

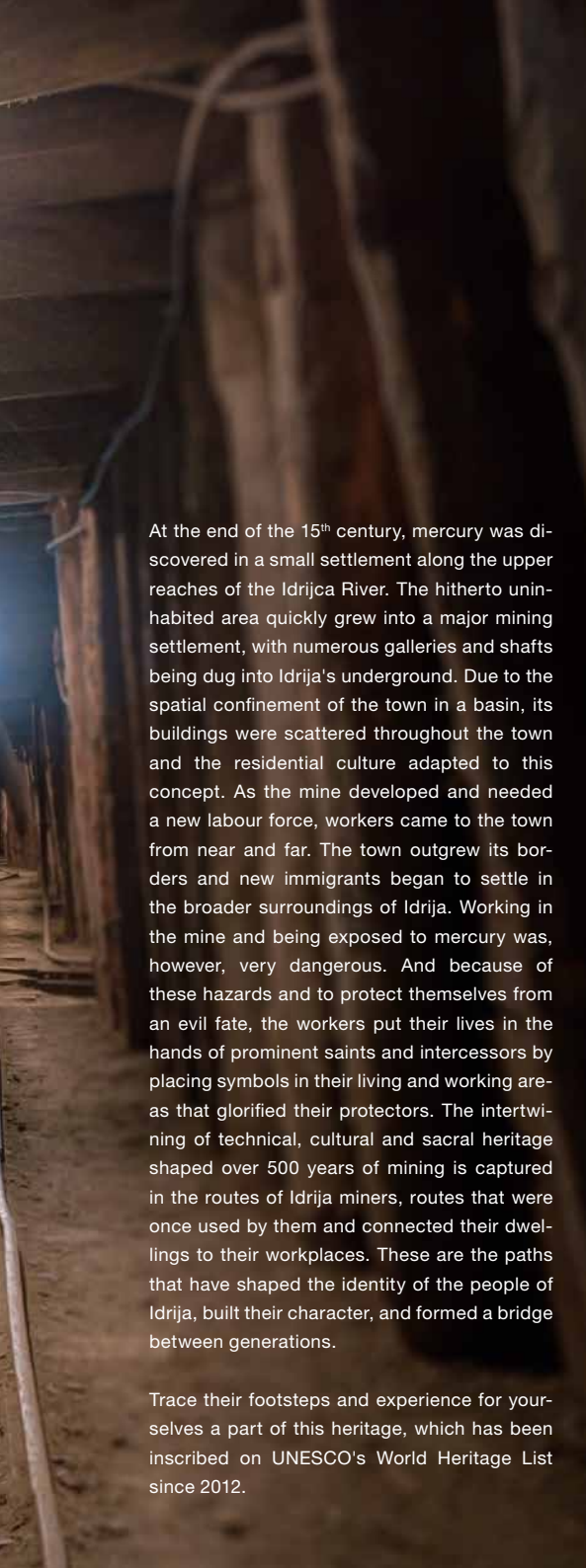
TRACING THE FOOTSTEPS OF IDRIJA MINERS

Cycling and walking paths
through mining heritage

ENG







At the end of the 15th century, mercury was discovered in a small settlement along the upper reaches of the Idrija River. The hitherto uninhabited area quickly grew into a major mining settlement, with numerous galleries and shafts being dug into Idrija's underground. Due to the spatial confinement of the town in a basin, its buildings were scattered throughout the town and the residential culture adapted to this concept. As the mine developed and needed a new labour force, workers came to the town from near and far. The town outgrew its borders and new immigrants began to settle in the broader surroundings of Idrija. Working in the mine and being exposed to mercury was, however, very dangerous. And because of these hazards and to protect themselves from an evil fate, the workers put their lives in the hands of prominent saints and intercessors by placing symbols in their living and working areas that glorified their protectors. The intertwining of technical, cultural and sacral heritage shaped over 500 years of mining is captured in the routes of Idrija miners, routes that were once used by them and connected their dwellings to their workplaces. These are the paths that have shaped the identity of the people of Idrija, built their character, and formed a bridge between generations.

Trace their footsteps and experience for yourselves a part of this heritage, which has been inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List since 2012.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Getting started

If you are cycling, it will take you just over 5 hours. If you want to walk the route, it will take you at least 12 hours, or you can split the hike into two days.

Route length: 33 km

Most of the trail is asphalted, with smaller gravel segments that are normally accessible by bike. Only some rare segments in the town area are not accessible by bike and you will need to walk your bike or carry it to the other side.

