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ROMA CULTURAL ROUTES IN SLOVENIA

Map:

<https://www.mapcustomizer.com/map/European%20Roma%20Route%20-%20SLOVENIA>

The ROMHERITAGE project

The ROMHERITAGE project, cofounded by the EU, is a private initiative promoted by Roma civil society that is mobilized to create a mechanism to enhance, preserve and disseminate Roma cultural heritage in Europe and the world. To this end, the consortium of entities formed by Presencia Gitana, European Romani Institute of Arts and Culture ERIAC, Them Romano and EPEKA decided to launch a pilot project that would serve as a model and as a founding movement of a process to which they would join each time more entities (Roma and non-Roma), official organizations, companies, regions, countries until constituting an international network that connects, dignifies and disseminates the Roma cultural heritage.

In this first pilot phase of the project, we have developed itineraries in three of the countries participating in the project (Italy, Slovenia and Spain), leaving ERIAC as the umbrella entity, unifier and promoter of Romani art and culture at the European level.

The national itineraries are grouped by themes that give them meaning and at the same time connect the points in a logical and attractive way for an easier knowledge and enjoyment. In any case, the itineraries constitute a first step in which the objective is to begin to draw routes following the layout of the Romani cultural heritage.

Each of the thematic itineraries has enough content and brings together a significant number of cities and municipalities in each case. However, we are aware that in most cases they can be expanded with newer points.

When preparing the itineraries we have followed the criterion of including the points that already contain elements that could be put into action immediately, such as monuments, museums, neighborhoods, cultural venues, or activities that are already being carried out and to which the component of the Roma/Gitano culture can be added, achieving a quick impact. These first itineraries are designed to serve as an example and as motivation for other points to join in subsequent expansions.

In the next phase of the project, the itineraries will be completed with information about the stakeholders who participate in these itineraries, so they cannot be considered completed yet. These itineraries are a living element that will be in continuous growth and enrichment.



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Introduction

Roma culture is an integral part of European cultural landscape and has made an important contribution to the diversity of the continent's heritage. However, very little is known by Europe's inhabitants about traditional Roma cultures, and Roma artists are rarely part of the mainstream cultural events. The lack of knowledge of Roma culture and the isolation of Roma communities have led to prejudice, indifference and hostility towards Roma are extremely strong.

The Roma culture and heritage trail will provide opportunities for direct contact and encounters with Roma communities and artists in the settlements themselves or through creative and educational events, will help to introduce the public with Roma culture.

The route will primarily connect places where the core Roma community live and operate, and will gradually expand through the involvement of additional public and private stakeholders. The route also aims to empower Roma through face-to-face contact and through the media in order to become ambassadors of their own their culture.





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Description of the proposed Roma Cultural Itinerary in Slovenia:

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Start in town of Lendava/Lendva

The first mention of Roma in the Lendava area dates back to 1729, when the birth of a Roma child, Josephus Zingarus, was registered in the civil registry. Today, the Roma ethnic minority is an important part of Slovenian society, as its culture, identity and language, together with the Hungarian and Italian ethnic minorities, form the basis of multiculturalism in the Republic of Slovenia, and this is particularly evident in town Lendava, the cradle of multiculturalism and multilingualism.

Cultural events proposals:

Exhibition Gypsies once - Roma today in Ljudska univerza Lendava





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Roma theatre play in Roma settlement village by Lendava town.



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Bulk number 2 on the map
Continue to town of Beltinci



Quotation from the most famous Slovenian singer Vlado Kreslin:

“I’m from Prekmurje, of course, and I remember how Roma musicians used to come here. Our legendary Gypsy from Beltin is Ački Horvat and he had sons Jouži, Roudija, and Pipaš, and Piki, and it was unforgettable when they stood at the door and started to play for various holidays and birthdays. They just knew when you had a name day. And they used to party in our pub, and at the Zvezda, the pub that I describe in *That Black Guitar*. So I was confronted with this great heritage of their music-making at a very young age, and it certainly remains with you. All the stuff stays with you, just like it did when you first heard the Beatles, that bit stays with you somewhere, it all builds up. It's just in you”.

An activity proposal of the Slovenian Itinerary is a Concert of Vlado Kreslin together with Roma musicians in Beltinci by the castle.



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Bulk number 3 on the map
Roma museum Kamenci in Črenšovci



The first Roma Museum in Slovenia was opened on 11 September 2003 and contains exhibits from the period when the first Roma family settled in the Kamenice area. Visitors can learn about the former Roma way of life, watch a demonstration of traditional Roma crafts and listen to legends passed down through oral tradition.

Bulk number 4 on the map
Town of Murska Sobota
European Museum of Roma Culture and History





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The exhibition aims to focus on Roma material culture, as most Roma are still seen as nomads, without achievements that can be evaluated as cultural heritage. The pictures on display show dwellings, transport, crafts and professions, and of course music and Romani dance. But it's just a single space of just over twenty squares, exhibits about the Roma in the land on the left bank of the river Mura...

