



SUSTAINABILITY REPORT OF THE DESTINATION CELJE 2023–2025

April 2025

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1 INTRODUCTION

Celje has been taking steps on the path of sustainability since 2015, when we joined the national programme for promoting sustainable development, the Green Scheme for Slovenian Tourism. The latter is key to the strategic orientations for the coming years. We want Celje to become the heart of the region, pursuing the following key objectives: a city with a listening ear, sustainable urban development, a green city tailored to its people, and the strength of a solidarity-based and connected community.

In 2019, we approached the first verification of our compliance with the standards and performance indicators of the Slovenian Green Tourism Scheme and were awarded the bronze Slovenia Green Destination label. With further steps and efforts to become an environmentally and socially friendly tourist destination, we approached the reassessment in 2022 and made progress once again. We were awarded the Slovenia Green Destination Silver Label for our successful implementation of sustainable practices in tourism.

In 2023-2025, Destination Celje has taken an even more intensive, integrated and strategic approach to introducing sustainable models into our tourism, taking into account both sustainable development and care for the economic, socio-cultural and natural environment. We have taken steps forward in all the areas (destination management, nature and landscape, environment and climate, culture and tradition, social climate, and the business of tourism providers), which the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism includes with specific standards for analysing the state of sustainable business and preparing an improvement plan, we have taken steps forward. In this report, we highlight just a few of them, which show that we are moving forward on the path of sustainability and a green future through events, projects, strategic documents, management models and continuous activities.



2 GREEN INDICATORS

GREEN INDICATORS DESTINATION CELJE

Leading destination in Slovenia
Macro-destination: Thermal Pannonian Slovenia

BASIC INFORMATION

 94,9
km²

 49.540
inhabitants

 36,35 %
forest coverage



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TOURISM IN NUMBERS (2024)

-  53 registered accommodation providers
-  1,200 beds
-  64,380 overnight stays
-  30,647 arrivals
-  2.1 days – average length of stay
-  84,350 visitors to Celje Castle

GREEN CELJE

-  2 stakeholders with a sustainable environmental label
-  Accessible clean and drinking water | Old town center, Celje Castle, major events
-  40 km marked hiking trails
-  Castle trails below Celje Castle 
-  65 km road and forest cycling routes
-  Green oases: Lake Šmartinsko, Celje Hut (Celjska koča), City Park and City Forest

SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

-  KolesCE | Centralka
-  224 regular and e-bikes
-  40 bike stations (KolesCE system)
-  Train access to the city center
-  Celebus – 10 regular lines
-  Universal card and app (parking, bike rental, city transport tickets)

SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

-  Separately collected municipal waste (2023)
-  20 years of Celje Central Wastewater Treatment Plant (2024) 1,300 tons of waste removed from screens 106,000 tons of sludge used for heating in Celje
-  2 public clean-up campaigns per year
-  25 natural heritage sites
-  Pečovnik Douglasia Fir – the tallest measured tree in Slovenia

SUSTAINABLE CULTURE AND TRADITION

-  1 entry in the Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage | Hat-making
-  Over 350 events per year | including green guidelines
-  Celje Castle – the largest medieval castle in Slovenia
-  388 units in the Register of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia

GASTRONOMIC BRAND TASTE CELJE

-  3 providers
-  2x per year street festival with local culinary offerings

3 NEW STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS



Public Call for Project Proposals for the Participatory Budget “Celje po moje” | published 2025



Municipal Spatial Plan of the Municipality of Celje | in the adoption process



Tourism Development Strategy in the Municipality of Celje 2024–2029, with guidelines until 2031 | adopted in 2024



Sports Strategy in the Municipality of Celje 2024–2033 | adopted in 2024



Cultural Development Strategy in the Municipality of Celje 2024–2027, with guidelines until 2031 | adopted in 2024



Action Plan for Improving and Implementing Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in the Municipality of Celje 2024–2028 | adopted in 2024



Economic Development Strategy in the Municipality of Celje 2021–2027 | adopted in 2022



Local Youth Programme in the Municipality of Celje: “YOUTH ARE CELJE” 2022–2027 | adopted in 2022



Sustainability Strategy for Quality Coexistence and Intergenerational Cooperation in the Municipality of Celje | adopted in 2021



4 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY



PROUD SIGNATORIES OF THE GREEN COMMITMENT OF SLOVENIAN TOURISM

By signing the Green Commitment of Slovenian Tourism, we commit to 12 sustainable principles, pledging to operate sustainably and strive for continuous improvement.



