



SUSTAINABILITY REPORT ANKARAN DESTINATION 2025

WE THINK AND ACT GREEN

The Ankaran Peninsula, with the town of Ankaran and the Debeli rtič Landscape Park, is an area of exceptional natural qualities, open toward the Mediterranean, with a diverse landscape, greenery, and the sea, which together have shaped a calm and authentic living environment for centuries. These very characteristics commit the destination to responsible and thoughtful development.

In the destination of Ankaran, we are aware of our responsibility toward the environment, the people, and future generations. We understand sustainability as a long-term, process-oriented approach that requires continuous monitoring of the situation, informed decision-making, and the regular adaptation of measures. Therefore, we do not view green development as a one-time objective, but as an ongoing process of learning, improving, and collaborating with the local community and key stakeholders.

Based on regular monitoring of sustainability indicators, annual reports, and publicly available data, the destination systematically evaluates the effects of its activities and incorporates the findings into further development planning. In this way, we gradually upgrade the quality of life for residents and the experience of visitors, while strengthening the long-term resilience of the destination.



01 STRATEGIC PLANNING

Tourism development in the destination of Ankaran is guided by the regional *Tourism Development Strategy of the Slovenian Istria Region until 2030*, which serves as a shared strategic framework for the sustainable development of tourism across the region. The strategy defines a long-term vision, objectives, and development guidelines based on sustainability principles, spatial and natural resource protection, improved quality of life for residents, and the development of high-quality tourism services.

Based on the adopted regional strategy, the destination of Ankaran will begin preparing its own action plan in 2026. This plan will translate regional goals and guidelines into concrete, locally adapted measures and activities. The action plan will serve as an operational tool for implementing sustainable tourism development at the destination level and for monitoring progress toward the set objectives.



Tourism development guidelines for the destination of Ankaran (in line with the regional strategy until 2030):

- **Destination leadership** – strengthening competitiveness, service quality, innovation, and visibility within the Slovenian Istria region.
- **Active and green destination** – emphasis on nature-based activities, recreation, sustainable experiences, and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage.
- **Year-round destination** – development of tourism products that enable a balanced distribution of visits throughout the year.
- **Mediterranean destination** – development of an authentic offer that goes beyond the classic “sun and sea” product and positions itself within the broader Mediterranean and Istrian context.

02 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The destination of Ankaran, in cooperation with regional partners, systematically supports the education and training of tourism stakeholders in accordance with the guidelines of the *Slovenian Green Scheme of Tourism* and the *Tourism Development Strategy of Slovenian Istria 2030*. The training programmes are intended for accommodation providers, restaurateurs, event organizers, tourist guides, and other tourism actors, with a focus on sustainable management, responsible business practices, service quality, and respectful use of space.

In recent years, targeted professional workshops for the tourism industry have been carried out, including on **23 May 2024** and **19 December 2024**, where participants were introduced to current topics in the fields of labour legislation, equal and fair employment in tourism, and responsible business operations. The destination also regularly participates in the *Istrian Tourism Forum*, which is held annually and serves as the leading regional platform for the exchange of knowledge, best practices, and strategic directions in sustainable tourism.

In 2025, the destination also took part in the *IstriaGreenTable* project, which contributed to connecting local providers, promoting short supply chains, and developing a sustainability-oriented gastronomic offer.

Regional Tourism Guiding Framework and the Code of Conduct for Tourist Guides

In the area of Slovenian Istria, including the destination of Ankaran, the field of tourist guiding is regulated by the *Ordinance on Local Tourist Guiding in the Municipalities of Piran, Izola, Koper, and Ankaran*, adopted in 2023 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia*, No. 3812/2023). The ordinance establishes a unified regional system of tourist guiding and defines the conditions for performing the activity, as well as the training and licensing of tourist guides.

Within the regional system, the *Code of Conduct for Tourist Guides of Slovenian Istria* has also been adopted. It sets out professional, ethical, and sustainable guiding standards, along with guidelines for respectful interpretation of natural and cultural heritage. Tourist guides are required to familiarize themselves with the code as part of the annual training for obtaining or renewing their licence, which—pursuant to the ordinance and with the support of all destinations in Slovenian Istria—is organized by the Portorož Tourism Board.

03 COOPERATION WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The destination of Ankaran systematically involves the local community in the planning and implementation of development, social, and sustainability-related activities, including in the field of tourism. In recent years, resident participation has taken place primarily through formalised participatory processes, public calls, workshops, and open invitations.

Participatory Budgeting

Between 2023 and 2025, the Municipality of Ankaran continued implementing participatory budgeting, through which residents are invited to propose projects and vote on their inclusion in the municipal budget. The process takes place in several phases (proposal submission, voting, and project implementation monitoring) and is communicated publicly via the municipality's website and the dedicated platform sodelujem.obcina-ankaran.si. Through this mechanism, residents directly



co-shape the development of public space, local infrastructure, and community services that are also important for the quality of life in the tourism destination.