Elevation gain: 836 m; highest altitude point is 609 m

Sights along the route:

A number of sights can be found in this brochure and are also marked on the map. For further information, please visit or contact the local tourist office.

Orientation on the route:

Follow the signs on the map in the middle of this brochure.

Water on the way:

There are several water sources along the route where you can refill your water bottles. You can also inquire at individual houses along the route and the locals will be happy to help you.

Food on the way:

We highly recommend that you try the traditional žlikrofi (pasta stuffed with potatoes and bacon) served at restaurants, or other delicacies offered at local inns. For those of you who will be walking, it is also advisable to have some food in your backpack.

ANTHONY'S MAIN ROAD

1

Anthony's Main Road is one of the oldest preserved mine entrances in Europe, dating back to the 1500s. Originally, 300 metres of the gallery was supported by timber, but from 1766 it was walled with thick limestone blocks. Towards the end of the 18th century, the Chapel of the Holy Trinity was built in the mine, where miners prayed before descending into the dangerous, dark depths of Idrija's underworld. In addition to the central image, after which the chapel is named, sculptures of Saint Achacius and Saint Barbara, the patron saint of all miners, were added in following years. Since 1994, Anthony's Main Road has been restored into a tourist mine.





COMPRESSOR STATION

2

The compressor station produced compressed air for the smooth-running operation of mining machinery and equipment for almost 100 years, using a variety of compressors. The oldest preserved compressor at the station is a compressor of the Italian manufacturer Tosi, which has stood on the same site since 1926.

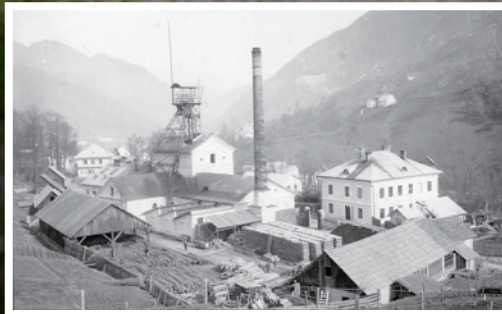




JOSEPH'S SHAFT

3

The main export shaft of the mercury mine was opened in 1786 and used until the end of the Mine's operation. Reaching a depth of 420 metres, it was the only shaft connecting all 15 levels of the mine. It was used for the delivery of mining materials, as a miner's entrance, and for the transport of ore to the surface. The shaft was completely backfilled and closed in 2007.



4

KAMŠT

The Kamšt, built in Idrija in 1790, is a pumping device for drawing water from the mine. It is the largest wooden wheel of its kind in Europe, measuring 13.6 metres in diameter. The Kamšt could pump up to 300 litres of water per minute. Due to its efficient operation, it was used until 1948.



CHURCH OF ST. JOSEPH THE WORKER

5

The Idrija parish church, built in the 1960s on the former site of a cemetery church, is among the most beautiful modern churches in Slovenia. The church is famous for its stained-glass windows painted by academy artist Stane Kregar, and also houses an altarpiece depicting St. Barbara.

