

Via

Slavonia & Baranja

Issue 3 Free edition
ISSN 3044-6090

DISCOVER THE DESTINATION

New Restaurants
Mihalović Manor
**Camping
through Slavonia**

SUSTAINABLE

**Most Welcoming
Region**
Baranja Cellars
Čudesna Šuma Estate

TASTE

Beans in a Clay Pot
**Đakovo Kulin
Sausage**
Wine Month



We're wired for a *warm welcome*

Booking.com Top 10 World's Most Welcoming Regions

Via

Slavonia & Baranja

**HeadOnEast
Croatia**

Green, sustainable, *welcoming*

Written by **Mislav Matišić, Assistant Director of
Osijek-Baranja County Tourist Board**



Spring is here, nature is awakening, and there is no better time of year to discover that Slavonia and Baranja are, in every sense of the word, a green and sustainable destination. The happiness of the local population is manifested in the famous Slavonian hospitality – a warmth recognised far beyond Croatia's borders. According to Booking.com, Osijek-Baranja County ranks among the world's TOP 10 most welcoming regions! This natural kindness of the locals is deeply rooted in their connection with the land – a bond you'll feel at every step. Life here flows slowly, in harmony with the environment and customs preserved for centuries. It's no coincidence that this is the region with the highest number of organic farmers. We are a land of abundance, where natural resources are cherished, and where tourism is ecological and sustainable without trying. In this third edition of our destination magazine, we want to take you to those very places. Take our advice and start at the zen oasis in Baranja, captured through the lens of renowned Osijek photographer Mario Romulić, a place where nature quietly plays out all its processes. Taste the finest wine in Baranja's iconic *gatori* – cellars carved into loess slopes, maintaining the same cool temperature all year round. These are spaces filled with the raw energy of ancient nature, much like our traditional mud houses –

naturally cool in summer, warm in winter. Lovers of the outdoors, try the best trails for your morning jog or the most beautiful camping spots as the perfect locations to sleep under the stars. Families with children will enjoy a visit to Croatia's largest ZOO, perfectly blended into the lush greenery of the Drava forests.

Among all our resources, however, the most valuable are the people. In the east, winemakers, cheesemakers and *kulen* producers await with a genuine smile, eager to share their stories. Blacksmith master Vinković is there too, a craftsman who tames fire to create both useful and artistic products. The French *Šokica* Caterina, together with her daughter, is an embodiment of this pride with tradition, too, carefully preserving centuries-old textile knowledge – from field to fabric. In Dalj, you'll find a center dedicated to Milutin Milanković, one of the greatest minds of this region. And the competition is stiff with his alma mater, Osijek's high school of natural sciences and mathematics, holding the record for the highest number of academics in Croatia. Meanwhile, the people of Osijek will proudly *defend their thesis* in the fine art of weekend relaxation – in the greenery of the Promenade, at the local market, in the city's parks, or simply in their favourite spots for resting their bodies and souls. Our itineraries thoughtfully include suggestions for tourists with disabilities, as well as scenic motorcycle routes crisscrossing the region. One of them even leads to the Mihalović manor in the vineyards of Feričanci, or further on to the gates of the equally fertile Golden Valley (*Zlatna dolina*) near Požega. And yes, it's entirely possible to pair motorcycling and wine events, provided you plan for an overnight stay in one of our charming wine cellars. Finally, we should warn you that in Slavonia and Baranja, a wine "month" tends to last three! We think that's just the right amount of time to slowly uncover all the reasons why we've been declared the European Wine Region Dionisio 2025. Three months of living in Slavonia and Baranja is more than enough to experience the many joys of the slow, and if you ask us – wonderfully sustainable – way of life in Croatia's green east.

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IMPRESSUM

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Where people are **long** remembered

If I had one word to describe the locals to a tourist, I would choose the adjective *hospitable* (or a synonym such as *welcoming, warm, sociable*). We are raised to be hospitable, learning that guests are sacred from an early age. If we're expecting guests, the house must be all tidied up, the finest linens and towels are laid out, the most delicious meals and desserts prepared and the best wines poured. The guest gets the most comfortable room and the best seat at the table. In fact, your parents will give you a reproachful look if you don't share your favourite toy with your visiting friend (yes, the one that helps you sleep) because, in their view, a couple of sleepless nights are not too big a sacrifice for a good cause. And the reason, you guessed it – good hospitality.

It came as no surprise when Booking.com recently revealed the winners of the *Traveller Review Awards 2025*. They listed Osijek-Baranja County among the ten most welcoming, warmest regions in the world for 2025, placing it shoulder to shoulder with tourism champions like Brittany in France and Madeira in Portugal.

Ivana Jurić, director of the Osijek-Baranja County Tourist Board, sees this as a direct compliment to all tourism workers and service providers who diligently build the experience of visiting Slavonia and Baranja. "It's proof that contact with the hosts and the community carries the most important emotion on any trip, because people are the heart and foundation of tourism. This is reflected in the destination's growth year after year," she emphasized.

Jurić points out that the tourist offer of the inland regions, including Osijek-Baranja County, differs from the experience provided at the Croatian coast. Tourist stays here are shorter, while the area covered is much greater, as guests like to actively explore and may travel 80 to 100 kilometers in a single day.

"For centuries, the people of Slavonia and Baranja have lived well off the land, and to this day they retain a mindset that seeks to offer the very best to each visitor. Tourism in inland areas is inherently sustainable, and besides environmental sustainability, the social aspect is equally important as the local community participates in the development of the destination. People leave the strongest impressions because hospitality is a natural part of who they are. They offer their smiles, creativity, knowledge, energy, and warmth – all of which the guest deeply appreciates," Jurić affirms.

You, too, will experience this hospitality firsthand when you visit the destinations presented in this issue of our magazine.

A return to nature through food and *tradition*

WRITTEN BY MAJA CELING CELIĆ

Primitivo is not just a place to relax, it's a true paradise where tradition, gastronomy, and ecological awareness merge into a unique experience.

The softest shades of green were painting the still-bare trees after a long and cold Baranja winter when we visited the Čudesna Šuma (Enchanted Forest) eco-estate on one of the last winter days. This fairy-tale-like spot is located in Bilje, just a ten-minute drive from the center of Osijek and near the Kopački Rit Nature Park.

They say that winter either bites with its teeth or lashes with its tail, and that Sunday morning it did just that. Days before, spring-like temperatures had warmed us, though spring hadn't officially begun, only for winter to return with its frost and rain.

Yet, the Romulić family estate stood defiantly green. True, the trees in the yard and forest were just beginning to bud, but the wild herbs were already showing their strength, having survived the winter. So too was the perennial collard, springing proudly from raised beds, as green as a forest.

A holistic approach to food production

Mario Romulić, the owner of this family farm, greeted us – as expected – while working. He was painting a fence, as his days are too short to fit all his plans and goals.

This unique character and Osijek native, a renowned and award-winning photographer, decided a few years ago to drop anchor in the Baranja wetlands. "I have everything I need here. I hate going to the city," he says with a smile when asked if he misses his old life – traveling, the adrenaline, the bustle. Now, his focus is





on nurturing tomato and pepper seedlings in the greenhouse he built with his sons. There's planting to be done, multiple types of pumpkins to be sown, as well as culinary and medicinal herbs to be grown in *Hügelkultur* beds. The 250-meter-long labyrinth with a variety of plants could use some maintenance as well.

And then there's hemp to care for, with its seeds used to make oils, creams, and other products. Luckily, the *forest of food* he started some four years ago mostly takes care of itself. Even though the wild herbs reseed naturally, the forest with its fruit trees that feed bees, birds, and other animals still needs some tender loving care.

Mario practices biodynamic farming, meaning he treats the entire estate as a living organism where plants, animals, and soil are interconnected. Nothing and no one is considered an enemy or pest. The production is fully organic, with soil fertility maintained through compost, manure, and biodynamic preparations, aiming for a self-sustaining, harmonious system free of synthetic chemicals.

Now, this could have remained a local story about a passionate man wanting to know what he's eating or a Baranja "wizard" who harvests wild herbs because to him, there's no such thing as a weed. But it has evolved into something much greater – an estate open to visitors and a true paradise for nature lovers and foodies alike.



Exhibition space, lab, and gastro oasis

The *Primitivo estate* created by Mario Romulić is not just a place to rest and enjoy nature. It's also an exhibition space, a workshop, and a gastronomic oasis. Everything you can see, touch, and taste here was made by Mario, with the help of his sons Ivor and Svebor, and craftsman Viktor.

