

Biser's company: THE INSTRUCTIVE PATH OF DWARF PEARL



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THE INSTRUCTIVE PATH OF DWARF PEARL

Introduction

Hello and welcome dear visitors! We're very pleased that you've decided to visit the path which Dwarf Pearl discovered.

Who is Dwarf Pearl?

The beginning of the Dwarf Pearl project can be traced back to the year 2010 when the fifth graders who took part in the Tourist Club decided that the village of Vinska Gora (Wine Mountain) must have its own mascot. Many suggestions were put forward and in the end we chose the name Dwarf Pearl which in the years since has been well received among the children of Vinska Gora.

His story

Once upon a time a rich dwarf, going by the name of Pearl, lived in these parts. Animals from all around came to visit him because he would always give them something to eat. He was a kind loner. He gave the pearls that he mined to the loggers and hunters so that they could buy food for the animals.

One day, as he was walking around Vinska Gora, he buried some of the pearls in the ground at different places of our town and said: "These pearls are so beautiful that everyone should be able to see and know them. That's why I've tied them in a necklace and this necklace is worn by our village, Vinska Gora.«

So, you've met Dwarf Pearl. He'll be accompanying you on the instructive path you're taking. At each stop he'll invite you to listen to what he has to tell you.

Dwarf Pearl likes animals, so he visits them. And you? Do you like animals as well?

He likes game the most, which he can visit at the Lamperček homestead. Dwarf Pearl went to the homestead on St. John's Eve, when, so the folktale says, one can hear animals speak if they unknowingly happen to have some fern seeds with them. The animals told Dwarf Pearl a story which had passed among them for generations. He says that the deer and does were the first to tell it and that the mouflons and fallow deer finished it. It's a story about the path through the Valley of the mills on which the noblemen travelled to oversee the millers. Without further delay Dwarf Pearl went to find out where this path leads and whether the stories told about it are true. He found a lot of interesting things on the way. Do you want to know what they were? Then let's get moving!

1. Turkish Lime Tree

The journey begins here, at the Lamperček homestead. Look around you and you'll see a lemon tree that is over 500 years old. It was planted in memory of the victory that Martin Krpan — a folklore character dating to the time of the Habsburg empire, to which today's Slovenia belonged, Martin Krpan had extraordinary strength and made a living by smuggling salt — achieved over the Turks.

Are you aware of all the meanings the lemon tree has? It is a symbol of the Slovenian nation as such. When it blooms, it emits a captivating aroma which attracts bees. The lemon tree also calms the restless and induces a growing feeling of inner calm and concentration. It encourages open-mindedness and helps realise good intentions.

Its blossoms are picked in June and the tea and syrup that can be obtained from them are of great use in winter as well as in summer. In winter they help with overcoming fever and in

summer with alleviating heat. You can find the recipe for lime tree tea and syrup on the Facebook page of the Biser (Pearl) Society, which we invite you to join.

And since we're socialising, let's finally get on our way and follow the signposts in the shape of Dwarf Pearl.

Bon voyage!

2. The Valley of mills and the stream

If you listen carefully, you'll hear the stream tell you a story which can be read as well:

Darksome well is the name I go by. I have more than three springs in the limestone rock of the Temnjak hill which got its name after the dark forests that surround it. I am the border between the municipalities Velenje and Dobrna. A long time ago the latter used to belong to Šalek valley.

I used to deliver water to the Snake castle. From the beginning of its reign up until the terrible storm in the middle of the 20th century, I powered more than thirteen mills. Then most of the fell silent. Vovk mill is the only one I occasionally run nowadays.

Different sources refer to me with different names: Ponikva, Potoški vrelec or Stream well, and Ločnica or Borderline because I pass through different areas before I disappear in the river Pirešica.

If you are a fan of kneipping in unspoiled nature then this valley with its many rapids and cold water will definitely be to your taste. Do you know what kneipping is? It's an exchange of hot and cold body baths which is a good method of strengthening your health. You can try it at home while taking a shower. Sebastian Kneipp, the famous German doctor, was the one who developed it — hence the name kneipping or “knajpanje”.