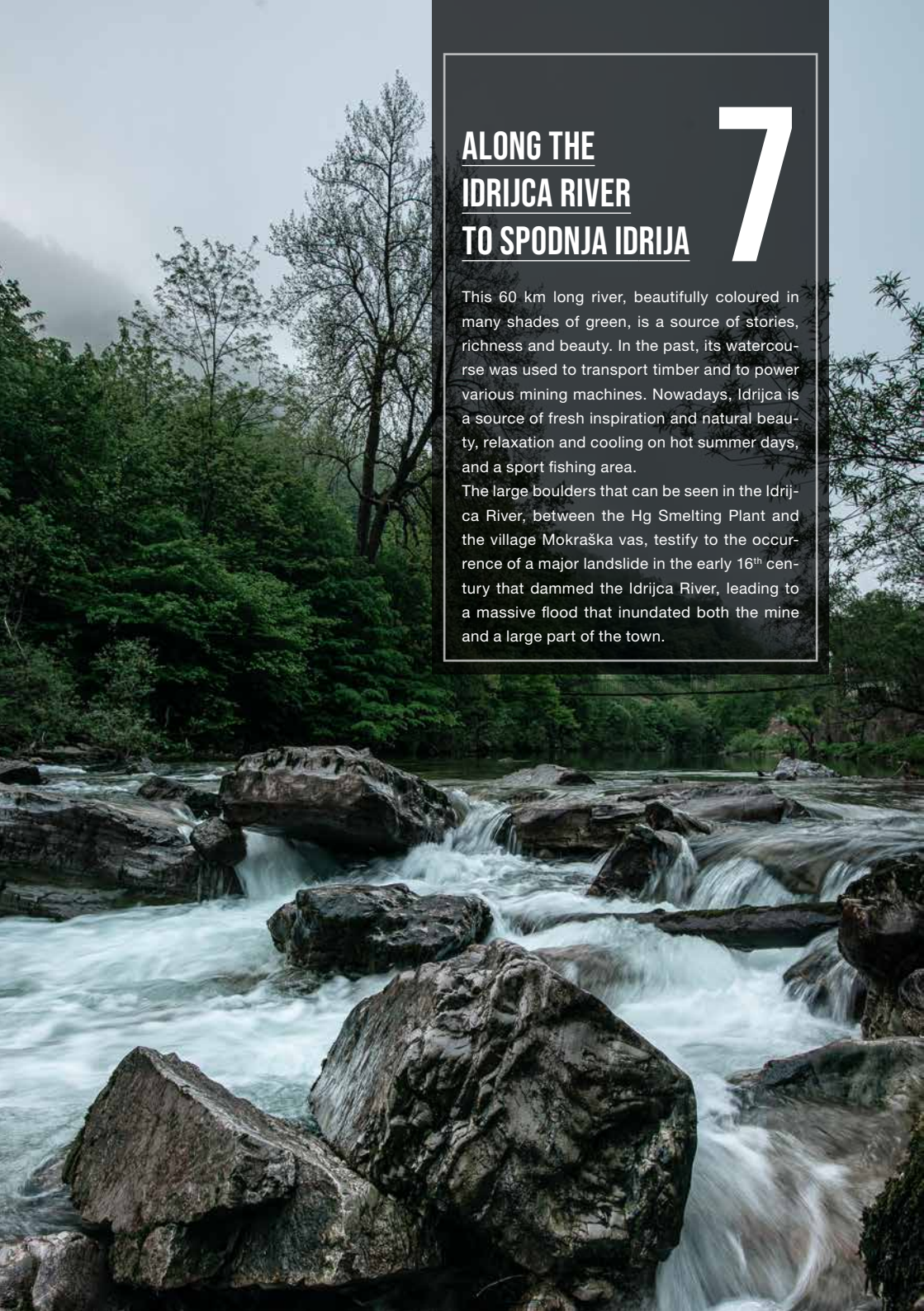




HG SMELTING PLANT

6

Hg Smelting Plant, a unique museum about mercury and the production of the liquid metal, is located on former smelting site. Visitors to the Museum will be introduced to the properties of mercury and its applicative value, smelting methods and the types of furnaces used in Idrija, and learn about the process of preparing the ore before smelting.



ALONG THE IDRIJCA RIVER TO SPODNJA IDRIJA

7

This 60 km long river, beautifully coloured in many shades of green, is a source of stories, richness and beauty. In the past, its watercourse was used to transport timber and to power various mining machines. Nowadays, Idrijca is a source of fresh inspiration and natural beauty, relaxation and cooling on hot summer days, and a sport fishing area.

The large boulders that can be seen in the Idrijca River, between the Hg Smelting Plant and the village Mokraška vas, testify to the occurrence of a major landslide in the early 16th century that dammed the Idrijca River, leading to a massive flood that inundated both the mine and a large part of the town.

CHURCH OF THE VIRGIN MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION WITH CHAPELS

8

This Church, referred to by the locals as Mary-on-the-Rock, is the oldest parish church in the Municipality of Idrija. According to some sources, its foundations were laid as early as in 1156. Its interior is decorated with frescoes by Jožef Mrak, a famous native of Idrija and the most prominent Slovenian polytechnician of the 18th century, who designed and constructed Idrija's stone water barriers. In the immediate vicinity of the church are three chapels dedicated to patron Saint Mary.