Bulk number 5 on the map

The Roma network Association of Slovenia



The Roma Association of Slovenia has been operating successfully for 20 years. It was founded on the basis of the provisions of the Law on Associations in 1996 with the following aims and objectives:

- To improve the situation of the Roma community and its members,
- preserving the language, culture and identity of the Roma community,
- to work for the education and information of members of the Roma community,
- political participation of Roma in municipalities and at national level,
- integration into Slovenian society and the fight against intolerance, - for mutual cooperation and networking of the affiliated Roma associations and for constructive action in the Roma Community Council.



Roma radio ROMIC



The ROMIC Roma Information Centre works to provide information to the Roma population, but also to the majority population. They see particular importance in the Centre being a centre for the preservation of Roma values and language. They create their own music productions and organise various cultural events.

Through its own media, the Centre produces a newspaper, broadcasts and various collections, and also works to educate members of the Roma community, to promote their cultural and other forms of social activity, and to preserve Roma cultural identity and the Roma language.

Bulk number 6 on the map
Romsko naselje Pušča



It is a compact settlement in the Municipality of Murska Sobota, located west of Murska Sobota. Pušča is a Roma community that was part of Černelavci until 2002. In a referendum in 1998, the inhabitants decided to create an independent settlement, which was officially declared in 2002.

Pušča is the largest Roma settlement in Slovenia, dating back more than a century, and one of the best-established, with its own local community. It is therefore considered a model for the management of Roma issues in Slovenia.

It's animating to look around one of the quite interesting places. It is the Roma village of Pušča. It is also interesting to follow the development of this place through history up to the present day, when it became the world's first and, supposedly, only local community.

The settlement in Černelavci, on the road leading to Polana, is said to have been established around 1855. The landowner Klara Jedervari - Gider from Polana is said to have given a small plot of land to the "Spengler" András Horvat shortly after 1848 as a kind of recognition for his participation in the fight against the revolution in Hungary in 1848.

Andraž Horvat had a wife from the Monostru area. Andraž's descendants later founded the settlements of Pušča, Borejci and Vanča ves. Andraž had 6 children and his son Andraž, known as "Musonja", had 6 children again, as did his brother Ivan, who moved to Puščá in 1911 and founded a new settlement there. He settled on the land of farmer Ivan Fais. Soon the



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families of Ivan Horvat, Ignatius Horvat and Ignatius Kokaš moved in. By the beginning of World War I, only 4 families lived in this settlement, with a total of about 35 members.

The purchase contract concluded on 5 September 1911 by Vilijem Berger, Bela Berger and Ignac Heimer with the Gypsies Ivan Horvat and Ignac Horvat shows that the purchasers bought plot No 220/a, a field of 204 square fathoms, for 200 crowns. The predecessors in title of this plot were Ivan and Terezie Terezie, who sold the estate and the plot at an auction on 10 April 1911 and bought it by the aforementioned Jews. The whole settlement measured 2 ha 62 a and 18 m².

Pušča is a settlement quite far from the village of Černelavci. The word Pušča means - desert, desert. It was widely believed that the Gypsies around M. Sobota were settled by Count Szapary because of their music. The musician Čičeri (real name Janez Karel), who died in 1943 at the age of 83, had the greatest influence on the musical development of the Gypsies around Sobota. He was known as "the professor" and was even the first to collect Gypsy tales from the area.

At first, they used whatever material they had at hand to build their houses: willow wicker, which they used to plait the walls and plaster them with mud, wood or raw bricks. The original dwellings were single-room dwellings with no space for furniture or cooking. Where there was a stream nearby, and for example in Puscha, the houses of the first inhabitants faced the road. In the beginning, the settlement was usually spread out, and so were the houses.

When a Gypsy settled on the plot he had bought, he did a lot of damage to the neighbouring world and the owner decided to sell the plot to another Gypsy. The growth of Pušča is very characteristic and interesting, where after the first row of houses, another row grew up, built by the sons. These new houses are placed perpendicularly with their long sides to the older, original homes, and thus they are incorporated into one courtyard. Then, in the 1960s, the L-shaped houses followed. They were followed by beautifully built houses, first without facades, then with facades, and then even one-storey houses. This can be seen in the place and, to some extent, in this exhibition.

In 1957, there were 28 houses in Pušča. In 1961, as elsewhere, some of the black buildings were demolished here. In 1961, the population of Pušča was 366, of whom 150 were children under 13, 88 had 4 years of primary schooling, and only 3 had completed primary school. In July of that year, 24 houses had been electrified and there were 22 electrical appliances in Pušča.