Walk carefully now alongside me!

3. Vovk mill

Dear visitors, you're now at the Vovk homestead. This homestead is interesting not only because of its mill, but also because of the stream, mentioned above, as it causes the mill and the homestead to fall under two different municipalities: the mill belongs to Velenje, while the homestead falls under the municipality of Dobrna. The Vovk mill, located above the homestead, is over 500 years old. It already performed its function for the castle noblemen and functioned all the way up until the 1990 storm. The mill was restored in 2007 and has been milling for its owners since then.

Food for thought: Do you know how flour is made? — By milling cereal. What kinds of cereals do you know? — Wheat, spelt, barley, oats, millet, rye, buckwheat, corn. What do we need to make flour? — Cereal grains. Who's the miller? — The miller is the owner of the mill which mills cereals. What does the miller do? — He strews the grains in the mill and sells flour at the end. What types of flour do we know? — Soft and hard wheat flour, as well as corn, buckwheat, rye, and spelt flour...

Do you know what the wooden object in front of the homestead is called? It's the thresher. Do you know what a thresher is? The dictionary defines a thresher as a “device made from wood in which the hard husks of the cereal grains are removed through the process of crushing, lifting and dropping.

The millers usually went to the mill at night. But do you know why? Because that's when they could find the time and because they didn't go to work in the morning. So they socialised, played cards, sang and drank a cider or two while the mill did its milling. If you'd like to see how the Vovk mill operates when it's powered by the stream, come around on Milller's Sunday which is every year on the first Sunday in September.

And now we're off to the forest!

4. In the forest

We're standing in the forest. Which trees can you see? Can you recognise them? And what else can we find in the forest besides trees that we perhaps even pick? Which fruits of the forest are you familiar with?

Well, what we're going to do today is something completely different. Do you like hugging? Have you ever hugged a tree?

"Tree hugging is called dendrotherapy which originates from the Greek word *dendron*, meaning tree. Trees contain a high concentration of healing energy which gives them the power to cleanse people of negativity. Get close to the tree that inspires you and stand turned towards it for a couple of minutes. Close your eyes and hug the tree with your arms stretched out and listen to your breathing. Surrender yourself to the flow and let feelings, memories and imagination move through you. When you feel like you've done enough and filled yourself with energy, thank the tree."

After turning right at the signpost, look toward the shore on your left and you'll see the pines. You're likely out of breath at this point because of the ascent but being in a pine forest should have an effect of improving your blood flow and, accordingly, your oxygen transport. And a better oxygen flow has an indirect consequence of improving your digestion and metabolism. The pressure in the chest will start to subside and eventually disappear. Pines are huggable as well, but be mindful of your clothes, as their crusts can be resinous.

Besides spruce, pine and beech are the most common trees of Slovenian forests. Let's get to know them in a slightly different way.

Pine

Black and red pines are known. Their names come from the colour of their respective crusts. Their needles are rich in vitamin C, while inhaling their steamed tips helps with lung and oesophagus infections and a rummy nose as well. A tea prepared from their cones purifies the blood. Pine used to be an important source of resin.

When you're coughing at home, do you prepare inhalations? Do you know what inhalations are? As an alternative you can visit a forest and spend some time next to coniferous trees. Just like spruce and larch, black and red pines also have lung cleaning properties.

Beech

Helps with blood circulation, regulates blood pressure, strengthens concentration and alleviates stress. If you're thinking about having a family or expanding an existing one, a visit to a beech forest would be ideal, as beech also increases fertility. A common consequence of doubting one's abilities and weaknesses are digestive problems. Beech's energy eliminates these symptoms, infuses us with cheerfulness, frees us from insecurities and fears and strengthens emotions and communicational abilities. If you're more of the quiet sort, then hugging a beech is just the thing for you to do.

Trees will restore your energy which will help you resist the spell of the castle, to which we are headed now.

For additional relaxation perform the meditation exercise written on the table. The tour guide should read it in a manner, appropriate to meditation: slowly, one sentence at a time with one second pauses in between. The teacher/guide can simplify the exercise for children.

