

# SOCIAL AND SPATIAL ASPECTS OF ROOTS TOURISM IN SLOVENIA: THE CASE OF THE SLOVENE-AMERICAN DIASPORA

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## ABSTRACT

### **Social and Spatial Aspects of Roots Tourism in Slovenia: The Case of the Slovene-American Diaspora**

Roots tourism describes the phenomenon of return visits of emigrants to the country of origin or the country of their ancestors. This term has gained widespread academic attention but remains relatively unknown in Slovenia despite the country's considerable diaspora with over 300,000 persons of Slovene origin. The article focuses on roots tourism in the Slovene context and examines the social, cultural, and spatial aspects of visits by members of the Slovene-American diaspora to their homeland. The research, based on data collected by online questionnaires, included 150 respondents from 25 US states. As the analyzed data show, their visits had a significant impact on their sense of family/ancestral heritage and in some cases became an emotional 'pilgrimage' rather than a 'tourist journey'.

KEYWORDS: roots tourism, Slovene-American diaspora, Slovenia, visit characteristics

## IZVLEČEK

### **Družbeni in prostorski vidiki turizma iskanja korenin v Sloveniji: Primer slovensko-ameriške izseljenske skupnosti**

V svetu že uveljavljeni izraz »turizem iskanja korenin«, s katerim označujemo turistične obiske izseljencev in njihovih potomcev v državi prednikov, je v Sloveniji kljub dejstvu, da zunaj meja Republike Slovenije živi preko 300.000 oseb slovenskega porekla, še relativno nepoznan. Avtorja v prispevku uvodoma predstavita poglobitve značilnosti tega segmenta turistične industrije, v nadaljevanju pa podajata izbrane ugotovitve študije, ki je preučila družbene, kulturne in geografske vidike turističnega obiska slovenskih izseljencev in njihovih potomcev iz Združenih držav Amerike v Sloveniji. Raziskava, ki je bila opravljena s pomočjo spletnih anketnih vprašalnikov in je zajemala 150 pričevanj anketirancev iz 25 ameriških zveznih držav, je pokazala, da imajo obiski pomemben vpliv na dožemanje posameznikove družinske dediščine, zaradi česar so turistična potovanja v nekaterih primerih postala intenzivna čustvena romanja.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: turizem iskanja korenin, slovensko-ameriška izseljenska skupnost, Slovenija, značilnosti turističnih obiskov

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## INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is a complex and segmented sector of the global economy, and a major contributor to national gross domestic products in both developed and developing countries. Due to the stiff competition for visitors, tourism destinations constantly strive to present new niche products and search for new market opportunities. In recent years, culture and heritage tourism, which can take many forms and which occurs at many different scales, has gained in popularity. This segment of the heritage tourism market capitalizes on curiosity about the past, but one component, dubbed “roots tourism,” concentrates particularly on specific and personal interests in family history and ancestral and ethnic heritage.

The term roots tourism, the derivation of which is further discussed below, describes the phenomenon of return visits to the homeland by emigrants and their descendants. Of the many immigrant groups in America, Slovene-Americans present a particularly appropriate population for an examination of roots tourism for a variety of reasons. Slovenia, newly independent in 1991 but long a well-recognized and cohesive ethnic homeland in Central Europe, has been sending emigrants, primarily to the Americas, for more than 150 years. It is estimated that the country, with two million inhabitants in 2010, has a diaspora of over 300,000 persons living on five continents (Prešeren 2001). Of this global Slovene diaspora, Slovene-Americans in the United States represent the largest group, consisting of over 176,691 persons in the year 2000 (U.S. Census of Population 2004).<sup>1</sup> The relatively large size of the Slovene-American diaspora, their high level of education and personal income, the persistence of institutions that remind Slovenes of their roots (the Roman Catholic Church, Slovene newspapers and websites, Slovene cultural heritage celebrations especially in and around Ohio and Pennsylvania) and the tendency of successive American-born generations to persist in their identity as Slovene-Americans have made this group a highly attractive population of potential tourists and tourist-service consumers with considerable purchasing power and strong personal motives to travel to Slovenia.

## THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS AND AN OVERVIEW OF THE RELEVANT REFERENCES

While many migrants never return to their homelands, return visits by those migrants who do return can take several forms. Some migrants spend a period of time in the host country, improve their financial status and then return permanently to their country of origin. Other migrants view themselves as residents or even citizens of the new country and visit the homeland only for a short time – a few weeks or months every so often – always returning to their new home country. These latter visits may, with time, become limited because of newly established homes, families, and the inevitable assimilation process; thus these visits may take on the character of tourist visits, while still providing the migrants with important insights into their family and ethnic heritage. It is these latter tourist-like visits that are the focus of our research.

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1 In the time of research, the 2010 Census figures were not yet available. In 2000, the number of Slovene Americans had increased from the previous census in 1990 by 42 percent, largely because in 1990 the independent country of Slovenia did not yet exist. Slovenia was then still a part of the former Yugoslavia; therefore, in 1990 many Slovenes had declared themselves as “Yugoslavian,” but by 2000, they claimed Slovene ethnic identity (U.S. Census of Population 2004).

## Defining the phenomenon of roots tourism

While tourism is globally defined and conceptualized as a temporary migration away from the place of permanent residence, authors Tim Coles and Dallen J. Timothy (2004: 2–3) critique the unwillingness of tourism studies to theoretically explore the blurring of tourism and migration in the modern era. Occasionally, scattered populations of migrants have been dealt with as exotic subjects for ethnic tourism or as travelers who undertake religious or secular pilgrimages. But for the most part tourism (especially cultural tourism) has been viewed primarily as a means for visitors to observe out of the ordinary ethnic communities or indigenous groups, not as a venture aimed at better understanding one's own culture of origin.

The fact that globalization in the last decades has stimulated new forms of travel, migration and tourism, with production and consumption complexly bound together, has become appreciated only recently. It is a topic that cries out for research approaches that are cross-disciplinary in nature. Efforts to combine tourism with migration and diaspora studies have been relatively scarce until lately when scholars from sociology, anthropology, geography and other domains, such as tourism studies, have recognized the importance of cross-disciplinary interaction to the production of profound scientific contributions. Coles and Timothy (2004: 11) assert that modern tourism can best be understood as a vital medium through which post-national and post-sovereign relations may be resolved, as temporary travel "home" represents a strong socio-cultural glue which binds the home state with "its" migrants.

In the opinion of the geographer Wilbur Zelinsky (2001: 210), tourism manifested by the return visits of migrants to their country of origin can be considered as facilitating feelings of connection between people across geopolitical boundaries and, in some cases, across vast distances. Russell King and Anastasia Christou (2008: 10) also found origin-related tourism activities of significance, claiming that journeys to the land of the ancestors were primarily made in order to articulate one's "true" identity, one's sense of belonging to a historical community. Similarly, as stressed by Marjorie Esman (1984: 452–453), travel and tourism to the "home country" is used by some ethnic groups to (re-)assert, reaffirm and perform their heritage, therefore such tourism can contribute to ethnic preservation both in the emigrant community and in the home country.

These perspectives deepen the understanding of the meaning of emigrants' visits to their country of origin or to the homeland of their ancestors and it is this type of tourism that is becoming known as *roots tourism*. The first studies on this subject arose in the United States among the African-American population. Many authors, including Ellen Badone and Sharon R. Roseman (2004: 7), Paul Basu (2004: 150–151; 170–171), Kamari Maxine Clarke (2006: 80), Patricia de Santana Pinho (2008: 74–75), Katharina Schramm (2004: 149), Dallen J. Timothy and Jeanne Kay Guelke (2008: 1) and Timothy and Victor B. Teye (2004: 111), agree that interest in ancestral heritage travel was to a high degree stimulated by the novel *Roots – The Saga of an American Family*, written in 1976 by Alex Haley and by the subsequent film series based on the novel.<sup>2</sup>

Roots tourism has only recently gained notice as an important segment of the tourism industry and can be classified as one of the many forms of cultural tourism. Within its domain are activities connected with traveling to and discovering one's family history in the country of one's ancestors; roots tourism partially overlaps with other cultural tourism segments such as VFR (visiting friends and relatives) tourism, heritage tourism, nostalgia tourism, genealogy tourism and ethnic tourism. Cultural tourism sub-segments, such as genealogy tourism, have recently gained attention among government sponsored tourism offices because of the revenue that can be generated by specially focused tours. Genealogy tourism, enhanced by special government sponsored data-search services, is now considered a sophisti-

2 The novel is based on a life story of African slave named Kunta Kinte, who was deported to the United States of America in the 18th century, and follows the lives of his descendants. As one of them, a seventh generation descendant, the author Alex Haley decides to travel to Africa in search of his ancestral heritage (Haley 1977).

cated niche product in countries known for their diaspora. These include Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Poland, Hungary and Germany (Garraway 2006; Timothy 2008: 126–127). The potential for expansion is great.

