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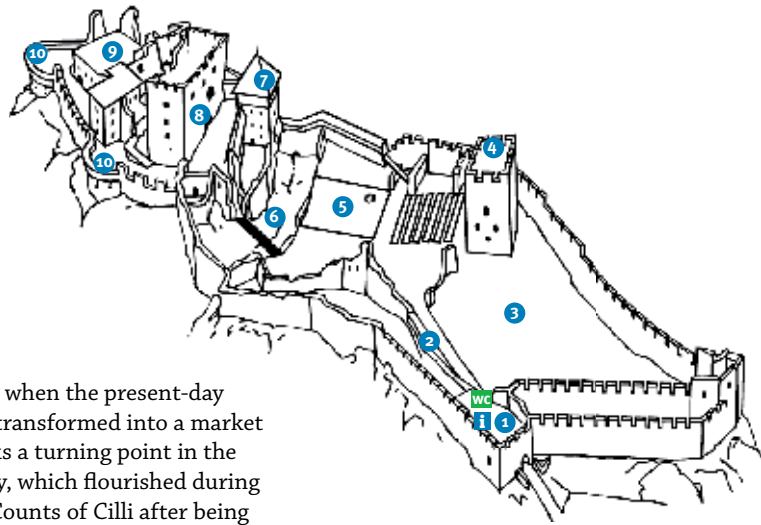
Old Castle Celje



STARI GRAD CELJE

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knezi - danes - jutri

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The Middle Ages, when the present-day city of Celje was transformed into a market settlement, marks a turning point in the history of the city, which flourished during the reign of the Counts of Cilli after being granted city rights in 1451.

Old Castle Celje was originally owned by the Carinthian Counts of Heunberg, who erected the building during the 2nd half of the 12th century. Compared to the present day, the castle was much smaller and encompassed only a Romanesque palatium, an enclosed courtyard and an exterior rampart, secured by a defence passageway on the top, a characteristic of other castles of the time.

After the Counts of Heunberg died out, the castle was inherited by the Counts of Sanneck, who were to be elevated to the rank of the Counts of Celje soon after their move to Celje. The Counts undertook the transformation of the castle into a comfortable residence. The exterior rampart was built into a Gothic palatium that served as a residential part of the castle. The Counts also erected an almost 23-metre high defence tower on a nearby hill that was subsequently referred to as Frederick's Tower. During subsequent phases of development of the building, the castle complex was expanded by an exterior

rampart with small towers, outbuildings and military facilities, wide defensive trenches and a new access to the central part of the castle. Even though the castle was extremely well and strongly secured, the final part of the rampart was added at the beginning of the 16th century, turning it into one of the mightiest fortresses of the time.

During its final development phase, the medieval castle was transformed into a Renaissance fortress that would provide shelter to the locals in times of danger. During the 18th century, the castle was abandoned and stones from which it had been constructed were used for other buildings erected nearby. Since its renovation, the castle has turned into an attractive tourist point. Visitors can avail of the state-of-the-art Tourist Information Centre and the Veronika Café. The largest medieval castle in Slovenia by surface area acts as a wonderful setting for weddings and numerous events and concerts held during summer.

ABOUT THE COUNTS OF CILLI

The Counts of Cilli dynasty dates back to the Lords of Sanneck (Žovnek) from the Sanneck (Žovnek) Castle in the Lower Savinja Valley. After the Counts of Heunburg died out, they inherited their estate including Old Castle Celje. Frederick, Lord of Sanneck, moved to Celje with his family and modernised and fortified the castle to serve as a more comfortable residence. Soon after, in 1341, he was elevated to Count of Celje, which marks the beginning of the Counts of Cilli dynasty. The present-day coat-of-arms of the city of Celje – three golden stars on a blue background – also dates back to that period. The dynasty experienced its greatest rise during the reign of Count Hermann II of Cilli. In the quest to free himself from the supremacy of the Habsburgs, Count Hermann II of Cilli established an alliance with the ambitious Sigismund of Luxembourg, King of Hungary, whose life he saved during the Battle of Nicopolis against the Ottoman Empire.

As a reward, Sigismund subsequently married Count Hermann's youngest daughter Barbara of Cilli, who thus became the Queen of Hungary and, later on, also the Queen of Germany and Bohemia by marriage. Because of her free thinking, religious tolerance and especially her interest in alchemy and astrology, emotions ran high even long after she died. Her granddaughter Elisabeth of Habsburg married the King of Poland with whom she had 13 children, out of which 10 survived.