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STEPS TOWARDS ZERO WASTE

The destination Celje, which hosts over 350 various events each year — 300 of which are organised by the Celeia Celje Institute with partners — has taken steps towards zero waste events. As part of the LAS "Diversity of the Countryside" call and the project "Living Labs for Zero Waste" (carried out in 2023–2024), the destination procured eco-cups (standard and wine glasses) and introduced a deposit system at events — advancing the development of sustainable event practices.



CLEAN-UP CAMPAIGN "LET'S CLEAN CELJE"

During the annual clean-up campaigns held in spring and autumn, the entire community becomes active — joining forces to clean public spaces, green corners, and the surroundings of institutions throughout the city and local districts.

2 days = 6,000 hands = 6,700 kg of waste collected

(4,300 kg plastic and metal packaging, 1,200 kg mixed municipal waste, and 1,200 kg bulky waste)





GREEN AND HEALTHY OFFICE FRIENDLY TO SLOVENIA

In 2024, the Celeia Celje Institute joined the Slovenian Tourist Board's initiative *Green and Healthy Office Friendly to Slovenia*, which proves that everyone matters — and that internal collaboration can also lead to (new) green habits that extend beyond the office into the broader tourism economy.



CITY CONFERENCES

- **#1 Radical Cooperation | April 2023**
Presenting examples of good practice and discussing ideas, opinions and visions on how we can all work together to make the city even better and co-create a city for the people.
- **#2 Space(s) | October 2023**
In-depth discussions on key issues of Celje's urban development: urban development, spatial planning activities, the power of cooperation and other topics addressing spatial, economic and social development.
- **#3 SEEnergy | May 2024**
Lectures and discussions on the future of sustainable energy and issues related to the future of the city's energy supply.
- **#4 Invest in Celje | September 2024**
Contributions and discussions on effective management of business zones and investment opportunities in Celje.
- **#5 Tribune for Celje my way | April 2025**
The aim of the conference is to highlight the importance of community involvement in the development of the city and to build a cohesive and collaborative environment.



By implementing the initiatives from the City Conferences, we are confirming our commitment to citizen engagement, open dialogue, co-creating strong and connected communities and finding innovative solutions to the challenges we face. For the 2023 City Conferences project, we were awarded the Most Improved Public Administration Award by the Faculty of Public Administration of the University of Ljubljana in the Moving Forward competition.

5 GREEN CELJE



THE LARGEST IS THE PEČOVNIK DOUGLAS FIR

In the Celje City Forest grows the largest living organism in Slovenia – the Pečovnik Douglas fir, which at 67.02 metres is the tallest tree in the country.



TREE LIBRARY "KNJIŽNI BRLOG"

On World Tourism Day in 2024, the largest treehouse in Slovenia became home to a Tree Library named Knjižni brlog ("The Book Den"). It offers around 100 books for readers of all generations and interests, further promoting a reading culture in Celje with a strong emphasis on intergenerational cooperation.



CASTLE TRAILS BELOW CELJE CASTLE

In the green hinterland of the city — home to Lake Šmartinsko, Celjska koča (Celje Alpine Lodge), the City Park, and City Forest — there are 65 km of road and forest trails and 40 km of marked hiking trails. On the hillside of Celje Castle, three new themed trails have been developed, totaling just under 2 km in length: The Geological Trail takes visitors on a journey through geological time, where the area's features are presented on wooden pillars and engraved stone steps. The trail is not only educational but also fun. Young hikers will be delighted by playful elements like a slide, wooden nest, climbing pyramids, and climbing platforms, while those seeking rest or reflection can pause on creatively designed benches. A glass viewing platform awaits visitors with a unique experience — it “floats” above the castle vista and offers breathtaking views of Celje and its surroundings. Through the entrance portal at the castle parking lot — where a new drinking water fountain is also installed — visitors can return via the Pelikan Trail, named after the renowned photographer Josip Pelikan. Hikers can also visit an outdoor classroom or choose the third route, the Trail Beneath the Cliffs.