## The Slovene-American diaspora and visits to the homeland

The first large Slovene settlements in the United States were established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when many of the agriculturally oriented regions in the southern part of the Habsburg Monarchy were facing poverty and economic stagnation. The United States, with its promise of jobs and land, was one of the first and major destinations for people from all parts of this region, including those from the Slovene ethnic territories. Economic stresses in central Europe following World War I produced a stream of Slovene migrants that lasted from 1918 to 1938. Yet another stream came in the post-World War II era, when some more educated and prosperous Slovenes, alienated by the swing towards Communism in Yugoslavia, left for the United States, Argentina and Australia.

Many authors have dealt with the Slovene-American diaspora from the historical, social, spatial and other perspectives over the last two decades (Drnovšek 1991; 1998; Friš 1997; 1999; Klemenčič 1995; 1999 and Klemenčič and Pugelj, 2009). However, limited work has been done on the subject of emigrant tourist mobility towards their homeland and on the contribution of this mobility to their sense of ancestral and cultural heritage.

One of such works was written by Darko Friš (1996), who carried out historical research on visits by Slovene emigrants to their homeland, but his study only focused on the period from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of World War II and consequently excluded tourist visits in the modern sense. According to Friš (1996), 19<sup>th</sup> century missionary priests were the first Slovene emigrants to the United States to visit Slovenia (at that time a part of Habsburg Monarchy). They went to visit their relatives and sometimes also to “recruit” new priests for missionary work in the United States. The first organized tourist trip from a Slovene emigrant community came from Westphalia, Germany, in 1922 and again in 1927. These visits were followed in 1929 by visits from Slovene emigrants to the Lorraine region of France (Slovenia was then part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). Then in 1930, following small, self-organized trips from North America, the first large organized visit of Slovene-Americans to Slovenia was made. Soon there were Slovene tour operators established in Cleveland and more visits to Slovenia followed until 1938, when, during the war years, the political situation in Europe became unstable. Visits from the United States stopped, and did not resume until the 1950s.

Another contribution on more recent short-term mobility towards the homeland was made by Rado Genorio (1989), who had extensively studied several other aspects of Slovene-Canadian diaspora. In the chapter *Slovene-Canadian Immigrants and their Relations with the Homeland* (*Stiki slovenskih priseljencev v Kanadi z matično domovino*) he presents the results of his questionnaire-based survey, which indicates that 83 percent of the studied population visited Slovenia at least once after their settlement in Canada. He continues that almost one quarter of the studied population (24.8 percent) visits Slovenia on a yearly basis, with many among them spending their entire holiday exclusively in Slovenia. He states that most of these visits have a tourist character, although some people travel in order to permanently settle in Slovenia in the future (therefore they feel obligated to purchase a house or finance the maintenance of it, etc.). Genorio (1989: 133–134) concludes that such tourism mobility is especially important for younger generations of Slovene-Canadians, who can get better acquainted with the land of their ancestors, while at the same time these visits have significant economic impacts for the Slovene (at that time Yugoslav) economy.

Cvetka Kocjančič (2001) presented similar observations in her paper, which also deals with Slovene-Canadian community and concentrates specifically on its economic role in relation to Slovenia. She ascertains that the first generations of Slovene-Canadians in general contributed substantially to Slovene tourism with their visits, due to the relative financial prosperity which they achieved during their

life in Canada. She mentions various opportunities for potential improvements in the tourism mobility of Slovene-Canadians and points out the non-existence of travel packages that include destinations in Slovenia.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF SLOVENE-AMERICAN ROOTS TOURISM VISITS

### Research methodology

In order to define the motives and travel behavior of those who traveled from the United States of America to Slovenia to visit their relatives and/or friends and (re-)discover their ancestral heritage, we devised a survey. Given the dispersed distribution of the clusters of Slovene settlements in America, in order to get the largest number of respondents, we decided to make our survey accessible on the Internet and to promote it in the Slovene-American diaspora media, where the chances of attracting the relevant population were high. Although online accessible surveys may have potential disadvantages for researchers regarding the basic characteristics of the studied population (possible exclusion of the elderly segment of the population and high levels of incomplete questionnaires), the prevailing factor for the selection of their use was accessibility.

