

- tourism/ breeding at Lipica

### Kobilarna Lipica



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### Introduction (Marlene)

Lipica is a village in Slovenia, which is located in the Mediterranean area. The village has only 12 inhabitants (according to data from 2015<sup>1</sup>). It is famous for its stud farm where the Lipizzan horses were bred.

In the following, we are going to analyse some aspects of Lipica and the stud farm. Those will include the development of tourism, the living conditions of the horses, the sustainability, the governmental influence, the workforce and the traditions. We are first going to have a look at those factors in the past and the present and will then go on to judge, whether Lipica has a positive or negative future ahead of it.

Finding sources about this topic was rather difficult, most of our sources therefore are connected to Lipica's own website. Even if we were able to find information on other websites, they usually got their content from Lipica's website again. We did discover some slovenian websites about Lipica with the help of our exchange students. As we do not speak slovenian and the texts were too long for the slovens to translate word by word, we did use a translator app in some places.

### The touristic development (Marlene)

When the Lipican stud farm was found in 1580, it's main purpose was to create beautiful horses, which could be used in parades for the Habsburg nobility.<sup>2</sup> Over time, this limited use has been enlarged. The selling of horses is still a point of the business<sup>3</sup>, but as another branch, tourism has been added to the list.

#### Visiting Lipica

In 1960, the stud farm was opened for tourists not interested in buying horses themselves, but just watching the beautiful creatures and admiring this traditional institution.<sup>4</sup> Since then, the touristic use of the stud farm has changed. It has opened up more possibilities for visitors, to keep them there for longer. Lipica also created multiple ways to profit off of them. Upon scrolling through Lipica's website, we find lots of activities offered for tourists, most of which have to be paid for. There are the "Visit to the Stud Farm", "A Show by the Lipican Riding

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.city-facts.com/lipica> (22.01.2023).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lipica.org/de/geschichte/> (22.01.2023).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.lipica.org/de/ueber-das-unternehmen/> (22.01.2023).

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.lipica.org/de/geschichte/> (22.01.2023).

School”, an “Official Training” and the “Carriage Ride”.<sup>5</sup> The entrance for the farm for instance is charged with, depending on the season, 15,00 to 18,00 Euro for adults, while children pay 7,50 to 9,00 Euro.<sup>6</sup> But, keeping in mind that this touristic use does add to the workload of the farm, why would they even open the farm for visitors? There are no numbers, statistics or polls, which could be looked at for an answer, so we can only make an educated guess.



#### Reasons

The farm still wants to sell their horses. If we take a look at why people want to buy those horses, we might assume that their role in slovenian culture and their reputation as precious and costly plays a role in there. One reason for opening the farm therefore could be to solidify lipican horses as part of the slovenian culture, by making them visible not just in parades and weddings, but also in the farm itself. The farm would then become a regular tourist destination, which solidifies the foreigners view of the importance of Lipizzan horses. This is a reason that explains how the stud farm wants to use globalisation to raise their sales figures.

A high importance is not the only aspect that is important in today's globalised society. As this world strives towards more equality and a lower importance of social ranks<sup>7</sup>, Lipica might have wanted to adapt to this image as well. Let us have a look at Lipica's image before they opened their doors to the public: They were some kind of closed society, that only people in the „horse bubble“ (who are with horses on a regular basis, mostly own some themselves) could „enter“, by buying a horse. As horses are a rather expensive business<sup>8</sup>, people in the „horse bubble“ are rather rich and therefore most likely have socially higher positions. This type of institution might set the wrong image of wanting to exclude some people, which also might have been a reason for Lipica to open for the public.

#### Activities

The touristic opportunities on the farm are wide spread. Lipica offers guided tours showing and explaining the farm. They also host shows, where the horses show what they have learned in

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.lipica.org/de/products/kutschenfahrt/> (22.01.2023); Offers like those also appear on the bottom of other parts of Lipica's official website.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.lipica.org/de/products/besichtigung-des-gestuets-lipica/> (22.01.2023).

<sup>7</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> (22.01.2023).