"We built it all ourselves, from the foundations to the roof, furniture and fencing," he says as we sit at a massive oak table, sipping homemade herbal brandy. The beams, he explains, were once poplars in a nearby forest. "We dragged them out, cut them, dried, charred, and installed them. Everything is made from recycled materials, discarded wood, and old furniture. Doors, shelves, benches – they were once someone's trash. We find fruit trees, walnut trunks, or logs left to rot and turn them into something useful and beautiful."

Self-sufficiency is the cornerstone of the entire estate. Mario grows vegetables, fruits, hemp, and other foods, guided by the *farm to table* philosophy.

"Our goal is to serve food we've grown ourselves to groups of up to 25 guests. Everything is homemade and organic. We make our own spices, teas, remedies; we preserve and ferment food, make jams and pickles, and bake sourdough bread only. All cooking is done the traditional way – over open flame, in clay or cast-iron pots", Mario showcases many, which line the shelves not as decoration but as working tools. The name *Primitivo*, he says, reflects a return to how people lived 50 or 100 years ago.





Alongside culinary pleasures, the estate offers educational experiences.

“We also organise workshops on environment protection, natural materials, making cosmetics and remedies – things long forgotten but worth preserving,” he says passionately before returning to preparing the food which he approaches with immense care. With a chef like him, this experience is truly special for every visitor.

Wild herbs enrich every dish

Slow cooking is central – some dishes take six hours, others up to 24. They use Danube fish, wild game meat, and other ingredients exclusively from local farms that grow food without pesticides or chemicals. “Guests love our oxtail *perkelt*, smoked carp, pulled pork, and ribs. We use kamado smokers and offset methods, combining low-temperature cooking with smoking, which gives the food its distinctive flavour,” explains Mario, who enhances every dish with wild herbs from his garden.

“We want to show guests how much delicious and nutritious food grows all around without us even realizing. Purslane, nettle, dandelions – these used to be common at markets, now they’re labeled as weeds,” Mario says, emphasizing their nutritional value and gourmet potential. He allows guests to pick their own vegetables like peppers, onions, tomatoes, lettuce, and teaches them all about wild edible plants and their medicinal uses. When it comes to fats, Mario only cooks with black pig lard and organic biodynamic olive oil sourced from the Croatian islands of Hvar, Vis, Korčula, and Šibenik.

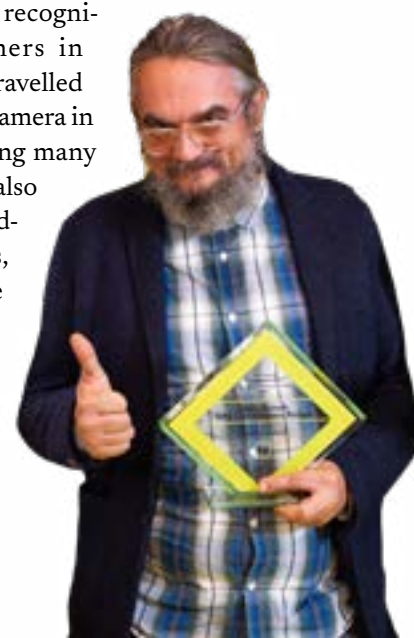
Having travelled the world thanks to his photography skills, Mario lists the cuisines he loves, highlighting Moroccan, Argentine, and Thai. “I love to cook and explore different cuisines, but I always choose what suits our lifestyle and diet,” he says with conviction.



“Our goal is to serve food we’ve grown ourselves to groups of up to 25 guests. It is all homemade and organic. We make our own spices, teas, remedies; we preserve and ferment food, make jams and pickles, and bake sourdough bread only.”

Mario Romulić

One of the most recognised photographers in Croatia. He has travelled the world with a camera in his hand, including many war zones. He is also known for his wildlife photographs, especially those from Kopački rit Nature Park, which is near his Utopia.



All kinds of cuisines



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The only way to eat in Slavonia and Baranja is well, delicious, and always. This haven for hedonists stirs and simmers its heritage over an open fire, but is always open to trying something new – broadening its culinary horizons to give every guest the welcome they deserve. Osijek's restaurant scene has welcomed a few charming spots that bring diverse culinary experiences for a dose of freshness in the city's social life.

Meandar ① is a newly renovated modern space within Hotel Osijek, offering an à la carte menu infused with traditional ingredients of Slavonia and Baranja presented through innovative dishes. Meat lovers and fans of bold flavours, don't miss their *homemade sausage jam*!

Right in the middle of Osijek's promenade, **Sc-hampini** ② delivers a unique fine dining experience with a modern twist on traditional dishes. There's a special focus on top-quality ingredients and creative presentation, with the menu changing seasonally.

Pizza lovers will be delighted by **Bocconcino Piz-za Bar** ③, led by a world champion in Neapolitan pizza making. They offer Neapolitan-style pizzas, sandwiches, and focaccias. Its cozy interior and warm atmosphere make Bocconcino perfect for a romantic dinner.

Taking a step further into international cuisine, **LULU Fusion Bistro** blends global flavours with local ingredients in irresistible fusion dishes. Whether you're a fan of Asian spices, Mediterranean specialties, or creative vegan options, LULU has something for everyone. With its pleasant atmosphere and the inventive dishes of a talented chef, it has quickly become a favourite spot for those seeking something a bit different.

There are a few fresh options for those who prioritize healthy eating as well. **YES Rebel Bites** is a plant-based bistro located on Hrvatske Republike, with a daily menu based on sustainable, plant-based meals. They've earned popularity thanks to their tasty homestyle dishes like soups, casseroles, *vege-sarma*, and delicious desserts.

Fresh Healthy Bar ④ offers a variety of healthy combos like "Sunburnt Chickpeas" and "Greekish." You can also create your own salads or wraps. The menu includes coffee, plant-based lattes, craft teas, smoothies, and 100% natural juices. The ingredients are sourced from local producers.

Loresa is quickly becoming another hit. With a fast food location in Čepin and a restaurant in Osijek's city center, they boast of being the only place in the region to offer a fully gluten- and lactose-free menu. They're especially proud that even their *Baranja-style steak* is made to fit those dietary needs.

It's not about the destination, it's about the journey



Follow the valleys of the Drava, Danube, and Sava, or head straight over the hills of Papuk. Whichever route through Slavonia and Baranja you choose, you'll find a well-maintained campsite or a family farm (OPG) with a meadow perfect for your home on wheels, all within reach for day trips by car.

Whether you enjoy traveling by car or fully equipped and always ready in your camper, Slavonia is a region you can easily explore. To get you started, here are a few campgrounds in Baranja and near Đakovo.

Camping Suza Baranje, Suza

www.camping.suzabaranje.com

This lovely family-run campsite lies 30 km north of Osijek and 35 km south of Mohács, Hungary. It is framed by Bansko Hill and vineyards on one side, and fields and forests stretching toward the Danube on the other. The Kolar family runs the site, and you can also visit their wine cellar or enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables from their farm. The campsite offers parking spots with electrical hookups, toilets, and a children's playground. Pets are welcome, there is a pond nearby, and you'll want to bring a bicycle to enjoy the scenic bike trails through the vineyards and toward Kopački Rit Nature Park.

Family Camping, Kopačevo

www.tzo-bilje.hr/smjestaj/kamp-odmoriste-family

Located in the picturesque riverside village of Kopačevo, near the Kopački Rit Nature Park and just

11 km north of Osijek, the "Family" campsite offers 19 marked grassy plots with water and electrical hookups. The site is equipped with a kitchen, toilets, showers, and other amenities.

Osijek, Đakovo, Požega and Slavonski Brod

Near the Drava beach *Copacabana* in Osijek there is a spacious shaded parking area for your day trips, while heading further south you can stop at the picnic area by Lake Borovik (Camp Borovik on Facebook) and visit the State Stud Farm of Lipizzaner Horses in Đakovo. If your journey takes you even further, there are additional campsites such as *Duboka* in Papuk Nature Park, *Zlatni Lug* and Čončić near Požega, and *Ramarin* near Slavonski Brod.





Huge (name) beneath the stars

There's a house in the village of Dalj that has a courtyard where among its decorative elements stands a special pine. Both the house and the tree belong to Milutin, standing as lasting monuments to the remarkable legacy of a genius.

Born in 1879, Milutin Milanković was a polymath whose knowledge spanned astronomy, geophysics, climatology, engineering, and even prose. His most significant scientific contribution is the formulation of the astronomical theory of climate change, which explains how variations in Earth's orbit influence climate patterns, especially the cyclical occurrence of ice ages. The importance of his work is underscored by the fact that NASA lists him among the 15 most important scientists who have studied planet Earth (*NASA Earth Observatory, On the Shoulders of Giants*).

