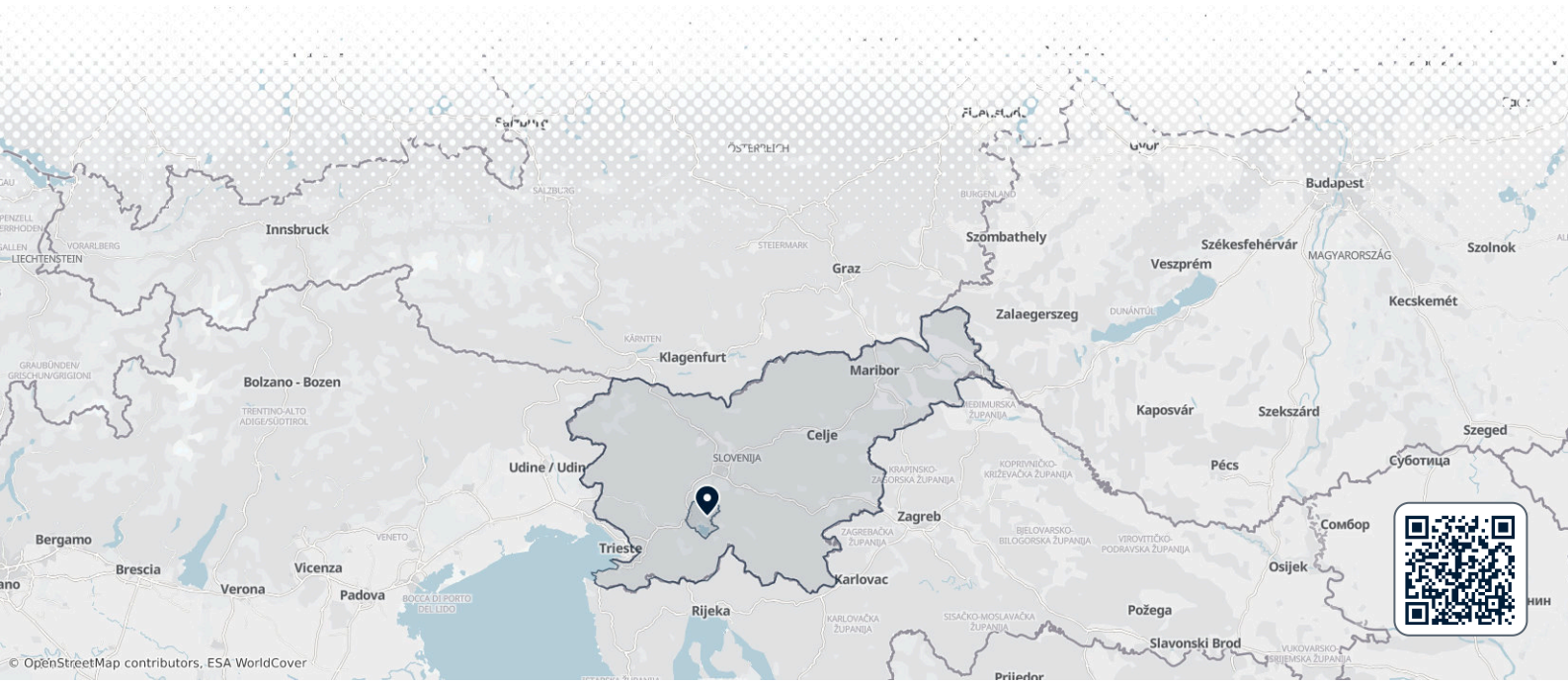


Cerknica

Slovenia

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Cerknica is a small town in the green karst country of Notranjska, south-west of Ljubljana. It sits at the edge of Lake Cerknica, an intermittent lake that floods the valley floor for most of the year and then drains away through holes in the rock. When it is full, it is the largest lake in Slovenia.

