guests are foreigners who are attracted by the nearby tourist spots in the Gorenjska region.



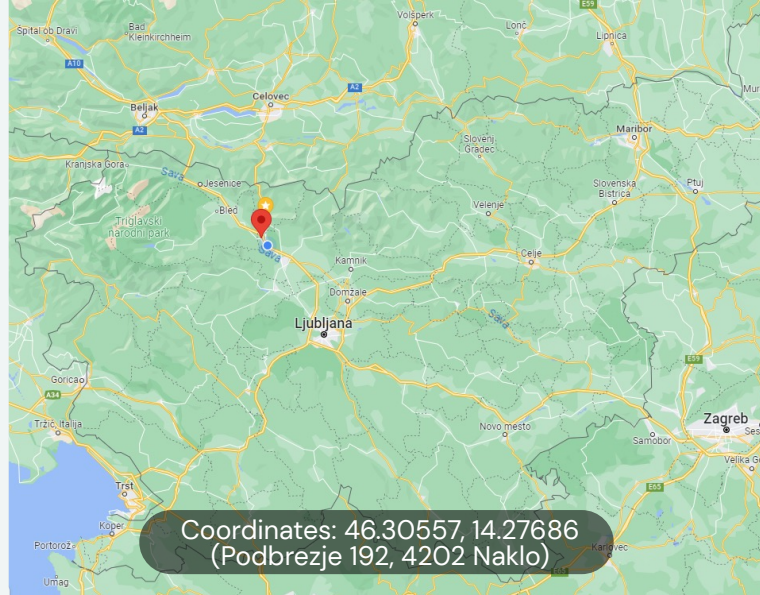
Terrace of one of the accommodations

2. About the agrotourism

The farm is located in the beautiful, green surroundings of the municipality of Naklo. The area is distinguished by its beautiful nature with many historical and cultural sights, friendly and hospitable people, and an extensive tourist offer.

Tourists can stay in the area at a nearby hotel or in tourist rooms. Those who like to spend time in nature can come to the nearby campsite by the Tržiška Bistrica River. The surrounding area offers plenty of recreational opportunities for tourists (relaxing in the forests, visiting the nearby mountains, playing tennis, enjoying horseback riding and fishing, cycling on the well-maintained cycle paths, etc.).

The municipality is characterised by its excellent location, good transport links, and proximity to major commercial centres around the country. It is also characterised by a strong small business sector, intensive agriculture, and strong social, tourist, and cultural activities. Podbrezje is one of seven villages within the municipality of Naklo and is mainly known for its fruit growing, which has survived to the present day.



When did the agrotourism business start?

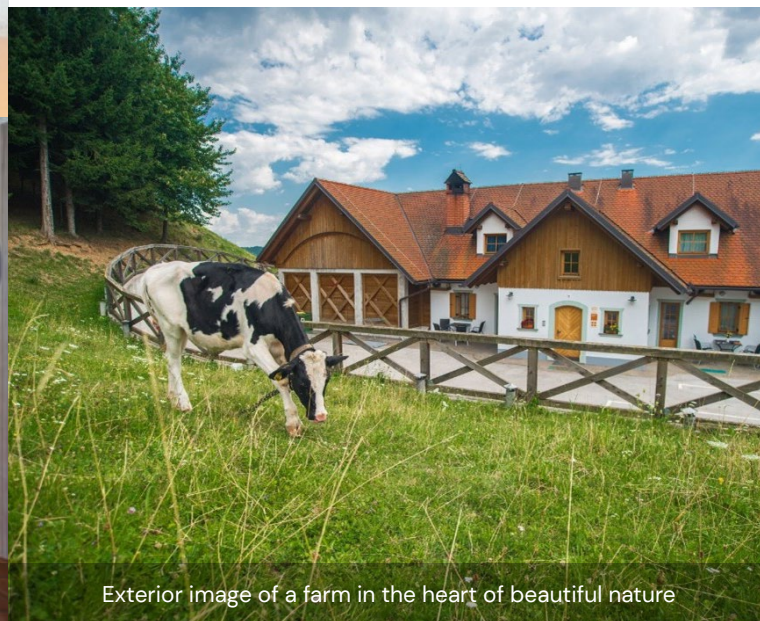
In 2012, they focused on their current main tourist activity on the farm – residential tourism. At the beginning of 2013, they started receiving the first guests as this is when they officially registered their new supplementary activity – a tourist farm with accommodation.

Number of workers

The farm employs two people, the owner and his wife. At the moment, due to time constraints, they have only hired a company to clean the accommodation units. However, during the main season, they employ about 10 helpers.



