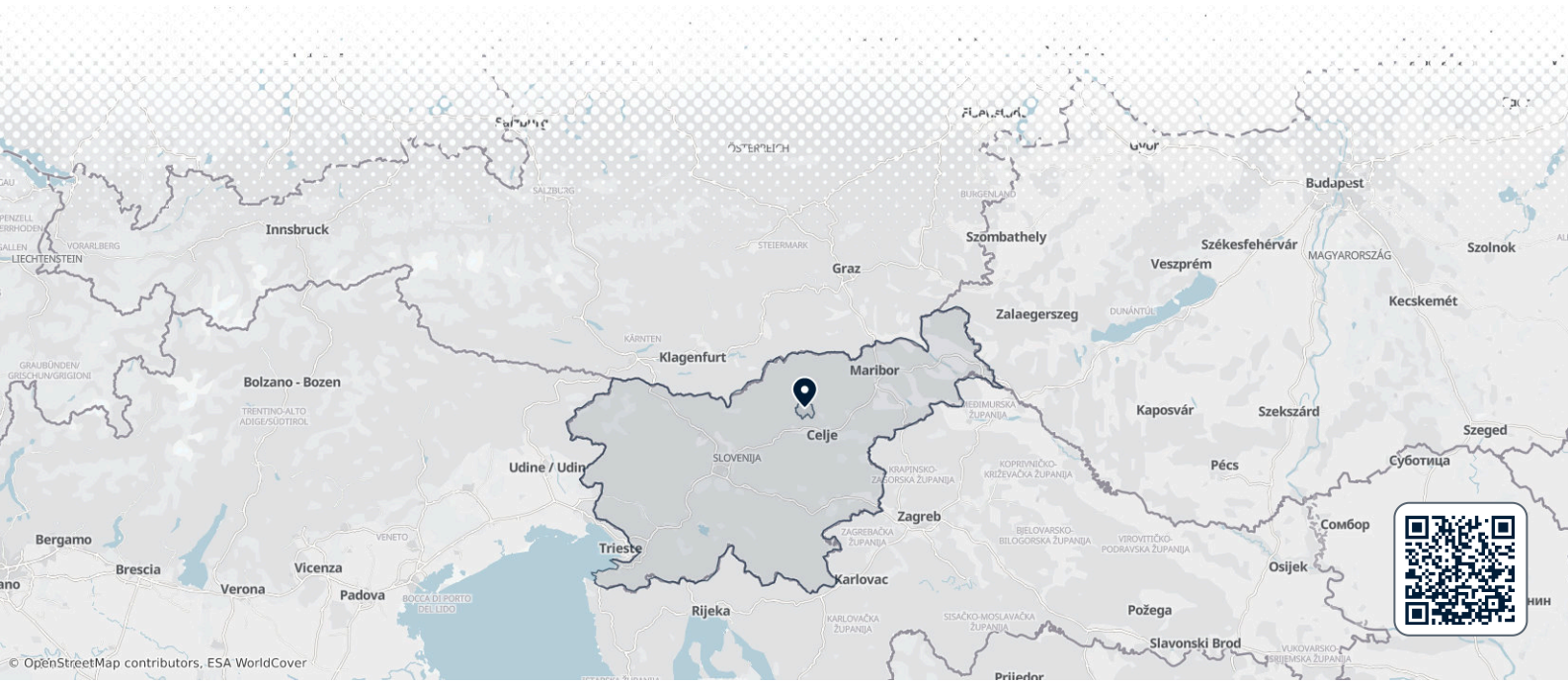


Velenje

Slovenia

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Velenje is a young town built around coal. Most of it was planned in the 1950s as a modern home for miners, with tower blocks set among parks and wide lawns. The result is one of the best-kept late-modernist town centres in Europe. Above it stands a medieval castle, and on its edge lie lakes that formed where the ground sank over the mine.

Come for one or two days. You can ride a lift deep into a coal mine, see mastodon bones in the castle, swim at a free lake beach and walk through a showcase town of socialist Yugoslavia. Velenje is also a quiet base for the green Šalek Valley, the spa at Topolšica and the mountain valleys further west. It suits families especially well.