The town is the base for Notranjska Regional Park. Within a short drive you find a gorge with natural rock bridges, a cave crossed by boat, and forested hills with brown bears. Local legend says the witches of Cerknica live on Slivnica, the hill above the town, and they return every year for the carnival. Come for walking, cycling, caves and birdlife rather than city sights. Two or three days are enough to see the main places.

When to visit

Late spring to early autumn is the best time. Days are warm, trails are dry and all cave tours run. The lake is usually fullest after the autumn and spring rains and often shrinks in late summer. Winters are cold and often snowy, and some tours run only at weekends.

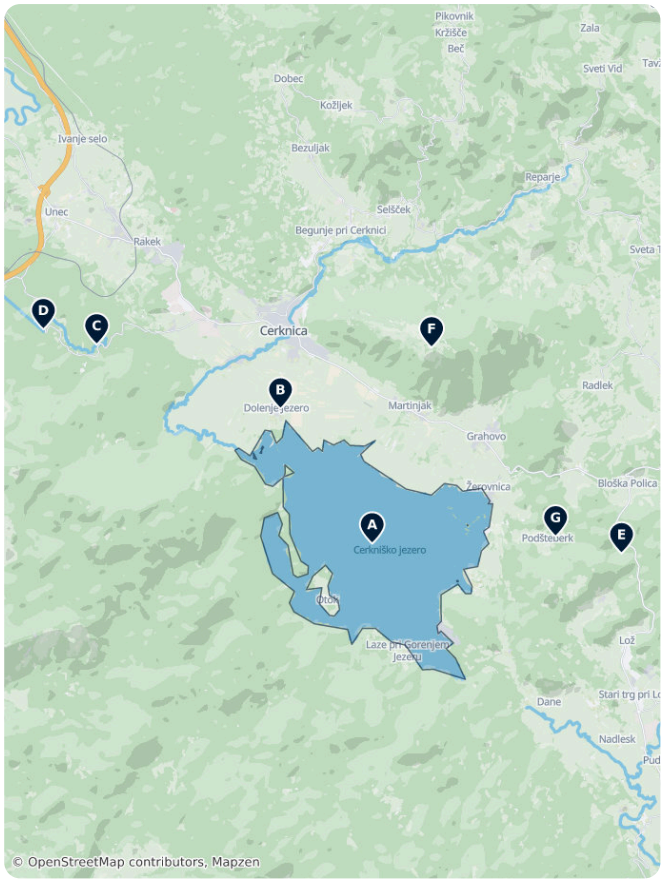
The biggest event is the **Cerknica Carnival** in February or early March. Masked witches, led by Uršula from Slivnica, and other local figures fill the town during the week before Lent, and the main parade takes place on the Sunday.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for hiking	3° / 10° Feels like -1°	-4° / -12°	Dry air · Calm winds
February	Poor Poor for hiking	5° / 12° Feels like 1°	-3° / -11°	Dry air · Calm winds
March	Fair Fair for cycling	10° / 17° Feels like 7°	0° / -6°	Dry air · Calm winds
April	Good Good for cycling	15° / 21°	4° / -2°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
May	Good Good for sightseeing	19° / 25°	8° / 4°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
June	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 29°	13° / 7°	14 rainy days · Calm winds
July	Great Great for sightseeing	25° / 31°	14° / 10°	Calm winds
August	Good Good for sightseeing	26° / 33°	14° / 10°	Calm winds
September	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 27°	10° / 5°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
October	Good Good for cycling	15° / 21°	6° / 0°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
November	Fair Fair for cycling	9° / 16°	2° / -5°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
December	Poor Poor for hiking	4° / 10° Feels like 1°	-2° / -10°	Dry air · Calm winds

Best months: June, July, September

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights



A Lake Cerknica usually covers more than 20 km² and holds water for most of the year. In dry spells it sinks underground, and the same land is mowed as meadow. Start at the Lake Cerknica Visitor Center in Dolenje Jezero, where a one-hour exhibition and a short film explain how the lake works. The visitor center is closed on Mondays.

