



THE INNOVATION JOURNEY

Amanda Kladnik and Maja Žerovnik were united by their love of their home region, herbalism, and tourism. They develop tourist experiences in the remote and rarely visited Gornji Grad. The experiences are based on their herbal activities and incorporate the natural, cultural, and intangible heritage of Gornji Grad and the Upper Savinja Valley.



Figure 1. Amanda and Maja in the herb garden (photo: Tomo Jeseničnik).

With enthusiasm, a little naivety, a love for where they live and an ambitious vision to develop local resources for the most discerning tourists, they began their entrepreneurial journey in 2018. Their idea of developing tourism and preserving cultural heritage was supported by a LEADER/CLLD project, which enabled them to set up and gradually expand their business.

Today, their activities are based on a herb farm and a herb garden. These are the two spaces they have at their disposal. One for workshops, the other for experiences and also as a source of raw materials for their creations. They focus on experiences and organise tea parties, a walk through the garden, a

walk in nature to collect and learn about herbs, workshops to make creams and incense. The experiences include learning about cultural and natural heritage, local stories, dialect, etc.

THE INNOVATION IMPACT

Amanda and Maja market two 5-star experiences under the brand "Slovenia Unique Experiences", which allow visitors to discover unique corners of Slovenia. In addition to the experiences, they also offer their own herbal products such as teas, incense, ointments, etc.

They have various projects in the local area, including setting up an herbal shop as a meeting place where they organise discussion evenings with locals, an artist residency with foreign artists in Gornji Grad, they have also participated in projects to record local stories and published a book with recipes about herbs.

With their activities, they have created two jobs and thus contributed to the economic development of the small local community. Their efforts have also helped to raise the profile of Gornji Grad as a tourist destination. The products they have developed help to realise the vision of Slovenia as a boutique green destination for 5-star experiences, while preserving and promoting the local intangible and cultural heritage, which is key to sustainable tourism and respect for local traditions.

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