The scientist's birthplace has been transformed into the Cultural and Scientific Center "Milutin Milanković," dedicated to preserving and promoting his scientific legacy. The exhibition presents Milanković's groundbreaking research in detail, including interactive displays and models that illustrate the mechanics of Earth's orbital changes and their impact on global climate. The center also features a space room and observatory, offering stargazing opportunities and educational programs, particularly engaging for the youngest visitors.

This brilliant mind easily found inspiration in nature and the river that still flows beneath his house. His connection with nature is evident in his memoirs, where he lovingly describes the lush surroundings in which he grew up, as well as the majestic flow of the Danube. The garden of today's visitor center is adorned with various flowers and includes a gazebo next to his beloved pine tree, planted in the same year Milutin was born.



The Cultural and Scientific Center in Dalj therefore stands as a beacon of scientific exploration, honoring a man whose work profoundly shaped our understanding of Earth's climate system. It offers a unique opportunity for visitors to delve deeper into the life and legacy of a scientist whose theories continue to resonate in today's discussions on climate change.

All individual and group visits are available by prior arrangement.

Address

**Zlatko Takač Street 13
31 226 Dalj**

kzcomm.hr

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WRITTEN BY KATARINA ANDELKOVIĆ



INTERVIEW FRANJO VINKOVIĆ, BLACKSMITH

I can forge anything – from a **sword** to a *flower* – and I’ve been called to forge the **crown of Croatia’s King Tomislav**



WRITTEN BY SUZANA ŽUPAN

The story of this craft is a special experience; tourists love seeing the forging, the fire, the sparks and the hammer blows – and learning how it’s all done

Are you the kind of tourist who doesn’t just bring home souvenirs but also one-of-a-kind experiences or even a new skill? In that case, the Vinković Master Blacksmith Workshop, run by Franjo Vinković is the place for you. The only master blacksmith in Osijek-Baranja County and one of just six in all of Croatia is also the only one who does restoration work. His smithy is sustainable and alive with tradition and craft. Between the fire, hammer, and metal, you’ll witness a display of strength that instantly transforms into surgical precision. A brute and an artist. A unique experience – unlike anything else offered in the city, and yet perfectly in sync with Đakovo’s landmarks: the cathedral, the State Stud Farm, the Bishop’s Palace, and the Strossmayer Park. If you stop for one of his handcrafted items you can observe the forging process, learn about this ancient craft, and even try your hand at shaping metal into a functional or artistic object.

How did a city kid end up in a nearly extinct trade?

“I love blacksmithing. It’s a blend of the old and the new, manual labor and physical strength. And yet, under the heavy hammer, even the most delicate objects are born – like the bouquet of flowers I forged for my master’s exam in 2007. In the smithy,

you face history every day, from the discovery of fire and metal. These are primal materials, with no harm to nature. And that's the balance – sustainability. It feels good to know that thanks to me, this ancient craft isn't dying out, and that my workshop has become a destination for those who want to witness something unique and leave with a completely new experience. I do both agricultural and artistic blacksmithing, as well as restoration."

How did you turn blacksmithing into an authentic tourism story?

"Tourists are most intrigued by the story itself and our work as blacksmiths. There are so few of us left, and we're living reminders of the past. My smithy is real life – no apps, no gimmicks. Tourists enjoy the interaction. The fire, the hammering, the sparks all make for an unforgettable experience. My approach is educational, but I also demonstrate my skills and even let visitors try shaping the metal themselves."

If tourists wanted something from your workshop, what would you present or make for them?

"My license allows me to teach through demonstrations, and I've run many workshops at festivals, fairs, and museums. I make a variety of items to order – nothing is impossible to forge from metal. I've crafted pieces inspired by the Đakovo Cathedral, the Lipizzaner horses, traditional headscarves and hats, swords... To mark the 1100th anniversary of the Croatian Kingdom and King Tomislav's coronation, I've been invited to lead workshops making replicas of his crown and early Croatian swords. I've made Templar swords, Roman *spatha* replicas for the Vinkovci City Museum's Roman Days, and sickles in collaboration with the Đakovo Heritage Museum. I've even been asked to restore wooden chests for the Međimurje Museum in Čakovec. My metalwork can be seen all around Đakovo."

The Ministry of Culture gave you permanent authorization for working on immovable cultural heritage...

"That opened doors to work on historical and sacral buildings and museums. I'm currently restoring the metal parts on windows for the Archdiocese of Đakovo-Osijek. I've worked on the cathedral crypt's fence, the fencing in front of the Bishop's Palace, made a new fence for the Strossmayer Park, and handled various museum orders. My craftsmanship extends beyond my smithy, adding value to my shop and my tourist offering."

Đakovo is also the city of Lipizzaner horses – and the relationship of horses and blacksmiths is everlasting...

"Absolutely. It's a connection rooted in the history of this craft and horses. In addition to horseshoes as souvenirs, I also make branding irons used at the Stud Farm. Can there be a more beautiful tourism story than that of the historic bond between blacksmithing and horses, as seen in Đakovo?"



Your craft is also a story about family, right?

"Yes. Out of my four sons, two are following in my footsteps. Goran is a second-year mechanical engineering student, while Franjo trained to become a blacksmith and we work together. It's fulfilling to see my sons envision their future in the forge. Visitors love the fact that this is a family, craft, and tourism story – and that the blacksmith's fire won't die with me."

Seemingly opposite

**Brute and artist
Strength and precision**

I'm here to stay



It all began when Caterina, born in Sardinia, moved to France and fell in love with Slavko Novoselić from Habjanovci



WRITTEN BY KATARINA ANDELKOVIĆ

In the very heart of Slavonia, the small village of Habjanovci, stands a 121-year-old traditional šokačka (Šokac-style) house whose owner is, believe it or not, a Frenchwoman. And yet, she is local.

Not quite Hollywood, but close

Born in Sardinia, Caterina moved to France at the age of six. Aged 17, she met Slavko Novoselić, the man who would become her husband, and fell in love with his native village of Habjanovci. Fine, it might not all have played out like that – this isn't Hallmark – but the story warms the heart just the same.

The Italian-French-Croatian couple frequently visited Slavko's homeland, especially for the village's annual church feast day, which was a must-attend event, no matter their obligations or the weather. That was tradition, and they honoured it. In 2006, when Slavko decided to retire to his birthplace, Caterina agreed to embrace the peaceful life in Slavonia.

Unfortunately, Slavko passed away that same year, but Caterina made a firm decision: "I'm here to stay." And it wasn't easy. She knew no one, social networks weren't quite a thing, and everybody spoke Croatian. Still, our lovely host quickly found her footing and started taking care of an elderly woman "right at the end of the village." While helping with household chores, Caterina observed, absorbed, learned, and asked questions about village life and its customs. She was particularly drawn to the traditional folk costumes, from their beauty and symbolism to the traditional crafting techniques.

Her curiosity led her to learn weaving on a loom, a skill she now shares with her daughter Andrea, who helps her run the newest addition to the Abljanovci ethno house: the weaving



workshop. And to round off the family story, allow us to introduce Mila, Andrea's daughter, who has inherited a love of Slavonian tradition and proudly wears the folk costumes.

A house reborn through love

The house itself, now a living monument to tradition, entered their lives when Caterina wanted to buy an old horse cart. Since the cart wasn't for sale, she ended up buying the entire house with the yard it stood in. Already deeply in love with all things šokac, she vowed to restore the home to its former glory.

She spent an entire year restoring everything she could – removing layers of paint by hand, repainting the pillars with the original colours and motifs, refurbishing furniture in the traditional style, and even rebuilding the fireplace that once stood in the main room.

The result is a living museum, built with tireless effort and a soul deeply in love with heritage.

Behind the loom

The house interior is outfitted with original furniture, handwoven textiles, and tools once used in daily life. Each room tells a story, from the kitchen filled with traditional cookware to a weaving room where visitors can observe live demonstrations and

even try their hand at the calming rhythm of weaving. As Caterina and Andrea say, it's an activity that "soothes the body and soul" (at least once you manage to coordinate your hands and feet).

In addition to its permanent display, Ethno House Abljanovci regularly hosts cultural events and festivals. A notable one was the first Summer Ethno Fashion Show in the enchanting courtyard. It brought together local artists and designers who showcased works inspired by traditional motifs, blending the old and the new in a truly special way.

The house also hosts the folklore festival "Abljanovci, my little village," organized by the local cultural association *Ravnica* from Habjanovci. The event gathers folklore groups from across the region, celebrating traditional music, dance, and customs in a vibrant program that honours the richness of Slavonian heritage.