Now relaxed, carry on with your journey following the signposts. Happy travels!

“I calm myself and quiet down, so that the sounds of the forest and the voices of the animals is all I hear.

I stand straight, hands next to the body, eyes closed. I am aware of my whole body and stand firm like a tree. I take a few moments to surrender myself to my breathing which flows through me, which invigorates and deepens me. I give myself to my breath.

Slowly I rise my hands along my body, hold them at the height of my shoulders with palms open, facing upwards. It’s important that I have my feet firmly on the ground and refrain from straining my arm muscles. All the weight of the arms and upper body gravitates towards the centre of the stomach. In that way this posture becomes completely natural and free of tension. As a result, the arms don’t become tired.

Perhaps I slowly feel the inner breadth and freedom. I am no longer looking inward, but observing nature. This stance wants to connect me with it and fill me with nature’s life, its breadth and freedom. I slowly start to look at my life in a different light. Depressive thoughts, now robbed of their space, often disappear in this posture. I enter a positive state of mind.

Slowly I lower my arms back to their starting position. I thank nature for this experience, either with words or just a grateful silence. In these moments of quiet I let the silence echo in me. Reflection.”

5. Snake castle

You’ve arrived to the Marovšek farm, where the Snake noblemen used to borrow yoke livestock. During the pasture season, which stretches from St. George’s Day (April 23) to the Nativity of Mary (September 8, but can also last longer), various animals will welcome you here: sheep, goats, cattle, chickens, and pigs. Did you meet all the animals on the farm? Which of them give milk? And which one carries eggs?

The animals could tell you a lot about what the noblemen did with them at this farm (you know, as long as you keep some fern seeds with you on St. John’s Eve).

You went past the table with a warning that movement in this area is taken under your own responsibility — a fact that’s important to remember!

The view of the valley reveals the towns of Novi Grad (New Castle) and Dobrna. On the right you can see the hills of Ložnica-Hudinja stretching towards Alexander’s Peak. On the left Stolpnik and Stenica announce themselves.

You can also see the compass on which the directions of major world cities, together with their distances from Dobrna, are inscribed. That way you can orient yourself. You can also take the steps to the castle itself (and even enter it), but be aware that you’re the one responsible for your safety. So be careful!

More than a few legends have been written about the Snake castle, which was already standing in the 12th century. One of these will be read now. You can read other legends and the history of the castle in the folder located at the Lamperček homestead, just don’t forget to ask about it.

The legend about how the devil drove away the lord of the old castle

An eighty year old man was telling this story to an eighty year old woman when she was still young: “My mother served at the old castle in Dobrna. One day the lord asked his family if they wanted to see how much money he has. Naturally everyone was curious, so they followed him to the basement. There in the corner stood a giant tub, filled with gold. This tub had a peculiar characteristic of becoming transparent if some money was thrown in it. The lord threw a couple of coins in the tub and the gold glittered. And on the gold sat a big black

cat with shining eyes. This cat was the devil himself. But the lord didn't stay at the castle for long. That black cat demanded that the lord surrender him his castle and move somewhere else. It was the time of fasting, when the devil said to the lord: 'If you don't move out of the castle by Easter, we'll be having supper that day.' The devil met my mother on the stairs that day when he went to see the lord who was in the castle room. The lord got frightened, quickly packed his clutter and temporarily moved to an abandoned cottage before building himself a new beautiful castle which we can see today. But the treasure remained at the old castle under the command of the devil himself.

One day at the Marovšek farm some threshing work was being done. The threshers wanted to make fun of the devil. So they tied a sheaf of straw to a pole, shoved it through a window in the castle cellar and said: "Burn yourself some tobacco, devil, you don't have your own fire anyway!" As a reply, a small bang was heard in the cellar. The thresher repeated this the second time and the bang grew louder in response. When they repeated it for the third time, a tremendous clap could be heard and the whole castle was instantly enveloped in smoke and fire, while the devil himself appeared in the window. From that day onward no one dares to approach the castle. Though the treasure probably still lies within it.

