

F.A.Q.

How much will it cost?

Cost to travel to Slovenia will depend on airfares in 2013 plus money for personal spending. The Synod is careful to find the lowest fares available. Many congregations either fully or partially fund the trip but that is a matter between you and your congregation and is not mandated by the exchange program. The teens arriving from Slovenia will have their own money with them for shopping, souvenirs and extras. As a host family you will need to provide meals/lodging and cover the cost of any non-group activities in which your family takes part (movies, dinners out, etc.). Group events are generally free for our visitors but may require a cost for the host family (such as a bus trip).

What about lodging requirements?

The teens need to have their own beds but not necessarily their own rooms. If you have pets in your home, please make that known just in case someone is allergic to them or may have a fear of them. Make sure your Slovenian guest is aware of the "rules of your home" or any special things they may need to know about your home (what is "that noise" that happens when the water pump comes on?...)

Do I need to speak Slovene?

No! Almost all Slovene teenagers are well-versed in English. They study English in school and many also learn from television shows, music and movies broadcast in English. Many of the teens are multi-lingual, speaking languages such as German, Croatian, Hungarian or Italian. Although Slovenia is a small country there are many local dialects of the Slovene language.

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What do I do with a Slovene teen?

Have fun! The intent of the exchange is to immerse individual teens into American life and to give them a taste of family life in Pennsylvania. Take them to the mall, the movies, or out to dinner. Try a day trip "down the shore" or to a local attraction. Have a barbecue, go on a hike, or attend a sporting event. Invite them to attend church with your family, have a family game night or just sit and chat. Get to know them and give them a chance to know you. It's an experience you will not want to miss!

In these days of litigation, what about background checks?

For the safety of everyone, the Synod is asking that anyone who applies to be a host family must be willing to have a "PA Child Abuse and Criminal Background Check" performed.

What are my responsibilities?

Applicants (teens) selected to participate in the exchange will be expected to attend an orientation meeting and two mandatory team-building sessions with their leaders prior to their trip to Slovenia. They will also be expected to report to their congregations on their experiences and to be involved with presentations to help recruit for future exchange cycles.

How do I apply?

If you are interested in applying to participate in this exciting exchange opportunity or just want more information, please contact Pastor Kurt Garbe at the Hazleton synod office at 570-788-1893. Applications will be accepted until December 2011 and the screening/selection process will begin in January 2012.

Youth Cultural Exchange



The evangelical church in Slovenia



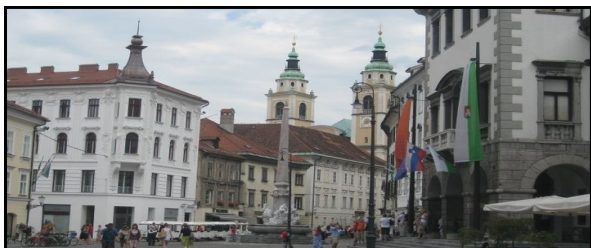
Where is Slovenia?

Often confused with Slovakia, Slovenia is one of the most beautiful countries – as well as one of the best kept secrets – in all of Europe.



Once part of Yugoslavia, Slovenia was the first province to secede in 1991 and form a free and democratic nation of its own. Bordered by the Adriatic Sea and Italy (west), Austria (north), Hungary (east) and Croatia (south), Slovenia is now a member of both the EU and NATO. It seems so small that most people don't know where it's located, yet it seems so big because of the kindness and warm hospitality of our sisters and brothers in Christ who live there. Lutherans comprise only 2% of the population, yet their faith and commitment are unwavering. Their work to help the poor is never-ending, and they are, indeed, the hands and feet of God in their part of the world.

Slovenia is the birthplace of the famous Lipizzaner stallions (in the town of Lipica) and the setting for Ernest Hemingway's novel, *A Farewell to Arms* (the battle took place at the Vršič Pass). It is also the ancestral home of those known throughout northeastern Pennsylvania as "the Windish." The capital of Slovenia is Ljubljana which is now a popular meeting place for Europe's young people.



Why Slovenia?

Many Lutherans in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod know that we have close relationships with Lutherans in other countries through what is known as the "Companion Synod" program of the ELCA. Thus, through the outreach of the church, we have become aware of places like Saxony (Germany), Argentina and Uruguay (South America), and Tanzania (Africa). There is also a fourth companion synod – Slovenia!

Through the efforts of the Slovenia Companion Synod Committee, Pastor Kurt Garbe of the Bishop's staff, and Pastor Leon Novak from the Evangeličanska cerkvena občina Murska Sobota, a Youth Cultural Exchange between our synod and the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovenia began in 2006. To date two groups of Slovene teens have visited our synod and in exchange, two groups of American teens have traveled to Slovenia. Everyone on both sides of the Atlantic is looking forward to continuing this joyous exchange program.



Evangeličanska cerkev na Slovenskem (The Lutheran Church in Slovenia)

Modern Slovenia is 94% Roman Catholic and 2% Lutheran (or "Evangelical" as Lutherans are known in Slovenia). The Evangelical Church of Slovenia includes 14 parishes with approximately 18000 members. Eleven of these parishes are located in Prekmurje province which is in the northeastern corner of the country. The remaining parishes are in Maribor, Apače and the capital city of Ljubljana. The beginnings of the Protestant Church in Slovenia go back to the 16th century when the Slovene representatives of the Reformation movement, Primož Trubar, Jurij Dalmatin, Sebastjan Krelj and others, standardized the Slovene language and published the first printed books in Slovene.

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When is the exchange?

The next exchange cycle is scheduled for the summers of 2012-2013. Teens from Slovenia will travel here during the summer of 2012 and will be hosted by American teens (and their families) who will, in turn, travel to Slovenia during the summer of 2013. Exact dates are still to be determined.

How long is the exchange?

The goal is to enjoy a 3 week exchange.

What kind of exchange is it?

There will be several (3 to 5) group events, but, for the most part, you will be on your own with your teen and are encouraged to integrate them into your family's daily routine. The intent is for the teens from each country to be exposed to the culture and lifestyle of their hosts.

Who is eligible to host / travel?

Any family with a teen who will be finishing 8th - 11th grade in June of 2012 and that belongs to an ELCA congregation in the Northeast PA Synod is eligible to apply to be a participant in the exchange.

Does there need to be a teen in my family?

Yes. If selected during the application/screening process, your teen will be traveling to Slovenia in 2013 to stay with the family of the teen you hosted in 2012. It is hoped that the youth from America will develop ongoing relationships with youth and families from our Companion Synod in Slovenia.