SLOVENIA (Slovenija)

Slovenia is a small mountainous country that borders Austria, Italy, Hungary, and Croatia. Slovenia maintains access to the seas through a small stretch of coast on the Adriatic, neighboring the Italian city of Trieste. The Julian Alps curve their way across Slovenia and feed a large number of rivers that make the country one of the most water-rich in Europe. Historically, Slovenia has been ruled by many different empires and only received autonomy from Yugoslavia in 1991.

QUICK FACTS
Population: 2 million
Area: 20,273 sq. km (a bit larger than Delaware)
Capital: Ljubljana (277,000)
Languages: Slovene

EDUCATION
Slovenian education is overseen primarily by the National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia. Primary education usually lasts from about age 6 to about age 14. Slovenian education systems are inherited from the former Yugoslavia and utilize grading systems familiar to any former Soviet educated individual: 1 is the lowest mark, 5 is the highest. State tests must be passed by students intending to proceed on to higher education. There are three public universities in Slovenia, the most prestigious of which is the University of Ljubljana.

RELIGION
Slovene society is traditionally and predominantly Catholic, although religious adherence in Slovenia has diminished over the last 20 years substantially. Lutheranism makes up a small minority (around 2.5%), however, it has a historically significant position in Slovenia due to the fact that the Protestant Reformation helped establish the official nature of the Slovene language. Other religious minorities include Islam (primarily due to Bosnian immigrants), Eastern Orthodox Christianity (primarily from Serbian immigrants) and a single community of religious adherents to Judaism in Ljubljana.

ETHNICITY
Ethnic Slovenes make up about 82% of the population and nearly 14% of the population claims ethnicity from one of the former Yugoslav republics. Special provisions in the constitution are made for relatively small Italian, Hungarian, and Roma minorities. Slovenia has experienced dramatic increases in the average age of its population, due to low fertility rates and longer average lifespans. Over half of births in Slovenia occur outside of marriage and highest birth rates exist among immigrant communities. Immigration to Slovenia, especially from Bosnia-Herzegovina, has accounted for most of the population growth or maintenance since its independence.

FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS & CUSTOMS
Slovenian customs and family relations emerge out of its cultural and religious background of Catholicism. Marriage rates are on the decline and the equalization of gender roles has developed substantially. There are 15 “work free” holidays on the Slovene calendar, 11 of which are state holidays. They include traditional religious holidays, such as Easter and Christmas, as well as Prešeren Day on February 8, the National Cultural Heritage holiday, named after the national poet, France Prešeren.
CONTEMPORARY SLOVENIA
Since the collapse of Yugoslavia and the independence of Slovenia and Croatia, there have been ongoing border disputes between the two countries. These disputes have remained, relatively civil, however, on occasion they have thrown a cog in the wheel of broader European Union absorption goals. In 2008 and 2009 Slovenia protested the entrance of Croatia into NATO and the EU due to disputed water and land borders such as the Gulf of Piran and the region of Sveta Gera. These conflicts remain only partially resolved and continue to provoke controversy in Slovenia and Croatia.

Of the countries that made up the former Yugoslavia, Slovenia was the most prosperous, and did relatively well for itself in the aftermath of the Cold War. Nearly 70% of the workforce of Slovenia works in service jobs. Slovenia was hit particularly hard by the economic recession that began in 2008. EU austerity measures have become a bone of contention in Slovenian politics (as elsewhere.) Slovenia’s main export and import partners are Germany and Italy.

SLOVENES IN THE USA
The first Slovenes in America were probably missionary Catholic priests. Records indicate that Friars Anton Kappus and Frederick Baraga had been to the Americas as early as the 17th century. The largest period of Slovene migration to the U.S. (and the largest period of migration to the U.S. overall) was between the years 1880 and 1918. One of the problems with identifying national immigrants is that they often immigrated before they had any sort of national identity. Slovenia as an independent nation has only existed since the collapse of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

NAMES
Slovene names share similarities with Czech, Croat, and German names. They commonly are of Christian origin, whether Biblical or of prominent saints. They include Alenka, Albinia, Avgusta, Bogomir, and Bor.

FAMOUS SLOVENES
Slavoj Žižek, is a famous Slovene Marxist philosopher and cultural critic, whose provocative Freudian-Marxist fusions applied to cinema and art have garnered him a following. Micky Dolenz, the drummer and lead singer of The Monkees is Slovene. Fritz Pregl was a Slovene chemist in the early 20th century. He won the Nobel Prize for chemistry in 1923. The band Laibach, which ambiguously uses totalitarian imagery and forms to provoke controversy and satirize political duplicity is from Slovenia, they are the first foreign band to play in the DPRK.

SLOVENE WORDS
Hi ........................................ Zdravo
Bye .......................................... Zbogom
Good morning .......................... Dober dan
Yes ............................................. Da
No .............................................. Ne
Sorry........................................ Oprosti
Thank you ................................. Hvala
How are you? ...................... Kako se imaš?
I do not understand ............ Ne razumem
Have a nice day! .............. Lep dan ti želim!
What is your name?......... Kako ti je ime?
My name is ......................... Ime mi je ...
Where are you from? ........... Od kod si?

USEFUL LINKS
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17846376
http://www.sloveniatimes.com/

The flag is comprised of three equal horizontal bands of white, blue and red, with a three peaked mountain and three gold stars.