When to visit

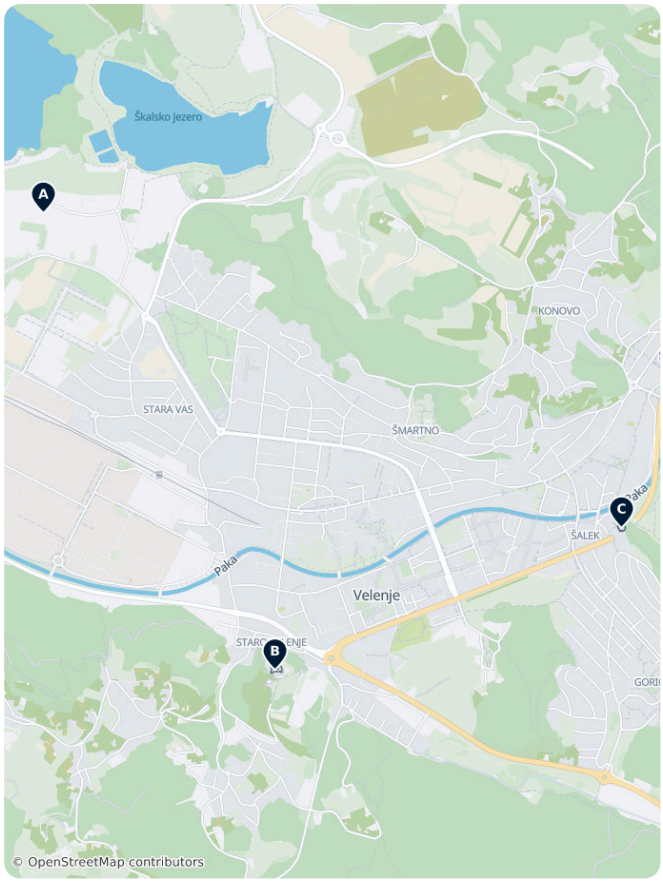
Late spring to early autumn is the best time. Summer is warm, and the lake beach is open with lifeguards on duty. Winters are cold and often frosty, but the museums stay open all year.

The biggest event is **Pika's Festival** in the first week of September. It is the largest children's festival in Slovenia, with workshops, plays and concerts across town, all inspired by Pippi Longstocking. Book a room early if you travel with children that week.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for sightseeing	4° / 11° Feels like 0°	-3° / -11°	Dry air · Calm winds
February	Poor Poor for sightseeing	6° / 14° Feels like 2°	-3° / -12°	Dry air · Calm winds
March	Good Good for cycling	10° / 18° Feels like 7°	1° / -6°	Dry air · Calm winds
April	Good Good for cycling	15° / 22°	5° / -2°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
May	Good Good for sightseeing	20° / 26°	9° / 4°	16 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
June	Good Good for sightseeing	25° / 31°	14° / 8°	16 rainy days · Calm winds
July	Good Good for sightseeing	26° / 33°	15° / 10°	16 rainy days · Calm winds
August	Good Good for sightseeing	26° / 34°	15° / 10°	15 rainy days · Calm winds
September	Good Good for sightseeing	21° / 28°	11° / 6°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
October	Good Good for cycling	16° / 23°	7° / 0°	Dry air · Calm winds
November	Fair Fair for cycling	10° / 17°	3° / -4°	Dry air · Calm winds
December	Poor Poor for sightseeing	5° / 11° Feels like 1°	-2° / -11°	Dry air · Calm winds

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

Top sights



- A Coal Mining Museum of Slovenia is the town's headline sight. A lift from 1888 takes you 160 m underground, where you walk through a very thick coal seam, ride a small mine train and can eat a miner's lunch. Tours run Tuesday to Saturday at fixed times, and you must book ahead. Children must be at least six.
- B Velenje Castle sits on a hill above the old square. Its arcaded courtyard and round Renaissance bastion are well preserved. Inside, the town museum shows the remains of mastodons that lived in the valley about three million years ago, plus an African art collection and a reconstructed old shop and inn.
- **Tito Square** is the heart of the planned 1950s town. Modernist buildings and the town hall frame the wide, open space, which is named after the Yugoslav leader *Josip Broz Tito*. Walk on along the promenade beside the Paka River.
- **Lake Velenje** formed when the ground sank over the mine and flooded several villages. Velenje Beach on its shore has free swimming, sunbeds and an inflatable water park in summer. The nearby Vista park has a viewing platform over the water.
- C Šalek Castle Ruins stand on a rock on the east side of town. Only the tall triangular keep survives, a very rare shape for a castle tower. The castle gave its name to the whole Šalek Valley.