6 SUSTAINABLE CULTURE AND TRADITION



LIVING CASTLES 2.0

In 2024, the Celeia Celje Institute, together with partners from Slovenia and Croatia, was successful in the Interreg Slovenia-Croatia call. The total value of the project *Strengthening the Cross-Border Network of "Living" Castles by Promoting Inclusive and Accessible Cross-Border Cultural Tourism* is €1.87 million. The Celeia Celje Institute will receive just over €200,000 from the European Union for its activities.

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URBACT EUROPEAN AWARD FOR 2 GOOD PRACTICES

In 2024, Celje received an award for two good practices through the URBACT programme, supported by the European Union via Interreg. The awarded practices were the Urban Forest and the temporary use of space GT8. A total of 116 urban practices were recognized, including five from Slovenia. Among the awarded Slovenian cities, Celje was the only one to receive two awards.



FIRST ENTRY INTO THE REGISTER OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Hat-making was entered as the 121st element in the Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage, maintained by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia. Its bearer is Špela Strašek from Celje, who preserves and develops the craft of hat-making and millinery through her work.





CELJE – EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS CITY 2025

Celje has been awarded the title of European Christmas City 2025 by the international jury of the Christmas Cities Network, supported by the European Parliament. Celje was awarded the title because, according to the jury, it is renowned for its charming festive traditions and innovative community spirit. The award recognises the city's commitment to creating an authentic and inclusive Christmas experience that invites visitors into a world of festive charm and cultural richness.

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PHOTOHOUSE PELIKAN

From 2024, the museum and cultural complex combines the photography studio of master photographer Josip Pelikan, a family apartment, and basement and attic space totalling 600 square metres. In an authentic environment, visitors can walk through the history and heritage of photography from the late 19th century to the present day. The renovated premises also present the bourgeois living culture of the first half of the twentieth century. The Božena Gallery is used for occasional exhibitions.





LIVING HISTORY AT CELJE CASTLE

Every summer in July and August, Celje Castle hosts the Living History programme. Various associations that help preserve the heritage of the Middle Ages, in cooperation with the Celje Celje Institute, provide attractive programme content such as: swordplay with knights, a knight camp, a party with the castle fool, a chat with the castle lady, medieval cuisine, dancing to the sounds of the lute, costumed guided tours. The Castle Printing House is also open every weekend. All of the above can be experienced free of charge on payment of the regular admission fee.

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7 GREEN PROVIDERS



Green Key 2023 | The destination gained its **first provider with the Green Key certificate – Celesta Restaurant and Café.**





2024 | The destination welcomed its **second provider with the Green Key certificate** – **Hotel Evropa**, which also received the **Slovenia Green label** and joined the **Slovenia Green Scheme**.



8 SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY



EUROPEAN MOBILITY WEEK (EMW)

Since 2001, the City Municipality of Celje has participated in the European Mobility Week (EMW), a project that aims to encourage sustainable mobility and change people's habits through various activities across the EU.





AWARD FOR THE MOST ACTIVE MUNICIPALITY

At the conclusion of the 2024 European Mobility Week, the City Municipality of Celje received an award for being the most active municipality in the category of large municipalities (with more than 16,000 residents). The title was awarded for a diverse and content-rich programme during EMW (16–22 September 2024), which included numerous activities aimed at all generations, especially young people, highlighting the importance of sustainable mobility and the use of public spaces designed for people, not cars.



KOLESCCE BIKE-SHARING SYSTEM

In 2024, the public bike-sharing system for regular and e-bikes recorded 93,659 rentals, representing a 20% increase compared to 2023. Users cycled a total of 496,393 kilometers, which is 15% more than in 2023. The average rental duration was 21.2 minutes, and the average distance ridden was 5.3 kilometers. By using bikes in 2024, 184,658 kilograms of CO₂ emissions were saved. The system includes 224 bikes and 40 docking stations.



CENTRALKA

Centralka is Celje's unified city application (and card), which has, since 2023, simplified everyday life for residents and visitors by offering modern solutions for purchasing bus tickets (Celebus), renting bikes (KolesCE), and paying for parking.





