

MARIBOR

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History and general information

With 110,000 inhabitants, Maribor is the second largest city in Slovenia. It is situated on the crossroads of the routes from Central to South-Eastern Europe and from western Central Europe to the Pannonia Basin. It is a university town, and the industrial, financial, administrative, educational, cultural, trade and tourist centre of north-eastern Slovenia. The area of the municipality of Maribor is 147.5 km². Prior to Slovenian independence, Maribor was economically very developed – particularly in the industrial sector, but the disintegration of the unified Yugoslav market, the loss of the Eastern European market and the transition to the market economy after 1991 were, with a wave of bankruptcies, too big of a shock. The erstwhile large companies mostly stopped working or were sometimes transformed. A complete social and economic restructuring did not take place. Unemployment in Maribor is consistently well above the Slovenian average (for example, in July 2012 at 17.2%, Slovenia 12%). At the moment, most of the city's revenue comes from services. In the last few years, commerce has particularly developed (new shopping centres), as has the banking-financial sector. Tourism is increasingly important.

Archeological sites from the Neolithic era, urn graves, Celtic findings and the Roman Villa Rustica are the oldest traces of the settlement in the territory of present-day Maribor. In 1164, the Carinthian Duke Bernhard Speinheim had the first stronghold built on the Piramida Hill and called it a Castle in the March, or Burg in der Mark. The settlement that appeared at the foot of the hill was called Markburg. In 1254, Maribor is mentioned as a town with city rights. Following the victory of Rudolph of Habsburg over Ottokar II in 1278, Maribor started to develop. At the end of the 17th century, the plague killed a third of the population.

In the 18th century, the city slowly completed and upgraded its qualities – in 1758 the Jesuits established a grammar school, in 1782 Maribor got its main school, and in 1795 the first printing house. The first home for theatre in Maribor, intended for the local amateur and visiting professional thespians, was established in 1785. A more permanent solution was found in 1805.

The city was significantly marked by the construction of the Southern Railway from Vienna to Trieste in 1846. The railway accelerated the development of industry. With the construction of additional traffic infrastructure (roads and bridges), the city lost its mediaeval layout, particularly the part of town known as Lent, where a 400-year-old vine is still growing – the oldest in the world.

In 1859, the bishop Anton Martin Slomšek transferred the seat of the Lavantine diocese from St Andrä in Carinthia to Maribor, and with the theological seminary, the city got its first post-secondary school. In 1852, a theatre building was constructed (for plays in German), and in 1899, the Slovenians built Narodni dom, the centre of their political, economic and cultural life. The establishment of the Maribor Drama Society in 1909 represents the beginning of the permanent Slovenian professional theatre.

After World War I, Maribor experienced excellent development in the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians. It became an important administrative centre of north-eastern Slovenia and established itself particularly with a strong textile industry. In the years following World War I, a Slovenian administration was formed, and Slovenian was introduced into school and became the official language.

The Nazi army attacked Yugoslavia in 1941 and occupied Maribor. Slovenian schools, cultural and educational institutions were abolished, the development and industry stopped. The Slovenian economy was destroyed, as was the city itself as a consequence of attacks and bombardments. The liberation of Maribor on 9 May 1945 was followed by years of reconstruction and eventually the consequences of the war were removed. The companies in the period of self-managing socialism employed people mostly according to social criteria and thus created the working class of the new era. In 1975, the University of Maribor was founded.

For a long part of the 20th century, Maribor was at the top of the Yugoslav industrial production. But this didn't work in its favour, because it only developed in the industrial sense. The consequences of this one-sided development were sorely seen at the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the loss of the important Yugoslav market. In the 1990s, the city thus found itself in distress. The decline of once enormous factories, unemployment and migration of the inhabitants contributed to the fact that the pulse of the city practically stopped for a while. As the table below shows, the population of Maribor is steadily declining.

Year	1991	1996	2002	2004	2007	2009	2011	2012
No. of inhabitants	119828	116147	110668	112558	119071	112640	111730	110946

Cultural infrastructure

Given its geographical size, Maribor is culturally active, but not flourishing. The city has a number of different cultural institutions. Because the city is small, all the cultural institutions are at "an arm's length", but it is interesting that despite the smallness, no particular surplus in co-operation and association of institutions is observed and nor did it occur even during the time of the Maribor – European Capital of Culture (2012).