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What to experience

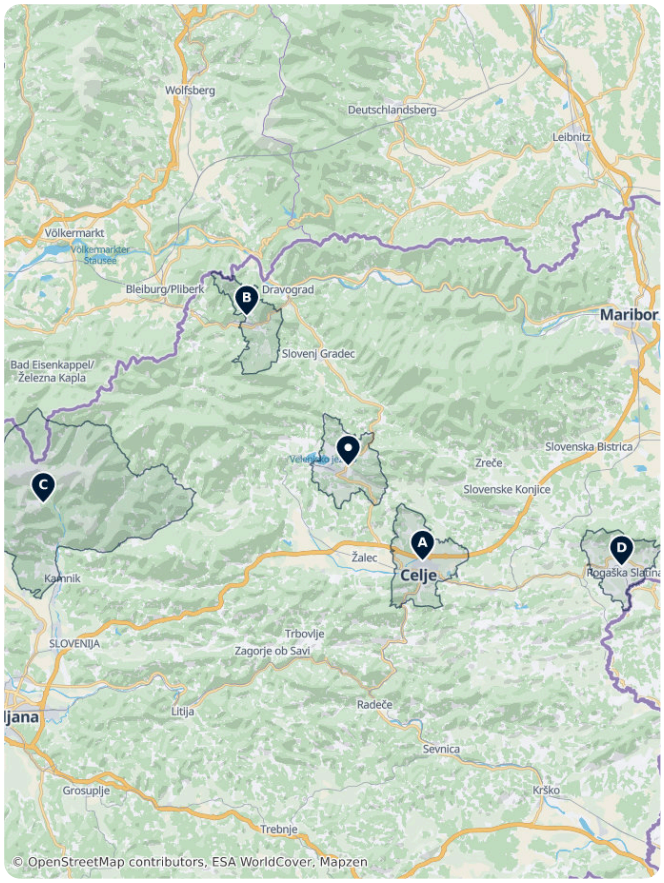
Velenje's best moments mix mining heritage, lakes and its socialist past.

- **Eat 160 m underground**: book the miner's lunch on a tour of the Coal Mining Museum of Slovenia, or the gourmet Velenje Underground dinner in the same deep dining room.
- **Spend a summer day at the lake**: swim and relax on the free sunbeds at Velenje Beach. Then climb the Vista viewing platform for a view over the water that covers the lost villages.
- **Take a retro town walk**: guided "Experience socialism" walks explain how Velenje grew into a model town of Yugoslavia, and they end with a lunch in the old workers' club.
- **Soak in thermal water**: spend half a day in the warm pools of Terme Topolšica, surrounded by forest.

Day trips

The Šalek Valley and the mountains to the west are easy to reach. A car helps for everything except Celje.

- **Šoštanj** (≈10 min by car): the neighbouring town has a pretty square and the Museum of Tanning in Slovenia, set in a former leather factory.
- Terme Topolšica (≈20 min by car): a forest spa with 32 °C thermal water. A memorial room in the spa park marks the surrender of German forces here on 9 May 1945.
- Ⓐ Celje (≈30 min by car or bus): Slovenia's third-largest city, with a large medieval castle and the history of the Counts of Celje.
- Ⓑ Ravne na Koroškem (≈40 min by car): a steel town in the Koroška region, surrounded by green hills.
- **Logar Valley** (≈1 h by car): a classic glacial valley with waterfalls at the foot of the Ⓒ Kamnik-Savinja Alps, reached through the Upper Savinja Valley.
- Ⓓ Rogaška Slatina (≈1 h by car): a historic spa town known for its mineral water and glassmaking.



Where to explore

Velenje lies in north-eastern Slovenia, between the Savinja Valley and the Koroška hills.

- **Nearby towns**: Celje lies to the south-east and Ravne na Koroškem to the north.
- **Mountains**: the Kamnik-Savinja Alps rise to the west.
- **Spas**: Rogaška Slatina is the best-known spa town in the region.
- **Cities**: Ljubljana and Maribor are both about an hour away by car.

Getting there

- **By air**: The nearest airport is Ljubljana Jože Pučnik Airport, about 1 h 15 min away by car. Without a car, travel via Ljubljana and continue by bus.
- **By bus**: This is the easiest public option. There are direct buses from Ljubljana and frequent buses from Celje on weekdays. Nomago
- **By train**: Regional trains run between Velenje and Celje, where you change for Ljubljana and Maribor. Services are much fewer at weekends. Slovenian Railways
- **By car**: Velenje is about 20 minutes north of the A1 motorway. The drive from Ljubljana takes about an hour. Slovenian motorways need an e-vignette.