Find them on Facebook

For more information about upcoming events and workshops, visit the official Facebook page of Etno kuća Abljanovci, where you'll find the latest updates, photos from past events, and tips on how to plan your visit. Caterina and Andrea are always happy to welcome guests eager to experience the magic of the past and feel the spirit of Slavonian tradition. In their cozy workshop, you can even purchase handwoven clothing and accessories, be it traditional or with a modern twist.

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Craving something *sweet*?



WRITTEN BY KATARINA ANBELKOVIC

Whether you're driving, cycling, or strolling through Baranja, outdoors is the perfect way to spend a sunny day. Every stop along this cheerful sightseeing route is worth admiring, that much is certain. But a couple of places truly stand out: Kopački Rit Nature Park with its wooden walkways weaving through wetlands, and the Batina Battle Memorial offering breathtaking views over three countries.

And it's only natural that moments of active exploring call for moments of pure relaxation and indulgence. Which is why you should *chase* it with a shot of craft rakija, a glass of fine local wine, or – the author's personal favourite – a cup of coffee paired with dessert. Whatever you choose, take a moment to pause, relax, and treat yourself to a little Baranja sweetness.

In the heart of the wetlands

Located right at the entrance to Kopački Rit Nature Park, Lounge Bar Lopoč is the perfect place to start (or wrap up) your visit to this birdwatcher's paradise. Surrounded by the park's natural beauty, Lopoč offers refreshing drinks and delicious desserts in a peaceful setting. Its outdoor area features wooden paths and shaded terraces with gazebos, providing a comfortable spot to relax away from the sun. Although

the interior of the bar is somewhat smaller, its outdoor areas are spacious and well-suited for all visitors. The staff is friendly and always ready to help, and the sweet treats offered at Lopoč come straight from Baranjske slastice Horvat. The lounge bar is open daily from 8 AM to 8 PM.

A spectacular view

With a spectacular view of the mighty Danube and right next to the Batina Battle Memorial, you'll find Caffè Bar Panorama. A favourite gathering spot for both locals and visitors, Panorama is famous for its laid-back atmosphere and delicious homemade cakes and desserts from Baranjske slastice Horvat, known for irresistible treats. Panorama is open from mid-April to November, every day except Mondays, from 10 AM to 10 PM. Highly recommended for anyone looking to enjoy the perfecting nature and local hospitality.



Sweet dreams in a baroque Slavonian manor

by Baroque heritage and decorated with original artworks purchased from the Mihalović descendants. Near the old wine cellar, tasting room and horse stables, the hotel also features amenities including a grand salon for various events, a music lounge, a wellness center with a spacious pool, and a wine cellar stocked with select wines from the house winery Enosophia (www.enosophia.hr).



When was the last time you truly pampered yourself, relaxed, and surrendered to pure pleasure? A romantic weekend for two, a cozy hotel room, relaxing in the wellness area and pool, followed by a fine dinner and a glass of wine... All that – and more – awaits at this heritage hotel located in the newly restored Mihalović manor in Feričanci.

This grand late Baroque manor, a *kurija*, was home to the Croatian noble family Mihalović from the 18th century until the late 19th century. Their hospitality, renowned throughout the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, was often enjoyed by the famous Hungarian composer Franz Liszt. He was known to say that he found perfect peace right here, in the calm of forests and vineyards, with a glass of *frankovka*, the red wine Feričanci has been known for over centuries, and in walks to the old vineyard house, now a restaurant at *Goveda Glava*, one of the finest winegrowing spots in all of Slavonia.

Nowadays, the heritage hotel offers six spacious rooms and suites with modern furnishings inspired

Castle hotels route

Kurija Mihalović is part of a kind of a castle hotels route stretching through the Slavonian Podravina region and the foothills of Papuk, currently spanning around 100 kilometers. Treat yourself to a noble retreat in places that were once homes of real aristocrats.



Also visit

Hotel Kurija Janković near Virovitica
(www.kurija-jankovic.com)

Janković Castle in Suhopolje
(www.dvorac-jankovic.hr)

For large groups (with prior notice):
the impressive baroque Turković
Castle Hotel in Kutjevo (www.visit-slavonia.hr/planiraj/smjestaj).

Top picks for your morning stroll

STOP 1: City market Elixirs of life

If you want to feel Osijek's heartbeat, head to the central Saturday market (*pijaca*, as the locals call it). There are smaller neighbourhood markets around, sure, but the main one is located on Gajev Trg and proudly carries the title "the belly of the city." The customers and producers greet each other like old friends – and some like family – bonded by trust and shared stories. Fresh fruits and veggies, meats, eggs, cheese, flowers... all sourced from local family farms, many of which are proudly certified organic.



Chef **Saša Vojnović** knows the market like the back of his hand. His partner, kinesiologist **Maja Diklić**, is a huge advocate for healthy living – and where better to stock up on nature's best than here? "The market isn't just where we buy food," says Saša. "It's an experience that blends tradition, community, and top-quality ingredients." "We love that everything is fresh and seasonal, and the variety depends on the rhythm of nature," Maja adds.

Beyond the produce, it's the people who make it special. "The chats with the producers, the trust, there's a vibe you just don't get in a supermarket. It's a social hub where people share advice, swap

recipes, and point you to the best pick of the day. Plus, the aromas of fresh herbs, fruits, flowers, all blended with the colorful stalls give the place such a lively energy. Shopping here isn't just practical, it's a way to support local producers and enjoy the authentic tastes of our region," they say.

STOP 2: Nova bookshop Food for the soul

After feeding your body at the market, it's time to nourish your soul. Just a short walk from Gajev Trg to Starčević Square will take you to Nova, a bookshop nestled just by the co-cathedral of St. Peter and Paul. There you'll find books, children's stories, and even fresh souvenirs – like tote bags and bum bags featuring the stylish #HeadOnEast design.



Writer and translator **Ivana Šojat** considers Nova to be a cultural cornerstone for Osijek locals. "It's more than a bookshop, a meeting point for dreamers, scholars, creative souls. It's part of the city's identity," says Ivana, one of Croatia's most acclaimed authors whose works have been translated into Italian, English, German, Turkish, Slovenian, Polish, Bulgarian, Macedonian – and soon, Hungarian and Albanian too.

Thanks to its tireless owners, the husband and wife duo Melita and Ivica Vuletić, Nova has spent over 30 years establishing its place as one of Croatia's finest independent bookshops. "Every book here is chosen with care and love. Come for inspiration, a recommendation, or simply to enjoy the smell of books," says Professor **Ivica Vuletić**.

STOP 3:

European Avenue - Osijek's secession row

Urban identity

From Nova, walk straight down Kapucinska Street and on to European Avenue, one of the city's most striking architectural ensembles, known locally as the secession row. The section between the corners of Vjekoslava Hengla and Radićeva Streets down to the corner with the Cardinal Stepinac Street makes for one of Osijek's most striking stretches.

"This residential row is a defining image of Osijek and one of the best-preserved examples of its kind, not just in Croatia but across Central Europe," says **Darija Cvitan**, an art historian and conservator, head of the Osijek Restoration Department.

Its southern side features grand historic public buildings from the late 1800s, while a few years later a row of elegant one- and two-story rental houses popped up opposite them, originally owned by prominent lawyers, industrialists, and landowners. "The buildings are rich with Art Nouveau details – stucco decorations inspired by local flora and fauna, geometric shapes, ornamental vases, and stylized masks and faces," explains Darija. Even new materials like concrete, steel, and iron were introduced here, giving the walls a chic monochrome look. Make sure you get your cameras out for this lively journey through time.



STOP 4:

The museum of Slavonia

A treasure chest

Follow the tram tracks under leafy branches, passing Osijek's parks and green areas, and head straight to the baroque Osijek citadel (*Tvrđa*). In its Holy Trinity Square, you'll find one of the oldest and largest museums in Croatia.

"Founded in 1877, the Museum of Slavonia holds nearly 130 collections, preserving the cultural, historical, natural, and artistic heritage of Osijek and Slavonia, from ancient times to the present. Although two new museums have since been created from its materials, the Museum of Slavonia still preserves a quarter of a million inventoried artifacts. Its curators regularly rotate the thematic exhibitions, giving locals and tourists fresh ways to explore the vast collections. It is open Tuesday to Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and entry is free on Saturdays," says senior curator **Grgr Marko Ivanković**.

The Museum of Slavonia allows for a peek into Osijek's urban past and village life across Slavonia and Baranja from the times of our ancestors. And don't forget to stop by the gift shop.