B Jezerski hram Lake Museum is a small private museum in Dolenje Jezero. A guide uses a large model of the lake to show how it fills and empties. Tours run mainly at weekends.

Rakov Škocjan is a short karst valley formed when the roof of a cave collapsed. The Rak stream comes out of C Zelške Caves in the east and disappears into D Tkalca Cave in the west. On the way it flows past the Small Natural Bridge (42 m high) and under the Big Natural Bridge (37 m high). An easy educational trail links the sights through fir and beech forest.

E Križna Cave has a chain of 22 green underground lakes. The short tour takes about one hour and includes a boat ride on the first lake when the water level allows. It is cold inside, so bring warm clothes. Longer boat tours deeper into the cave take only a few visitors a day.

F Slivnica rises to 1,114 m above the town and the lake. In legend it is the home of the Cerknica witches, led by Uršula. Trees cover the summit, but a mountain hut just below it makes a good goal for a half-day hike, with views over the lake on the way.

G Šteberk Castle ruins stand above the south-east shore of the lake. The castle was first recorded in 1274 and later abandoned. Only walls remain, but the site gives a good view across the valley.

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What to experience

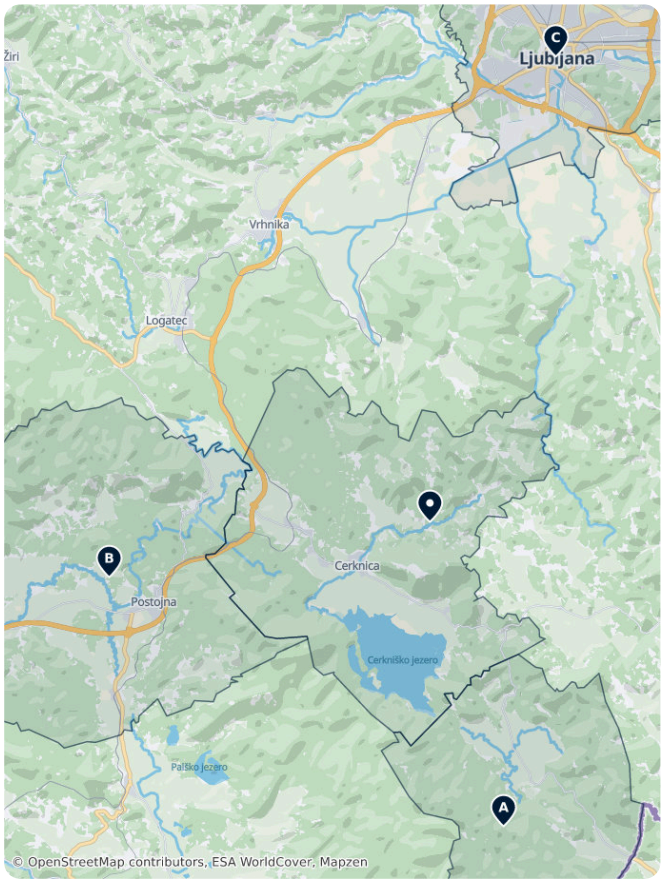
Most local experiences follow the water level of the lake and the seasons.

- **Join the Cerknica Carnival**: Events with masks and humour fill the week before Lent. On the Sunday, witches led by Uršula join the big parade through the streets.
- **Paddle on the lake**: When the water is high enough, guided canoe trips cross the flooded valley. The park publishes live water levels, so check them before you plan a trip.
- **Watch birds**: Hundreds of bird species have been recorded at the lake. Spring and autumn migration are the best times to bring binoculars.
- **Walk the Drvošec Trail**: This educational trail near Dolenje Jezero gives good views over the lake and its meadows.
- **Take the long boat tour in Križna Cave**: The tour to the Calvary chamber takes about four hours and crosses 13 underground lakes by boat. Only four people a day are allowed, so book well ahead.

Day trips

Several of Slovenia's best-known karst sights are less than an hour away by car. Bus links are limited, so a car makes these trips much easier.

