Walking Through Flavours and Stories - How Škofja Loka connects gastronomy, craftsmanship, heritage and active exploration into one sustainable visitor experience

Škofjeloško, Slovenia
Občina Škofja Loka
Local Destinations (including villages, cities, municipalities, islands)
Culture & Heritage

Summary of Good Practice Story
Škofja Loka, one of Slovenia's best-preserved medieval towns, was losing visibility of its traditional dishes, crafts and stories as visitors experienced the town mainly through its monuments while local providers faced growing competition from standardised tourism offers. The municipality, tourism organisations, hospitality providers and artisans worked with chef Primož Pintar to research and reinterpret traditional recipes like Loška smojka, while the Škofja Loka Craft Centre introduced honeybread-making and wooden mould-carving workshops, together forming "Tasty Škofja Loka Steps – Flavours in Motion," a digitalised walking experience combining food, storytelling, heritage, craftsmanship and active low-carbon mobility, tested through pilot tours with residents, stakeholders and journalists before launch. This created new partnerships between hospitality providers, artisans and local suppliers, revived disappearing dishes and crafts, and gave local people renewed pride in traditions they'd started to overlook. The lesson: successful tourism products aren't built by a single organisation but through trust and shared ownership among many stakeholders, and innovation doesn't always mean creating something new — sometimes it means rediscovering and reinterpreting what already exists.

Setting the Scene: Destination & context

Škofja Loka is one of the best-preserved medieval towns in Slovenia, located at the confluence of the Poljanska and Selška Sora rivers. Beyond its historic streets and landmarks, the destination is shaped by a rich tradition of local food, craftsmanship, storytelling, and a close connection between people and the surrounding landscape.

For centuries, local life was built around small farms, traditional recipes, artisan skills, and strong community ties. Food and craftsmanship were not separate parts of everyday life but expressions of local identity, knowledge, and creativity passed from generation to generation. However, many traditional dishes, stories, and craft practices gradually became less visible in everyday life and tourism. While visitors admired the town's cultural heritage, they often had limited opportunities to experience the living traditions that continue to shape the destination today.

This local context inspired Škofja Loka to develop new ways of connecting heritage, gastronomy, sustainability, and tourism. The result was a collaborative effort that transformed local traditions into authentic experiences, allowing visitors to discover the destination through its flavours, stories, people, and craftsmanship.

The Turning Point: Why change was needed

A growing concern emerged among local stakeholders that valuable elements of Škofja Loka's heritage were slowly disappearing from public awareness. Traditional dishes were no longer regularly prepared, local stories were being forgotten, and many visitors experienced the destination primarily through its monuments rather than through the people, traditions, and knowledge behind them.

At the same time, local providers faced increasing competition from standardised tourism offers, making it more difficult to highlight what truly makes the destination unique. There was a shared feeling that local identity could not be preserved simply by protecting buildings and monuments; it also required safeguarding living traditions, skills, and everyday cultural practices.

This led to an important realisation: heritage must be experienced, not only observed. Local food, craftsmanship, storytelling, and community knowledge needed to become visible, relevant, and valued again. Rather than preserving traditions behind museum walls, Škofja Loka saw an opportunity to bring them back into everyday life and transform them into meaningful experiences for both residents and visitors.

The Vision: What you set out to do

Our vision was to reconnect people with the living heritage of Škofja Loka through food, craftsmanship, storytelling, and sustainable mobility. We wanted visitors to experience the destination not only as a historic town, but as a place where traditions continue to live through local people, skills, and everyday practices.

The initiative was developed through cooperation between the Municipality of Škofja Loka, tourism organisations, local hospitality providers, artisans, guides, and development partners.

Together, they recognised the opportunity to create a tourism experience that supports local businesses while preserving cultural heritage and promoting sustainable lifestyles.
Rather than creating a conventional sightseeing product, we set out to build an experience that connects gastronomy, craftsmanship, local stories, and active exploration. The goal was to revive forgotten traditions, strengthen cooperation among local stakeholders, increase the visibility of local providers, and create authentic experiences that generate benefits for both the community and visitors.
By investing in local knowledge and creativity, we aimed to ensure that Škofja Loka's heritage remains a living and evolving part of its future.

The Journey: How change happened
The journey began by bringing together local hospitality providers, artisans, tourism professionals, guides, development organisations, and the municipality. Through a series of workshops, meetings, and training sessions, participants explored how local heritage could be transformed into a meaningful and sustainable visitor experience.
The process included research into traditional eating habits, local stories, and historical sources, while chefs and providers worked together to revive and reinterpret traditional dishes. Under the mentorship of chef Primož Pintar, local providers developed contemporary versions of traditional recipes, including Loška smojka, while strengthening cooperation with local suppliers and producers.
At the same time, the Škofja Loka Craft Centre joined the initiative, introducing visitors to traditional honeybread making and wooden mould carving. This created a unique connection between gastronomy and craftsmanship, two important elements of local identity.
The result was the creation of Tasty Škofja Loka Steps – Flavours in Motion, a digitalised walking experience that combines local food, storytelling, cultural heritage, craftsmanship, and active mobility. Pilot tours involving residents, stakeholders, and journalists helped refine the concept and demonstrated strong community support for the initiative.