Interior appearance of the accommodation



Exterior image of a farm in the heart of beautiful nature

Some tourist data from the agrotourism

Short description of the tourist supply

The Matijovc Tourist Farm offers modern, luxuriously furnished apartments with a furnished terrace, free Wi-Fi, air conditioning, TV, a bathroom with a shower, and free private parking. Timber is used throughout the apartments, giving them an even greater sense of homeliness and a rustic feel. The farm and apartment complex also have a shop where they sell their own farm produce and gifts, as well as produce from the surrounding farms (fresh and dried fruit, juices, liqueurs, and other spirits). The apartments offer a beautiful view of nature and the mountains, and there is also a lovely terrace. Guests can wash and dry clothes, as the property has a laundry room with a washing machine and tumble dryer. There are plenty of hiking and cycling trails surrounding the farm. The Krvavec ski resort and other major Slovenian tourist sites—Bled, Bohinj, Krvavec, Vogel, and Kranjska Gora—are also nearby.

The farm is also a stop for many coach trips to visit the farm and taste its products, and it also provides practical training for students from the nearby Naklo Biotechnical Centre. Children can learn about life on the farm and have the opportunity to pet the farm animals. There is also a village playground nearby.

The owner of the farm is the holder of the following supplementary activities on the farm:

- Tourist farm with accommodation
- Production of vegetable oil and processing of oil seeds
- Production of fruit and vegetable juices
- The processing and preservation of fruit and vegetables
- Vinegar production
- The production of spirits
- Farm sales and door-to-door sales, local market sales
- Mail order retailing via the Internet
- Sales to retailers, institutions, and caterers
- agricultural oil pressing service
- Fruit and vegetable juice production
- Fruit and vegetable processing and preservation
- Display of agricultural, forestry, and complementary activities

Number of beds

The farm offers several accommodation options. Their apartments are rated 4 apples, the highest rating for tourist farm suites. They sleep up to 32 people. They offer four four-person suites, one seven-person suite, and one nine-person suite, all done in a rustic-modern style. The farm also offers parking and a motorhome pitch.

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

In 2022, they had 1181 guests. These guests generated a total of 678 overnight stays. In 2023 (from 1.1.2023 to 15.9.2023), 698 guests were recorded, generating a total of 588 overnight stays.

Tourists profile (age, nationality,)

The main tourist season on the farms is from May to September when they are fully booked. Most guests are families, couples, and pensioners. The farm has hosted and continues to host mainly foreigners from Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Austria, Germany, France, England, Holland, Russia, Poland, Spain, the Czech Republic, Israel, Belgium, China, Korea, Japan, and the United States. There are practically no domestic guests.

Opening calendar

In high season, from May to September, the farm is open all hours and all days of the week. In autumn, however, they may also temporarily stop their touristic activity, as they have a lot of other work to do with fruit production and processing.

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

The farm gives tourists the opportunity to get to know modern farm life and spend quality time in the village. Tourists are not involved in the work on the farm itself, but they can visit the farm and get to know the farm's activities during their stay. The tourists are not involved in the daily chores on the farm.



Interior appearance of the accommodation

About advertising

They use a website (www.matijovc.si) and a Facebook profile (<https://www.facebook.com/kmetijamatijovc/>) to advertise. They no longer use leaflets and catalogues because they are outdated.

Their key competitive advantage is their high guest ratings on Booking.com (<https://www.booking.com/hotel/si/kmetija-matijovc.sl.html>). They have very good ratings on the website (staff 9'8, comfort 9'4, service 9'5, cleanliness 9'8).

On the farm, they consider it essential that guests get the most for their money. All the members of the farm are very communicative, hospitable, and friendly to customers, and they speak good English and German. At the same time, they want to satisfy their guests' wishes as much as possible, as they realise that satisfied guests are the cheapest and most effective way to spread positive reviews and endorsements among their friends, acquaintances and other potential guests.

About starting up the business

Why did they choose agrotourism?