STOP 5:

Osijek promenade

Synergy of the elements

From Tvrđa, head down through the Water Gate to the Drava river promenade, one of the longest riverside walkways in Europe.

“To me, the Osijek Promenade isn’t just a riverside walk. Here the city breathes with all its might, this is where past meets future, the hustle and bustle of the city meets peace and nature. As I walk, run or ride my bike, I feel the rhythm of the river harmonizing my thoughts and bringing me inner peace. This reminds me of how beautiful and special Osijek is, bursting with life, yet offering plenty of hidden corners. For me, the promenade is a meeting point, a symbol of freedom, connection and belonging”, famous Osijek musician **Igor Delač** describes his fascination.

After facing some health challenges a few years ago, Igor started running, often right here.

“I’m especially proud that our charity race *Osijek runs and so can you* – Gift your kilometres, finally, in its sixth

edition, connected Osijek’s Upper and Lower

Towns with the old town, which became the foundation for the City Day celebrations,” he explains.

Don’t feel like running? No worries. There are dedicated walking and cycling paths, or you can take a ride on the *komp*a (river ferry), a rowboat, or even a speedboat.



STOP 6:

Bajta, Kopika Beach

The joy of living

The best way to discover a city is by learning what makes its people smile. In Osijek, that has to be the beloved riverside swimming spot known as Kopika, which short for its famous namesake, the Copacabana beach.

“There were a few sad summers when Kopika was empty even in July, but then, fortunately, it had its renaissance, and several bars and cafés opened there. Bajta has stood out from the very beginning. The guys who run it decided not to close with the first signs of autumn, but kept it going for each ray of sunshine, no matter the wind and cold,” reveals the chronicler of the city’s joys of life, manager **Davor Brmež**.

He realized, he explains, that Bajta is not just a place where you can grab a drink. “You go there to witness the most beautiful sunset in the world, listen to music that you can’t hear in restaurants, see *the crew*, walk your dog or spend a few moments with the river. All of this is possible because Ante, Ivan and the rest of the team don’t just follow trends – they have become one with the space that they enriched by persistently refusing to let bad weather stop them. Bajta is open whenever needed,” Brmež is convinced.

Don’t miss Bajta. “Especially on Saturdays! Happy hour isn’t just happy hour, you get to share the city’s energy. They’ll charge for the drinks, but they’ll serve good vibes for free,” says Brmež, Davor concludes his Saturday stroll.



Run, tourist, run!

Contrary to popular belief, the terrain of Slavonia and Baranja isn't entirely flat – at least not enough if you're a recreational runner. The landscape here includes wetlands, hills, and steep trails, of which the most beautiful ones stretch along rivers, through vineyards, fields, parks, manor grounds, and centuries-old towns. The sun is calling, so don't hesitate – lace up your running shoes, grab your camera, and try conquering at least one of the top 5 running trails.

The **Osijek trail** route offers a unique urban running experience along the river Drava. The starting point is at the beginning of Osijek's famous promenade, and the trail winds past Osijek's Baroque old town. It's ideal for those looking for the perfect blend of recreation and exploring Osijek's cultural landmarks.

The **Rit trail** passes through Kopački Rit, one of the largest wetland areas in Europe. It's perfect for nature lovers looking to run surrounded by tranquil waters, reeds, and forest. An early morning jog here with birdsong

and the reflection of the rising sun is a truly special experience.

Set among vineyards and rolling hills, the **Erdut green trail** offers spectacular views of the Danube River and the surrounding landscape. This is a slightly more challenging route with gentle climbs. And it can't hurt to say that a glass of fine wine tastes even better after a good workout, and local winemakers are happy to welcome all guests looking for refreshment.

The **Našice nobles' trail** runs through historical sites linked to the noble Pejačević family. Starting at the Pejačević Castle, it offers a glimpse into the aristocratic lifestyle of past centuries. The trail passes through the castle grounds and follows forest paths lined with information boards about the Pejačević family, composer Dora Pejačević, and the rich cultural heritage of Našice.

Part of the Baranja Mountain Bypass, the **Two gorges** is a more demanding trail. Its central features – *surduci* – are steep, deeply cut gorges carved by water runoff from the Bansko hill. Characteristic of the Baranja landscape, these gorges often house wine cellars, locally known as *gatori*.

These might be our favourites, but there are many more running and hiking trails worth exploring. Check them all out at <https://visitslavoniabaranja.com/outdoors/trails/>

Trail lengths

- **Osijek trail** (6,7 km)
- **Rit trail** (7,7 km)
- **Erdut green trail** (8,4 km)
- **Našice nobles' trail** (10,3 km)
- **Two gorges** (17,1 km)

The secret is to keep the pot near the fire – without it touching the embers

We live in times where we have less and less of one essential thing: time. The goal is always to cook a quick meal and eat it even more quickly. Ready-made dishes, pressure cookers and kitchen gadgets have become our most valuable allies. But is there anything more beautiful than finally making time to approach food the way it deserves: slowly? Imagine a bean stew simmering on the stove for two hours, or better yet, four to five hours beside a fire, in a clay pot.

A dish of the old Šokci

The old Šokci used to cook beans this way for practical reasons while working in the fields or vineyards. Beans would be cooked in a clay pot, along with bacon, sausage, onions, and red paprika. The pot would be placed near hot embers that were simply pushed to one side, allowing warm and cool air currents to stir the contents naturally.

They also used to cook it in winter using the stove that heated their living space. They would light it in the morning, and once it was warm, they'd place a clay pot inside to prepare something *soupy* for lunch that day. Everything was put into the pot at once, then placed in the stove to simmer for three to four hours, with occasional checks to make sure there was enough water.

Interestingly, Šokac-style beans cooked in a clay pot is also a recognized culinary brand in the town of Mohács in neighbouring Hungary, which has its own bean festival. A special type of a colourful, slightly larger bean is used.

Beans prepared this way are creamy and have a unique flavor, owing to the open-fire cooking and the special aroma from the ceramic pot. Try this dish at several places in Baranja.



Like life in Baranja – slowly

One of those places is *Baranjska kuća* in Karanac, where it's been on the menu since the restaurant opened. As Stanko Škrobo says, it's one of the most original dishes of this part of Croatia.

"It's cooked in pots made from Baranja clay and it's a very simple dish, but this very simplicity is what makes it so complex. It's prepared over several hours on an open fire, so it's not something you can just make at home, which is exactly why it's exclusive," explains the young restaurateur, highlighting the paradox.

Make sure to book in advance if you want to try their beans from a clay pot, as the dish takes an entire day to prepare. The beans are soaked overnight and cooked for several hours. They make it with smoked meats like pork ribs and shank, but also with fresh beef and pork, along with vegetables, salt, and ground red paprika.

"The philosophy lies in the technique - the quantities of each ingredient, the way the carrots and parsley are chopped, and that's something you learn with experience," says Stanko, pointing out the uniqueness of the handmade pots. "You have to know the pot – where the wall is thinner and the beans might burn. At first, we stir it to even out the temperature, and then it's cooked slowly next to the fire, like life in Baranja. Slowly."

With this dish, Škrobo recommends a light, dry, mineral, fresh wine. "So light it makes room for a second serving," he concludes with a smile.

That's how it used to be

One of the masters of clay pot beans is Marko Horvat from Duboševica, who is also the president of the association *That's How It Used to Be*. He prepares the dish at various tourism events, as well as on request at Tikveš Castle and in the Zajec Family Wine Cellar. The first event this year where the dish can be sampled is the *Pasta Festival and Baranja Bečarac*, held in early June in Topolje.

Horvat's recipe is simple. Add one third of beans, one third of smoked meat, and a third of water into the pot, along with red onion, garlic, carrot, parsley or celery, ground paprika, and salt, plus a



spoonful of pork lard to enhance the flavour. He places the pot next to the fire, with only the flame's proximity heating it. "The embers shouldn't touch the pot as they could damage it. I don't stir the pot; the currents do that," says the chef.

As for wine recommendations, he notes that sweeter wines are becoming more popular. "There are a lot of women among our guests, and men have started following their taste. Each of our wineries has one or two wines that are sweet or semi-sweet, and they pair wonderfully with beans from the pot," Horvat concludes.

Sweet wine for spicy beans

This is confirmed by the wineries *Carev podrum* and *Gerštmajer*. Alongside the standard offering, they produce dry, semi-dry, and sweet *Graševina* wines. They prepare all their dishes – including the beans, which are now part of the regular menu – right in front of their guests, who are welcome to watch and ask questions.