Getting around

- **On foot**: Tito Square, the old square and the castle are all within a 10-minute walk of each other. The lake beach and the mining museum are about 2–3 km west of the centre.
- **Town buses**: The Lokalc town bus runs on five routes with 43 stops across town. Lokalc (Municipality of Velenje)
- **Cycling**: The valley floor is flat, and paths circle the lakes. The town has a public bike-share system, and the tourist office in Vila Bianca rents e-bikes.
- **Tourist information**: The office in Vila Bianca, on the old square below the castle, is open every day. Visit Šaleška

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The modernist centre, the old square and the castle are a short walk apart; the lake beach and the mining museum are 2–3 km west, so take the Lokalc town bus or a bike.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

High

The valley floor is flat, paths circle the lakes, and the town has a public bike-share; the tourist office also rents e-bikes.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Not for the town centre, which is compact. A car is the best way to reach Topolšica, the hill farms and the Alpine valleys to the west, as buses there are infrequent.
- **Parking**: Parking is easy compared with older Slovenian towns. Leave the car at the car parks around the centre or by the lake, and walk to Tito Square.

Food & drink

Velenje's food mixes Styrian farm cooking with the hearty meals of a mining town. Miners came here from all over Yugoslavia, so Balkan grill dishes are popular alongside Slovenian soups and stews. Look for local apple brandy.

For something special, eat in the dining room 160 m underground at the mining museum. The boutique in Vila Bianca sells local farm products, including brandy aged in the coal mine, and runs guided tastings. For everyday meals, try the cafés and bars around Tito Square and along the river promenade.

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

Velenje is a safe town with very little crime. Normal care with your belongings is enough.

Tap water is safe to drink. The lakes lie over old mine workings, so swim only at the official beach, where lifeguards are on duty in summer and the water quality is checked.

History

For centuries Velenje was a small market town below Velenje Castle, which is first mentioned in 1270. The Šalek Valley had so many castles that it was called the "valley of castles". Šalek Castle Ruins are what remains of one of the oldest, built by the 12th century. In the 16th century the valley was a centre of Protestant life in Styria.

Coal changed everything. The mine opened in the late 19th century, and after 1950 demand for coal grew fast. The mine's director, *Nestl Žganek*, argued that miners who spend their days underground deserve bright homes and green space. Architects from Ljubljana planned a new town for about 30,000 people. The new centre opened on 20 September 1959, still celebrated as the town's birthday. From 1981 to 1990 the town was called Titovo Velenje.

Mining also reshaped the land. As the ground sank, villages such as Škale were pulled down and their sites flooded to form the lakes. During this work in 1964, workers levelling the land found the mastodon bones now shown in the castle. Coal mining is now being phased out, and the valley is changing again.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Slovenia at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY

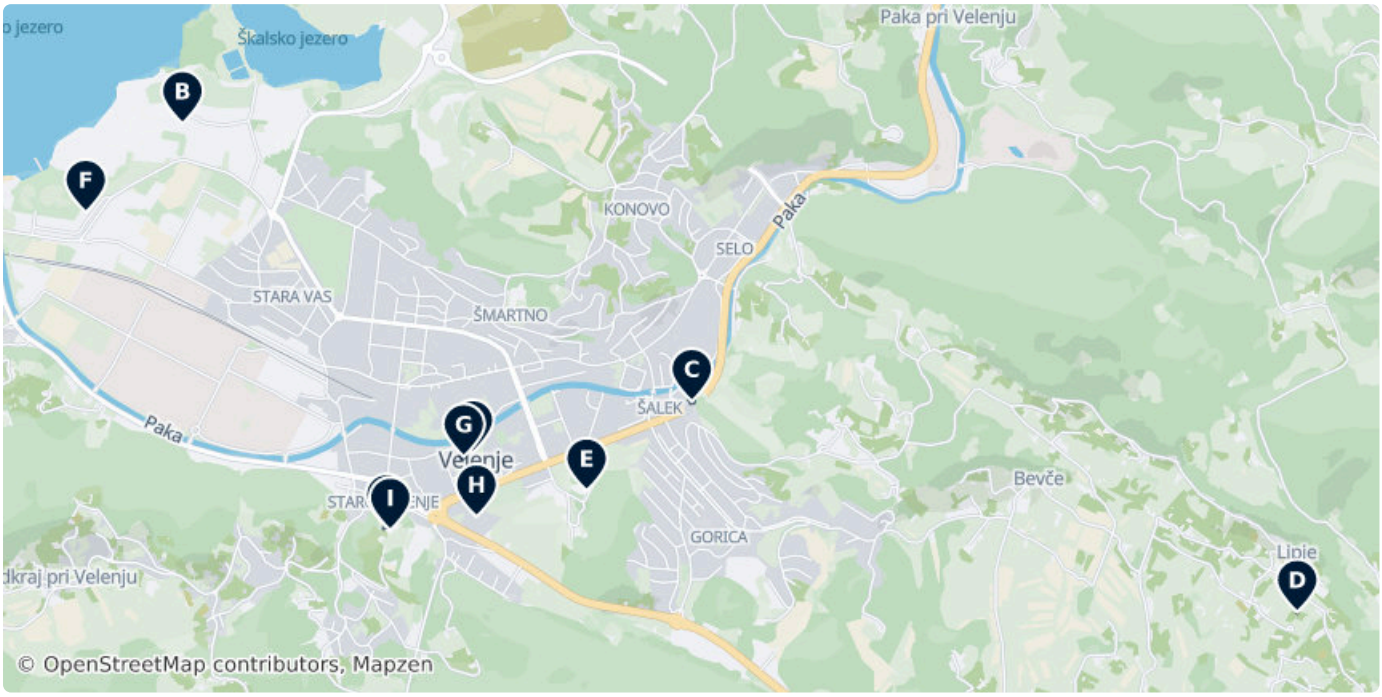
Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Slovenian