The survey, consisting of 22 questions, began by asking for the respondents' sex, age, location and proceeded to ask for details of the journeys made to Slovenia. The survey was made accessible online,<sup>3</sup> and a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) was defined for it.<sup>4</sup> Then, introductory letters containing a short explanation of the survey were sent to the main Slovene-American organizations in the United States: the American Slovene Catholic Union (KSKJ), the Slovene National Benefit Society (SNPJ) and the Slovene Women's Union of America (SWUA). All responded positively to our request and published the invitation to participate in the organizations' periodical newsletters.<sup>5</sup> All three newsletters are routinely issued and distributed to members in paper form or/and on the Internet in an online portable document format (PDF). As the Internet has proved to have an important role in the life of Slovene ethnic communities (Meden 2007; Milharčič-Hladnik 2008; Mikola and Gombač 2008), we additionally presented the invitation to participate in the survey in the online PDF newsletter of the Slovene community in Cleveland<sup>6</sup> and on the Internet site of the SNPJ, where the online survey was directly accessible. The survey was open between April 1, 2008 and January 15, 2009.

### Main findings of the survey

Altogether, 150 completed questionnaires were received from respondents, located in 25 U.S. states. The questionnaires were analyzed using univariate statistical analysis. Among the respondents, the age groups from 50 to 59 years and 40 to 49 years predominated (at 39.5 and 34 percent of the total respectively). Most of the respondents (64 percent of the total) were females. The geographic locations of these respondents reflected all the major population centers of the Slovene community identified by

3 The computer software used for the purpose of the survey was LimeSurvey 1.70+, available (open code) on March 1, 2008, online at: <http://www.limesurvey.org>.

4 The URL used for the survey was: <http://oskarserver.upr.si/limesurvey/index.php?sid=73536&lang=en>.

5 These newsletters were: *Amerikanski Slovenec*, published by KSKJ on October 22, 2008, *Prosveta*, published by SNPJ on July 2, 2008 and *Zarja / The Dawn* published by SWUA in August, 2008.

6 The *Cleveland Slovenian Newsletter*, edited by Phil Hrvatin on June 21, 2008.

Matjaž Klemenčič (2005: 113). The highest share of respondents came from Ohio (46 percent of total), of which 64 percent were from the Cleveland metropolitan area (including Euclid, Willoughby Hills, Mentor, Wickliffe, and Eastlake). Another 13 percent of the respondents came from Pennsylvania, with 8.5 of this 13 percent coming from the Pittsburgh metro area including Canonsburg and Coraopolis. Other states with significant shares of respondents were Florida and Illinois (both with 4.7 percent of the total) followed by California (4 percent of the total) and Minnesota (3.3 percent of the total). The complete spatial distribution of the respondents is shown in Figure 1.