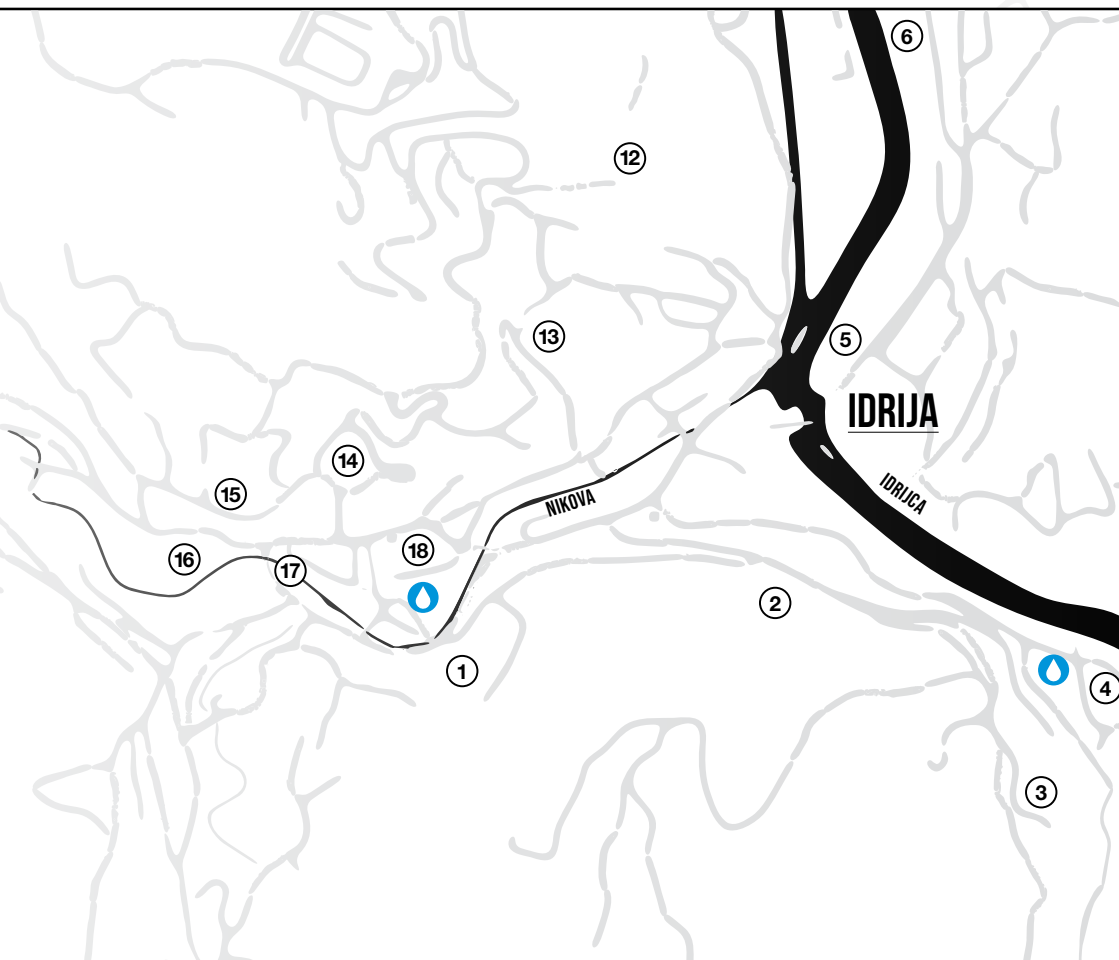
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