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Velenje Essentials

Velenje combines its medieval origins with a significant 20th-century industrial legacy. The town's skyline is dominated by Velenje Castle, one of Slovenia's best-preserved fortifications, and the distinctive triangular ruins of Šalek Castle. Beneath the surface, the Coal Mining Museum offers an immersive 160-meter descent into the region's mining heritage. Modernist architecture defines the city center, including the Kulturni dom and the Red Hall sports arena. Natural highlights include Velenje Lake, where lakeside dining and recreational paths link the town's historical and industrial sites.





A Velenje Castle

Velenje Castle is a well-preserved castle in Velenje, Slovenia that was owned by the Kunšperk family, followed by their relatives and the...

3320 (46.35674, 15.10997)



B The Coal Mining Museum of Slovenia

An underground museum located in the Škale pit, offering a descent into the shafts to explore historical mining equipment and simulated working conditions.

62A Koroška cesta, Velenje 3320, Slovenia
(46.37246, 15.09844)

Mo	Closed
Tu–Sa	09:00–16:30
Su	Closed

muzej.rlv.si, +386 (0)31 752 418



C Šalek Castle

Ruins of a 13th-century hilltop castle characterized by its unique triangular tower, overlooking the Šalek Valley.

19 Šalek, Velenje 3320, Slovenia (46.36163, 15.12723)

We–Sa 09:00–17:00

D Grilova domačija

An ecomuseum set in a traditional 19th-century farmhouse, featuring a vegetable garden, orchard, and herb garden showcasing regional rural life.

(46.35340, 15.16147)

Mo–Su Open 24/7

muzej-velenje.si/grilova-domacija/, +386 3 898 26 30

E Vila Herberstein

A late 19th-century suburban villa located near Velenje Castle, currently operating as an upscale restaurant.

1 Kopališka cesta, 3320, Slovenia (46.35814, 15.12129)

vilaherberstein.si

F Restavracija Jezero

A restaurant located on the shores of Velenje Lake specializing in regional cuisine.

(46.36900, 15.09297)

gorenjegostinstvo.si/restavracije/res... , +386 (0)3 586 64 62

G Galerija Velenje

A central art space hosting rotating exhibitions of contemporary Slovenian and international visual arts.

Titov trg 5, 3320 Velenje, SI (46.35947, 15.11435)

H Red Hall

Red Hall is a sports facility arena in Velenje, Slovenia. It is the home arena of handball club Gorenje Velenje.

3 Šaleška cesta, Velenje 3320, Slovenia (46.35712, 15.11505)

I Grad

A scenic vantage point located at the Velenje Castle complex, offering views of the town and the surrounding valley.

(46.35661, 15.11018)

J Kulturni dom Velenje

A modernist cultural center and theater in the heart of Velenje, serving as the primary venue for local performing arts.

(46.35963, 15.11486)

DATA SOURCES

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