Public Calls and Support for Local Initiatives

Every year, the municipality publishes public calls for the co-financing of programmes and projects implemented by associations, institutes, and other organisations working in the fields of culture, sports, social welfare, the environment, and community development. These projects significantly contribute to the vibrancy of the area, social cohesion, and the development of an authentic local offer.

Resident Involvement in Strategic Processes

In 2024 and 2025, residents and stakeholders were invited to participate in the preparation of the *Tourism Development Strategy of Slovenian Istria 2030* through public invitations, workshops, and online communications. Engagement also took place through the communication channels of *Visit Ankaran*.

Social and Solidarity Initiatives

The local community actively participates in social initiatives such as the *Warm-Hearted Fridge* campaign, in which residents, employees of public institutions, and local organisations contribute food and essential items for vulnerable groups.

Cooperation with the local community in Ankaran is based on transparent procedures, open dialogue, and the regular involvement of residents in decisions that influence destination development and overall quality of life.

04 CARE FOR THE ELDERLY

The Municipality of Ankaran systematically develops support mechanisms for older residents with the aim of maintaining independence, social inclusion, and quality of life.

Information and Counselling

An Information Point for the Elderly has been established, providing residents with comprehensive information and assistance in handling everyday and administrative matters (help with completing applications, guidance on appropriate forms of home-based assistance, support with scheduling medical appointments, etc.).

Mobility and Access to Services

The municipality cooperates with the organisation *Sopotniki*, which provides free transport for older residents to healthcare facilities, public services, and essential errands when independent mobility is no longer possible. This service helps reduce social exclusion and prolong independent living in the home environment.

Intergenerational Cooperation and Active Ageing

As part of its municipal programme *Care for the Elderly*, the Municipality of Ankaran has provided premises for the Intergenerational Centre Ankaran, within which the Day Activity Centre for the Elderly operates. The centre's programmes promote active use of time, social interaction, lifelong learning, and intergenerational connections.

Support for Associations

The Municipality of Ankaran publishes annual public calls for the co-financing of programmes and projects carried out by local associations. Organisations working in the field of elderly support regularly apply, including the Ankaran Pensioners' Association and the mixed choir association *Ulka*. Through this support, the municipality strengthens social inclusion, cultural participation, and the quality of life of older residents.



05 SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

CYCLING ROUTES

The Municipality of Ankaran participated as a partner in the *LAS Istre – Revitalising the Countryside* project, which was completed in 2023. The project, co-financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, focused on developing sustainable recreational and cycling tourism in rural areas and improving inter-municipal and cross-border connections. As part of the project, thematic trails were restored, recreational infrastructure was upgraded, and conditions were created for further development of cycling connections in the area of the Karst Edge and the hinterland of the Municipality of Ankaran, in cooperation with the Municipality of Koper, the Municipality of Izola, and other partners. Special emphasis was placed on harmonising recreational activities with the conservation objectives of the Debeli rtič Landscape Park and strengthening oversight of land use in sensitive areas.

Following the project's completion, the Municipality of Ankaran continues to manage and maintain the existing trail network and coordinate activities aimed at improving the safety and flow of cycling routes, particularly along state roads and at interfaces with environmentally sensitive areas.

The destination also offers e-bike rental (Rezidenca Ortus), contributing to reduced motor vehicle use and encouraging environmentally friendly mobility among visitors.

In 2025, the Municipality of Ankaran, in cooperation with stakeholders, is carrying out an update of the trail registry, which serves as a foundation for better management of recreational and cycling routes, their promotion, and further planning of sustainable mobility within the destination.

WALKING TRAILS

Between 2023 and 2025, the Municipality of Ankaran has continued managing, upgrading, and promoting the existing network of walking trails that connect natural features, cultural heritage, and recreational areas of the destination.

The coastal walking path *Čez slani travnik*, connecting the town of Ankaran with the St. Catherine Sports and Recreation Park, remains an important daily and recreational route for residents and visitors. The trail also serves as an interpretive space, raising awareness of the natural values of the salt meadow and coastal ecosystem, and encouraging a respectful attitude toward the sensitive natural environment.

In the Debeli rtič Landscape Park, thematic, educational, and recreational trails are available to visitors and presented on the Visit Ankaran website. Particularly notable are the marine and panoramic circular thematic trails, equipped with interpretive panels that introduce visitors to local biodiversity, landscape characteristics, and traditional land uses. The trails are intended for individual visitors, guided groups, schools, and nature enthusiasts.