9 SUSTAINABLE EVENTS

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EVENTS AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Sustainable practices implemented at events such as *Fairytale Celje*, the *Rol.Ce & Vin.Ce Festival*, *DOBROdošlo vino*, the *Tastes of Celje Festival*, the *Easter Market*, the musical *Veronika of Deseniška*, the immersive theatre *Celjski vsi*, and others include:

- separate waste collection,
- use of eco-friendly cups with a return system,
- use of exclusively serving packaging made from recycled materials,
- access to fresh drinking water,
- free bus transportation to the Celje Castle,
- promotion of local culinary chefs and use of locally grown ingredients,
- preservation of crafts and artisanal knowledge,
- promotion of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the destination,
- promotion of the destination's natural heritage,
- communication primarily without printed publications and with increased use of digital channels.





10 SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION AND AWARENESS



ON THE WAY TO SUSTAINABILITY

In cooperation with the Municipality of Celje, the Celje Celia Institute organised the meeting On the Path of Sustainability in January 2024, where the activities of the leading destination within the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism and the steps to be taken in the field of sustainable development in 2024 were presented. The Mayor of the Municipality of Celje signed the Green Commitment of Slovenian Tourism, and the Association for Environmental Education of Europe in Slovenia awarded the Green Key environmental label to Hotel Evropa.



CONFERENCE IN DIALOGUE WITH TOURISM

At the first conference (2024), speakers presented tourism trends for 2024 in Slovenia, marketing guidelines for art and culture in 2024 and 2025, the new strategy for cultural development in the City Municipality of Celje, and the program guidelines of the Celeia Celje Institute for 2024. They also introduced sustainable business practices and the use of vertical video in the promotion of tourism and cultural products to interested audiences.

At the second conference (2025), the focus was on financial incentives at the national and local levels, the establishment of networks under the Slovenian Tourist Board, as well as brand management and addressing the challenges posed by climate change to tourism.





NEW GENERATION OF TOURIST GUIDES OF CELJE | 2024

The multidisciplinary course program for local tourist guides in the City Municipality of Celje has equipped the new generation of fourteen guides with essential knowledge for the work of a tourist guide, as well as expertise in storytelling, costumed and themed experiences, gastronomy, and sustainable tourism. A significant portion of the course took place on-site, engaging with various tourism stakeholders and tourist attractions.



CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SUSTAINABILITY-ORIENTED TOURIST GUIDES OF CELJE







Turistični vodniki ste prvi ambasadorji in gostitelji mesta. Vzpostavljate stik, ste ogledalo vseh Celjanov in Celjanov, nalih dosežkov in strateških smernic v sedanosti ter izzivov v prihodnosti.

HVALA,
ker dajete spled in s svojimi dejanji pomagате tudi pri trajnostnemu razvoju destinacije.

Spodaj podpisani turistični vodnik destinacije Celje se s podpisom

KODEKSA ZA TRAJNOSTNO NARAVNANE TURISTIČNE VODNIKE CELJA

zavežujem, da bom

s svojim delom prispeval k trajnostnemu razvoju turizma in spoštovanju naravne ter kulturne dediščine mesta. Zavzemal se bom za odgovorno in etično vodenje turistov. S svojim delom bom prispeval k ohranjanju edinstvenosti Celja kot trajnostne in gostoljubne destinacije ter krepił spoštovanje med obiskovalci in lokalno skupnostjo.

Odgovorno in strokovno bom turistom predstavil bogato zgodovino Celja. Skrbel bom za ohranjanje in promocijo naravne ter snovne in nesnovne kulturne dediščine Celja ter to, na znamenitostih kot so: Celjski grad, Drevesna hiša, stara mestno jedro, Mestni grad ... prenašal tudi na obiskovalce in lokalno skupnost.

