

# FAIRYTALE CELJE 2019 THROUGH THE EYES OF A VISITOR

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**Abstract** This paper deals with the traditional annual holiday event held in Celje called Fairytale Celje and how the visitor or guest experiences the event Fairytale Celje. Fairytale Celje begins with the festive lighting of the city's holiday lights, which takes place on the last day of November, and ends with the New Year's Eve party on the last day of the year. In the festivities of the old town of Celje visitors can find many different events, concerts, celebrations and various offers of local culinary delights and themed products. The creators of Fairytale Celje and the Municipality of Celje, as the main organising force behind the event, ensure that the traditional annual event is always varied, and that there is something new each year for younger and older visitors alike. For this paper we visited the event in 2019, but also because we were interested to find out if the experience of Fairytale Celje is truly »magical«. We started our Fairytale Celje 2019 experience at Krekov Square and experienced Fairytale Celje through the eyes of a visitor, we believe that the event captures the essence and purpose of Christmas tradition and festivities.

**Keywords:**

Celje,  
christmas,  
festivities,  
event,  
experience.

## **Introduction**

Fairytale Celje is an annual winter and holiday event that attracts both locals, visitors from near and far and tourists. The Fairytale Celje event takes place in the centre of Celje and has a history of more than 15 years, covers several different events that take place throughout December, culminating in the second half of December, when the Christmas celebrations begin. So what is the experience that the holiday of Celje offers to visitors? Is the offer suitable for different visitors? How much time does the visitor spend to attend the event? Do you feel like you're in a fairy tale after the viewing? We will try to answer all these questions and more through our field observations and analysis of promotional and other materials. Another reason that we decided to write about this topic is that we have always been fascinated with this kind of event, because they promote the local environment, contain some very good ideas and concepts, and offer an escape from everyday life for children and adults alike.

## **Overview of Fairytale Celje**

Fairytale Celje (Celje.info, 2019) begins with the festive lighting of the city's holiday lights, which takes place on 30 November in the Main square and also starts the traditional Christmas – New Year Fair. The interactive music programme starts in the evening, which provides the visitors of the event with a pleasant holiday atmosphere, live music and entertainment for children and adults alike. On the opening day of the event visitors will also have the chance to buy festive gifts, food, drinks and other merchandise for a discount. The festive events continue with Miklavževanje for children, which is held on 5 December at Krekov Square in the centre of Celje. The event offers entertainment programmes for children, streets will be riddled with fantasy characters, street performers, singers, etc. There will also be many different entertainment programmes, aimed at diverse target audiences to enhance the holiday season and the experience of Fairytale Celje for all visitors. Different light elements will be installed in different locations of the event and the city of Celje as photo corners, which will offer the visitors a chance to perpetuate their visit to Celje with their festive photographs. The main event or attraction for children is Fairy Land, which opens its doors on 13 December in the Main Square of Celje, and finishes with a New Year's Eve party for children on 31 December.

During the Fairy Land, visiting children will be entertained by dancing fairies, who will be joined by other characters, like Santa Claus. Fairytale Celje also includes performances of the city's young performers. Celje's young talents will be presented on the city streets and the balconies of the old houses of the city centre. At Main and Krekov Squares there will be smaller and bigger musical performances from known bands to local performers. In the street of the Metropol City Cinema, children will be able to have fun in a small amusement park. Visitors will also be able to take part in the thematic Scavenger Hunt game named »Zvezdni princ« or explore the holiday festivities of the streets of Celje with a local tour guide. Fairytale Celje will conclude its events and festivities with the New Years' Eve celebration at Krekov Square on 31 December.

### **Visitor offer of Fairytale Celje 2019**

The event of Fairytale Celje offers (Zloženska Pravljичno Celje 2019):

**The Holiday Fair:** One of the main attractions of Fairytale Celje. It starts with the lighting of the festive Christmas lights, and includes rich and diverse holiday shops, stands, live music, ambiance, etc. in the 3 main streets (Main Square, Stane Street and Prešeren Street) of the old city centre of Celje.

**Concerts:** Over the month-long events of Fairytale Celje, visitors will be able to attend over 10 outdoor concerts (Tabu, Vlado Kreslin, Eroika, Nipke, etc.) at the Main and Krekov Squares of the old city centre.

**Events:** Besides the big outdoor concerts, visitors will be able to see and engage in many different holiday-themed events: Shows for kids and adults, tourist tours, carriage rides, music events, entertainment programmes, fireworks, light shows, culinary events, dance performances, etc.

**Cuisine:** Visitors of Fairytale Celje can taste traditional Slovenian and Christmas themed cuisine at the Pišek Bar stand, which is located in the Main Square and during the event the Evropa Hotel offers special holiday-themed cuisine tied in with the story of Fairytale Celje.

Experiences: Fairytale Celje offers many different experiences for all groups of visitors. The most notable is the interactive game called »Zvezdni Princ«, which is a holiday-themed treasure hunt, where 2-5 players explore the locations of Fairytale Celje to find clues, which lead to a treasure that contains practical rewards and the Middle Age themed Virtual Reality experience »Spremeni tok zgodovine«, where the players can emulate the battles and intrigue of the famous Counts of Celje.