- Planina Cave — ≈20 min by car. This large river cave is where the Rak river from Rakov Škocjan meets the Pivka from Postojna. Guided tours run inside.
- Snežnik Castle — ≈30 min by car, in A Loška Dolina. The castle keeps its 19th-century furniture on four floors, and visits are by guided tour. The park around it is free.
- Postojna Cave — ≈25 min by car, near B Postojna. It is Slovenia's most famous show cave, toured partly by underground train.
- Predjama Castle — ≈35 min by car. The castle is built into the mouth of a cave in a high cliff. Combine it with Postojna Cave.
- C Ljubljana — ≈40 min by car. The country's small, walkable capital.



Where to explore

To the south, Loška Dolina has Snežnik Castle and the quiet Lož valley. West of Cerknica, Postojna is the centre of Slovenia's cave country.

To the north, Logatec lies on the road and rail line to the capital, Ljubljana.

Getting there

- **By air**: Ljubljana Jože Pučnik Airport is the nearest international airport. Most travellers continue via Ljubljana by car or bus.
- **By train**: The nearest station is Rakek, on the line from Ljubljana to Koper. From Rakek, take a local bus or taxi, or walk a marked trail to the lake. Slovenian Railways
- **By bus**: Regular buses run to Cerknica from Ljubljana and from Postojna. Ljubljana bus station timetables
- **By car**: Cerknica is about a 40-minute drive from Ljubljana, mostly on the A1 motorway towards Koper.

Getting around

- **Bus**: Local buses connect Cerknica with nearby villages, but services are infrequent, especially at weekends. Public transport to Rakov Škocjan and Križna Cave is very limited.
- **Bike**: A cycling and walking path runs from Cerknica to the lake at Dolenje Jezero. Bike Center Cerknica rents ordinary and electric bikes, and marked cycling routes start in town.
- **On foot**: The town centre is small. Marked trails lead up Slivnica and along the lake, but the main sights are spread over several kilometres.
- **Car**: A car is the easiest way to combine the lake, Rakov Škocjan and Križna Cave in one day.

Notranjska Regional Park

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The town centre is compact, and a path leads to the lake, but the main natural sights are several kilometres apart.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

High

A cycle path links Cerknica with the lake, bikes and e-bikes can be rented in town, and quiet roads circle the valley.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Yes. Buses are rare, and the lake, Rakov Škocjan and Križna Cave are far apart.
- **Parking**: There are several car parks in Cerknica and near the lake. Signs show any charges and where motorhomes may not stop.
- **Roads**: Local roads are narrow and wind through forest. Watch for wildlife, including deer and the occasional bear, especially at dusk.

Food & drink

Food here is simple, filling inland Slovenian cooking. Menus often feature game, mushrooms in season and hearty stews.

For a meal, look in the small centre of Cerknica or at the inns and tourist farms in the lakeside villages, such as Dolenje Jezero. The Taste Notranjska culinary festival brings special local menus to restaurants across the region.

What to eat & drink

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Potica · potica
A rolled nut cake, traditionally served at holidays.

Kremna rezina · kremna rezina
A vanilla and whipped-cream custard slice, associated with Bled.

DRINKS

Slovenian wine
Wine from the Vipava Valley, Štajerska, and Primorska regions.

SIGNATURE DISHES

Štruklji · štruklji
Rolled dumplings, sweet or savory, boiled or baked.

Kranjska klobasa · kranjska klobasa
A protected (PGI) pork sausage, usually boiled and served with mustard and horseradish.

Jota · jota
A hearty stew of beans, sauerkraut or turnip, and smoked meat.

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Safety & health

Cerknica is very safe, and crime against visitors is rare.

The main risks are outdoors. Brown bears live in the forests of Notranjska. Keep to marked trails, make some noise when walking, and never leave food out. Ticks are common in grass and forest, so check your skin after hikes. Caves are cold and wet inside, so wear warm clothes and sturdy shoes on every tour. Do not walk on the lake bed when it is flooding.