During the reign of the most powerful and influential representative of the Counts of Cilli dynasty, Count Hermann II of Cilli, the dynasty was involved in the top-level European political scene and established alliances with the most significant noble families of the time. In 1436, two representatives of the Counts of Cilli, Frederick II and Ulrich II of Cilli, were elevated to the rank of Princes of the Holy Roman Empire by

Sigismund of Luxembourg. As the oldest son of Count Hermann II of Cilli, Frederick II of Cilli was the heir apparent. In the history of the dynasty, he is known for his tragic love story with Veronika of Desenice. His politically ambitious father married him off to Elizabeth of Frankopan, with whom Frederick was not happy. When his wife was found murdered, he was finally free to marry his beloved but thus tainted the reputation of the whole dynasty. He was consequently punished by his father, who had him imprisoned in a 23-metre high defence tower and had Veronika assassinated but later had to free him as his successor. The dynasty thus continued to gain social, economic and political power until the Counts of Cilli were elevated to the rank of Princes of the Holy Roman Empire. The ensuing dispute with the Habsburgs was resolved by a peace treaty and an agreement of mutual inheritance on the basis of which the Habsburgs inherited all the estates previously held by the Counts of Cilli in the Holy Roman Empire when the male line of the Counts of Cilli died out in 1456 when Count Ulrich II of Cilli was assassinated.

LEGEND:

About the Black Raven

Before Count Ulrich set out to participate in a battle, a lady-in-waiting saw a black raven, warning him that he should not leave home as a black raven was considered bad luck. Ulrich, however, ignored her and set out anyway. While fighting in Belgrade, he saw the same raven. While observing it, he was stabbed by one of his enemy's troops. This is how Ulrich met his demise.





TAKE A STROLL AROUND THE CASTLE

Discover hidden parts of the castle, feel the power of history and experience the life of one of the most powerful European families of the Late Middle Ages. Guided by 11 information boards along the castle complex, you will be able to discover the castle and unveil its history on your own.



Old Castle Celje Tourist Information Centre

Enter the castle through the Tourist Information Centre, whose premises are located next to the former watchtower. At the Tourist Information Centre, you can purchase tickets and souvenirs and be provided with basic information about Celje and the castle. You can also visit the permanent Celje Regional Museum Counts of Cilli exhibition entitled “Counts of Cilli Today and Never Again”, located in the parti-wall.



Veronika Café

At the Veronika Café, you can avail of its castle drinks and desserts and a Frederick’s Tower-shaped playground for children.



Eastern Inner Ward

The Eastern Inner Ward serves as a venue for the Living History programme held between April and October that provides castle visitors with the opportunity to form part of “living” history and to engage in fencing, archery or creative medieval workshops in an authentic environment.



Frederick’s Tower – panoramic point

The tower takes its name from Count Frederick II of Cilli, son of the most powerful and influential representative of the Counts of Cilli dynasty, Count Hermann II of Cilli. Erected in the 14th century, it is 23 metres high, and its walls are 3 metres thick. A darkroom was set up in its first floor, above which weapon and other military equipment storage facilities were located. In its original form, a defence passageway ran around the entire top floor of the tower. This is where Frederick II was held captive after marrying his beloved Veronika of Desenice against his father’s wishes.

LEGEND:

How Frederick Survived His Incarceration

One night, the son of the mighty Count Hermann II of Cilli, Frederick II, had his first and legal wife, Elizabeth of Frankopan, assassinated and then he secretly married Veronika of Desenice against his father’s wishes. As a result, Count Hermann II of Cilli had his son imprisoned in the main tower of the castle and Veronika of Desenice drowned. According to the legend, Frederick II, who was heading towards certain death, was saved by a loyal shield bearer who excavated a subterranean passage through which he would bring Frederick II food. It is said that this passage could still be seen during the previous century and was sufficiently wide to be used by an adult man.



5

Central Courtyard with a Well

During the reign of the Counts of Cilli, this part of the castle contained significant outbuildings and military facilities. Wall remnants indicate the location of the former forge and stables. Nowadays, the Central Courtyard is also the main venue of events held at the castle during summer, open-air concerts and performances that reach their peak with the two-day medieval event held at the end of August.

LEGEND:

About the Fate of the Castle's Well

One night, a farmer arrived to the castle to convey an important piece of news to its owner. As he reached the courtyard, he suddenly heard a voice saying: "Where is my land, where is my castle, who am I?" As the farmer approached the well, he saw Count Ulrich waist-deep in water and wounded all over his body. Since then, nobody else has dared to collect water from the well, which has been walled in.




6

Defensive Trench and Drawbridge

During the 15th century, the existing natural trench was deepened and transformed into a defensive trench that provided additional security to the area of the castle inhabited by the Counts of Cilli. The deepening and transformation of the trench also required a transformation of the access to the central part of the castle. The original trail was replaced by a new entry gate with a drawbridge.



