

Best practices
of Ljubljana
Tourism

CREATIVE HANDICRAFT WORKSHOPS



Ljubljana Tourism

CREATIVE HANDICRAFT WORKSHOPS

With its eight new boutique Creative Handicraft Workshop experiences, Ljubljana Tourism is responding to the needs of a new generation of travellers and tourists in search of experiences, knowledge, and connections with the local populace. These workshops both offer domestic and foreign visitors a quality insight into the treasure trove of knowledge, creativity, and heritage of Ljubljana's local craftsmen and craftswomen, while also encouraging, preserving, and raising awareness of traditional handicrafts that represent an important part of the local and national cultural heritage and identity.

The unique experience of an apprenticeship with a local master craftsman or craftswoman offers a new point of view on and attitude towards handmade items and the processes “involved in crafting them”. And even though the items crafted by attendants may not always turn out as masterpieces, a good story always makes up for it.



Photography: Primož Lukežič

1. At a workshop with Marija Lah, the last umbrella maker in Ljubljana, who learned the skill from her father and took over the business from him. /
2. At a workshop with printing master Marko Drpić, who commands more than 20 years of teaching experience in calligraphy, carving letters in stone, as well as organising design and printing workshops. /
3. At a workshop with academic sculptor and ceramic designer Eva Peterson Lenassi, who has been teaching a course in sculpting and pottery for all ages at her studio for several decades now.

Challenges and goals

Reviving old crafts is important from a cultural tourism point of view, as it provides a valuable insight into life in Ljubljana through time. Realising the potential of creative tourism in Ljubljana plays an important role in the destination's development. We strive for constant innovation in the tourism sector to ensure marketplace competitiveness and the dispersion of activity outside the city centre.

The Creative Handicraft Workshop experiences revive old handicrafts and raise awareness among locals about the importance of preserving cultural and handicraft heritage, as well as carrying broader potential for raising awareness among young people of the importance of traditional handicrafts and for the inclusion of young people in their presentation.

At the same time, they represent an important contribution to the development of tourism in Ljubljana – satisfying the needs of new generations of visitors that travel in search of new experiences, knowledge, and connections with locals from different cultures.



1. At a workshop with experienced weaver Mojca Tomšič, who has been practicing the art of hand weaving in her studio at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum for decades. / 2. At a workshop with Christoph Steidl, a renowned goldsmith and silversmith who learned his craft in the workshops of the Benedictine monastery in Würzburg. / 3. At a workshop with Marija Lah, the last umbrella maker in Ljubljana. / 4. At a workshop with academic sculptor and ceramic designer Eva Peterson Lenassi.

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Course of the project

We developed the project in cooperation with the Municipality of Ljubljana (MOL) and the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (SEM) between 2020 and 2022. During the development of the project, it was important to us that its content was derived from the DNA of Ljubljana itself. Initially, we conducted historical research together with MOL and SEM, which yielded a list of all the craft professions mentioned in historical sources. We also did fieldwork and performed an ethnographic study. Based on the study and in cooperation with creative tourism development experts from “Rajzefiber” by “Društvo Hiša!”, we defined target groups and then developed eight quality boutique experiences in cooperation with five craftspeople – an umbrella maker, a printer, a weaver, a potter, and a goldsmith.

We also defined an execution plan for the workshops along with a schedule, locations, and workshop content, and prepared a marketing strategy for promoting the workshops, including digital campaigns, collaboration with local tourism agencies, and promotional activities in international markets.



8

quality boutique
experiences



5

craftspeople

Participating craftspeople:



an umbrella maker



a printer



a weaver



a potter



a goldsmith

Results

The creative workshops project has yielded numerous positive results: we successfully identified the still existing traditional crafts in Ljubljana and increased the level of awareness about their importance among both visitors and the local population. We launched the workshops at the end of 2022. Since then, we have sold 106 workshops, with a total of 194 people attending. We also noticed a trend of growing attendance – in the first eight months of 2023, 64 people attended the workshops, while 80 people attended during the first eight months of 2024, representing a 25% increase.

The handicraft workshops also received good media coverage from their launch through early 2023. This resulted in 15 free publications in print media, 3 contributions on national television, a contribution on radio, and 5 posts on social networks by various other media outlets. With this exceptional response, we managed to attract wide public attention and further emphasise the importance of handicrafts and creative expression in our community.

Workshop attendance

in the period 2023–2024



106

workshops



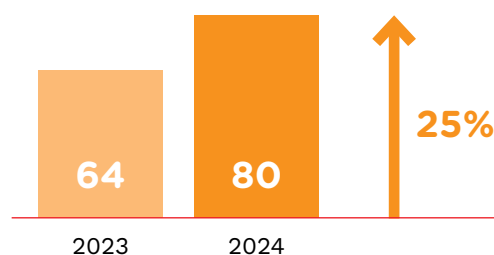
194

participants

Source: Ljubljana Tourism

Growing attendance

in the period 2023–2024*



* the data were collected in the first eight months of each year
Source: Ljubljana Tourism

14 articles

were published



15

in print



3

on television



1

on radio



15

online

Source: Ljubljana Tourism

The promotion of the workshops plays a key role in preserving traditional crafts and skills that might otherwise disappear. By involving local craftsmen and artists in tourism activities, we also increase economic activity while ensuring that revenue remains within the local economy. This type of tourism product design greatly contributes to the regeneration of the local community and its environment, and enables visitors to have an interactive and in-depth experience of the culture of the area they have chosen to explore.