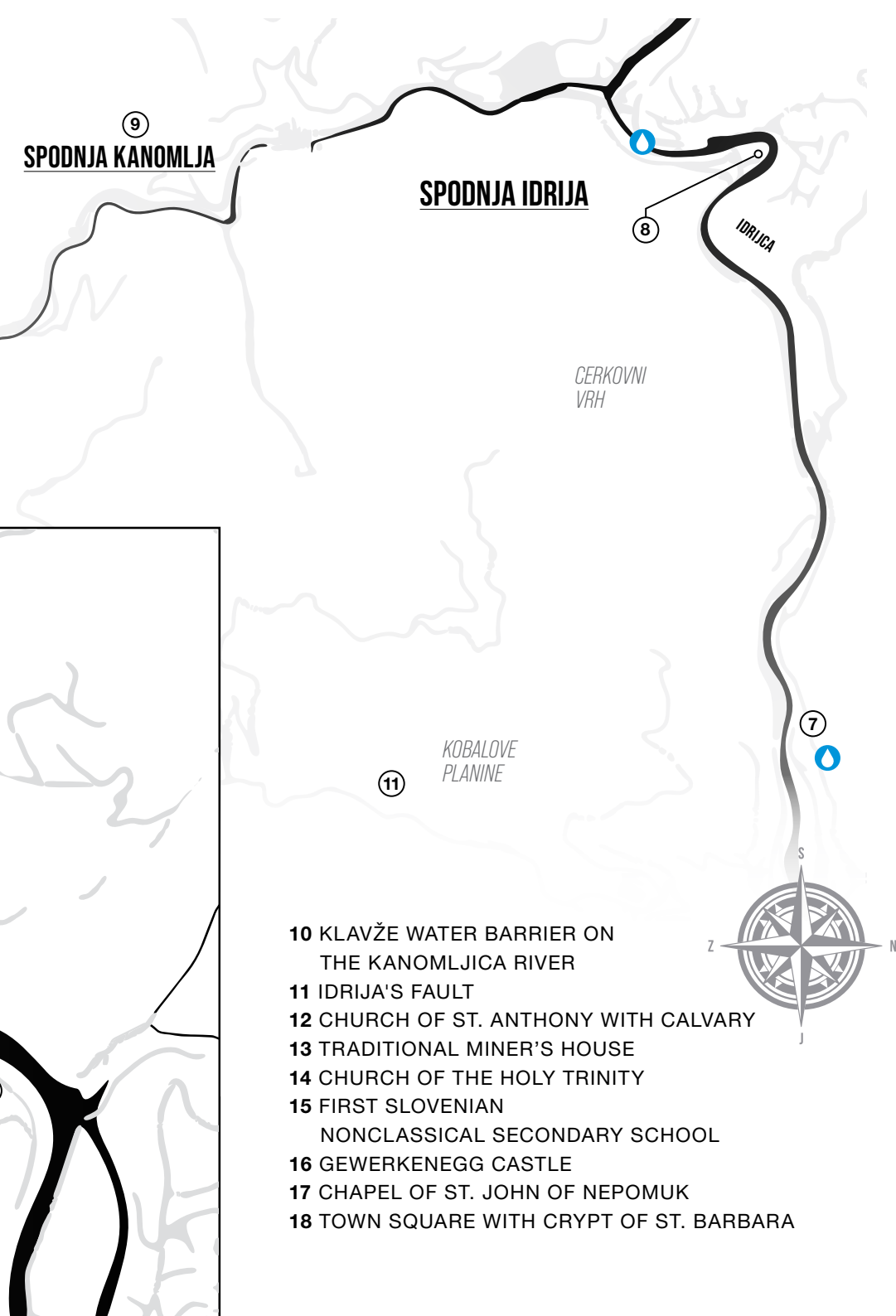
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KANOMLJICA