After we've looked around and observed the interesting surroundings, we return by taking the same route back pass the Marovšek farm. At the asphalt road we turn left and follow the signposts. Good luck!

6. Old bicycles and motorbikes

We're done with noblemen. Now we'll get to know the means of two-wheel transport from the late 19th and early 20th century. How did our great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers get around? There is an interesting collection of antiques at this house, such as motorbikes and bicycles used in different professions. Can you imagine what a bicycle of a seamstress or a knife grinder, the milkman, rescuers and firemen was like? Here you can see them and also test them if you call ahead first. The owner of the collection is Mr. Peter Habe who has a keen interest in antiques.

At the Lamperček homestead you can see fenced wild animals in person. In the memorial room there is a presentation of forest animals, whose habitat is located primarily in Slovenia but also elsewhere in the world, from Russia to Canada.

If you're interest to know more about the history of the Snake castle, just ask!

Thank you. We'll be grateful if you can pass on your good experiences from this trip!

Best wishes from the members of the Biser Society.

7. Main stops on the way

ABOUT LAMPERČEK HOMESTEAD

The view on the farm is marked by a mighty old linen tree and a fenced door with hunting motives, just at the entrance to the farm. There is also a large car park for visitors beside the road. Upon arrival through the front door, a glimpse of the unspoiled nature opens up with the presence of animals walking freely within the fenced farm. The owner's owner, Bernard Drev, set up a landing for wild deer on 14 hectares, which is now home to more than a hundred deer, hens, dams and

moufflons. The farm consists of an old farmhouse, an economical building, two old hayrack and other accompanying premises. The greatest feature of the farm is the homeliness and direct contact of the visitor with nature and animals that can be fed and peacefully observed during a conversation, chat or snack. (<http://www.domacija-lampercek.si>).

ABOUT MILL VOVK

Vovk Mill is more than 500 years old. Mills grounded several types of cereals: wheat, buckwheat, millet, oats, maize. It has been continuously grinding since the time of Snake Caste's lordship until 1990, when the flood stopped the milling. After a thorough reconstruction, it was re-launched in 2007, but it was once again damaged by torrential rain again soon after its opening. Now it's repaired again. The visitor is fascinated by the noise of the stream, the clapping of the mill, the equipment, and the beautiful portraits stored in the mill room. It is even more magical to listen to the stories of the witty narrator Karl Pungartnik or his son Drago.

The interest of this farm is also that the mill is located in the municipality of Velenje and the farm is in in the municipality of Dobrna. Each year, in memory of this Valley of Mills, they hold a traditional Miller's Sunday event at Vovkov mlin, which is prepared by tourist associations from both municipalities and it attracts hundreds of visitors.

ABOUT THE KAČNIK CASTLE

Neuhaus, Schlangenburg, first mentioned in the 13th century

In 1275 the Dobrna castle was mentioned for the first time as Domus noua apud. After this year, up to 1613, it had different names and owners. The landmark was the year 1613 when it was sold to Gačnik. From there, a Slovenian made up name of the castle originates – Snake's Castle (Kača translates as Snake).

In 1769, it was bought by Franc Ksaverij Avgustin, Baron Dienersberk. In three years, in 1772, the castle was devastated the earthquake, and baron had to escape from it, as it began to fall apart, and part of the castle was completely crashed. Two years later, Dienersberg built a new mansion in the valley, which inherited the name of the old castle.

The ruins of the Dobrna castle are still powerful enough, but they have not yet been studied. It is certainly true that the walls in its core can not be dated to the Romanesque period. Some of the Gothic architectural elements are preserved in the central part of the ruins. The castle had a large hall, a chapel, a rich archive, cannons and a weaponry with antique weapons before the summit.

There are quite a few legends about Castle Kačnik, which can be found in a special folder at the Lamperček Homestead.