7


Tower above Pelikan's Trail

On the northern part of the defensive trench, you will find a small gate that marks the finishing point of Pelikan's Trail, named after the well-known 20th century photographer from Celje Josip Pelikan whose photography studio you can visit in the city centre. Above the entrance to the defensive trench, there is a three-storey tower called the "Tower above Pelikan's Trail", which was erected at the beginning of 16th century, i.e. after the Counts of Cilli dynasty had already died out. The tower now serves as a periodic exhibition area.

LEGEND:

About the Old Castle Treasure

More than a century ago, the castle was inhabited by a poor but brave day labourer. On his way home one night, he noticed a man with a cart close to the castle gate. Approaching him, he noticed a strange, tall individual with broad shoulders wearing a tall wide brim hat. "What is on your cart and where are you headed? Unless you tell me, I will push you down the hill so that you know who you are dealing with!" The other man did not answer. The day labourer grabbed his hand, which was, however, very unusual, being made of wash leather and stuffed with hay. Oh, the poor day labourer! Swiftly releasing the other man's hand, he ran to fetch a man sleeping in a nearby hut to take him with him. But as soon as the day labourer left, the cart driver brandished his whip powerfully, as if thunder had struck. When the day labourer returned with the man from the hut, the cart driver could no longer be found even though they looked everywhere. What had the man been carrying on his cart? Money belonging to the Counts of Cilli. According to the legend, the day labourer should have held that man's hand until the clock struck midnight, as he would then have gotten to keep it all. But he was too late.





8

Gothic Palatium

The original castle was much smaller than the present-day building. The exterior castle rampart was located where now the remnants of the Gothic Palatium can be found. During the 14th century, when the Counts of Cilli undertook restoration of the castle to transform it into a more comfortable residence, the exterior rampart was transformed into a living quarter and a four-storey Gothic Palatium was constructed. The upper floors contained heated living quarters, while the lower floors were intended for storage and other useful purposes.



9

Romanesque Palatium

The Romanesque Palatium constitutes the oldest part of the castle. In the past, it was composed of several floors. The upper floors were intended for living quarters, while the lower floors contained premises intended for various uses and storage. Its interior also contained an enclosed courtyard with a water tank. During an earthquake in the 16th century, the palatium was demolished and a new one was built on its foundations. Today, the Romanesque Palatium contains a multi-purpose hall used for various events, including weddings.



10

Viewing platform

The viewing platform marks a point from where the best view of the city of Celje opens up. The Savinja River, which flows through Celje, was formed almost two millennia ago and served as an important transport rafting route towards the south during the Middle Ages. Against the backdrop of the river, you will find the church of the patron saint of rafters, St. Nicholas' Church, which was erected during the Counts of Cilli era. In the past, rafters would say special prayers for a safe journey ahead. To the extreme west, you can find the Kamnik-Savinja Alps.



LEGEND:

About the Bridge between Old Castle Celje and St. Nicholas' Hill

According to the legend, Old Castle Celje on the left bank of Savinja River and St. Nicholas' Hill across from it, which contains the small St. Nicholas' Church, were connected by a leather bridge during the Counts of Cilli era. A mere century ago, some people were able to indicate the location of the ring built into the rock that had once served to secure the bridge in place.





LIVING HISTORY

April–October

Knights, princesses and other entertainers take visitors back in time to the Middle Ages where they can engage in fencing or archery and become familiar with a knight camp, an armoury and medieval lifestyle in an authentic environment.



CASTLE EVENTS

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During the summer, numerous events, concerts and theatre performances that remain etched in the memory of the audience are held in the unique environment of the castle.

SUMMER IN CELJE EVENTS

A diverse programme of events at the central castle courtyard.



THE LAND OF CELJE INVITES ... MEDIEVAL EVENT –

last weekend in August
A two-day medieval event that brings the traditions of medieval lifestyle back to life





CASTLE OFFER



WEDDINGS:
traditional or castle wedding
at various venues in the castle



GUIDED TOURS:
guided tours are customised
to various age groups and are
carried out subject to prior
arrangement with the Celje
Tourist Information Centre



MEDIEVAL FEAST:
try out castle cuisine and
pamper your senses with
medieval recipes



KNIGHTING:
become a Knight of Cilli
and experience an unforgettable
knighting ceremony at the castle



AUDIENCE WITH A COUNT:
experience a meeting with
Count Hermann II or
Barbara of Cilli and their staff

RENT THE CASTLE:
you can either rent the entire
castle or a specific part thereof

For more information about
the programmes and castle rental,
please contact Institution for
Cultural Events and Tourism Celeia Celje:
Tel.: 00386 3 428 79 30 and
00386 3 428 79 32 and tic@celje.si





USEFUL INFORMATION

Opening hours
Old Castle Celje is open
all-year round!