<sup>8</sup> “The purchase price of the Lipizzan horse can be anywhere from \$9,000 to \$25,000.”; <https://horsesonly.com/lipizzan-horse/> (22.01.2023).

the training. Those take place in open-air arenas on the farm. Inside the houses we find some art museums. Another place to go are the three museums. They exhibit many different topics. Some of them are the evolution of the horse to the one we know today, the history of riding in its differing disciplines and the history of the farm itself.<sup>9</sup>

#### The museums

From my view, the museums mainly fulfil two purposes.

The first one is the educational aspect. The museum gives school classes a reason to go there and adds another layer of deeper information outside of the beauty of the horses and the breeding today. This also appeals to other people outside of school, as this further radius of information might be the decisive reason to visit.



By adding the history of the farm to the exhibition, the farm deepens the image of itself in people's minds. It is not just a little farm somewhere in Slovenia anymore, but becomes some type of living organism or organisation with a long history. This history once more underlines the importance of Lipica, but also shows how so many people have loved the farm over time, so the visitors should love it too and want to support it.

#### The hotel and the restaurants

Next to the farm, there is the Hotel Maestoso. According to Lipica's website it was founded in 1971, around ten years after Lipica began opening for tourism, which perfectly fits into the farm's timeline of commercialisation.<sup>10</sup>

The hotel includes the "Gratia Restaurant", which is one of four culinary places in Lipica. They are the "Culinary Museum", the "Thorysa Restaurant", which is intended for people who spend the night, and the "Manor Café".<sup>11</sup> Those restaurants are not established for the employees or the people who come there for riding lessons, but were again made for tourists.

#### The Lipica experience

The hotel seems to accommodate different target groups. One are families, as there is a special family offer. Another group are people who want to do what the title of the part about the hotel on their website promises: "RELAX IN THE NATURE OF THE KARST"<sup>12</sup>. With this, Lipica

<sup>9</sup> We learned this at our visit of Lipica.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.lipica.org/de/geschichte/> (22.01.2023).

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.lipica.org/en/culinary-offer/> (22.01.2023).

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.lipica.org/en/new-hotel-maestoso/> (22.01.2023).

is merging itself into the cultural heritage of the Karst region, while the horses seem to move to the background. What comes off as more important is the “lipican atmosphere”, meaning the aesthetic of old stables and a connection to nature. Lipica themselves follows the title with the paragraph “Hotel in the embrace of nature [-] [...] [T]he white Lipica fences, hay beds, and the same sliding doors as those found in the stables, all create a Lipica experience that you will not forget.”<sup>13</sup> This introduces an important term: The “Lipica experience”. Lipica, with all of its touristic offers, is not just a stud farm to buy and ride horses no more. It wants to be a place with its own culture as part of the bigger culture of the Karst region. The place itself rises atop the actual horses in the aspect of tourism.



#### Golf in Lipica

Lipica has two Golf Courses, one of which is a Mini-Golf Course connected to the hotel. The other Golf Course is called Golf igrišče Lipica (deutsch: “Golf Platz Lipica”). It has been enlarged in 2005 by the state of Slovenia and was designed by Donald Harradin, a famous golf course designer. This course celebrates itself as the only one in slovenia, which is open all year around. As they claim themselves, the golf attracts yet another target group, being for golf-lovers themselves. It is also widely thought, that golf is played by people with rather high income ranges, because of the high financial entrance barrier. This might again accommodate the rich people who could also buy horses in Lipica.<sup>14</sup>

#### The casion

One unexpected tourist attraction in Lipica is the casino. It is not mentioned on Lipica’s own website, even though it is close to the historical centre of the farm. On the website there is a card<sup>15</sup>, which shows the attractions in the houses. The casino is not displayed on there, even though another website<sup>16</sup> shows it to be in that exact house. The casino is, on the one hand, yet another target group Lipica reaches. On the other hand, it is also really profitable. There are no public statistics about how Lipica generates its income though, which prevents us from conforming the money from the casino.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.lipica.org/en/new-hotel-maestoso/> (22.01.2023).