"That makes people even hungrier, especially with an aperitif – homemade rakija, liqueur, or a glass of wine," reveals Ivan Gerštmajer Zelember, adding that he recommends dry *Graševina* as the aperitif, while its semi-sweet or sweet version or a late-harvest Pinot Gris would balance out the bold and spicy flavours of the dish.

Tourists with limited mobility can freely explore the city landmarks

Another inclusive star of the city must be the new low-floor trams

WRITTEN BY SAŠA DRINIĆ

Thank you, Europe! And Osijek – every little cobblestone of the city jewel Tvrđa seems priceless when the wheels of my wheelchair effortlessly glide across the renovated old town. We know all too well what it was like before. One of my most unforgettable experiences happened on the night Croatia joined the European Union. After the celebration at the Holy Trinity Square, I nearly kissed the ground when my wheelchair's front wheel got stuck in one of the old stones. Thanks to my skilled companion, a mishap was avoided, but we had been eagerly awaiting the renovation of the old town for a reason.

This major project, funded with EU money, has made Osijek a more inclusive city, where tourists with limited mobility can now easily and without fear visit the landmarks.

Friendly architecture

Osijek is, in many ways, a disability-friendly city, from its parks or the long Drava river promenade to the open-minded attitude of its people and its architecture. All new buildings are designed with accessibility in mind, as confirmed by local architects.

“Sloped curbs on sidewalks, tactile paving for the visually impaired, and raised symbols in elevators have long been standard. Many existing buildings housing pharmacies, banks, and shops have already installed ramps or lifting platforms. Even the Osijek Co-cathedral is now accessible. The new emergency room and outpatient hospital building is a great example of accessibility-focused design,” says architect Bruno Rechner.



Make sure you don't stop at the emergency rooms, though, and continue enjoying the city!

Outdoor areas follow strict regulations for ramp inclines, stairways, and handrail heights. Nothing is left to chance. Since we aim for an inclusive society where everyone should have their place, these rules are as important as any architectural standards, says Rechner.

He applied these principles in the design of Osijek's Freedom Square, a must-see for every visitor.

"This is most apparent along the central north-south axis, where you can move freely from the main pedestrian street (Korzo) to the Street of Hrvatske Republike. The same goes for other directions as well. Elevation differences are handled with gentle ramps, and the flat surfaces provide full access to the square's contents and its surroundings. The paving pattern alternates between lighter and darker tones, creating a visual effect like a long pedestrian crossing or barcode, which was an intentional designer move. It also makes the space easier to perceive and navigate, particularly for those with visual impairments," he explains.

Equality and independence

Nika Matančić, a blind student from Osijek, says the city's public spaces help her feel independent. "Osijek puts a lot of effort into building its roads and curbs. Many intersections have audible pedestrian signals, tactile paths for blind people, and both auditory and visual announcements on public transportation. Guide dogs are allowed on all public transport and in public buildings. These measures promote equality and make higher education more accessible for young people with disabilities," says Nika, who studies in Osijek's historic Tvrđa.

She says she wishes e-scooter users would avoid pedestrian paths, but that doesn't stop her from safely getting where she needs to go.



"We should note that Osijek continues to show progress with regards to inclusion and adaptation of urban spaces to the needs of all its citizens. I believe more will be done to improve infrastructure and raise awareness so the city becomes even more accessible. Small changes in our everyday interactions, like respecting parking spaces for people with disabilities, can significantly improve everyone's quality of life," says Nika optimistically.

Another inclusive star of the city must be its fleet of low-floor trams, making tram rides possible for those who've never had the chance to tick off the experience from their bucket lists.

The city is a living organism, beating in rhythm with the hearts of its residents, and growth with inclusion is the only way forward. Inclusion will never be perfect or meet everyone's needs completely, but the new public spaces, parks, and pedestrian zones in the works show a commitment to people over cars. Everything Osijek already offers, along with everything that's coming, brings joy and a sense of responsibility.

Welcome!

Kulen, *kulin*, or *kuljen* – it might go by different names, but the pleasure is the same

The Đakovački kulin association brings together about thirty members - kulen producers from the wider area of Đakovo

Đakovo is, without a doubt, the only city in the world that can call itself the City of Kulin. So proudly says Vladimir Ćorić, president of the Đakovački kulin association, working to promote and brand Đakovo as the city of kulin or kulen.

The association gathers around thirty members – kulen producers from the wider area of Đakovo. For nearly 40 years, it has continuously organised a kulen tasting competition in Đakovo as part of the annual Đakovački vezovi festival. According to Ćorić, the association's greatest value lies in the fact that its members promote this treasured delicacy of Slavonia, Baranja, and Syrmia at various events and that they pass on their knowledge to young kulen producers.

So, which one, *kulen* or *kulin*, is this prized delicacy of eastern Croatia? Both names are correct. In some Šokac dialects the term *kulin* is more common, though *kulen* is by far the most widely used name. Still, in the heart of Slavonia, in the Đakovo

area – specifically in the villages of Koritna, Kešinci, and Semeljci – you'll hear people calling it *kuljen*.

Kulen and luxury

"The old folks in these parts really do call our most prized product *kuljen*," says Stanko Josipović, one of the successful younger producers of kulen and other cured meats.

Stanko and his family have been raising pigs in Koritna, a village 17 km northeast of Đakovo, for





years. They raise about 15,000 pigs annually, and between 300 and 500 of them are fattened specifically for the premium kulen which requires mature pigs of at least 180 kg. At the end of 2022, the Josipović family launched a new meat processing facility (*FB Kulen Josipović*). Excellent results quickly followed, and in 2024 Josipović kulen was awarded best in show at the Kulen Festival in Beli Manastir. The crown of their success with kulen and other cured meat production is the Josipović House, a five-star rural luxury vacation home (www.josipovic-house.com). Yes, kulen and luxury go so well together!

A similar success story is unfolding near Lake Borovik. In Podgorje Bračevačko, a company called Balkan Lov produces Đakovačke delikatese, a line of cured meats that begins with free-range pigs, especially the prized Black Slavonian breed, raised on pastures, meadows, and forests along the slopes of Krndija. Since 2019, the company has been making high-quality meat products, which are now featured in restaurants across Croatia and available for purchase online at djakovacke-delikatese.hr.

Serious investment

Serious kulen producers keep emerging throughout the Đakovo area. For example, in Josipovac Punitovački, the Eling family with their farm (OPG Eling) have made significant investments in their production facility and are well on their way to creating a recognisable Kulen Eling brand (*kulen-eling.hr*).

Other examples include Delicije Tokić in Široko Polje (*FB Delicije Tokić*) and long-time kulen producers OPG Bošnjaković in Piškorevci.

In Đakovo, Mesnica Vrhovac (mesnica-vrhovac.hr) has been winning medals for kulen quality for years. And yes, you can even buy kulen at a butcher boutique: visit Mesni butik Jančo at the Đakovo City Market (*FB Mesni butik Jančo*).

Fun fact: in Slavonia and Baranja, there is an ongoing debate on whether or not kulen can be made in non-traditional ways. The short answer is no. Pro tip: try not to start this debate among locals.



On two wheels – with extra power



WRITTEN BY KATARINA ANDELKOVIĆ

Whether you love winding roads or prefer cruising along vistas of endless plains, Slavonia and Baranja are more than worth exploring on a motorcycle. No one knows this better than the seasoned Osijek biker Siniša Maurus, who has selected his top routes. So, helmets on, hop on your metal steed, and pick your route.

The riverside route (80 km) **Osijek – Aljmaš – Erdut – Osijek**

A ride to Aljmaš offers great roads and a stunning view of the Danube. Visit the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Refuge in Aljmaš or enjoy breathtaking views from the Erdut Tower. Treat yourself to some excellent fish stew on a well-earned break.

The aristocratic route (140 km) **Osijek – Donji Miholjac – Našice – Osijek**

This ride through Slavonian villages provides a relaxing escape. Stop at the Mailath Castle in Donji Miholjac, an impressive Austro-Hungarian architectural gem, and don't miss the Pejačević Castle and lush gardens in Našice. The return leg winds peacefully through Podgorač and Čepin.

The wine route (105 km) **Osijek – Zlatna Greda – Suza – Batina – Osijek**

This route has it all. It begins through the bird- and wildlife-rich Kopački Rit Nature Park, passes by the Zlatna Greda Eco-Center, and continues along the wine road through the Baranja villages of Suza and Zmajevac, ending at Batina. Soak up the history and enjoy a magnificent panoramic view of the Danube at the Batina Battle Memorial.