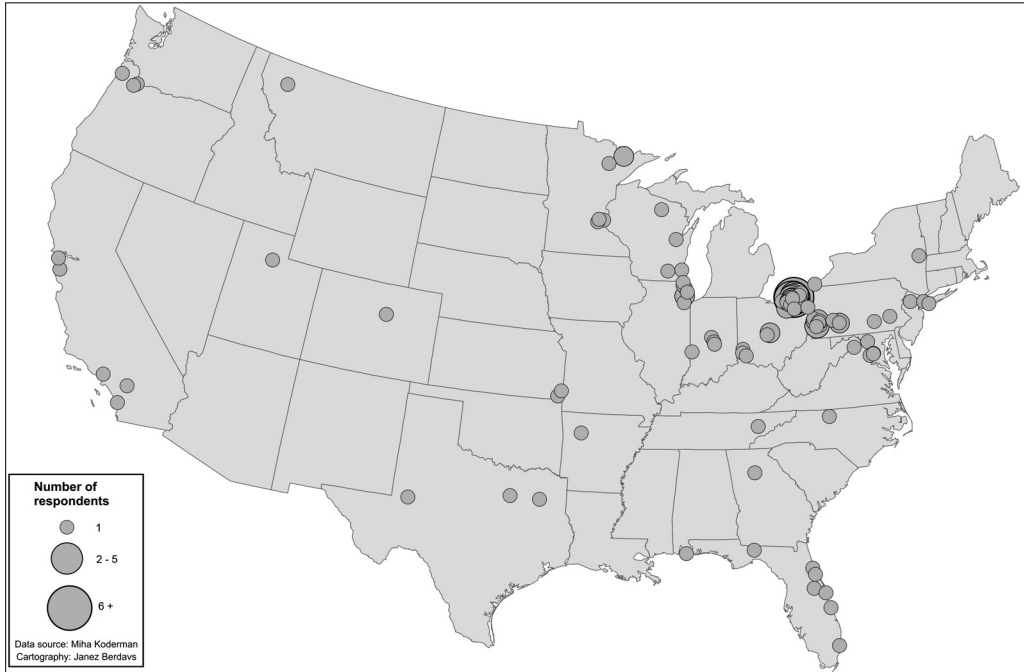


Figure 1: Spatial distribution of 150 Slovene-American respondents, located by the given postal codes.

### ***Motives for travel***

The clustered pattern of Slovene-American settlement is very likely linked to the high level of incidence of interest in family history revealed by this survey. According to Basu (2005: 134), interest in family history can be understood as a response to the increasingly multicultural nature of the so called “New World” societies that absorb one’s ethnic identity gradually and inevitably into the melting pot. Surrounded as it has usually been by a wide range of other ethnic clusters, the Slovene-American community has long endeavored to preserve its identity, not only by encouraging members to take part in ethnic religious parishes and social organizations and by publishing periodical newspapers, but also through cohesive settlement patterns as described by Klemenčič (1995: 82–107).<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, these impressive efforts on the part of the Slovene ethnic community for self-preservation do not reach all of those of Slovene derivation nor do they necessarily persist in successive generations who may no

<sup>7</sup> As Klemenčič’s historical research has shown, Slovenes in the United States usually settled closely together in urban areas, sometimes even according to the part of Slovene territory they originated from. This was of significant importance for their social life and sustenance of their identity (1995: 82–107).

longer speak the mother tongue or even be aware that Slovenia has played a role in their ancestry. For example, we have encountered second and third generation Slovene-Americans who are aware of having grown up with a unique food heritage but who no longer know the Slovene names for their favorite dishes, and some are unaware of where in Slovenia their families originated. In other words, there appears to be some decay over time of awareness of and interest in Slovene heritage.

Efforts to combat this loss of identity among Slovene-Americans and to encourage roots tourism have been organized in Slovenia and in the United States for some time. For example, since the late 1980s, for six weeks every summer the Slovene government has subsidized a Slovene language course in the capital, Ljubljana, for those in the second and third generations of the Slovene-diaspora. The rather demanding course is enhanced by efforts to create camaraderie among the (mostly) young people who come from Australia, Argentina, North America, and Europe and by efforts to introduce them to the country through well-planned excursions to many national landmarks.

In North America, in the vicinity of northern Ohio, the heaviest settlement of Slovene-Americans, there have long been tour companies that organize special excursions back to Slovenia both for those interested in visiting relatives and friends with whom they are in close contact and for those who no longer have contact with their Slovene roots but who would like to gain knowledge about their family history and perhaps establish some lasting contacts.

Our analysis of the data we collected through the survey shows that among our studied population the motives connected to roots tourism are by far the most important reasons for visiting Slovenia. The predominant motives for travel, together accounting for 72 percent of the responses, were "Visiting relatives and/or friends" and "Discovering my ancestral heritage". Visiting sights in Slovenia and its neighboring countries – activities generally covered by the term "Tourism" – also represented a significant motive for travel (22 percent), while "Business" and "Other" together presented the main motive to 6 percent of the studied population.

Our respondents elaborated on their ancestral heritage motives for visiting Slovenia in their comments at the end of the survey questionnaire. For example:

Visiting Slovenia is an attractive tourist opportunity for anyone. My special attraction is the connection with my heritage. Absent family to visit, it would decrease in attractiveness to visit.

(Respondent from Urbana, Maryland)

I was overwhelmed by the beauty and diversity of the Slovene landscape. Also significant was the fact that my brother and I looked like many of the Slovenes and reminded us of our aunts, uncles, and grandparents. We had never realized there was a "look" to Slovenes. If anything, we are even more proud to be Slovene now than before.

(Respondent from Painesville, Ohio)

I am so happy that I have discovered Slovenia as it is a hidden treasure. I never knew much about the country until I started researching my heritage.