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.quora.com/Why-do-rich-people-like-to-play-golf> (22.01.2023).

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.lipica.org/de/> (22.01.2023).

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.casino-slovenia.net/de/listing/grand-casino-lipica/> (22.01.2023).

When visiting, we spotted a vending machine in one of the houses. We again can not conform, if this contributes to Lipica's income, but it sure is a way to get just a little more money from the visitors.

#### Conclusion

Over the years, Lipica's focal business point seems to have shifted from selling horses towards tourism. It began in the 1960s, when the farm was opened for tourists. Today, there is a wide range of possible activities for visitors. From this perspective, the shift seems obvious, but on Lipica's website, they are still very much keeping up an image which seem to be one from the 1950s. The first thing you see when opening Lipica's website is a video of running horses.<sup>17</sup> When participating in one of the guided tours in Lipica, you are only told about horse riding, its history and a little bit about the stables. You find close to nothing about a casino and about the golf courses only by second view. Part of this is because of how famous lipican horses are, but that is not the whole story. Lipica has actively blocked some older websites, which should be reachable with the wayback machine<sup>18</sup>. It also consciously made the decision to not mention the casino on its website. They are doing this for the "Lipica experience". Lipica is creating a certain image of the farm, which does not, for instance, include a casino. This image is used for marketing the place to tourists, but is not a representation of the actual place. In addition to this, Lipica seems to also have shifted their income sources, which are now much more widely spread than in the beginning. On how far the horses in Lipica are actually the centre of attention, can only be speculated about.

#### The horses' living conditions (Carl)

During our research about the stud farm Lipica, we came across side facts about the horse's living conditions from time to time. Questions like „Is the stud farm too commercialized, to actually keep the horses under such conditions that their wellbeing can be guaranteed?“ arose.

#### Our experience

Furthermore, we experienced the horses' behavior at our visit in Lipica ourselves. While we were led around the stud farm we encountered some paddocks with stallions on them.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.lipica.org/sl/> (22.01.2023).

<sup>18</sup> <https://web.archive.org> (22.01.2023); This is a tool used to open older versions of websites.

Those were mostly shaped rectangularly, with one long side. There was barely any shadow on the meadows the stallions stood on. One stallion we saw galloped along his paddock again and again, always being thwarted by the small space he was supposed to live in. He seemed to be overly nervous while we, the visitors, stood at the fence, watching him. It appeared as he was



underutilized, additionally. Seeing him being so unpleased made some of us think about the horses' living conditions at Lipica back then already. Although we did not know, we would work especially on that topic some months later. We discussed our opinions according to the standards, we were shown and told about by the tour guide, the whole visit onwards.

#### A positive expertise

Since it was not possible to prove our assumptions, we tried to find other people describing their own experiences regarding the horse husbandry. One report was published by the magazine „Cavallo“<sup>19</sup>. Cathrin Flößer wrote about her own visit at Lipica as an undercover horse specialist, observing the shown standards. If one believes the journalist, all stallions behaved normally, without any irrational and maladjusted actions, although every single one of them stood in their boxes inside the stable. The stallion she rode in her booked riding lesson was a school-stallion, so he was trained to be calm in



the present of strangers. Due to that he might not be the best representative to check the stallions' wellbeing. Furthermore, one can not quite capture the overall situation within one visit.

However, Flößer was convinced that the horses were treated greatly and in accordance with animal welfare. She described the employees knowledge as based. Her riding teacher had to work with six stallions, as every „Bereiter“ at Lipica, and knew the stallion the journalist was riding well enough to interpret his actions and support the riding experience. She was enthusiastic about the high quality the riding school's performance she watched had. In conclusion she reassured the reader that the breeding at Lipica is harmless.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.cavallo.de/reitsportszene/wie-gut-sind-pferdehaltung-und-unterricht-in-lipica/> (22.01.2023)



At this point two opinions stood against each other. In order to develop a fact-based opinion, additional sources were examined.