In 1946-1951, there was a very high mortality rate: out of 76 children born, 19 (25%) died in the first year, and another 25 died in the same period. In the 1950s (1950-1960), two infectious diseases were rampant: trachoma and tuberculosis (TB).

Progress was brought about by the opening of a kindergarten in December 1962 in a newly built barrack. At first, the inhabitants were not understanding and the children did not want to come to the kindergarten. Vera Flisar, the kindergarten teacher, collected them from house to house. In 1969, the programme needed to expand the kindergarten premises, as there were 20 pre-school children in Group 1 and 50 school children in Group 2.





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The trades included grinders, umbrella repairers and dishwashers. They also worked as musicians. Women excelled in greasing walls, floors and large bread ovens with mud and making bricks. They knew very well the quality and stickiness of the soil and mixed it with chaff or chopped straw. Some women practised fortune-telling from cards and palmistry.

Later, they were employed in seasonal jobs at home and abroad. In industry, metal industry, such as Pannonia, and textile industry, such as Mura. A few emigrated abroad, to Germany and Austria.

Today, a large number of them have turned to trade (market stalls, stallholders' fairs or independent shops. More and more of them have recently finished primary school, some going on to various vocational schools.

In terms of religious affiliation, they are Catholic and statistics from the 1960s show that around 75% of children attended religious school. There is also a sacral monument in the village, a chapel built in 1991 by the local resident Kaludjerovič on his land along the road. The chapel (dedicated to the Black Virgin Mary) is used for various religious meetings and ceremonies. The settlement belongs to the parish of Soboš and all other services are provided by this parish.

The inhabitants of Pušča also seem to have been made more aware in several respects. Also with regard to crime. As an indication, in the years 1947-1951 there were 72 burglaries in M. Sobota and the surrounding area. Entire families were arrested in Puscha, but it turned out that there was no one among them. This injustice affected them very much afterwards. For a while they did not even send their children to school.

Among the sporting activities, let us mention football, whose association celebrated its 50th anniversary last year. Among them, Prof. Eugen Titan certainly deserves a lot of credit for the sport.

Today there are 220 households in Pušča, with 554 inhabitants.

In 2011, Pušča celebrated the 100th anniversary of its first settlement.

In 2021, a Roma Firefighters documentary movie was filmed:

https://www.facebook.com/watch/?extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-AN_GK0T-GK1C&v=457555405811169

When the route will be implemented, this movie will be shown to locals and tourists. The documentary film Tekmüvanje takes us to the Roma village of Pušča near Murska Sobota, where the first and only Roma firefighting association in the world is trying to integrate into the Slovenian firefighting culture. The film is mostly in the Romani language and is subtitled, with the actors speaking in the Prekmurje dialect in between.





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Bulk number 7 on the map
City of Maribor

Romani kafenava – first Roma restaurant:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_NAboS-p0M



Romani Kafenava (Roma Restaurant) is the first of its kind in the European Union. It operates on the principles of a social entrepreneurship. Romani Kafenava is active in the arts, in culture, in the promotion of young people and youth work, in highlighting of Roma issues especially concerning employment, and in Human Rights.

The main target group are the members of the Roma community in Maribor and its surroundings. The secondary target group are the general public of Maribor, encouraging them to the restaurant to drink and eat while meeting and engaging with Roma people.

The need for the project came from the high rate of unemployment among the members of the Roma community. The long term unemployment of members of the Roma community is 17 times higher than other citizens. Social exclusion of Roma, prejudices, stereotypes, racism, non-tolerance towards the community, etc. are all common place and make finding a job much more difficult. The other need for such a concept was to introduce the rest of the community to the Roma, their culture and traditions.

Romani Kafenava was opened on the 8th April 2014. Till now it is still open and is self-sustainable. The importance of the Kafenava and its work becomes ever more important with more and more new phenomena of Antigypsyism appearing.



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Bulk number 8 on the map
First Roma Airbnb



Designing the first Roma Airbnb involves considering a unique blend of cultural heritage, comfort, and local aesthetics. The decor should reflect Roma traditions and art, incorporating vibrant colors and patterns, traditional Roma motifs, and handcrafted items. Comfort is key, with cozy, welcoming spaces that invite guests to relax. Local touches, like artworks or furnishings made by Roma artisans, can add authenticity. The space should also offer modern amenities for convenience while preserving a sense of cultural identity and tradition.

Capital of Ljubljana
Bulk number 9 on the map
Slovenian Ethnographic Museum



The Slovene Ethnographic Museum is a museum "about people, for people"; a museum of cultural identities, a link between the past and the present, between traditional and modern culture, between our own and other cultures, between the natural environment and civilisation. It is a museum of dialogue, open, active and hospitable, dedicated to serving the public. It presents and reports on traditional culture as well as mass and pop culture in Slovenia and the diaspora, on non-European cultures, and on the material and intangible cultural heritage of both everyday and festive life.