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SPODNJA IDRIJA

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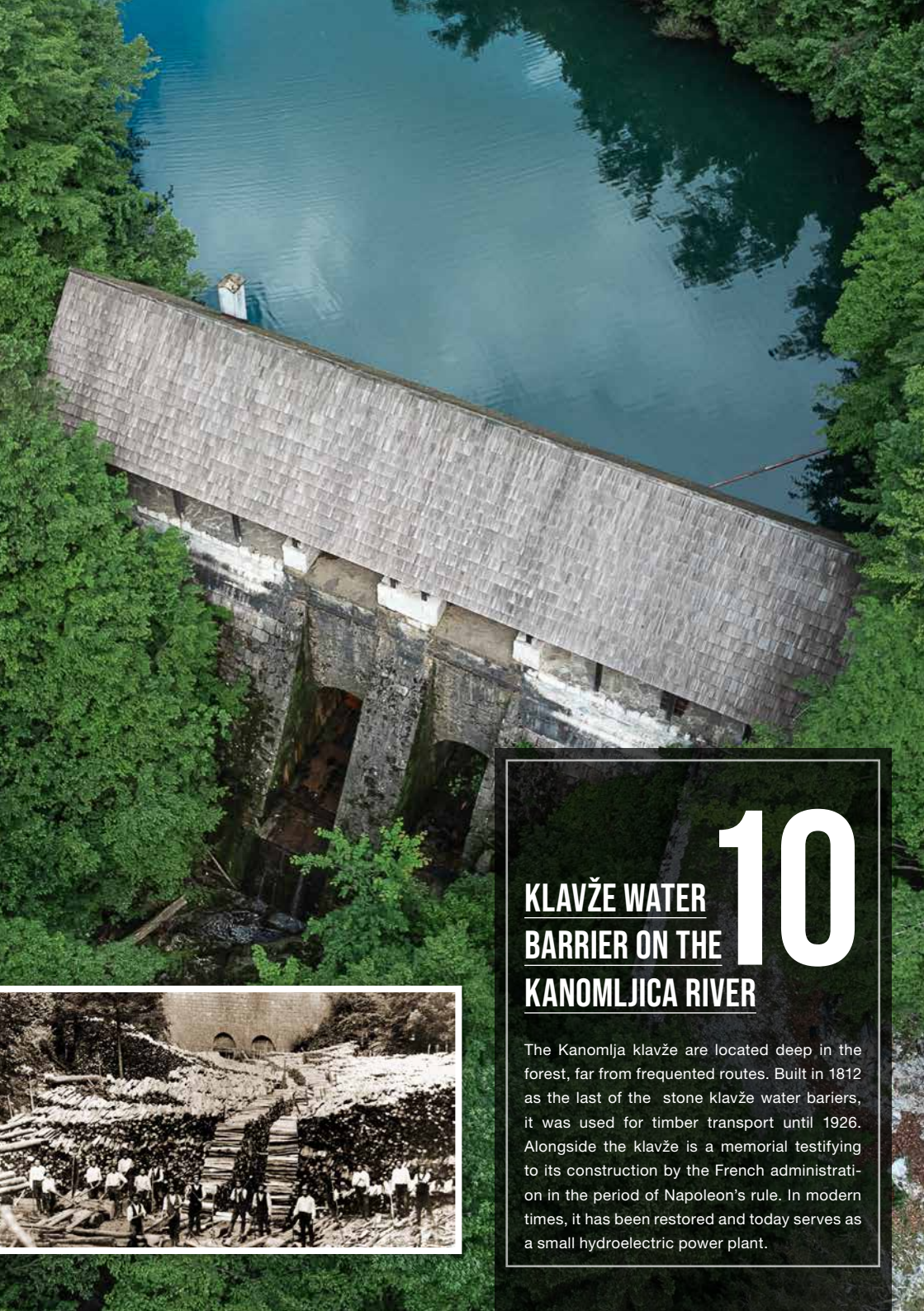




