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RAFTING THROUGH HISTORY

The history of rafting

The oldest testimony about rafting on the river Drava dates back to 1280. The knight Otto Velikovaški owned the document and it allowed the collecting of tolls for the transportation of wine barrels. In the land register of the St Pauline's monastery dating from 1289 it also mentions that serfs transported timber to Štajerska, like those of St Laurence on Pohorje dating from the year 1371. In the first half of the 16th century trading between Villach and Ptuj was in full swing.

Šajka raft

In the 16th century the period of "šajka rafts" began on the river Drava. The šajka raft was a robustly built raft, and they sailed from Vuzenica to Vojvodina in today's Serbia. In the 16th century the Štajerska provincial nobilities earmarked Vuzenica for construction and warfare river port for šajkas.

Italijanček raft

At the beginning of the 20th century merchants came to the Drava valley from Kranj, as did Italian foresters, and rafters who began to tie rafts in their own special way and which they named Italijanček. Measuring up to 32 metres long these rafts were made from tied logs, and sailed by six rafters. Rafts were built in about 60 different river ports along the route from Libeliče to Maribor.

The route of the 4 Drava rafters

For the river Drava rafters the first real port was in Maribor, where the river port became popularly known as Lent or Pristan. On the bank of the river Drava two piers are still clearly visible, where once stood an old inn, called Maribor's Benetke (Venice), and a part of a medieval bridge that linked both sides of the river Drava. Today substituting the once important route along the river Drava are five road bridges, a railway bridge and a footbridge leading from the street Strma ulica towards the suburb of Studenci. Rafters who continued their journey along the Drava towards Osijek and later along the river Danube towards Belgrade purchased their food supplies in Maribor.

Why the rafting trade

Rafting, as it achieved on the rapid flowing river Drava in its heyday in the 19th century and as it extended into the 1940s, was preserved not because of the eventual lagging

development of traffic on roads and later on the railway, but due to its favourable calculations. A raft was namely a means of transport and at the same time cargo!