Bulk number 10 on the map
Roma TV So Vakeres



The basic value of the programmes is that they are produced by the Roma themselves, and the majority of the programme is in the Roma language. The content of the 15-minute programme is varied. From history, the Roma language, life stories, current issues, legislation, the work of Roma associations and the pulse of Roma communities in neighbouring countries.

Bulk number 11 on the map
Kino Šiška / Roma concerts



Concerts of famous Roma musicians from abroad.

Kino Šiška has been the central Slovenian institution of the contemporary concert scene since 2009, complemented by activities in visual and performing arts.



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Dolenjska region

Bulk number 12 on the map

Exhibition of Roma jewellery in Žabjakk



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The Roma have a rich tradition of art and craftsmanship, particularly in jewelry making. Roma jewelry is known for its intricate designs, bold use of color, and the blending of traditional and contemporary styles. It often features vibrant colors, reflecting their love for vivid and lively designs. Gemstones of various hues are commonly used. Jewelry may incorporate symbols important to the culture, like the wheel or horse, which have deep meanings related to travel, freedom, and the nomadic lifestyle. Traditional Roma jewelry is handcrafted, a skill passed down through generations. This gives each piece a unique, personal touch.

Jewelry not only serves as adornment but also as a means of expressing cultural identity and heritage. It is deeply rooted in the traditions and history of the Roma people, making it both culturally significant and artistically valuable.



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Activity proposal: Traditional Roma Route in Dolenjska region - old fashion way of life
Roma glamping

In the past, travel was generally by horse and cart. As a result, horses were highly valued and became part of the family. Roma life often consisted of travelling during the day, doing various handicrafts and in the evening gathering around the fire, having dinner and dancing, something that has faded away in modern times. Singing, storytelling, socialising across generations has been replaced by TV, touchscreen phones and tablets, fast food and the isolation of having each family member in their own room. On the Roma Route, we will go back in time in a way that will revive the old way of life and enjoy it as it used to be.

Glamping is luxury camping for people who like to camp but miss the modern world in a tent, such as a soft bed, a shower or even the internet. For these purposes, we will offer our visitors a unique experience. They will travel through beautiful landscapes in a Roma wagon, mingle with Roma in the evenings around the campfire, learn Roma dance, try Roma cuisine and socialise like they used to.

During the day, visitors will make crafts together, such as sharpening knives with a flint stone, take part in a music workshop with top musicians, look after horses, pick medicinal herbs and mushrooms, and much more.

Žabjak – Brezje start

Bulk number 13 on the map

Roma glamping in Metlika

Bulk number 14 on the map

Roma glamping in Kočevje

Bulk number 15 on the map

Roma glamping in Črnomelj



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EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF ROMA



There is not an officially designated "European Capital of the Roma". The same like there wasn't a European Roma Route before ROMHERITAGE.

The concept of a city being named a capital for the biggest ethnic minority in Europe has not taken place yet. Roma do not have own country, it's a People without land but from all over the World. So according to the values of EU of intercultural dialogue and coexistence we want to make majority population aware about the sizable Roma communities across Europe, with rich cultural heritage.

Additionally, various European cities and towns may host significant cultural events, festivals, or institutions dedicated to Roma culture, history, and rights, contributing to the visibility and recognition of the Roma community.

The concept is still under development and we want to include all of participants of European Roma Route into the brainstorming: how the title should be to make EU diverse and better place to live in for all of us.





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Conclusions

With this document, the ROMHERITAGE project begins to design and implement itineraries of Roma culture in Slovenia.

ROMHERITAGE is a pilot project with a duration of two years that begins a work that, without a doubt, will have to extend beyond. With these itineraries we are beginning the task of recovering, promoting and highlighting the Romani culture and integrating it into an attractive approach for the knowledge of Roma and non-Roma people, from the cities where the spots of the itinerary are located, as well as visitors. However, we are aware that the Romani cultural heritage extends far beyond the itineraries included in this pilot project.

In preparing the itinerary and in the subsequent formation of public-private collaboration networks, we have given priority to quality over quantity. It would be useless to have many spots in an itinerary if activities are not carried out, or there's lack of institutional or private support to sustain it.

In the next phase of the project, when the network of public-private collaborators is incorporated, these itineraries will make even more sense. Furthermore, we must consider it as a living element and in constant growth and incorporation of new points and activities. We believe this is natural since Roma culture is in evolution and its recognition is a process that in most places has just begun.



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The ROMHERITAGE consortium is composed by Asociación Nacional Presencia Gitana (Spain), ERIAC (European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture), EPEKA (Slovenia) and Associazione Thèm Romano (Italy), as well as associate partners such as Instituto Cervantes (Spain). Project is co-funded by the European Union.

Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



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