A significant part of the destination's walking network also includes trails of diverse thematic content:

- Bebler Trail, which connects the area's natural and historical heritage,
- Ankaran Time Travel, an interpretive trail designed for families and younger visitors,
- the final point of the Slovenian Mountain Trail, which positions Ankaran as the symbolic endpoint of one of Slovenia's most important long-distance hiking routes.

The hiking guide "*Ankaranski polotok*" remains an important resource for visitors and the local community. It presents trails, points of interest, and natural features in a structured way and helps direct visitors along designated routes, reducing pressure on sensitive areas.

Through the maintenance, promotion, and content enhancement of walking trails, the destination of Ankaran promotes sustainable mobility, active leisure, and high-quality experiences of natural and cultural heritage throughout the year.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

During the summer tourist season, the Municipality of Ankaran provides additional forms of public transport to reduce motor traffic, relieve parking areas, and improve accessibility for residents and visitors.

In the summer months, a free summer bus operates across the Ankaran Peninsula, connecting key points of the destination, including Ankaran's beaches, major car parks, and the town centre. The service is intended for both locals and tourists and encourages the use of sustainable mobility options during peak visitation periods.

In addition to road-based public transport, a maritime connection with the Zlatoperka boat operates during the summer season, once again linking coastal settlements and providing an alternative to



road traffic. The free summer bus and the boat service together form an integrated seasonal mobility solution that enables environmentally friendly movement along the coast and contributes to improved safety, accessibility, and quality of life in the destination.

Measures in the field of public passenger transport are aimed at supporting sustainable mobility, reducing traffic pressures during the summer season, and promoting the use of public transport as the preferred means of accessing tourist areas.

06 ACCESSIBILITY AND SUPPORT FOR PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND OLDER ADULTS

The Municipality of Ankaran systematically ensures the accessibility of public spaces, services, and facilities, and supports the inclusion of persons with special needs and older adults in the local environment and community life.

Within the destination, adaptations for people with mobility impairments are provided, including accessible entrances to selected accommodation facilities and services, as well as to key public buildings (such as shops, banks, the post office, and the pharmacy). Access to the sea is enabled at several locations, including the Adria Ankaran area (with the swimming pool), the Youth Health and Holiday Centre Debeli rtič, and the Debeli rtič beach, all of which offer adjusted access points.

Since 2022, the Municipality of Ankaran has held the title "*Disability-Friendly Municipality*", awarded in cooperation with the Association of Disabled Workers of Slovenia. Between 2023 and 2025, measures are being implemented in line with the *Action Plan for Improving and Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities 2022–2026*. The Council for Persons with Disabilities operates as an advisory body within this framework.

Special attention is dedicated to health and safety. Several publicly accessible defibrillators (AEDs) are installed throughout the municipality, and their use is supported through regular training and public awareness activities.

Additional support mechanisms have been established for older residents, including the Information Point for the Elderly, cooperation with *Sopotniki* (free transportation services), and the operation of the Intergenerational Centre Ankaran and the Day Activity Centre for the Elderly, which foster active participation, social security, and intergenerational connection.

The municipality also regularly publishes public calls for local associations, through which programmes run by the Ankaran Pensioners' Association and the *Ulka* mixed choir association are co-financed. These initiatives further strengthen social inclusion and improve the quality of life of older adults and vulnerable groups.

07 CARE FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Municipality of Ankaran recognises cultural heritage as an important element of local identity and as a cornerstone of the destination's sustainable development. The protection, preservation, and integration of cultural heritage into contemporary life and the tourism offer are carried out in cooperation with the local community, professional institutions, and cultural associations.

A rich inventory of immovable cultural heritage is recorded within the municipality, including:

- **7 archaeological sites**,
- **2 cultural landscape units**,
- **9 units of profane architectural heritage**,
- **4 units of sacral architectural heritage**,
- **3 units of garden and architectural heritage**.

Heritage is preserved in accordance with applicable legislation and spatial planning documents, while gradually being integrated into the destination's interpretive and promotional content (Visit Ankaran website, thematic trails, interpretive panels, publications).

Significant emphasis is also placed on intangible cultural heritage, which contributes to the destination's authenticity. The following elements are listed in the Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage:

- the traditional game **pandolo**,
- **Istrian–Venetian dialects** in Slovenian Istria,
- the **craft of making olive-leaf palm decorations**,



- **dry-stone walling**, which is also inscribed on the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Between 2023 and 2025, the municipality actively incorporated heritage into cultural events, educational content, and cross-border projects (e.g., *IstriaGreenTable 2025*), while encouraging its respectful presentation to visitors through interpretation based on professional sources and local knowledge.

Through this approach, the destination ensures that cultural heritage is not only protected, but also lived, understood, and sustainably integrated into the development of the local community and tourism.

08 CARE FOR NATURAL HERITAGE

The Municipality of Ankaran regards natural heritage as a key developmental and conservation asset of the destination and manages it in close cooperation with professional institutions, protected area managers, and the local community. Particular attention is dedicated to the Debeli rtič Landscape Park and other protected natural features within the municipality.