(Respondent from Ormond Beach, Florida)

### *Average length of stay, frequency and mode of travel*

As Timothy (2008: 119) argues, one of the main characteristics of journeys made by people motivated by family and ancestral heritage is that they can entail traveling great distances. This was also evident from the studied data of the Slovene-American community. Slovene-Americans traveled overseas despite

the relatively high costs of air travel,<sup>8</sup> changed planes two or three times, due to the lack of direct flights between the United States and Slovenia, and experienced six or more hours of time change.

The relatively long average length of stay is partially a result of the distance traveled. As the distance from the country of permanent residence (the United States) and the country of origin (Slovenia) is large, people usually decided to stay for a longer period of time. In the case of our survey, the average length of stay in Slovenia was 12.2 days. Altogether 76 percent of the respondents stayed in Slovenia longer than one week.

Frequency of travel is again closely connected with the potential visitor's motives. People tend to travel more often to the destinations for which they have established a positive emotional attachment. As previously explained, the level of attachment to the visited place is high among those initially motivated by an interest in family and ancestral heritage. This is reflected in the frequency of journeys made by Slovene-Americans. Our survey showed that Slovene-Americans travel to Slovenia an average 2 or 3 times in a decade, with many exceptions to this "rule". Some of them visit Slovenia on a yearly basis; some only come every 10 years or less frequently.

Our survey missed some statistical information due to the fact that some Slovene-Americans hold dual (American and Slovene) citizenship and are therefore not registered as international tourists when they come into Slovenia but rather as Slovenes returning home from the United States. Similarly, the registries kept by hotels and guesthouses do not report reliable information on those holding dual citizenship to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia. Although information on a visitor's country of residence is required, the custom is to register one with dual citizenship as a resident of Slovenia rather than of the United States of America. Reportedly, hoteliers do this in order to subtly encourage Slovene identity and return visits.

Our survey shows that Slovene Americans tend to self-organize their trips to Slovenia as individuals, couples or families (60 percent of total), while 22 percent traveled with a package tour organized by a travel agency.<sup>9</sup> A total of 18 percent of the trips were organized by a circle of friends, who then made the journey together as a group.

### *Social aspects of visits*

Our respondents provided information on how their experiences in Slovenia modified their sense of identity. Nearly 93 percent of the visitors reported positive impacts: many began to feel a closer kinship with their Slovene ancestry (58 percent), some wanted to learn more about their family history in Slovenia and elsewhere (29 percent), while only a few found their sense of identity with their adopted country of permanent residence strengthened (6 percent).

Strong emotional experiences were also evident from some of the respondents' comments on how the visit of their family contributed to their sense of cultural/ancestral heritage. Two such comments are representative of other similar comments:

8 According to the respondents' estimate the average cost of return airfare from Cleveland/Pittsburgh via London/Frankfurt/Zurich to Ljubljana was USD 1424.11.

9 It should be noted that 91 percent of the people who travelled to Slovenia with a travel agency stated they travelled with Kollander World Travel, the leading travel agency in the United States specializing in package tours of Slovenia and other neighboring European countries. The company is located in Cleveland, Ohio, and was established in 1923 by Slovene entrepreneur August Kollander, Sr. Along with simple airfare packages, Kollander organizes custom-designed tours on such themes as Slovene traditional dishes, local music and folklore entertainment, sometimes co-organized by Slovene and American organizations. They are the only agency to offer genealogy specialized tours, including attendance at formal genealogical conferences in Slovenia, together with access to archival records and training in their use (KWT 2008).



The visit made history come alive. I had heard about these people and the homestead and I was actually able to stand right there and see it with my own eyes. It was overwhelming, it brought tears to my eyes and I wanted so much to share this experience with my aunts living in the States.

(Respondent from Midland, Texas)

It would mean almost nothing without my family. I felt completely immersed in the Slovene culture – it was like walking in my Staramama's [Grandmother's] shoes for a month. She recently died; I had loved her so much; she always talked of her home in Slovenia. Just breathtaking to be taken in and accepted so readily into the everyday life of my extended family in such a beautiful place. It felt more like home than home feels!