KANOMLJA VALLEY AND KANOMLJICA RIVER

9

The picturesque, yet narrow and rather steep Kanomlja valley, in the middle of which runs the Kanomljica River, also used by the mine for timber floating, was formed as a result of the intensive activity of the Idrija fault. Despite its confinement, the valley is marked by a rich tradition, which is most evident in the heartiness of its loyal inhabitants.



10

KLAVŽE WATER BARRIER ON THE KANOMLJICA RIVER

The Kanomlja klavže are located deep in the forest, far from frequented routes. Built in 1812 as the last of the stone klavže water barriers, it was used for timber transport until 1926. Alongside the klavže is a memorial testifying to its construction by the French administration in the period of Napoleon's rule. In modern times, it has been restored and today serves as a small hydroelectric power plant.

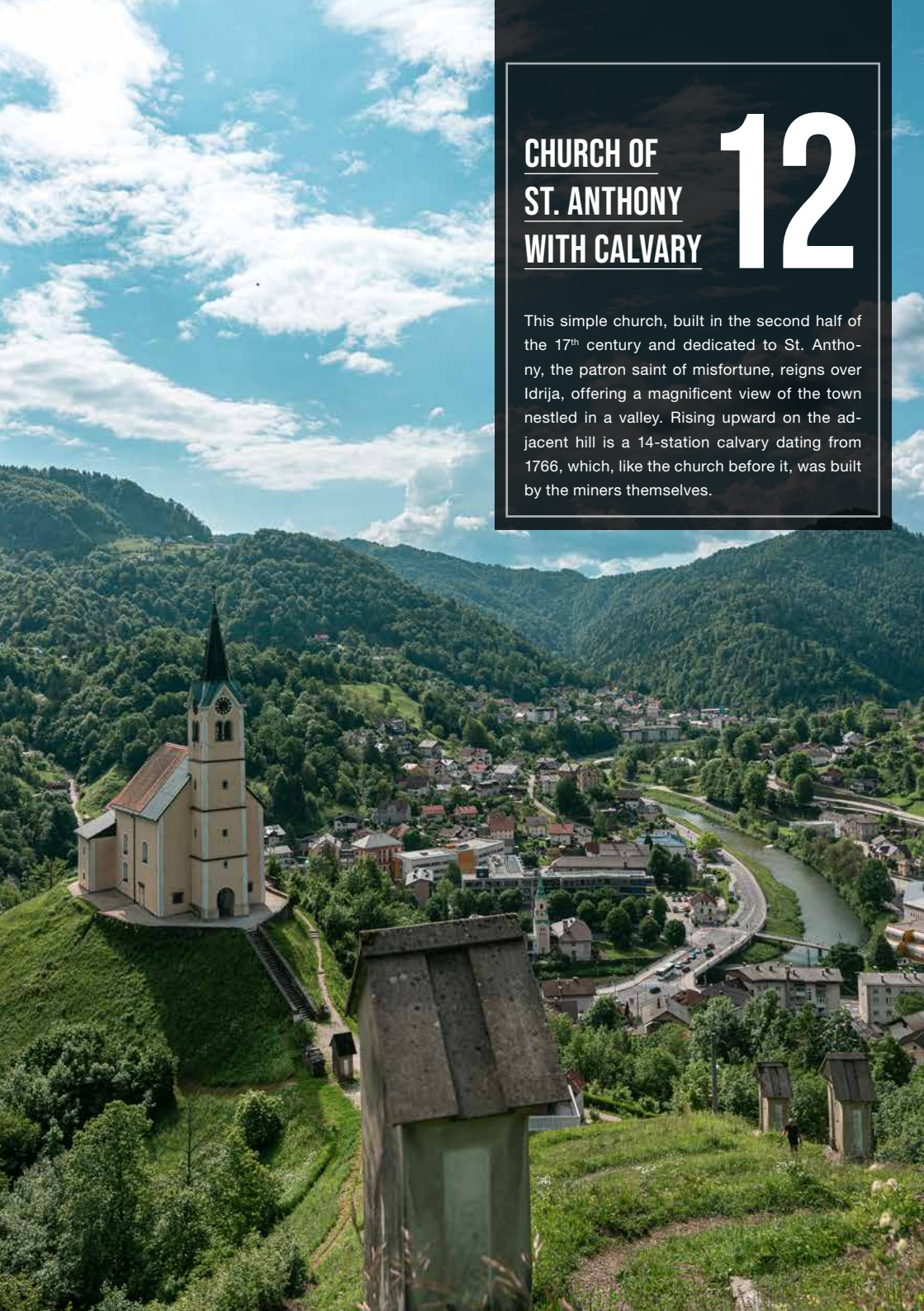




IDRIJA FAULT

11

At the crossroads of routes leading to Idrija, Kanomlja, Kopalove planine (hill) and the Vojsko plateau, there is a breathtaking view of the Kanomlja valley and the famous Idrija Fault, which is approx. 120 km long and whose activity is responsible for the diversified landscape that can be seen from this viewpoint. In good weather, the view stretches as far as Slovenia's Julian Alps.



CHURCH OF ST. ANTHONY WITH CALVARY

12

This simple church, built in the second half of the 17th century and dedicated to St. Anthony, the patron saint of misfortune, reigns over Idrija, offering a magnificent view of the town nestled in a valley. Rising upward on the adjacent hill is a 14-station calvary dating from 1766, which, like the church before it, was built by the miners themselves.

A tall, three-story white building with a steep, dark brown tiled roof. The facade is plain white with numerous small, dark-framed, multi-paned windows arranged in a grid-like pattern across the upper floors. The building is situated on a hillside with green foliage visible to the left. A dark, overhanging roofline is visible on the left side of the frame.

TRADITIONAL MINER'S HOUSE

13

The conserved miner's house, dating from the second half of the 18th century, reflects the working-class character of the town and the living conditions that prevailed in the past. Due to the severe housing shortage, new immigrants were forced to rent apartments. Thus, in addition to the owner, at least two other tenant families lived in such a house.



CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

14

This Late Gothic sacral building was constructed on the site where, according to legend, mercury was discovered. The church's interior reveals a precious monument of Late Gothic architecture and carving dating from the 17th century.





