



Ten Unforgettable Worry-Free Days

116 Children and Adolescents with Coeliac Disease Enjoyed a Gluten-Free Paradise at Debeli Rtič



For the 32nd consecutive year, the Slovenian Coeliac Society (SDC) organised an unforgettable rehabilitation camp for children and adolescents, full of educational content, cookery workshops, numerous sports and creative activities, as well as socializing, ending on Wednesday 13th August 2025.

This year's rehabilitation camp brought together as many as 116 children and adolescents aged 5 to 18 from all over Slovenia.

From 3rd to 13th August 2025, Debeli Rtič became a safe home and gluten-free paradise for these 116 participants. For 32 years in a row, the Slovenian Coeliac Society (SDC) has been organizing this rehabilitation programme, giving children and adolescents with coeliac disease ten carefree days by the sea. The camp features a packed programme, which participants can enjoy in the company of peers, all while ensuring a strictly gluten-free diet.

The programme was exceptionally diverse. We carried out:

- **Educational activities:**
 - **Label-reading workshop** (theory, practice and quiz) led by Nataša Forstner Holešek, BSc in Food Technology, Vice President of SDC, Chair of the SDC Product Certification Committee, Project Manager for Licensing of Catering and Accommodation Facilities at SDC and SDC Delegate to AO ECS.
 - **Cookery workshops:**
 - 4 burger-making workshops led by our member and current 'strudel master' Ivica Milat. Children prepared buns, meat and sauces themselves, and then devoured their own delicious gluten-free burger. For reference, we made a total of 220 gluten-free burgers.
 - 6 dessert-making workshops (cakes, sponges, muffins and puddings).
 - 2 gluten-free bread and bakery product workshops (various types of bread and baked goods).
 - 4 gluten-free pudding workshops (chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry flavours).
- **Sports activities:**
 - Daily morning exercise and walks
 - Swimming with the swimming club, led by our outstanding swimmers (Lovro, Teo Starc, Črt, Žiga)
 - Water activities in the sea and swimming pool
 - Football (in cooperation with the Football Association of Slovenia – training led by NZS coach instructor Tomi Bronič)
 - Beach volleyball
 - Basketball
 - Running club
 - Kayaking (paddling to the last lighthouse in the Slovenian sea)
 - Yoga
 - Chess club
- **Creative workshops:** sock painting, jewellery making, art workshops (painting and decorating chests, 'What do I feel?', expressing emotions through drawing)
- **Cultural and social activities:** talent night, 'Show what you can do', theatre performances, dance parties, cinema night (animated film screening), filming and group viewing of presentation videos, word quiz, 'Write and act out your own fairy tale'
- **A memorable boat trip** along the Slovenian coast with a stop for swimming in Izola, an excellent gluten-free seafood lunch and entertainment on board
- **Reading programme:** 'Older Read to Younger'
- **Self-esteem strengthening activities:** letter to your future self, manifestation workshop, and anti-stress workshop
- **Training for independent living in the gluten-free world**
- And of course, **socialising**

"Every year, we see again that this isn't just a holiday – it's an experience that strengthens children's and adolescents' self-confidence and sense of security. Here, in the company of peers, they can enjoy themselves without fear and without any obstacles, as we provide a 100% safe gluten-free environment

with three main meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner), morning and afternoon snacks, and an evening snack,” emphasised Maja Piskernik, Head of the Rehabilitation Camp for Children and Adolescents at SDC.

Parents are also deeply grateful for this opportunity: “When we know our child is in safe hands and among peers who share the same experience (coeliac disease) and is thoroughly enjoying themselves, it warms our hearts too,” said the mother of a 9-year-old participant.

The 100% safe gluten-free meals were prepared by Špela Turšič, dietary chef at the Pediatric Clinic of the University Medical Centre Ljubljana, together with her team.

The Slovenian Coeliac Society also provides a medical team during the camp, led by Vedrana Majstorović, registered nurse and long-standing SDC member, employed at the Izola Health Centre – Health Promotion Centre.

The children and adolescents were cared for by 16 educators and 5 assistants, all knowledgeable about coeliac disease and experienced in preparing gluten-free meals, each having completed HACCP food hygiene training.

This year, SDC once again arranged organised transport for the participants (three buses and two support vehicles) on the Maribor – Debeli Rtič route (3rd August 2025) with boarding points in Tepanje, Celje, Ljubljana, Lom, Ravbarkomanda, Studenec and Ravne, and on the Debeli Rtič – Maribor route (13th August 2025) with drop-off points in Ravne, Studenec, Ravbarkomanda, Lom, Ljubljana, Celje and Tepanje.

We extend our gratitude to all donors who supported this year’s rehabilitation programme, enabling children and adolescents with coeliac disease – who otherwise would not have such an opportunity – to enjoy unforgettable seaside holidays.

You are invited to read the daily reports and view the extensive photo and video galleries of the 32nd Rehabilitation Camp for Children and Adolescents at Debeli Rtič: <https://sdc.si/dnevno-dogajanje-obnovitvena-rehabilitacija-otrok-in-mladostnikov-debelirtic-2025/>

The Slovenian Coeliac Society (SDC) is a humanitarian organization working in the public interest in the field of health and healthcare for people with coeliac disease throughout Slovenia since 1988. Since 1990, SDC has also been a member of the Association of European Coeliac Societies (AOECS), a member of the Slovenian Patients’ Organization Network (ZOPS), and a member of the Centre for Information, Cooperation and Development of NGOs (CNVOS). SDC currently has almost 2,500 members and is one of the largest and most active societies in the field of healthcare in Slovenia – we invite you to follow our activities: <https://sdc.si/news/>.

Coeliac disease is a lifelong chronic systemic autoimmune disease caused by hypersensitivity to gluten, affecting approximately 2% of the population. The only treatment is a strict lifelong gluten-free diet – with no exceptions, no shortcuts and no lapses – considered a medically prescribed diet.

Maribor, 14th August 2025

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