History

People have lived around the lake since prehistoric times, drawn by its fish. Cerknica was first recorded in 1040. The parish church on the hill in the centre was rebuilt as a late Gothic hall church between 1480

and 1520, after Ottoman raiders burned the earlier one in 1472. It stands on the site of a fortification built against those raids.

In the 17th century the Carniolan scholar *Johann Weikhard von Valvasor* studied how Lake Cerknica appears and disappears. His work earned him a place in the Royal Society in London. The lake is still a classic example in the study of karst landscapes.

Protection of the area also started early. Rakov Škocjan became Slovenia's first regional park in 1949. Today the lake, Rakov Škocjan and Križna Cave are protected together as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Slovenia at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



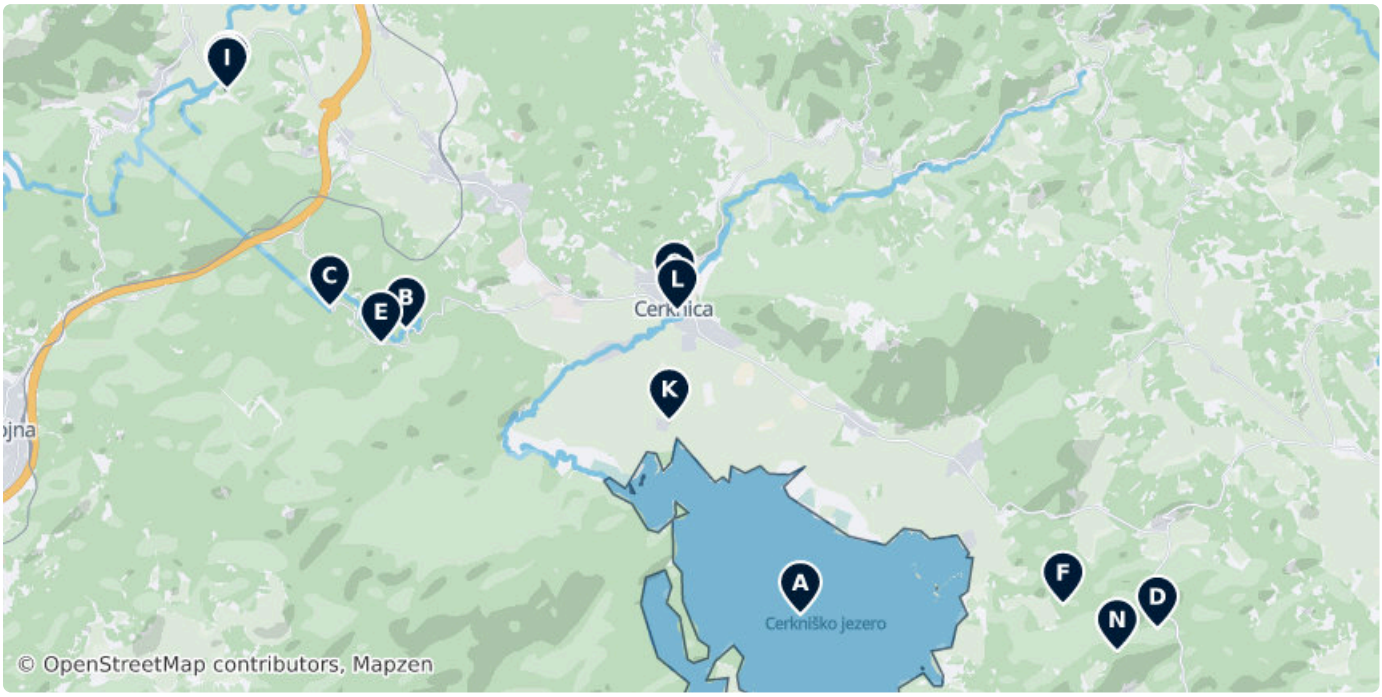
Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Slovenian

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Cerknica's Essential Wonders

Cerknica is defined by its dramatic karst geology, centered around Lake Cerknica, Europe's largest intermittent lake. The region features the Rakov Škocjan valley with its natural stone bridges and the Križna Cave, famous for its underground lakes and Ice Age cave bear remains. Historical sites include the ruins of the Haasberg Mansion and Šteberk Castle, alongside cultural landmarks like the Lake Cerknica Museum and the fortified Church of Mary's Nativity.





