

Slovenia, a land with beekeeping in its genes

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Beekeeping is a cherished national tradition in Slovenia, which has led the way in raising awareness of the plight of bees

It was a Slovene who wrote the world's first modern beekeeping manual.

And Slovenia has gone on to lead the way in raising awareness of the plight of bees, as concern has grown over the health of the world's [bee](#)

[population](#) in recent years.

Beekeeping is a cherished national tradition in Slovenia, with colourful beehives to be found dotted throughout fields, on the edge of forests, in gardens and on city rooftops.

The bee can be spotted as a symbol of industriousness above the doorways of banks and museums, and now even on a special two-euro coin issued by the country's central bank to mark the first World Bee Day on Sunday, an initiative launched by Slovenia and backed by the United Nations.

"Once you start keeping bees, it's like an addiction," Bostjan Noc, head of the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association tells AFP, adding that his family boasts several generations of apiarists.

"We have beekeeping written in our genes," Noc says.

'Farmer's logic'

Some 10,000 people are estimated to have their own beehives in Slovenia, a nation of just over two million people.

That's 10 times more beekeepers per head than in Spain, Europe's biggest producer of honey.



The memorial apiary of Slovene Anton Jansa, who wrote the world's first beekeeping manual in the 18th century

The Alpine nation's love affair with the bee stretches back to the 18th century when Slovene Anton Jansa (1734-1773) wrote the first modern beekeeping manual.

At that time much of modern Slovenia made up the Habsburg province of Carniola, and Empress Maria Theresa appointed Jansa as one of the first teachers at the beekeeping school in the imperial capital, Vienna.

"Anton Jansa laid the foundations (of beekeeping) that are still in force today, despite technological advances," Noc says, lauding Jansa's "clear farmer's logic" that has stood the test of time.

And indeed, May 20 was chosen as the date for World Bee Day as it's Jansa's birthday.

Jansa was also a painter and contributed to another aspect of Slovenian beekeeping heritage—the decoration of beehive panels with colourful works of folk art depicting an array of themes, from the religious to the everyday, such as the country woman dragging her errant husband back from a cafe.

'Modest and gentle'

Noc points out that the second most common honeybee in the world—the Carniolan honeybee—owes its name to the region.

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