Jan	10:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Feb	09:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Mar	09:00 AM – 6:00 PM
Apr	09:00 AM – 7:00 PM
May	09:00 AM – 8:00 PM
Jun	09:00 AM – 9:00 PM
Jul	09:00 AM – 9:00 PM
Aug	09:00 AM – 9:00 PM
Sept	09:00 AM – 8:00 PM
Oct	09:00 AM – 6:00 PM
Nov	09:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Dec	10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Last admission half an hour
before closing time.



PARKING:

You can park in front of the
Old Castle entrance. The
parking area can also be
used by buses and caravans.



ACCESS FOR DISABLED VISITORS:

Access and washrooms for
disabled visitors provided.



HOW TO FIND US

GPS Northing (N) : 46,2199, GPS Easting (E) : 15,2712



Take the A1 Motorway to
Celje. If travelling from
Ljubljana or Maribor:
exit the motorway at the
“Celje – Center” exit, turn
towards the city centre and
follow the signs for “Stari
grad Celje”.



The Celje Railway Station
has good international and
national connections. For
further information, please
visit www.slo-zeleznice.si.
Take a taxi from the taxi
rank in front of it or take a
walk along the local road to
the castle.



Jože Pučnik Airport
www.lju-airport.si,
distance:
99 km, 1h 10 min
Connections with
other airports:
Graz (113 km, 1 h 20 min),
Zagreb (116 km, 1 h 37 min),
Klagenfurt (145 km, 2 h),
Trieste (202 km, 2 h 8 min).

ACCOMMODATION IN CELJE

HOTELS:

HOTEL EVROPA****



Krekov trg 4, 3000 Celje
T: +386 3 426 90 00,
E: info@hotel-evropa.si,
www.hotel-evropa.si

HOTEL CELEIA***



Mariborska 3, 3000 Celje
T: +386 (0)3 426 97 00,
E: info@hotel-celeia.si,
www.hotel-celeia.si

HOTEL FARAON***



Ljubljanska 39, 3000 Celje
T: +386 3 428 71 00,
E: hotel.faraon@siol.net,
www.hotel-faraon.si

HOTEL GRANDE*** superior



Bežigrajska 7, 3000 Celje
T: +386 3 425 51 00,
E: hotelgrande.celje@siol.com,
www.hotelgrande.si

HOTEL CELJSKA KOČA***



Pečovnik 31, 3000 Celje
T: +386 59 070 400,
+386 41 718 274,
E: info@celjska-koca.si,
www.celjska-koca.si

GUESTHOUSE:

HOCHKRAUT GUESTHOUSE**



Tremerje 2, 3000 Celje
T: +386 3 427 91 00,
+386 3 427 91 04
E: gostisce@hochkraut.com,
www.hochkraut.com

YOUTH HOSTELS:

MCC HOSTEL – The House of Legends



Mariborska 2, 3000 Celje
T: +386 3 490 87 40,
+386 40 756 009,
E: mcc.hostel@mc-celje.si,
www.hostel-celje.si

GEORGES HOSTEL



Aškerčeva 3, 3000 Celje
T: +386 41 329 179,
E: violeta.stojs@sz-atrj.si,
www.hostelworld.com/hostel-details.php/Georges-Hostel/Celje/80146

CAMPSITE:

AUTOCAMP CELJE***



Zadobrova 37a, 3211 Škofja vas
T: +386 41 726 516,
E: branko@verdev.si,
www.camping-celje.com
GPS coordinates: 46° 15' 46,12" /
15° 17' 54,61"

NOT TO BE MISSED



ROMAN CELEIA
(Celeia – a town beneath today's town,
www.pokmuz-ce.si)



THE GREEN OASIS
(Lake Šmartinsko jezero,
www.smartinsko-jezero.com)



HISTORIC CITY CENTRE



CHILDREN'S MUSEUM
(Herman's Den, www.muzej-nz-ce.si)



ADRENALINE ADVENTURE
(Celjska Koča Adventure Park,
www.celjska-koca.si)

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ZAVOD CELEIA CELJE



STARI GRAD CELJE
knezi - danes - jutri



OLD CASTLE CELJE TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

Cesta na grad 78, 3000 Celje, Slovenia

T: 00386 3 544 36 90

E: tic.grad@celje.si

www.grad-celje.com

FB: Stari grad Celje (Old Castle Celje)

CELJE TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

Krekov trg 3, 3000 Celje, Slovenia

T: 00386 3 428 79 36, 00386 3 492 50 81

E: tic@celje.si

www.celje.si

FB: V Celju smo face (Celje is cool)



**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**