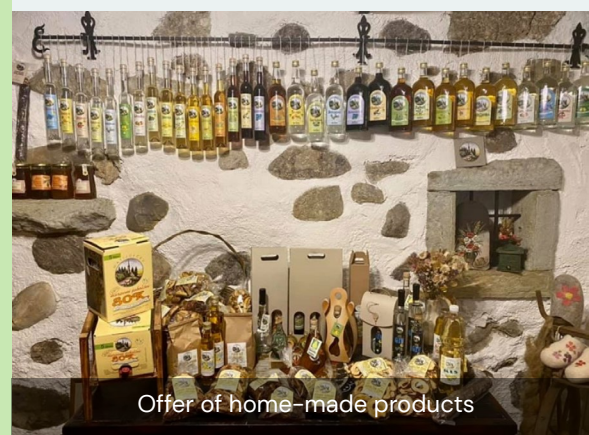
They decided to go into agritourism because they wanted to combine several different branches (tourism, fruit processing, agriculture, etc.). In 2005, they decided to build a new facility. The ground floor was converted into a fruit processing area, while the first floor and the attic were converted into apartments to be used for tourism. In 2005, the investment in a new building and equipment for the fruit processing plant was selected in a competitive call for tenders, which resulted in a grant of approximately 33% of the total investment. Construction was completed in 2007 when the facility was built. The basement of the building has been converted into a fruit processing area and is equipped with a modern woodchip stove. In 2010, it was decided to add apartments to the newly built building.

About commercialisation

Through commercial activities, they want to inform potential tourists of their tourist farm and attract them to spend their holidays there. The main elements used are advertising, personal marketing, sales promotion, public relations, and the overall image of the farm. As most guests nowadays look for information about tourist accommodations online, this is an essential source of promotion for them. So much so that, since 2013, they have been listed on Booking.com, the largest international travel booking system for hotels and other accommodations. They also advertise on Airbnb and directly through the Matijovc Farm website and Facebook profile. They also communicate with people by phone and email. Their main source of information distribution—advertising—is through direct sales of their products.

They are also known for their distinctive logo, with which they wanted to emphasise the recognition of the farm, thereby using it as an effective marketing tool. Another important element in the sale of their products is their beautifully and meticulously designed packaging, which features an image of the farm and the nearby Tabor church, situated on the hill above the farm.

The central reservation system is managed by the owner and his wife alone.



Offer of home-made products

About managing an agrotourism business

Later, they applied for a call for proposals for diversification into non-agricultural activities, where they were awarded a grant of 50% of the investment. Construction of the apartments was completed in 2012 and the first guests started arriving in January 2013.

The owner and his wife have no training in tourism and no previous experience. They have only had help with co-financing from investment funds.

The main obstacle to carrying out their complementary activities is unpredictable weather conditions (hail, frost), as this would lead to a significant loss of yields and, consequently, to a drop in the quality of the input raw material for processing. Another problem is the changes/fluctuations in product and service prices in the domestic and foreign markets.

The farm is an integrated fruit farm (apples, pears, cherries, plums, and walnuts). Most of the fruit is sold as table fruit, but some is processed into fruit juices (apple juice), apple cider vinegar, brandy, William's brandy, and various liqueurs, while some is turned into dried fruit. The farm also sells potatoes, garlic, cabbage, turnips, both edible and ornamental pumpkins, spelt, buckwheat, and rapeseed.

Some cabbage and turnips are also grated and pickled in vats. The buckwheat and spelt flour are ground into wholemeal flour, and the rapeseed is cold-pressed into rapeseed oil. For the storage of these products, they have two modern cold stores, which allow them to store their products properly and enable them to sell them all year round. They sell directly to customers on the farm or deliver to their homes. Most of the produce and products are sold to bulk buyers, such as agricultural cooperatives, supermarkets, hotels, restaurants, schools, and kindergartens.

Their total annual production of the entire range of crops is around 150 metric tonnes.

The owner says that they manage the farm and the tourism business very well because they work in tandem. They are always available at home or around the home, so despite all the work they do, they are able to coordinate their work and cooperation with tourists and with the reception of tourists.

Tourism represents less than 25% of their family income. Agrotourism account for 50% and agriculture for 25%.

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

There is a tourism-oriented daughter in the family, as she has a degree in tourism management. Promotion would also be a priority training programme.

What are the skills you would like to see?

The desirable skills for owners are mainly foreign language skills.

Expectations for the near future?

They have no specific expectations for the future, as the situation is currently great for them. They are fully booked in high season, and the guests are very happy and like to come back.



Interior appearance of the accommodation

Advice for new entrepreneurs

“It is up to each individual to find out what they enjoy, what they want to try and to dare to take the risk to succeed. They should dare to start their own business, realise their business ideas, and then succeed and strengthen their position and their offer on the market.”

“Future businesspeople should not be too bothered by competition and should concentrate on their own businesses. In doing so, they should make sure that they promote themselves properly and that they market really good, quality products.”

An essential tip for future businesspeople is to build and maintain excellent relationships with their business partners and with their customers and guests. Once established, it is important to ensure a stable, successful, technologically advanced, and environmentally friendly operation that will compete with what is offered in the domestic and foreign markets.