#### Scandals

##### Cheap food

In 2007 Ebtin Tavcar, who was the deputy director for the management of natural and cultural heritage in Lipica and also the president of the international Lipica-Association back then, was dismissed, because of his dicey accusations about the horse husbandry.<sup>20</sup>

First of all, he published information about two stallions' deaths. He accused that they were fed with cheap food, which was under Lipica's usual standards. Mitja Mahoricic was responsible for the forage suppliers on the one hand, but also for the food distribution on the other hand. Due to that no one checked, whether the animals's feeding was done correctly. Tavcar criticized those missing quality checks and monitoring, pointing out his misunderstanding regarding the professionalism Lipica was known for. Additionally, he blamed Mahoricic to sell Lipizzan horses without proper identity documents.<sup>21</sup> There were no information, proving these two allegations, though.

##### Forbidden hormones

However, he made another one, which was confirmed by the Lipican manager Marko Mark in 2009; He made official that the vaccine Improvac, was used on ten stallions to castrate them through hormones. The vaccine is forbidden in Slovenia but did not fall under the European doping prohibition of horses' welfare, as european stud farms used it to castrate diseased older animals. Eight out of ten stallions at Lipica had testosterone levels under the physiological limit due to the vaccine, causing dangerous damage. Although, Improvac did not cause the two stallions' deaths. In the official press release was said that the responsible employees will be dismissed at Kobilarna Lipica, immediately. Furthermore, the infringement proceedings were led by the official veterinarian in Koper. Assumptions were made that Lipica would have to pay a fine.<sup>22</sup>

This case proves Ebtin Tavcar's reliability. Because of that, one might assume his other accusations were true too. Those perfidious methods have an alarming effect and appropriate treatment is no longer assured. Abuse might be covered up and hidden from society.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.mladina.si/90520/udbovske-metode-v-lipici/> (22.01.2023)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.dnevnik.si/1042247599> (22.01.2023)

<sup>22</sup> <https://siol.net/novice/slovenija/v-kobilarni-lipica-priznali-uporabo-neregistriranega-cepiva-21085> (22.01.2023)



#### Breeding methods

There was another scandal discussed in Slovene media years later in 2019. It was not clarified either, but even more bad light falls on Kobilarna Lipica due to that. Seven young, newly castrated stallions were put together with eight studs to form a herd later on. Horses usually distribute their ranking between each other through a few bites and kicks, causing no serious wounds. But photos went through social media, showing a maltreated stallion. Iztok Humar uploaded the photo, claiming Lipica to use harmful methods within their breeding. Lipica rejected those accusations.<sup>23</sup>

One might not be able to capture the importance of these scandals. But they show that Lipica had fallen into disrepute already

years ago. Additionally, those information were difficult to find. If one researches „Lipica“ there are only a few sources at first. None of these talk about the horses' living standards. It almost feels like someone agreed on not mentioning them anywhere.

#### The image

Especially striking is Lipica's official website<sup>24</sup>. It doesn't say anything about the husbandry itself, but only about the traditional breeding. They claim their stud farm is the best for breeding Lipizzan horses, making the customers feel as if the horses had a great live through peaceful pictures with wide landscapes and graceful, presentable horses. The goal is obvious: Tourists should be attracted, deciding to visit Lipica. Everything to keep the profit on a high level. The very positive internet representation is usual in our today's life. Companies all over the world present themselves as good as possible, leaving out any topic that might cost a loss of costumers.

#### Conclusion

However, this is also a reason why questions arose: Lipica itself gives no prove, does not even sell an image of high husbandry standards. Why does Kobilarna exclude this decisive topic completely, although they claim the breeding as the most important part of the tourist attraction?

There is no definite answer. Our question from above is not resolved, sadly. There are two positions in each of the presented cases, there is no official prove from a neutral institution. From this point, one *can not* say that the horses live in accordance with animal welfare. However, one can also not say that they do not. It is questionable and should also be discussed and checked in the future. Because in our opinion, Lipica's development clearly depends on the horses' wellbeing, as the topic of animal welfare gets more and more popular in the modern globalized society.