(Respondent from Wickliffe, Ohio)

When asked if the visits to Slovenia had broadened their interest in world cultures beyond Slovenia, 46 percent of the respondents replied positively and another 17 percent said the Slovene visit had stimulated them to plan trips to other world locations. More than half of the respondents (57 percent) stressed that the visits to Slovenia relieved them of misconceptions and prejudices, as they became more understanding of why and how people are different. Perhaps most significant for the concept of roots tourism and its perpetuation is the fact that more than 80 percent agreed with the statement that their roots visits gave them ideas that will affect their future life positively. Some agreed that the Slovene experience left them more interested in civic participation back home, because they had renewed interest in fostering cross-cultural contacts.

In general, the Slovene-Americans we studied found their overall experience in Slovenia positive (62 percent). Among those who had negative experiences, some reported that the language barrier seriously inhibited their enjoyment of the experience (9 percent); others found service personnel unhelpful (7 percent). A few were seriously inconvenienced by the Slovene bureaucracy (5 percent) and others found the Slovene people hard to get to know (4 percent).

### *Geographic and cultural experiences*

Images of Lake Bled, its picturesque island and church with scenic mountains in the background are iconic to the Slovene diaspora all over the world. Images of Bled can be seen (in different forms) in Slovene ethnic clubs and individual homes throughout the Americas and in Australia. In Table 1, Column 1 depicts the popularity among the Slovene-American visitors of Bled and other geographical icons. The favored sites mentioned by the respondents include some of Slovenia's most well-known tourist

Table 1: Ten most popular geographic areas (Column 1) and cultural experiences (Column 2)

	Column 1: Geographic areas	Column 2: Cultural experiences
1.	Bled	Food / cooking / potica
2.	Ljubljana (Old town)	Folk groups / music / singing / polka / accordion
3.	Postojnska jama	Wine / wine cellars / beer / schnapps / coffee
4.	Piran	Concerts / festivals / atmosphere
5.	Triglav NP	Family gatherings / genealogy
6.	Portorož	Museums / galleries / castles
7.	Bohinj	Nature / walking / sport / countryside
8.	Škocjanske jame	Churches / religious life
9.	Koper	Visiting markets / fairs
10.	Škofja Loka	Souvenirs / handcrafts

Source: Survey, 2009.

destinations: the historic cities and towns of Ljubljana, Piran, Koper, and Škofja Loka received most of the attention; spectacular caves were popular – Postojnska jama, Škocjanske jame, as were mountain areas – Triglav National Park, Bohinj.

The Slovene-American visitors also described their most popular cultural experiences in Slovenia (Column 2). Among them, gastronomical products were placed at the top of the list (first and third in popularity). They were followed by ethnographic phenomena and events (second in popularity), such as concerts, museums, festivals and religious sites/events. Among other experiences prominently mentioned by the respondents were family and ancestral heritage, family gatherings and genealogical research.

## CONCLUSION

The intersection of migration, diasporas and tourism by migrants and explorations by an array of scholars from different disciplines has resulted in a phenomenon labeled roots tourism. We have presented selected aspects of Slovene-American tourism mobility motivated by interests in ancestral and cultural heritage. Analysis of our data has shown that such roots tourism has had a strong impact on the visitors' sense of family and ancestral heritage and has enhanced the individual's sense of identity as Slovene, even as they maintain their identity as Americans.

Our study demonstrates that roots tourism can have significant positive outcomes. Such diaspora travel can be regarded as a product of the evolution of ethnic identity preservation, which used to include socializing in ethnic clubs, worshiping at ethnically-oriented religious and community centers and reading periodical media in the language of the ethnic community. Now, with relative prosperity among younger generation ethnic communities, roots tourism travel to the homeland can be seen as a natural extension of earlier identity-reinforcing customs. But roots tourism has an experiential intensity that may be especially appealing to those who have no personal memory of the "Old Country," and have only fading pictures and an oral folklore about the "Old Country" that is rapidly vanishing with time. These roots journeys offer younger generations a unique, interactive, "hands-on" ethnic and ancestral heritage experience.

The roots tourism market segment could contribute added value to the tourism industry and could help to consolidate the overall importance of tourism in the service sector. Although no significant action on the national or private level has yet taken place, services specifically designed for roots tourism participants (electronic searches of church records, accessible short courses in language, translated vital statistics, and even affordable bed and breakfast accommodations in rural towns) are suggested as logical ways to expand the role of this niche tourism in the Slovene economy and strengthen the cross-national identity of the Slovene diaspora. At the same time the need for future research that will address the topic from the receiving family and friends' point of view of is required.