The Debeli rtič Landscape Park is part of the Mediterranean initiative **INHERIT**, through which it has been awarded the **INHERITURA** sustainability label. The initiative connects natural areas that develop sustainable tourism while protecting natural and cultural heritage and raising visitor awareness.

Regular maintenance and conservation measures are carried out in the St. Nicholas Salt Meadow area, including boardwalk maintenance, mowing of parts of the protected meadow, waste removal, and systematic eradication of invasive alien plant species. The municipality also participates in the preparation and use of field manuals for identifying invasive species and in raising public awareness about their impact on ecosystems.

Protection of the marine environment represents an important part of natural heritage management. Between 2023 and 2025, the **POSEIDONE** project was implemented, focusing on monitoring the state of the marine environment and protecting seagrass meadows. In the Debeli rtič Landscape Park, sea-based surveillance has also been introduced to improve oversight of activities within the protected area.

The natural diversity of Debeli rtič is exceptional: nearly **700 marine animal species** live in the underwater environment, including numerous endangered and internationally protected species such as the noble pen shell, long-snouted seahorse, Mediterranean stony coral, loggerhead sea turtle, and the Mediterranean shag. The plant life is characteristic of the sub-Mediterranean region and includes flysch cliffs, thermophilic shrubs, and extensive areas of native tree species.

The municipality and the destination regularly participate in coastal and natural area clean-up campaigns and in awareness-raising activities targeting residents and visitors. Additional support is provided by the **Guide to Nature Conservation in Slovenian Istria**, which serves as a professional basis for responsible behaviour in the natural environment.

Through an integrated approach that combines conservation, monitoring, education, and public involvement, the Municipality of Ankaran ensures the long-term preservation of natural heritage and its sustainable integration into the development of the destination.



KEY DESTINATION INDICATORS

% of protected nature within the destination area
2023 = 34 %
2024 = 34 %

% of wastewater treated to the secondary level
2023 = 86,9 %
2024 = 92 %*

number of accommodation providers with the Slovenia Green certificate in the destination
2023 = 1
2024 = 2

number of months in which 80% of people arrive
2023 = 7
2024 = 8

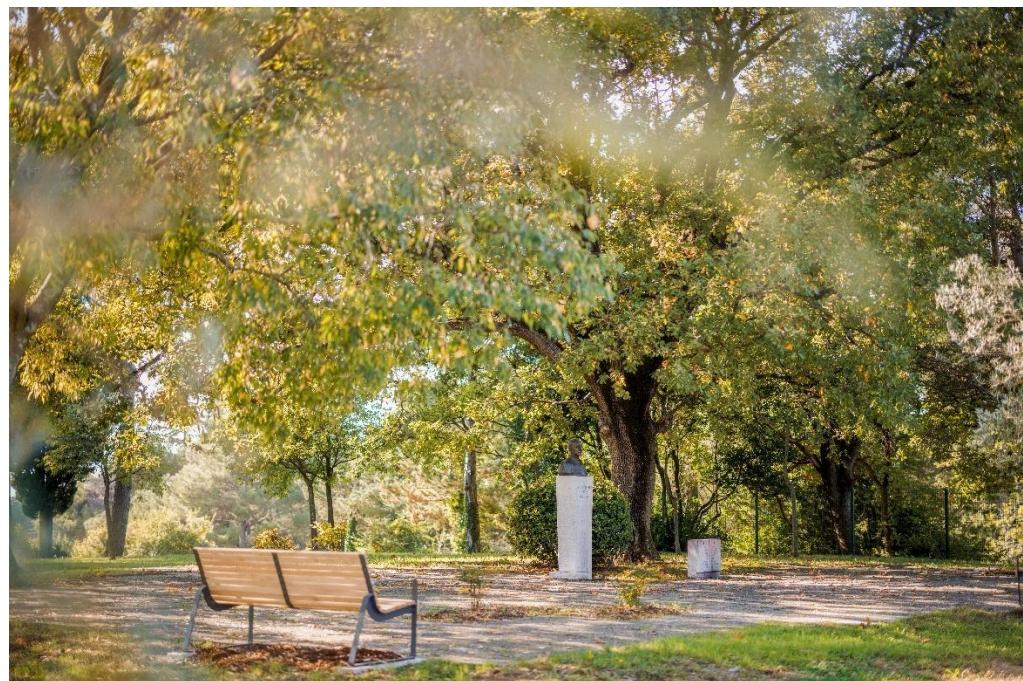
PROUD OF WHAT WE PRESERVE



Recreational green areas – Across the Salt Meadow



Drinking fountain in the centre of Ankaran



Ankaran Memorial Park



Debeli rtič Landscape Park