The Breakthrough: What you achieved
The initiative transformed local food, craftsmanship, and heritage from separate elements into one connected visitor experience. Through collaboration between hospitality providers, artisans, tourism professionals, local suppliers, and public institutions, Škofja Loka developed the sustainable tourism product Tasty Škofja Loka Steps – Flavours in Motion.
The project brought together local providers, producers, tourist guides, and the Škofja Loka Craft Centre, creating new partnerships and strengthening local supply chains. Traditional dishes that had gradually disappeared from everyday life, such as Loška smojka, were revived and reinterpreted for contemporary visitors, while local ingredients and culinary traditions gained new visibility and value.
A particularly important achievement was the integration of craftsmanship into the tourism experience. Visitors not only taste local food but also discover traditional honeybread making

and wooden mould carving, gaining a deeper understanding of the skills, stories, and knowledge that shape the destination.
The experience encourages visitors to explore the town on foot, connecting gastronomy, cultural heritage, wellbeing, and low-carbon mobility. Perhaps the greatest change has been a renewed sense of pride. Local people increasingly recognise the value of their traditions, craftsmanship, and landscape, while visitors leave with a richer and more authentic understanding of Škofja Loka and the people who bring it to life.

Reflections: What you learned and what others can learn

One of our biggest lessons was that successful tourism products are not created by a single organisation—they are built through trust, cooperation, and shared ownership. At the beginning, bringing together hospitality providers, artisans, tourism professionals, public institutions, and local suppliers required time, patience, and continuous dialogue. Building a common vision proved to be just as important as developing the final product itself.
We were also surprised by how strongly local people responded to stories that were already part of their everyday lives. Traditional dishes such as Loška smojka, local craftsmanship, and forgotten anecdotes suddenly became sources of pride when presented in a new and engaging way. This showed us that innovation does not always mean creating something new; sometimes it means rediscovering and reinterpreting what already exists.
Another important lesson was the value of testing and co-creation. Pilot tours involving residents, stakeholders, and journalists provided valuable feedback and helped improve the experience before launch. Their perspectives often revealed details that planners might overlook.
If we were starting again, we would involve even more local producers, artisans, and community members from the very beginning. Authenticity, collaboration, and local pride are the strongest foundations for sustainable tourism.

The Ripple Effect: Lasting impact

The impact of the initiative extends far beyond the tourism product itself. It created new partnerships between hospitality providers, artisans, local suppliers, guides, and public institutions, strengthening cooperation across the destination.
The project demonstrated that local food, craftsmanship, and heritage can become powerful drivers of sustainable tourism and community pride. Traditional dishes such as Loška smojka gained new visibility, while local crafts and stories found new audiences among both residents and visitors.
The experience also established a foundation for future collaboration, inspiring new ideas for heritage interpretation, local product development, and community-based tourism experiences. Most importantly, it reminded the community that its greatest strengths already exist: its people, traditions, skills, and stories. By valuing and sharing these assets, Škofja Loka is building a future where heritage is not only preserved but actively lived, creating authentic experiences for generations to come.

Awards or Certifications
Being among top 20 in the TASTE projects and became a part of robust European network of tourism stakeholders
Slovenia Green Destination certificate - Bronze
Sustainability training and certification support provided to participating tourism business through the project

Web Articles
https://www.visitskofjaloka.si/si/kulinarika/1850
https://www.skofjaloka.si/objava/1297799
https://hotel-lonca.com/dozivetje/okusni-koraki-po-skofji-loki
https://gorenjskainfo.com/novica/turizem/novo-atrakcija-v-skofji-loki-kraj-boste-raziskovali-kar-z-vilicami-v-rokah/359930

Other Relevant Links
https://www.visitskofjaloka.si/en/cuisine/1851

Quotes or Testimonials
"For years, Loška smojka was just a memory from childhood. Seeing it brought back to life and shared with visitors made me realise how valuable our culinary heritage really is."
— Local resident

"What impressed me most was not only the food, but the people behind it. Every stop revealed a new story, a new tradition, and a deeper connection to Škofja Loka."
— Visitor

"This project showed that local food, craftsmanship, and heritage are strongest when they work together. We are no longer promoting individual businesses, but a shared story of our destination."
— Local tourism provider

"The experience reminded us that our traditions are not something from the past. They are part of our future."
— Project partner