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## POVZETEK

### **DRUŽBENI IN PROSTORSKI VIDIKI TURIZMA ISKANJA KORENIN V SLOVENIJI: PRIMER SLOVENSKO-AMERIŠKE IZSELJENSKE SKUPNOSTI**

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Interdisciplinarno preučevanje migracij in izseljenskih skupnosti je pripeljalo do njihove obravnave tudi v sklopu s turizmom povezanih strok. Tovrsten pristop, ki vključuje interakcijo izseljenskih skupnosti v povezavi z njihovo turistično mobilnostjo, je relativno nov pojav, za katerega pa se je v znanstveni literaturi že uveljavil angleški izraz *roots tourism*. Termin smo v slovenskem jeziku prevedli kot 'turizem iskanja korenin', pri čemer smo sledili prizadevanju, da bi se čim bolj približali izvornemu poimenovanju besedne zveze, poleg tega pa smo z vključitvijo glagolnika (iskanja) skušali prispevati tudi k ohranitvi širokega pomenskega obsega.

Turizem iskanja korenin je s strani raziskovalcev različnih strok pojmovan kot 'družbeno-kulturna vez' (*socio-cultural glue*) in izpostavljen kot eden izmed najbolj aktivnih mehanizmov, ki povezujejo izvorno deželo z »njenimi« emigranti. Z obiski izvorne dežele se, kot ugotavlja Zelinsky (2001: 210), ljudje počutijo povezani ne glede na (geo-)politične meje in velike razdalje, zaradi česar bi lahko to turistično udejstvovanje označili kot pospeševalca družbenih interakcij in ga celo razumeli kot proces, preko katerega poteka »de-teritorizacija« kulture. Ta segment turizma se v zadnjih desetletjih zaradi specifičnih lastnosti, med katerimi je treba poudariti prav emocionalni (motivi za obiske temeljijo na spoznavanju in ohranjanju družinske in etnične dediščine) in pogostnostni (tovrstni obiski niso omejeni le na enkratni obisk, pač pa se potreba po njih vzpostavlja vedno znova, poleg tega pa je dolžina obiska zaradi prostorske ločenosti in razdalje daljša) vidik, vedno bolj uveljavlja znotraj sicer širokega spektra turističnih dejavnosti. Prve razprave o obiskih izvorne dežele izseljencev lahko zasledimo v povezavi z afriško-ameriško skupnostjo v Združenih državah Amerike, ki je od 16. stoletja nastajala s prisilnimi migracijami.

Zanimanje za preučevanje posameznikove dediščine in obiskovanje izvirne dežele prednikov je v veliki meri spodbudilo leta 1976 izdano literarno delo temnopoltega ameriškega pisatelja Alexandra Haleya z naslovom: *Korenine – saga o ameriški rodovini*, kateremu je sledila tudi odmevna televizijska serija z naslovom *Roots*.

Omenjena spoznanja so vodila avtorja prispevka k zasnovi študije, s katero je želel preučiti najrazličnejše vidike turističnega obiska slovenskih izseljencev in njihovih potomcev iz Združenih držav Amerike v Sloveniji. Omenjena izseljenska skupnost obsega preko 170.000 oseb slovenskega porekla in je poznana po dolgoletni tradiciji, precejšnji stopnji koherence, učinkoviti organizacijski strukturi ter splošnem prizadevanju za ohranitev slovenske identitete. Po končanem zbiranju pričevanj posameznikov s pomočjo spletnih anketnih vprašalnikov sta avtorja izbrana spoznanja strnila v pričujočo razpravo, ki povzema glavne značilnosti tovrstnih obiskov. Te sta predstavila v štirih tematskih sklopih, ki se nanašajo na motive za potovanje, povprečno dobo bivanja ter pogostnost in način potovanja, socialne vidike potovanja ter geografske in kulturne izkušnje.

Avtorja v zaključku ugotavljata, da je treba pojav turizma iskanja korenin deloma razumeti kot produkt evolucijskega razvoja oblik ohranjanja etnične identitete, ki so nekdaj vključevale druženje v etničnih društvih in verskih središčih ter učenje slovenskega jezika in prebiranje najrazličnejših v slovenskem jeziku napisanih publikacij. Potovanja v domovino staršev oziroma prednikov v tem pogledu ponujajo nadgradnjo in so zlasti za mlajše generacije edinstvena življenjska izkušnja, ki jim na interaktiven način približa družinsko in narodnostno dediščino.