Among the most important museums and galleries in the city are: Maribor Castle, which houses the Maribor Regional Museum with its collections on archaeology, ethnology and the wider cultural history of the Maribor region and its surroundings; the UGM Maribor Art Gallery, established in 1954, and the Museum of National Liberation



View of Lent – the old part of Maribor – today. Photo: Luka Cajnkar, used with permission.

Maribor, where we can find rich museum collections with more than 10,000 items from World War II. In addition, Maribor has the Betnava Mansion – the museum of the Maribor Archdiocese with a permanent exposition of its religious, social and cultural heritage.

Theatre infrastructure

There are three public institutions in Maribor that cover most of its theatrical activity: the Slovene National Theatre (SNG) Maribor, the Narodni dom Maribor and the Puppet Theatre Maribor. They have their own premises, while the private companies usually do not. Their performances are thus created in collaboration with the SNG, the Narodni dom and other venues.

SNG Maribor is the largest public cultural institution in Maribor and in Slovenia. It is the only theatre house in Slovenia with drama, opera and ballet as well as a symphony orchestra. The Maribor Theatre Festival (Slovenian name: Festival Borštnikovo srečanje – FBS, usually held in October) is also a part of the SNG Maribor. It is a national festival, competitive in its concept. At the end, awards are conferred for the best performances, director, actors, music and other artistic achievements. Every year, the Borštnik Ring Award is given to honour the lifetime acting achievement of an actor or an actress. The SNG Maribor is also the most important venue in Maribor for classical music.

The 1974/75 season is considered as the first professional season of the Puppet Theatre Maribor, established with the objective to regularly prepare and perform puppet shows

for children (and adults) at the home theatre as well as all over Slovenia and abroad. In the 2010/2011 season, they played 20 different productions (266 performances). The Puppet Theatre Maribor also organises Summer Puppet Pier (Poletni lutkovni pristan), an international puppet festival whose slogan is “filled with playfulness and sensitivity”.

The Narodni dom Maribor cultural centre is a public institution founded in September 1992 by the Municipality of Maribor. It first started working in the historic building of the Rotovž (City Hall), but later moved to the premises of the Narodni dom (built in 1899). It offers a varied cultural programme for all ages and tastes: classical concerts, contemporary music events, theatre programme for children, youth and adults, and in particular, “light” forms of entertainment (stand-up comedy, etc.). The Narodni dom also organises the Lent Festival. The international multi-cultural festival takes place at the beginning of summer and offers a varied selection of events: jazz, rock, pop, classical and world music concerts, evenings with singers-songwriters, spoken theatre, puppet and dance performances, creative workshops for children, etc.

TARTU

Hedi-Liis Toome

History and general information

Situated in the southern part of the Estonia, Tartu, with approximately 100,000 inhabitants, is the second biggest city in a country of 1.29 million inhabitants. With the biggest and oldest university in Estonia, the University of Tartu (about 20,000 students), as well as with several other higher education institutions, Tartu is the centre of educational life of Estonia. It is also the cultural centre of the southern part of the country and most important in offering services and commercial facilities in the region. The slogan of Tartu is “the city of good thoughts” which points to the university and the large amount of young people who bring new and fresh ideas and to a city that offers a peaceful and youthful living environment.

Tartu is 187 km away from the capital city Tallinn (population 450,000) and 245 km from Riga, the capital of Latvia. There has always been some joking between the two biggest Estonian cities. The people living in Tallinn find Tartu small and boring, the people living in Tartu find the capital too busy and stressful.

Tartu was first mentioned in 1030 after Jaroslav the Wise conquered it; already in 1061 the locals, that is, The people living in this area conquered Tartu back. From the 13th century until 1918, the city was occupied by the German Order, Kings of Poland, Kings of Sweden and Russian tsars. During the so-called “good old Swedish time” of the 17th century, the University of Tartu was founded in 1632 by the Swedish King Gustav