<sup>23</sup> <https://siol.net/novice/slovenija/v-lipici-zaradi-medsebojnega-obracunavanja-mocno-poskodovani-lipicanci-494171#> (22.01.2023)

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.lipica.org/sl/> (22.01.2023)

### The national importance of Lipica (Annalena)

Lipica is one of the few breeding estates for lipizzans and as such known to many people worldwide, who associated the estate and the lipizzans with Slovenia. The estate and the Lipizzans are a popular tourist attraction and an important part of Slovenian history and culture. As they are an important local horse breed they are used by the government for representative tasks. The estate would even describe themselves as very important to the reputation of Slovenia. To keep this image of Lipica, the estate tries to avoid all negative headlines and increase the touristic attractions at Lipica. Which works pretty well as scandals about the estate, that were in the news in Slovenia never made it into the international press. Lipica is a state institution, so the government has also an interest in keeping Lipica a popular touristic attraction and even increasing its importance further. Lipica has been most of the time a state institution (or an imperial estate, till 1918) but during the world wars the horses had to move to other places and Lipica was resolved for some time. 1996 Lipica became a state institution again and at the same time a cultural monument. That happened to protect the estate and the lipizzans as they are considered a very important part of the Slovene culture and history. As not only the estate itself, but also the horses and the breeding process are protected, there have to be always enough horses to continue breeding. There have to be at least 24 stallions and 48 studs at the estate, which have to come from the different lines of the original horses, to ensure a breeding variety. There are six original lines of stallions, and 16 original lines of studs, so there have to be three studs and four stallions per original line. The law also protects the training of the horses and important riders the maintenance of the facilities, the preservation of the traditional landscape as well as the general the wellbeing of the herd. The presentation of the area as well as the presentation of the horses, in from of sport events and a general international presentation. There's a four year plan, every four years, to ensure the protection of the area is secured. If the estate itself is not able to secure this plan, the state is responsible to provide all necessary things to fulfill these requirements. In 2018 the Lipica stud farm act passed, which made Lipica a monument of national importance and included the plan to further develop the estate.

### Cultural monument of Kobilarna Lipica (Rosa)

Kobilarna Lipica as a cultural monument of outstanding importance for the Republic of Slovenia.

It includes the area of Kobilarna Lipica with its cultivated karst landscape, the Lipizzaner horse herd and the architectural and artistic heritage.

The Lipizzaner herd, which is part of the protected area, must be preserved so that the breeding nucleus of the Lipizzaners (i.e. all bloodlines of stallions and mares) remains. Consequently, the "herd" must always consist of at least 24 stallions and 48 mares, as well as all offspring up to the age of 4 years.

The architectural heritage comprises the most important buildings of the ensemble, consisting of the castle with the Velbanca and the church, as well as certain stall complexes with the associated silos and the dressage facilities, as well as the training rooms, and the hotel club.

The artistic heritage consists of the collection of works of art by Avgust Černigoj and the park sculptures in cast stone.<sup>25</sup>

#### Architectural heritage

The historical core of Lipica is the castle complex with Velbanca. Today it consists of the Castle Graščina on the west side, the Velbanca on the north side and the residential and commercial buildings on the east.

The Velbanca is Lipica's oldest stable, home to its 12 best stallions.

The old residential and commercial buildings now house Lipica's largest museum, which tells the story of Lipica and the Lipizzaners - the Lipizzaner Museum.

The castle was built on the former estate of the Bishop of Trieste.<sup>26</sup>

#### The St. Anthony of Padua Church

The St. Anthony of Padua Church is an important part of Lipica's monument and honours the patron saint against equine and animal diseases, Anthony of Padua. The church has existed since at least the 17th century and was renovated in the 19th century. Nowadays it serves as a place for church wedding ceremonies and holy masses.

#### Borjanca and the Jubilee stable

Other important stable buildings of the stud are the Borjača stables, the mare stable, where foals are traditionally born and raised, built in the 18th century, and the so-called Jubilee stable



<sup>25</sup> <https://www.uradni-list.si/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.lipica.org/de/>

also called Abrihtunga, which traditionally houses the young horses starting their training, and nowadays the riding horses used for the purpose of tourist riding. The stable was built in 1899 to celebrate the 50th jubilee of the government.<sup>27</sup>

#### The Karst House and the Italian Villa

The Karst House and the Italian Villa are two other important buildings with different histories and uses. The Karst House, built in the traditional Karst style, is now a popular venue for wedding ceremonies.