S svojim delom ne bom škodoval naravnemu okolju. Obiskovalce bom govedelal o pomenu varovanja reke Savinje, celjskega Mestnega grada, Smarinskake jezera in drugih naravnih vrednot destinacije Celje ter učił spoštivega vedenja v naravnem okolju. Upošteval bom občutljiva območja naravnega lokalnega ekosistema, dinamiko ter življenjski prostor živali in rastlin v njem. Izpostavil bom pomen ter ohranjanje biotske raznovrstnosti, v primeru kršitev in nevarnosti pa ustrezno ukrepal ter obvestil pristojne službe.

V svojem delu bom dosledno spoštival načela trajnostnega turizma, kot so varčevanje z viri, zmanjševanje ogljičnega odtisa in spoštovanje lokalnih običajev. Turiste bom spodbujal k trajnostno naravnemu ravnanju na destinaciji, spoštovanju Celja ter njegovih prebivalcev in zmanjšanju negativnih vplivov turizma na okolje in ljudi. Spodbujal jih bom k potrlni lokalnih izdelkov in storitev, rabi javnih pitnikov vode v starem mestnem jedru in na Celjskem gradu, trajnostni mobilnosti in zmanjšanju količin odpadne hrane in drugih odpadkov.

Spodbujal bom obisk lokalnih podjetij, obrtnikov in gostincev, ki ohranjajo tradicionalne obrti, spoštujejo lokalno pridelano hrano in kratke dobavne poti ter avtentično celjsko kulinariko.

Turistom in lokalnim prebivalcem bom nudil točne, nepristranske, preverjene in zanimive informacije, ki bodo temeljile na zgodovinskih dejstvih ter kulturni dediščini. Skrbel bom za varnost in dobro počutje turistov in lokalnih prebivalcev ter upošteval njihove potrebe in interese. Spoštval bom kulturne razlike, prepričanja, verovanja in svoboda posameznika.

Delo trajnostno naravnane turističnega vodnika bom opravljal po načelih poštenosti, integritete in spoštovanja. Stalno se bom izobraževal in nadgrajeval svoje znanje, da bom lahko obiskovalcem nudil kakovostno in verodostojno izkušnjo.

Kraj in datum: _____

Ime Priimek: _____

Podpis: _____




11 GREEN COMMUNICATION



CONSISTENT USE OF THE SLOVENIA GREEN SILVER LOGO

- in press releases,
- Printed publications in various languages,
- Digital advertisements,
- Video and photo promotions,
- On the website platform www.visitcelje.eu ...



GREEN TIPS

Discover green Celje by Wheel or on foot.

Drink tap water.

Try local dishes and buy products from local producers.

Buy less and thoughtfully.

Visit the biggest medieval castle in Slovenia - Celje Castle.

By train for culture.









Od preteklosti do trajnosti

Koraki, ki štejejo.



Pripeljite se trajnostno

Z vlakom do mesta

P železniška postaja | Zgodovinski arhiv | PH Celela

Uporabite brezplačen avtobus od 14.30 dalje | avtobusna pri železniški postaji.



Tudi vitezi so šli peš

Z družino ali v dvoje se odločite za grajski sprehod po Pelikanovi poti.

Skupaj z vodnikom | 17.30 | 18.30



Ločujte kot pravi grajski komornik

Ce je bil kdo v srednjem veku natančen, so to bili grajski komorniki.

Sledite njihovemu zgledu in odpadke ločujte.



Plastika? Ne, hvala!

Plastična embalaža je v tem gradu nezaželenal

Izposodite si povratne kozarce | kavčija 5 EUR



Zemljevid?

Sodobni vitezi ne potrebujejo papirnatih zemljevidov.

Skenirajte QR kodo in si oglejte program Srednjeveškega dne.



Podprite grajske ustvarjalce

Na srednjeveški tržnici boste našli izdelke, ki jih z ljubeznijo ustvarjajo domači obrtniki.

Podprite jih s svojimi nakupi.



Prinesite svojo čutarico

Pravi vitezi in dame nosijo s seboj svojo čutarico za vodo.

Čutarico lahko v viteškem taboru BREZPLAČNO napolnite s pitno vodo.



Zdravica za lokalne okuse

Poskusite jedi iz lokalnih in sezonskih sestavin, ki jih ponuja grajska kuhinja.



Vsak korak šteje.

Vabimo vas, da se nam pridružite pri tem odgovornem poslanstvu in skupni skrbi za okolje.



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