A Lake Cerknica

Lake Cerknica is an intermittent lake in the southern part of the Cerknica Polje, a karst polje in Inner Carniola, a region in southwestern...

1380, Slovenia (45.74738, 14.38949)



B Zelske Caves

Karst cave system featuring natural rock bridges and the River Rak. The area is characterized by unique karst terrain and various water sources.

Rakov Škocjan, 1381 Zelše, Slovenia (45.79075, 14.30348)

C Weaver Cave

Weaver Cave, also known as Inlet Cave, is a 2,885 metres long ponor cave in southwest Slovenia.

914, 1380, Slovenia (45.79407, 14.28687)



D Križna Cave

Cross Cave, also named Cold Cave under Cross Mountain, is a cave in Slovenia's Lož Valley, in the area between the Lož Karst Field,...

(Unnamed Road), 1384, Slovenia (45.74523, 14.46735)

krizna-jama.si, +386 41 632 153



E Rakov Škocjan Natural Park

This is one of the most beautiful natural parks of Slovenia featuring many incredible sites including the famous natural stone bridge.

9 Rakov Škocjan, 1380, Slovenia (45.78855, 14.29806)



F Šteberk Castle

The ruins of Šteberk Castle stand at an elevation of 647 meters above the settlement of Podšteberk southeast of Cerknica, Slovenia.

1384, Slovenia (45.74893, 14.44676)

G Dvorec Haasberg

A 17th-century Baroque mansion once owned by the Windisch-Graetz family. Though burned during World War II, its monumental ruins remain a significant example of noble architecture in the Inner Carniola region.

(45.82783, 14.26498)



H Dvorec Haasberg

The skeletal remains of one of Slovenia's most prominent Baroque manors, destroyed by fire in 1944. The site preserves the shell of the main building and its grand stone staircase.

(Unnamed Road), 6232, Slovenia (45.82799, 14.26485)

I Grajska štala

The former stables of the Haasberg estate, part of the larger 17th-century manor complex near Planinsko Polje.

(Unnamed Road), 6232, Slovenia (45.82718, 14.26451)

J Grajski vrt

The remains of the formal gardens surrounding Haasberg Mansion, which once featured manicured paths and parkland typical of 17th-century noble residences.

(Unnamed Road), 6232, Slovenia (45.82760, 14.26415)

K Lake house Museum

Features a detailed 1:2500 scale living model of the intermittent lake, demonstrating the complex hydrological system of the karst landscape and local folk traditions.

1380 Cerknica (45.77679, 14.36088)

Sa–Su 11:00–12:00

jezerski-hram.si, +386 41 561 870



L WWII memorial

A monument dedicated to the local victims and partisans of World War II, located within the town of Cerknica.

5 Partizanska cesta, Cerknica 1380, Slovenia (45.79352, 14.36263)



M Križna gora

A 857-meter hill overlooking the Lož Valley, topped by a pilgrimage church and offering views of the surrounding karst fields.

(Unnamed Road), 1386, Slovenia (45.74175, 14.45853)

zupnija-staritrg.si/podruznice_page_4

O Župnijska C. Marijinega Rojstva

A Baroque parish church in Cerknica, originally built in the 15th century. It features a fortified wall, a remnant of its history as a defense against Ottoman raids.

(45.79608, 14.36209)

cerknica.donbosko.si

N Cerkev sv. Križa

A 16th-century pilgrimage church located atop Križna gora, known for its late Gothic architecture and its role as a prominent local landmark.

(Unnamed Road), 1386, Slovenia (45.74175, 14.45858)

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