The villa was built in 1931 and, like the Lipica Stud Farm, served as an Italian military base at the time. It was inhabited by Italian officers

#### Museum of culinary arts

A building that has undergone many changes of use from the past to the present is the former residence of the chaplain, which also served as a school for the children of the stud farm employees. After the Second World War it was an inn.

Nowadays it is used as a museum of culinary arts. Guests can learn about the gastronomic and oenological heritage of the Karst.

Other important buildings are the stable complex with silos and dressage rooms and the hotel club.<sup>28</sup>

#### Art heritage- Avgust Černigoj and The park sculptures

the art heritage consists largely of the collection of artworks by the artist Avgust Černigoj. Černigoj lived more than 120 years ago and was a constructivist. He is known in Slovenia for being the first and still the only Slovenian artist to study at the renovated Bauhaus School in Weimar, and also for spending his last years at the Lipica stud farm. There he was inspired by the unique karst landscape and the Lipica stud farm. Today, 1300 of his works of art are housed in Lipica and some of them are exhibited in the Avgust Černigoj Gallery in Lipica.

Another part of Lipica's artistic heritage are the park sculptures made of karst stone.

The park sculptures made of karst stone are works of art that were created as part of a sculpture workshop for the 400th anniversary of the stud farm.

The workshop was later repeated for the 425th anniversary.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.lipica.org/de/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.lipica.org/de/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.lipica.org/de/>

### Future perspectives

To sum up, Kobilarna Lipica has always adapted to the needs of the people. All these changes, have one thing in common. The horses, the culture that goes with them, the breeding of the horses, the training etc., have not changed.

Lipica has always managed to remain true to its ancestors, but at the same time has always evolved with them.

Time has shown that the original Kobilarna Lipica was at times no longer in the foreground of society's interest, and yet this place and its importance could be preserved.

Especially due to the full funding of the Kobilarna Lipica by the Slovenian government, a future is guaranteed.<sup>30</sup>

Passing on the heritage has also never presented itself as a problem until now; therefore

I see that Lipica is and has been very changeable. I am confident that it will therefore always be able to continue this heritage in the future.

### Final conclusion (everyone, esp. Rosa)

It can be concluded that Kobilarna Lipica is a cultural monument of outstanding significance to the Republic of Slovenia. It encompasses not only the area of Kobilarna Lipica with its cultivated Karst landscape, its architectural and artistic heritage but also the famous Lipizzaner horse herd. Throughout its history, Kobilarna Lipica has shown its ability to adapt to the changing needs of people while preserving the core of its cultural significance centered around the horses, their breeding, training, and associated culture.

However, it is important to address certain concerns that have arisen regarding the welfare of the horses at Kobilarna Lipica. Although there is no clear evidence to confirm the well-being of the horses, several cases have already been discussed. For example, cheap feed without adequate controls has been provided, resulting in the death of two stallions.

While Kobilarna Lipica maintains a peaceful and positive image, it is crucial to acknowledge and address concerns regarding the breeding and husbandry conditions of the horses. A positive future perspective for Kobilarna Lipica requires avoiding or overcoming further scandals that could damage its image. It may also be necessary for the Slovenian government

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.uradni-list.si/>

to take measures that demand Kobilarna Lipica to demonstrate the living conditions and welfare of the horses, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Due to its national significance, Kobilarna Lipica should continue to be recognized as an important part of Slovenian history and cultural heritage. Government support demonstrates the importance and commitment to its preservation. For the future, it would be advisable to enact additional laws and regulations specifically aimed at protecting and preserving Kobilarna Lipica as a national cultural heritage. By addressing the raised concerns and implementing measures to protect the welfare of the horses, Kobilarna Lipica can secure a positive future and continue to be a symbolically cultural landmark of Slovenia.