

Geomorphosites in Slovenia

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In a comprehensive manner, this paper presents the geomorphological natural heritage in Slovenia. Slovenia boasts outstanding landscape diversity since on its small territory the Alps, Dinaric Alps, Pannonian Basin, and Mediterranean regions meet, and this contact is reflected in a great wealth of relief forms. The karst area of carbonate rock that covers a good 40% of Slovenia contributes further diversity. It is therefore not surprising that among the 19,000 valuable natural features in Slovenia (~1 feature/km²) about half (9,350) are underground geomorphosites (karst caves). A further 10% of the surface geomorphosites largely concentrated in the Alps and in the karst region are also the most visited valuable natural features (waterfalls, intermittent lakes, canyons, caves). Slovenia's tourist caves alone have around 750,000 visitors each year, and more than 80,000 visits are made to individual waterfalls and canyons. The geomorphological natural heritage is therefore a significant economic factor.

However the conflicts of interest that have arisen as a result of growing human encroachment, the excessive “use” of geomorphosites, and the ensuing reduction of geodiversity increasingly demand an effective system of evaluating and protecting our natural assets.

Examining the case of Bled, a world-renowned tourist center and an area with a large number of natural attractions, this study examines the state and prospects of Slovenia's natural heritage. Although much of its natural environment has been damaged by building, Bled with its geomorphological and landscape attractions remains a magnet for tourists.

We identify and describe the most important geomorphosites and evaluate them. We offer recommendations regarding which of them are suitable for exploi-

tation and which should be left to undisturbed natural development and excluded from human use.

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