About the Temnjak stream and its Valley of Mills

The Dark Spring, which has more than three springs in the limestone rocks of the Temnjak hill, has been named after the dark forests that surround it. Various sources

refer to it with names such as Ponikva, Potoški vrelec or Ločnica, as it flows through various places before it flows into the Pirešica River with one stream, while the other branch is dug in Hramše, where it becomes an underground karst stream. When it returns to the plane of Pernovo, the second branch rejoins with the first one in the Pirešica River. If you love kneipp in unspoiled nature, you will surely enjoy among many rapids and cold water in this valley. People found the remains of wooden pipes, which suggests that drinking water was conducted to Kačji grad as it is today. Once, it was full of water and it helped people to a better bread. They built mills. The biggest number of active mills was 13. They were named after the house owners names: Gregor's, Petrač's, Sedevšek's, Vovk's, Vovk's thresher, Gorjanec's, Breclj's (still standing, only the Vovkov Mill is still running), Lamprček's, Arnšek's, Potokar's, Kanižar's and the lowest Blažiš's. They are for the needs of Kačji grad, for neighbors and for their own needs. For a long time, the seven remained. The mills worked until evening of 5th June, 1954 when severe storm appeared. Since then, on special occasions, only Vovkov Mill has been launched.

ABOUT THE COLLECTION OF BLAŽIŠ ANTIQUES

With prearranged meeting you are able to see an interesting collection of antiques. Its owner is Mr Peter Habe, a passionate amateur collector, who has a special relationship to his exhibits, which you will experience as you meet him. In addition to the motorcycles from the middle of the 20th century, there is an interesting collection of bicycles that they used for various professions: dairies, dressmakers, knives sharpeners, firefighters, rescuers. One of the first bikes is exhibited, one that has one giant and one small wheel. It stores even more interesting exhibits, including the wreckage of an airplane that once crashed not far away. More about everything you are interested in can be arranged with him as you visit our route.

8. Did you know?

- That Lamperk's linden is known as one of the oldest trees in Slovenia? It is about 500 years old, with a diameter of 1.5 m.
- The Red Pine also grows on the poorest and most deprived sites? It is a light-hearted species that tolerates considerable drought and very low temperatures, it is less tolerant of snow and ice. It grows throughout Slovenia.
- That in many cultures around the world, pine expresses a symbol of immortality?
- That ever green needle tree, black pine, can reach the age of up to 500 years? It is only after four to eight years that the needles fall off, so the crochets are dense and dark. It is resistant to cold, but it needs a lot of summer heat for growth. Among the conifers it is the most resistant to polluted air, so it is common in urban centers and along the highways.
- That pine trees are not the autochthonous tree species in the Karst region? They were planted only at the end of the 19th century.
- That beech can grow 25 m high in 80 years, has a diameter of 15 cm, a volume of 2700 m³ and 800000 leaves with a total area of 1600 m²? Each hour consumes 2.4 kg of CO₂ and 1 kg of water and produces 1.6 kg of grape sugar and 1.7 kg of oxygen. This oxygen is sufficient for breathing of 10 people. In 80 years it processes 40 million m³ of air, it contains 15 m³ of wood, which dried weighs 12 tons.
- That since the 6th century onwards, from the wood of ordinary beech, writing tables were made? Several joined together in bundles. This is how the first books were created. That's why we call the books beech (In Slovenia the word book is a synonym for beech). Because of these books, this tree is still called beech. In Germany, the letters are called Buchstaben, which were named after beech plates.
- That the beech also lent its name to sheep wool fabrics. It's beech cloth or beech. In this case, the beech meant "raw, rough". The beech clothes were cumbersome. "Buck trousers stand up themselves, if you put them on the floor," they used to joke, but it is true that beech trousers served some generations.
- Why are we hitting the wood? In order to awaken a hidden, good wood spirit that protects our health and takes care of our happiness.
- That the mysterious power of wooden horns in the form of a weaver can still locate water there where modern science remains powerless.
- That Terme Dobrna, the oldest operating Slovenian thermal spa, has been built by the owners of Snake's Castle, since they have a tradition of over six hundred years? In the year 1403, water was first used for medical purposes. The heart of the spa is the thermal spring located in the central part of the Health Center. Water with a temperature of 35 to 36 ° C at the spring comes from a depth of 1200 meters and has a beneficial effect on all types of female diseases.

9. Sources and Literature

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