

Žirovnica Sustainability Report 2024

Žirovnica is a proud holder of the Slovenia Green Destination Silver Label. Many of the sustainable measures that were initially introduced (training a green coordinator, information and educational workshops for tourism providers, encouraging the use of public transport, promoting local products, organising talks and study tours, etc.) have become part of the regular operations of the Žirovnica Institute for Tourism and Culture in the two years since it was awarded the Label.



Photo: Aleš Košir

Development Vision and Aims

Our heritage is our pride! We are aware of the natural and cultural heritage of the Žirovnica area and are proud of it. We strive to nurture, preserve and promote it, and also to warmly welcome all visitors who wish to discover the area's natural and cultural beauties. In accordance with the vision, which emphasises the prudent preservation of cultural and natural heritage, as well as the goals that strive for the sustainable development of key destination advantages, cultural content and natural attractions, the direction of further development of the destination of Žirovnica focuses on three fundamental areas:

- sustainable and responsible tourism
- cultural tourism
- active tourism

Measures introduced in 2024 that adhere to the Žirovnica sustainable development guidelines

The Žirovnica Institute for Tourism and Culture (hereinafter: the Institute) is aware that sustainable tourism development goes hand in hand with the local community, so locals were invited to contribute to the *Kašar Tribune of Ideas*, where they could directly share their views, initiatives and constructive criticism. Despite the very poor response from local residents, some initiatives were received for research, preservation and presentation of cultural heritage, which the Institute will endeavour to realise in the coming years.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of the Municipality of Kranj, the Institute put together a presentation for the residents of Vrba at the beginning of the summer about the project to renovate Prešeren's birth house and the conversion of the Ribčev homestead building into a museum complex.

Tourism employees are almost always the first to come into contact with visitors and thus have a strong influence on their well-being in the destination. They influence how visitors will experience and accept the wealth of cultural heritage, beekeeping tradition, beautiful nature, local food and products. Employees and external collaborators follow the **Code of Ethics for Tourist Guides in the Destination of Žirovnica**, and their knowledge is upgraded every year by attending various training courses. This time, participants saw examples of good practice in the Škocjan Caves and the Pivka Park of Military History.

Employees gained additional knowledge in various areas of sustainable operations through training and study tours within the Slovenia Green Consortium, of which Žirovnica is a member. The Institute participated in workshops within the Julian Alps Biosphere Reserve and various international conferences, including the ICOM DEMHIST 2024 conference.

Events are an important factor, as they represent, preserve and promote the destination's wealth of cultural heritage. The Institute collaborates with local providers at events and all events take place

without single-use plastic. The intertwining of green energy and culture was present at the following events:

- KašArt Festival – Prešeren’s Night with Aleksander Mežek and friends in front of Prešeren’s birth house
- KašArt Festival – Fairy Tale Evening in front of Finžgar’s birth house
- KašArt Festival – Concert in Završnica
- Traditional Hike along the Cultural Heritage Trail
- Other smaller events

As part of the development of infrastructure, the Institute prepared a conceptual design for the development and marking of the hiking trail from the Žirovnica Railway Station to Završnica. The project includes a review of the terrain, route marking and preparation of documentation that will enable safer and more attractive hiking experiences. In the Završnica Recreation Park, new picnic areas were landscaped and a new rental reservation system was established, which also includes a rental system and certain rules of conduct intended to protect the natural environment. In cooperation with local associations, the Institute ensures regular maintenance of hiking and mountain biking trails, and also arranged the trail from the water surge tank to the Završnica Valley.

A new car park in Doslovče was put into use, which includes space for five cars and one space for a bus. Areas for pedestrians, cyclists and other users have also been landscaped, with benches, bicycle racks, a drinking fountain, bins for separate waste collection and a urine-diverting dry toilet. Traffic restrictions in the Završnica valley in the direction of the Valvasorjev dom and Dom pri izviru Završnica mountain huts remain in force. All newly installed urban equipment complies with the Žirovnica Street Equipment Catalogue.

The Institute invited tourism providers in Žirovnica to an annual meeting, where it acquainted participants with new features for visitors to Žirovnica and, together with the Municipality of Žirovnica and the Administrative Unit of Jesenice, provided explanations on the proposal for the Hospitality Act. The Institute promotes local providers and products and sells their products in the Žirovnica online store. It also cooperates with local catering service providers and promotes them at various events.

Together with Slovenian Railways, the Institute invites visitors to travel by train to major annual events in Žirovnica, such as the Traditional Hike along the Žirovnica Cultural Heritage Trail on 8th February and the KašArt summer festival.

The Žirovnica Institute of Tourism and Culture is the manager of three monuments of national importance – Prešeren’s and Finžgar’s birth houses and the village linden tree in Vrba, as well as two monuments of local importance – Čop’s birth house and Janša’s apiary. It is also the manager of the Žirovnica Cultural Heritage Trail. As part of the Institute’s management, it is responsible for the promotion of monuments, maintenance of trails and monuments, guiding visitors and raising awareness among the public about the importance of cultural heritage. The Institute is also responsible for the management of investments in maintenance of monuments, which in 2024 included:

- Preparation of the project documentation for a construction permit for the barn at Finžgar’s birth house, intended for improvement of the barn and its conversion into a space for holding workshops and events in winter and rainy months.
- In 2024, the Institute, as manager, was a member of the working group established by the Ministry of Culture for the preparation of new content in the facilities at Prešeren’s birth house

and renovation of the birth house, as well as preparation of content for a new museum exhibition about Prešeren.

- Renovation of Prešeren's birth house and the complex began on 1st August 2025 and is led by the Ministry of Culture.

Our commitment to preserving and presenting the wealth of cultural heritage is confirmed by the receipt of the Golden Hospitality Award 2024 for the Žirovnica Cultural Heritage Trail, awarded by the Slovenian Tourist Board.

As part of the LAS Living Heritage project, the exhibition about Matija Čop was upgraded, thus part of the area's exceptional literary heritage is now available to visitors through an interactive presentation of *Zdravljica* (A Toast) in nine languages.

At the end of 2024, the Local Energy Concept of the Municipality of Žirovnica was amended, which includes, among other things, measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, efficient energy use, and the method of supplying energy from renewable sources for the period 2024–2031.

Informing the public about sustainable development:

- Kašar Tribune of Ideas development of tourism (1zavse.si, 11.3.2024)
- Kašar Tribune of Ideas development of tourism (Gorenjski glas newspaper, 8.3.2024)
- Kašar Tribune of Ideas development of tourism (Gorenjski glas newspaper, 11.3.2024)
- Kašar Tribune of Ideas development of tourism (Novice.najdi.si online news, 11.3.2024)
- Entry point to Doslovče (Municipality of Žirovnica News, July 2024)
- Meeting of tourist providers (Municipality of Žirovnica News, July 2024)
- LAS Living Heritage Project (Municipality of Žirovnica News, July 2024)
- Juliana Trail in the villages beneath Mt. Stol (Municipality of Žirovnica News, July 2024)
- To whom does our heritage belong? (Municipality of Žirovnica News, November 2024)
- Golden Hospitality Award for the Žirovnica Cultural Heritage Trail (Municipality of Žirovnica News, December 2024)