**FIRST
SLOVENIAN
NONCLASSICAL
SECONDARY
SCHOOL**

15

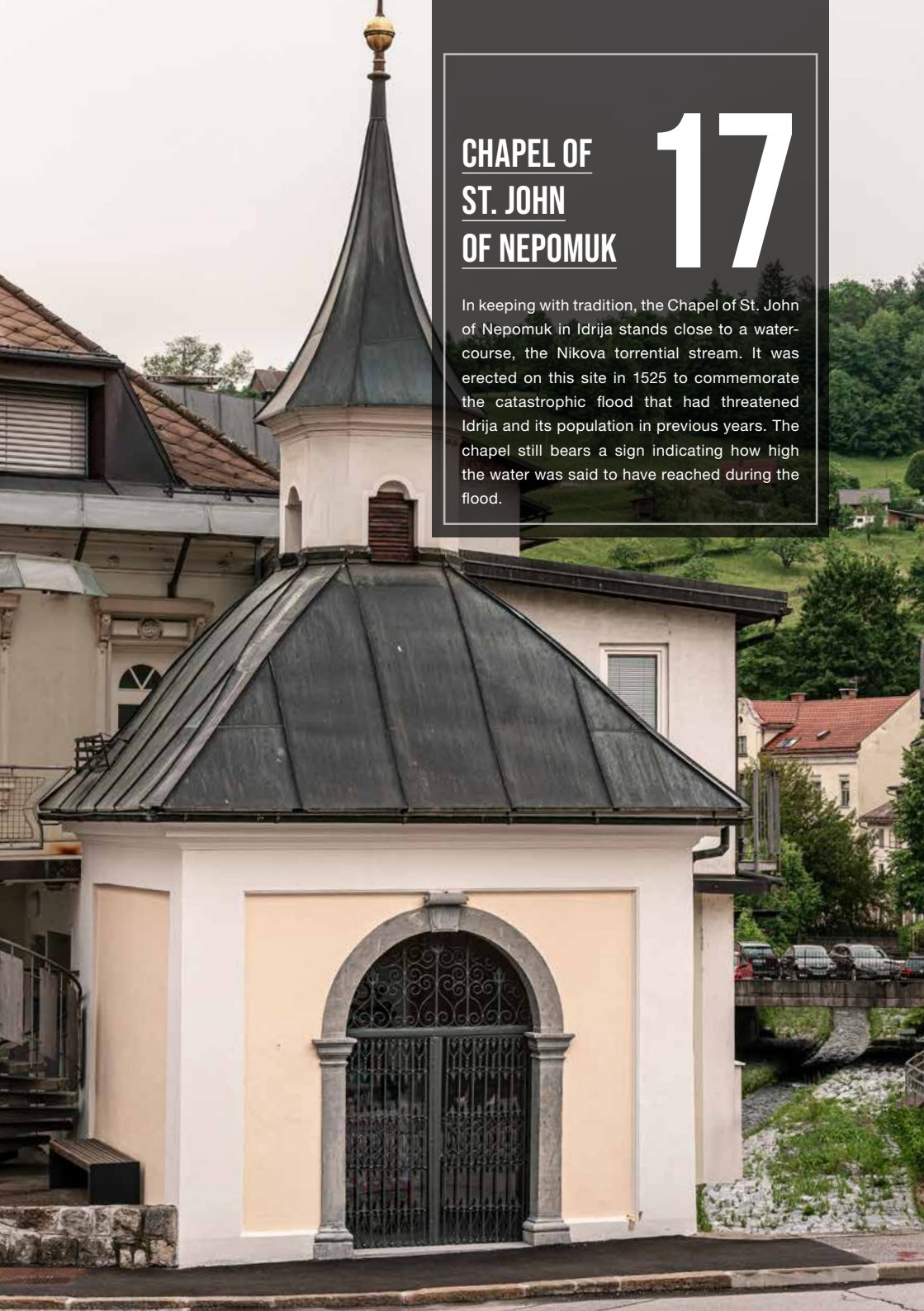
Owing to constant needs for technically trained staff, in 1901 the first Slovenian nonclassical secondary school was opened in Idrija. After 120 years, the Idrija secondary school is still operational today and is successfully continuing its tradition of education as one of the best Slovenian secondary schools.



GEWERKENEGG CASTLE

16

This Renaissance castle from the early 16th century dominates over the town centre. It was built by the mine owners of that time for the purpose of managing the mine and storage of mercury. Today, the castle hosts the Idrija Municipal Museum.

A photograph of the Chapel of St. John of Nepomuk in Idrija, Slovenia. The chapel is a small, white, square building with a dark, multi-tiered conical roof topped with a golden orb. It features a large arched entrance with an ornate black metal gate. The chapel is situated next to a building with a tiled roof and a stone bench. In the background, a river flows under a bridge, and a hillside with greenery and other buildings is visible.

CHAPEL OF ST. JOHN OF NEPOMUK

17

In keeping with tradition, the Chapel of St. John of Nepomuk in Idrija stands close to a watercourse, the Nikova torrential stream. It was erected on this site in 1525 to commemorate the catastrophic flood that had threatened Idrija and its population in previous years. The chapel still bears a sign indicating how high the water was said to have reached during the flood.

TOWN SQUARE WITH CRYPT OF ST. BARBARA 18

The Parish Church of St. Barbara once stood on the present-day town square, where its foundation stone was laid in 1622. However, during the Second World War, the church suffered such extensive damage that it was demolished by decree of the authorities in 1951. The memory of the former church lives on through the restored crypt of St. Barbara and the commemorative plaques engraved in the pavement of the Town Square.



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REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF CULTURE