### Our Fairytale Celje Experience



**Figure 3: Photo corner at Prešeren Street**  
Source: Žiga Zdovc



**Figure 4: Culinary master of Pišek Bar at work**  
Source: Žiga Zdovc

We arrived in Celje by train, then crossed from the train station to Krekov Square, which is one of the entry points to Fairytale Celje. First, we took a look at the festive offer of the Evropa Hotel, and decided to try the Christmas waffles with hot chocolate and cinnamon. Then we headed to Prešeren Street, where we saw a lot of children and their parents waiting in front of the photo corner, waiting for the opportunity to take pictures together. We continued our journey towards Zvezda, which is known to the people of Celje as the junction of the old city centre, and represents the focal point of the Fairytale Celje. When we arrived at Zvezda, we noticed Christmas decorations donated by the High School of Horticulture and Visual Arts Celje, and a large stand with balloons, sugar foam, and popcorn. We stopped for a moment and enjoyed the festive panorama of the focal point of Fairytale Celje. Before deciding where to go, the taste of mulled wine and home-

made sausages tempted us, which was coming from the stand of Pišek Bar, a renowned local provider of culinary delights. So we continued our journey towards the Main Square and stopped at the queue before the Pišek Bar. We had noticed that, due to the queue and passers-by, a crowd had started to form, as the narrow streets of Celje do not allow a large mass of people to move about quickly. We waited a good amount of time before we could order food and drinks. We ordered a homemade hotdog and a glass of red mulled wine. We then settled into the outdoor, and, of course, heated dining space on the other side of the street, and consumed our holiday delicacies. We think it was worth the wait, as the hot dog and mulled wine were delicious. After we waited for a couple of minutes for the food and drink to settle, we continued our journey towards the Main Square, where the biggest attraction for children, the Fairy Land, is located. Halfway through we were surprised by a carriage that drove past, then about 50 metres in front of us, we saw a large sign, indicating the entrance to the Fairy Land and more stands, offering local honey, holiday and tourist souvenirs, etc. Before entering the magical Fairy Land, we also noticed a stand with an extended range of hot holiday-themed beverages and a stand named Sladki Toni, where visitors could enjoy sweet holiday delights. Given that the candy stand was close to the Fairy Land, we assume that the owner made a lot of money. Then we finally entered the Fairy Land, when, from the left side, a group of children riding ponies swooped in, of course, accompanied by their parents. The Fairy Land was surrounded by Christmas trees, holiday-themed sculptures, artwork and the main stage, where performances for visitors were taking place. We arrived at the right time, as there was quite the crowd, which meant that there was probably a live entertainment going on. As we made our way through the crowd, we saw the performers dressed as Elves, entertaining children with Christmas songs and dancing. After a short viewing of their performance, we headed back to the focal point of Fairytale Celje, to see the rest of the event. On the way to the focal point of the event there is also the Tourist Information Centre, which was decorated on the outside and inside with Christmas decorations, and there was another photo point, where, of course, there was a large crowd of people waiting for the opportunity to take a photograph. When we reached the location of Zvezda, we once again looked at the festive panorama of the junction of Fairytale Celje, and continued our tour along Prešeren Street towards the Museum of Contemporary History, where the anniversary exhibition of the 20-year long history and development of Fairytale Celje was held. After watching the exhibition, we headed

back towards the centre of Fairytale Celje, to see the rest of the festive offer located on Prešeren Street.



**Figure 5: Entrance to the magical Fairy Land**

Source: Žiga Zdovc

When we arrived back at Zvezda, we turned towards Stane Street, where we stopped at the 2 biggest stalls and made an obligatory "must" purchase of traditional holiday fruit, nuts, and homemade Christmas candy. After making our purchases, we continued down the street to see the rest of the festive offer of Fairytale Celje, Christmas lights and the decorative artwork. We ended our tour at the Square in front of the Metropol City Cinema, where there were a small amusement park and a fast-food stand. We tried our luck and skill at the stand with shooting targets, but, of course, we lost. Finally, we headed to the bar inside the Metropol City Cinema, where we ordered another mulled wine and watched the happenings in the amusement park. To avoid the growing crowd which started to gather in Fairytale Celje, we headed back towards the railway station along the side paths, where we ended our experience of Fairytale Celje.

## Conclusion

Fairytale Celje is a winter-holiday event with a 20-year tradition, covering many different cultural, musical, entertainment and holiday events. We found out that Fairytale Celje is suitable for all visitors, the programme of events includes events and entertainment programmes for children and adults alike. We can point out that Fairy Land, which offers an original and authentic entertainment programme for children and the cooperative game Zvezdni Princ, interestingly, shows the essence of the city of Celje. The organisers of the event managed to capture the festive and Christmas spirit that transformed the city centre into a fairy tale during this period. Of course, this would not be possible without good cooperation. We found many local vendors and sellers at the event stands, the offer of food and drinks was also taken care of by the locals, and the festive - holiday ambience was taken care of by the School for Horticulture and Visual arts Celje and numerous local beautification and cultural associations. We attended the event for about an hour, but if there is a live concert going on, or if you visit the event with children or the entire family, the whole visit could take a lot longer. We have to mention that admission to the Fairytale Celje is free, only the main experiences of the event require an entry fee. The success of the event is also proven by the increasing attendance each year and the 20-year tradition of the event, where the organisers succeeded with the idea and desire to create an authentic experience and capture the essence of the Christmas holiday spirit.

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