The Slavonian route (130 km) **Osijek – Našice – Đakovo – Osijek**

The Pejačević Castle in Našice and the St. Peter Cathedral in Đakovo are the must-see landmarks on this route. Visit the Lipizzaner horses in Đakovo and stop by Lake Borovik for a nature break. The return leg winds through charming Slavonian villages and picturesque landscapes.

The Baranja route (100 km) **Osijek – Beli Manastir – Batina – Osijek**

The open expanses of Baranja feature numerous cultural and historical sites. Alongside the tri-border viewpoint in Batina, you'll find Kneževi Vinogradi and the ethno-village of Karanac, ideal for indulging in local delicacies and Baranja wines.

The loop (100 km) **Osijek – Bizovac – Valpovo – Beli Manastir – Osijek**

This loop combines a scenic ride through the flatland with cultural highlights. Visit the Prandau-Normann Castle in Valpovo or let the industrial town of Belišće surprise you with the charm of its *Jam Street*. The ride through Baranja is made all the more enjoyable by its gorgeous scenery and rich wine & food offer.

Gatori – underground guardians of Baranja wine

Gatori are traditional wine cellars characteristic of the Danube region, especially the area around Zmajevac and Suza. These unique buildings have been used for centuries to store and mature wine, and their creation is associated with the Ottoman period and the later development of viticulture under the influence of Hungarian and German culture.

The oldest *gatori* in Baranja date back to the 17th and 18th centuries, when winegrowers looked for ways to ensure ideal conditions in which to store their wine. They were dug by hand in the *loess* soil, on the slopes of hills, the most famous of which is BANSKO hill. Precisely because of such design, their temperature is stable - from 12 to 15 °C all year round. Thanks to the structure provided by their loess environment, *gatori* naturally regulate humidity and temperature, without the need for additional cooling or heating, and are now recognized as self-sustaining and environmentally friendly facilities.

Their construction is simple but functional. They consist of two main parts, a brick building and a part buried in the loess, the entrance of which is often decorated with bricks or stone. The interior consists of a long corridor that branches in some places into side rooms where wine is stored in wooden barrels. The walls naturally absorb moisture, preventing the barrels from drying out and ensuring optimal conditions for wine maturation.

In addition to their primary function as wine cellars, *gatori* have always been social places. Locals gathered there to celebrate the harvest, taste new wine or simply enjoy the company of their friends. Today, some still serve the same purpose - renovated and adapted for wine tourism, they offer visitors an authentic experience of the Baranja vineyards.

Among the most famous are the gators in Zmajevac, located in the so-called *surduci* - alleys cut into the hill, where there are a series of wine cellars. At events such as Vinatlon, visitors have the opportunity to explore these unique cellars and enjoy wine tasting.



One of the oldest and most famous *gator* is that of the Belje winery in Kneževi Vinogradi. It dates back to 1526, was first mentioned in descriptions of the Battle of Mohacs, and is still open to visitors today. For those who want to experience their authentic atmosphere, allow us to recommend a visit to the Kolar family wine cellar in Suza or the Josić winery in neighboring Zmajevac. There is also the Zlatno Brdo winery in Kneževi Vinogradi, as well as many others in the area. Apparently, there are 400 or more of these in Zmajevac alone!



A big “**did you know?**” journey through Slavonia — with just a few *stereotypes*

WRITTEN BY MISLAV PAVOŠEVIĆ

Ever felt like your knowledge of Slavonia is filled with stereotypes? It's time to change that! Discover the fascinating nature of Papuk, dive into the ancient Pannonian Sea, learn about the healing waters of Lipik, experience the baroque Požega with wine and chocolate, or learn how to sing a traditional bečarac!

Hiking in Voćin

Papuk isn't just impressive for its elevation – which breaks the “flat Slavonia” myth – but also for its unique geology and natural and cultural heritage. In 2007, it was declared a UNESCO Global Geopark. In Voćin, near the majestic Gothic church, visit the *Geo-info Center* (www.geoinfocentar.com) and step into a 6D cinema to experience the era when sharks swam the Pannonian Sea and dinosaurs roamed its shores! Don't miss nearby Rupnica with its lava stone columns, making it almost like a Slavonian version of the famous Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland.



Swimming in Velika

Think the only wild animals in Slavonia are those that end up in a stew? Think again! In the former sand pit on Papuk's southern slopes, exotic fish and mammals have been preserved as fossils for millions of years. Explore them in the *House of the Pannonian Sea*, a visitor center of Papuk Nature Park in Velika (www.kucapanonskogmora.hr). There, you'll learn all about the Megalodon shark and its ancient rivals – seals and whales. And if these “Slavonian jaws” don't scare you away, you can cool off at the nearby “riviera” in Aquapark Shhhuma (www.shhhuma.com). Since Papuk's slopes are always a few degrees cooler than the rest of the Požega Valley, you can also find natural shade from the summer sun at the Duboka campsite and adrenaline park (www.pp-papuk.hr/kamp-duboka; www.adrenalin-park-duboka.com). If

you're up for a bit of light hiking, follow the marked trail from the medieval Velika Fortress or take the gravel road past the quarry to Slavonia's famous hiking spot – Jankovac Forest Park. Thanks to its clear lakes, travertine barriers, and waterfalls, visitors fondly call it the “Little Plitvice” (www.pp-papuk.hr/park-suma-jankovac).

Riding in Lipik

All roads lead to Rome, but since that's a bit far, how about bringing a bit of Roman hedonism to Slavonia? That's exactly what the ancient Iasi tribe, known as “The Healers,” did in the 2nd century BC when they recognised the healing power of thermal springs on the western slopes of Papuk. Learn the story of Lipik's thermal waters (up to 62°C!) at the *Villa of Good Water* visitor center (www.tz-lipik.hr) and experience the healing powers at *Narodne kupke*, Lipik's historical interpretation wellness center (www.toplice-lipik.hr). Then, as befits your vacation in a historic spa, take a ride through the town in a luxurious Lipizzaner carriage of the Lipik State Stud Farm (www.ergela-lipik.org).

Wine in Kutjevo

Just how popular is Graševina wine? In Slavonia, it practically flows like a river – and if that river had a source, it would certainly be in Kutjevo! In the city center, at Graševina Square, you'll find vines planted and cared for by local winemakers, especially before big wine celebrations like St. Vincent's Day and St. Martin's Day. Visit the Kutjevo Winery and the oldest Croatian wine cellar dating back to 1232, featuring an oak barrel that can hold

a staggering 53,520 liters (www.kutjevo.com). Stroll through the park alongside the baroque castle-hotel, and among the many local restaurants, be sure to stop at Vinkomir (www.kutjevo.com/restoran) where you can even get a carriage ride! Don't miss tasting wines from other dedicated local winemakers gathered in the Kutjevo Winemakers Association (www.kutjevacki-vinari.hr).

GLASS FOR THE NEVERA

As you drive to the Geo-info Center or the House of the Pannonian Sea in Papuk Nature Park, check your car windshield, it might have been made in Lipik! The fossil-rich Pannonian sand from Papuk is the base material used in the production of high-tech glass for luxury vehicles, including the ultra-popular Croatian electric supercar, the Rimac Nevera.

Bećarac in Pleternica

If you're looking to experience a true Slavonian stereotype, look no more! Learn how to be a *Slavonac*, a *Šokac*, and a *Bećar* and compose your own *bećarac*, a two-line humorous folk song which is part of Croatia's intangible cultural heritage that has been listed by UNESCO since 2011. Through a wealth of interactive exhibits at the Bećarac Museum in Pleternica (www.becarac.hr), you'll learn all about Slavonian traditions from baptisms, carnivals, and village feasts to weddings and funerals. The museum will teach you how to joyfully sing along with the locals, and you'll even have a chance to try it on the spot!



Welcome to the European wine region!

This year's Wine Month in Osijek-Baranja County begins on May 10, to go on all the way until July 5

WRITTEN BY KATARINA ANDELKOVIĆ

In Slavonia and Baranja, we have a habit of counterbalancing every hardship with something good. And so it was wisely decided: let's balance the long and weary January with a cheerful, fruitful month mid-year, and let that be the Wine Month. And since we like to take our time in Slavonia and Baranja, our version of Wine Month stretches over three. Take that, January!

An exciting time

As soon as February rolled around, we had reasons to celebrate: the European Network of Wine Cities (RECEVIN) awarded Osijek-Baranja County the prestigious Dionisio title of European Region of Wine. This marked the beginning of an exciting, dynamic, wine-soaked year for our wine capital.

