

Primorsko-notranjska statistical region, Slovenia

The NUTS 3 – Primorsko-notranjska statistical region lies in the southernmost part of Slovenia. The region has 52,538 inhabitants and stretches over 1,456 km², thus representing one of the smallest regions in Slovenia, covering 7.2 % of the country. The region comprises an area of six municipalities (Bloke, Cerknica, Loška Dolina, Ilirska Bistrica, Pivka and Postojna). It is a predominantly rural region with the lowest population density in the country – 36 inhab./km².

This region is part of the Alpine biogeographical region and, according to geographical landscape typology, a part of Dinaric landscapes. Sedimentary rocks known as limestone and dolomite led to special shapes created by water flowing over the fusible stone – the so-called karst phenomena (karst caves, potholes, karst springs, disappearing lakes, original karst poljes, sinkholes). As a result we find here a vastly forested area – Illyrian *Fagus sylvatica* forests, covering 71% of the region. Wood is the most abundant and the most important natural resource in the area. There are also some unique grasslands (dry karst meadows, pastures and scrubbed-over areas) and wetlands. The region has a lot of water resources, mainly because of the karst aquifer and springs.

The region is well preserved from an environmental point of view. More than half of the region is part of the Natura 2000 network. The largest protected area is Notranjska Regional Park. There is also significant natural heritage here. The flora and fauna of this region are diverse – birds, large carnivores, bats, butterflies, plants, flowers. There are many endemic species, which ranks the region as a biodiversity hotspot for the underground karst world.

The influence of humans has caused diverse cultural landscapes – clustered villages, churches, castles, mills, sawmills, stone crosses and preserved castles. The Green Karst is the tourist brand of the region that gathered all of the main touristic destinations – typical Karst features, historical and cultural monuments. The majority of tourists visit the Postojna Cave, the Military History Park Pivka, the Predjama and Snežnik castles, and the Križna Cave.

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