

Mauthausen Ljubelj

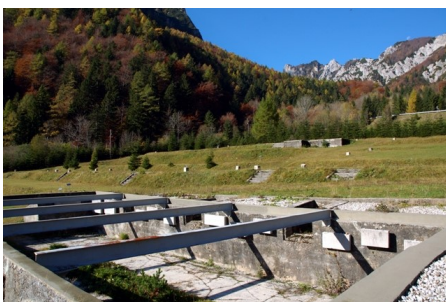


A KINGDOM OF PATHWAYS. CHOOSE YOURS.

The floor plan of the former camp can still be seen on the grounds of the Memorial Park. Several thousand inmates of the labour camps on both sides of the border built the Ljubelj tunnel in severe conditions between 1943 and 1945. The personal belongings of the inmates are on display in the memorial room of a nearby inn.

J'ACCUSE—I ACCUSE

Motorised units of the German forces crossed the Ljubelj pass in 1941. Hitler was well aware of the importance of this route across the Karavanke mountain range, and therefore wanted the Ljubelj road shortened by the means of a tunnel. This idea supported his plans for conquest.



The Memorial Park

In 1941, initial works were performed by 42 civilians who erected a civilian camp. In the night of 29 June, the members of 2nd Kokra Battalion burned the camp down, which delayed the works.

The full scope of the works did not resume until the spring of 1943, when construction of the new camp began. A concentration camp was built on both sides of Ljubelj, with the smaller part on the northern side and the larger on the southern side. Tunnel-drilling started on the southern side in March 1943, with the northern side following in June of the same year.



The southern part of the concentration camp

In addition to the camp labour force, 660 additional civilians were employed. Some came voluntarily to Ljubelj, while others were forced. Next to the barracks for civilians and technical management, barracks for the inmates were built on the left side and surrounded with barbed-wire and four guard towers. The Podljubelj camp fell under the auspices of the Mauthausen Extermination Camp, which provided the labour force.

The first prisoners started arriving in July 1943. They were loaded onto cattle wagons in Mauthausen and transported to Tržič. There they were then loaded

on trucks and driven to Ljubelj by SS troops. The locals risked attempts to secretly feed and pass cigarettes to the prisoners. The majority of inmates were confined for political reasons and others for refusing to participate in forced labour. Still others were prisoners of war of various nationalities.



The internee number

The largest group, of around 800, was French. There were also around 450 Poles, 188 Russians and 144 Yugoslavs. Among the 70 German and Austrian inmates there were mostly criminals. They were given positions of authority among the inmate population, or allocated to less demanding work. The rest of the inmates came from Bohemia (contemporary Czech Republic), Norway, Luxemburg, Greece, Belgium or the Netherlands.

On December 4, 1943 the works in the tunnel resulted in a narrow pass from one side of the Karavanke to the other. A year later, the first vehicles passed through. Underachieving or incompetent workers were sent to Mauthausen to meet certain death.



Original tools can be seen in memorial room

The Podljubelj camp was initially guarded by 100 SS troops, and later by as many as 300 guards. Julius Ludolf was the camp commander. Serious beatings of inmates began under his management. The beatings were called "corridas", the Spanish word for bullfight. The guards constantly beat the inmates, who were forced to perform the most difficult labour without pause. Soon, construction companies began filing complaints about the increasing numbers of incapable workers due to physical injuries. This resulted in Ludolf's replacement by Jakob Winkler in August 1943.

MAUTHAUSEN LJUBELJ

 **Tržič**
A KINGDOM OF PATHWAYS. CHOOSE YOURS.



Inmates' things and shoes can be seen in memorial

Things did not improve under his command. Some say that the conditions faced by the inmates were even worse. Any contact by the civilian labour force with the inmates was forbidden. Despite the prohibition, letters and parcels were smuggled into the camp, thus establishing a link between the inmates and the outside world.

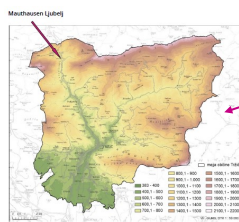
The tunnel was open for traffic in 1964.

Every year in June, with a special event, we remember all the victims and the suffering of the people building the tunnel.



The monument »J'accuse-Obtozujem«

Slovenia



Tourist information centre Tržič
 18 Trg svobode, SI-4290 Tržič
 T +386 4 597 15 36, +386 51 627 057
 E informacije@trzic.si
 W www.visit-trzic.si