

# Slovenia celebrates UNESCO recognition for renowned Lipizzan horses



Lipizzan horses run as they are put out to meadows for pasture in Lipica, Slovenia. — AFP photos



Lipizzan horses pull the carriage through the meadows near the Lipica stud farm in Lipica.



Lipizzan horses are seen in the meadows during pasture in Lipica, Slovenia.



Riders attend an official training with Lipizzan horses in Lipica, Slovenia.

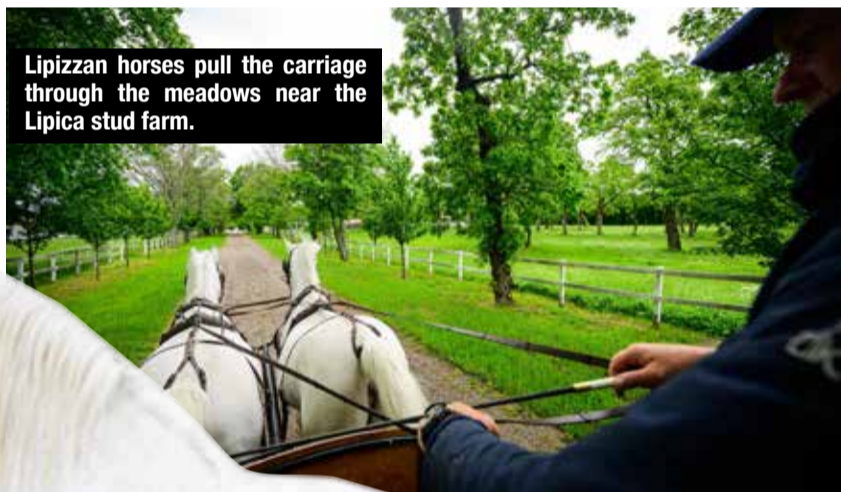
People watched in awe as the world-renowned Lipizzan horses put on a dazzling show this month in the village of Lipica in the small Alpine state of Slovenia.

The home of one of the world's most distinguished horse breeds - and seven countries in the region that once were part of the Habsburg Empire - have reason to celebrate.

Their shared tradition of Lipizzan breeding recently made UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

The noble Lipizzans, also known as Lipizzaners, are descendants of long stallion lines crossing Spanish, Arabic and Berber horses and were first bred by the Habsburg court in the 16th century.

Lipizzan horses pull the carriage through the meadows near the Lipica stud farm.



Lipizzan horses run as they are put out to meadows for pasture in Lipica.

They are famous for their "airs above the ground" classical dressage jumps - a series of difficult movements requiring strength and precision, in which the horse's feet leave the ground.

This rare breed - featuring white hair but grey skin - is also famed as a carriage horse.

The name derives from tiny Lipica, nestled among Slovenia's verdant hills and lush forests.

The picturesque village is home to one of the world's oldest stud farms, which dates back to 1580 and currently stables more than 400 blue-blooded horses.

"This is the Lipizzan's home," said Slovenian culture minister Asta Vrecko, ahead of the UNESCO ceremony last weekend.

The event was attended by the eight countries that jointly applied for recognition of their shared breeding heritage - Austria, Bosnia, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

For a moment, time stood still as horses and riders from the eight nations performed their dressage and driving exhibition.

"They are phenomenal animals. The way that they've been trained and the level of skill of the riders is incredible," said 42-year-old horse farm owner Laura Highlander, who travelled all the way from the United States to see the horses.

"I was super excited to be able to come... and see them in their training," she added after visiting the Lipica stud farm.

## Equine ballet

Dark at birth, the Lipizzan horses' coat turns white by the time they are about four years old, which is also when their demanding training starts and the most promising stallions are selected.

"Lipizzans can have a strong temperament. They are usually serene, sometimes shy. They are kind and it is up to us to recognize the quality of each horse," Miro Dragic, head of the Lipica stud farm riders' team, told AFP.

If health permits, these athletic equine stars, can be worth up to several hundred thousand euros (dollars) each, and can remain active well into their mid-20s.

Only the best stallions will be trained in the elitist "haute école" of classical dressage to eventually master an equine ballet of cantering, caprioles and pirouettes.

The riders, who sport tailcoats and Napoleonic bicorne hats, must also be at the top of their game to get the best from their sensitive partners.

"With horses it's like with people. There are many external elements - weather included - that can affect them," stableman Amadej Cej told AFP while grooming one of his elegant stallions.

It's stablemen like Cej who spend quality time with these beautiful creatures, attending to their every need "from birth until their end". — AFP



A mare and a foal of a Lipizzan horse breed are seen outside the stable in Lipica.

## Live-action 'Little Mermaid' debut makes box office waves

Disney's live-action version of "The Little Mermaid" netted the top spot at North American box offices on its opening weekend, over the United States' Memorial Day holiday, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday.

The remake of the 1989 animated tale of an underwater princess who gives up her voice in pursuit of true love on land, starring pop singer Halle Bailey and Melissa McCarthy, raked in \$117.5 million in US and Canadian box offices and another \$68 million internationally, Exhibitor Relations said.

Despite the number one spot, analyst David A. Gross pointed out that the aquatic adventure's debut does not represent the biggest opening weekend for a live-action Disney adaptation.

He recalled that 2019's "The Lion King" and 2017's "Beauty and the Beast" earned \$191.8 million and \$174.8 million respectively, over their opening weekends.

"During the last dozen years, Disney has built live-action remakes into a powerhouse phenomenon," Gross wrote in the FranchiseRe newsletter.

Still, Ariel and friends were able to bump last

week's number one feature "Fast-X" down to a distant number two, with Universal's action film pulling in only \$29.5 million in the Friday to Monday period.

That's less than half of what the movie, part of the "Fast & Furious" franchise starring Vin Diesel, made during its opening weekend last week.

Disney's "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3" and Universal's "The Super Mario Bros Movie" were also knocked down one spot each from last weekend to take third and fourth places, making \$25.3 million and \$7.7 million.

In fifth place was Sony's new action comedy "The Machine," which earned \$5.8 million and is based on US comedian Bert Kreischer's stand-up routine.

Rounding out the top 10 were: "About My Father" (\$5.3 million) "Kandahar" (\$3 million) "You Hurt My Feelings" (\$1.8 million) "Evil Dead Rise" (\$1.2 million) "Book Club: The Next Chapter" (\$1.2 million). — AFP