Thanks to its favourable geography and climate, Slavonia and Baranja are home to the ideal soil for many grape varieties. The county boasts four winegrowing regions – Baranja, Erdut, Đakovo, and Feričanci – home to prized whites like Graševina. This perfect accompaniment to fish stews and barbecues is now making a grand comeback, with a shiny new reputation. It is quickly gaining popularity, and will impress even the toughest of critics. Some other nearly forgotten local varieties like Kadarka are enjoying a kind of renaissance as well. It's an exciting time for oenology in this golden land, and the best, we're certain, is yet to come.

For seasoned hedonists and beginners alike

This year's Wine Month in Osijek-Baranja County runs from May 10 to July 5, bringing back some beloved events and introducing a few new ones for true hedonists and those only looking to become one.

May 10 – Valpovo hosts the 6th Cheese & Wine Festival in the Baroque Prandau-Normann Castle's courtyards. Expect local cheese and wine producers, rich gastronomy, and a lively music program.

May 17 – Osijek Wine & Walk returns for all lovers of active holidays and top-quality wines. The picturesque walking tour through Osijek is accompanied with tastings at selected locations. Participants get to learn about the city's rich history while enjoying top-quality wine.

May 24 – Wine & Art Evening in Osijek transforms the city into the region's capital of culture and oenology. This event combines exhibitions by local artists with wine tastings, creating a unique atmosphere that celebrates creativity and tradition.





May 30–31 – Zmajevac becomes the wine capital once again for the annual **Vinatlon**, featuring wine-themed games, workshops, and the prestigious **Danube Champion Award**. Local wines and great music await in the iconic gorges (*surduci*) of Baranja, home to the unique wine cellars known as *gatori*.

June 6 – The Wine & Tambura Fest between Topolje and Gajić brings traditional music and wine together for a truly authentic Baranja winery experience. While enjoying the always impressive performances by tamburica bands, visitors can taste wines from local winemakers as well as the area's specialties.

June 7 – Baranja Wine & Walk in Kneževi Vinogradi takes visitors through the stunning Baranja. This walk offers a unique opportunity to explore the natural beauty of the Baranja hills and its rich wine offering. Participants will enjoy beautiful views and taste wines right where the finest drops originate.

June 20–21 – Open Cellar Days in Đakovo Wine Region, with wineries in Mandićevac and Trnava welcoming visitors to explore their wine-making process and sample the finest vintages.

June 21 – The 38th Bonavita Festival in Trnava, as part of the Open Cellar Days, celebrates the long-standing viticultural tradition of the region, bringing wine tastings, music, and hearty food.

But Wait—There's More!

Yes, we'd love it if Wine Month lasted even longer, but the celebrations continue later in the year:

September: *Wine & Bike Tour Erdut*, the 20th Wine Marathon in Zmajevac, and the 8th Frankovka Festival in Feričanci

October: *Vino.grad (HeadOnEast)* and the 5th Golden Wineend

These events are just a taste of the rich wine offering of our region. We warmly invite you to join us in celebrating this wine season, discovering all the flavours and stories that Slavonia and Baranja have to offer.

*Scan the QR
code and find all
the inspiration
for your
trip*



The citizens know their names and even *sing* for them

WRITTEN BY IVANA RAB GULJAŠ

Visiting Osijek with children? Looking for the perfect mix of education, recreation and exploration?

Then follow in the footsteps of generations of Osijek locals who cherish the tradition of family visits to the Zoo, a green oasis on the left bank of the Drava River. And the best way to get there is the eco-friendly route by Osijek's famous *komp*a - a river ferry which has been shuttling across the Drava since 1916. Begin your short boat ride near Solarski Square and disembark at Tvrdavica, where you'll also find a hotel with a restaurant and a children's playground.

Osijek ZOO celebrated its 70th birthday in January this year. It is the largest in Croatia, spanning 11 hectares and home to approximately 1000 individuals of one hundred animal species, with 95 000 visitors annually. It is open 365 days a year, and its working hours are adjusted to the length of the day depending on the seasons. The entrance fee for adults is 4 euros, and 2 euros for children.

The people of Osijek have special appreciation for their Zoo, and sometimes even participate in naming its new residents. They regularly follow reports on new arrivals. For example, they recently learned that a baby alpaca named Željka was born on the eve of the zoo's birthday. Among the thirty or so employees is an educator who organises workshops for children, where, among other things, they have the opportunity to prepare treats for the animals. Last winter, famous Osijek residents such as athletes, singers and actors did so, while opera soloist Sanja Toth even sang for the monkeys.

The numbers

11

hectares
- the zoo area

1,000

individuals (100
animal species)

95,000

annual
visitors



Osijek Zoo
+385 031 / 285 234
info@zoo-osijek.hr
www.zoo-osijek.hr

Events: June – October 2025.

More info: <https://visitslavoniabaranja.com/en/event/upcoming-events/>
The calendar of events is indicative, not exhaustive and subject to change.

May

17	Osijek Wine and Walk & Urban Wine Party	www.tzosijek.hr
23 - 25	Pannonian Challenge, Osijek	www.annonian.hr
24	Wine & Art Night, Osijek	FB Vno.Umjetnost
30 - 31	Vinatlon – wine festival, Zmajevac (Baranja)	FB vinatlon
31	Našice Knights' Story, Martin	FB visitnasice

June

1	Našice Knights' Story, Martin	FB visitnasice
7	Antiques Market, Osijek	www.tzosijek.hr
7	Baranjski bečarac: Pasta festival, Topolje	FB LandranjeBaranjom
7	Baranja Wine&Walk, Bansko brdo	www.tzbaranje.hr
8	Spring Ljelje Procession (UNESCO), Gorjani	FB Kud Gorjanac Gorjani
14	Fiš&Aljmaš	tz.opcina-erdut.hr
14	Baranja Rural Trail BRUT	www.brut.life
14 - 15	International ethno meetings in Bilje	www.tzo-bilje.hr
20 - 21	Galoop Festival, Đakovo	www.visitdjakovo.com
20 - 21	Đakovo Days of Open Wine Cellars	www.visitdjakovo.com
20 - 31	59. Đakovo Embroidery Festival	www.visitdjakovo.com
23 - 29	57th Valpovo Summer	www.tz.valpovo.hr
26 - 28	Oscans graffiti jam, Osijek	FB osjecka.tvornica.ideja
27 - 29	Motorcycle Riders' Meetup, Osijek	www.mk-osijek.hr
28	1st Osijek Summer Night	www.tzosijek.hr
28	Borovik Cup - Boat Race, Borovik-Đakovo	www.visitdjakovo.com
29 - 30	„Miholjačko Sijelo“ Heritage Festival	www.tz-donjimiholjac.hr

July

1 - 6	59. Đakovo Embroidery Festival	www.visitdjakovo.com
5	Antiques Market, Osijek	www.tzosijek.hr
4 - 5	Wine & Art Night, Osijek	www.visitslavoniabaranja.com
19	Rock'a'raj fest, Valpovo	www.tz.valpovo.hr
26	2nd Osijek Summer Night	www.tzosijek.hr

Aug.

2	Antiques Market, Osijek	www.tzosijek.hr
29 - 31	Old Sports Olympic Games, Brođanci	www.tzob.hr
30	2rd Osijek Summer Night	www.tzosijek.hr
30	Nard Fiš Paprikaš Festival	www.tz.valpovo.hr

September

	Zemlja bez granica Festival, Osijek	www.zemljabezgranica.com
	Urban Fest Osijek - UFO	FB urbanfestosijek
5 - 6	Đakovo Craft Beer festival	www.visitdjakovo.com
6	Antiques Market, Osijek	www.tzosijek.hr
6	Largest Croatian Fiš Paprikaš Festival, Beli Manastir	www.tzbaranje.hr
12 - 13	Wine&Bike Tour Erdut	FB WineBikeTourErdut
12 - 13	Valpovo Craft beer fest	www.tz.valpovo.hr
12 - 14	Kopačevo Fishermen Days	www.tzo-bilje.hr
26 - 28	Osijek Autumn Fair	www.gospodarskicentarobz.hr
26 - 27	Wine Marathon, Zmajevac	www.tzbaranje.hr
27	Baranja Ferivi Half Marathon	FB Baranjski polumaraton
27	Frankovka Festival, Feričanci	FB Festival frankovke

Oct.

2 - 5	HeadOnEast festival, Osijek	www.visitslavoniabaranja.com
4	Antiques Market, Osijek	www.tzosijek.hr
4 - 5	Paprika fest, Lug	www.tzo-bilje.hr
23 - 25	Filmska Runda Film Festival, Osijek	www.filmskarunda.com
24 - 25	Tehnicoolum, Osijek	www.gospodarskicentarobz.hr

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