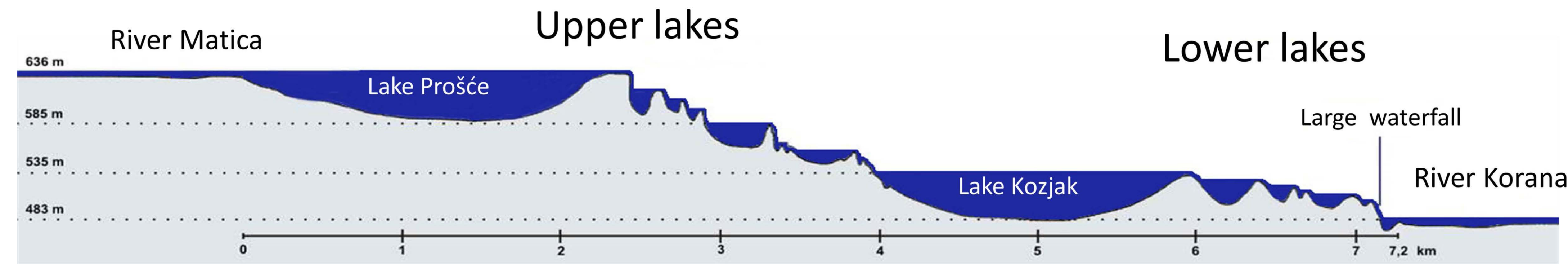
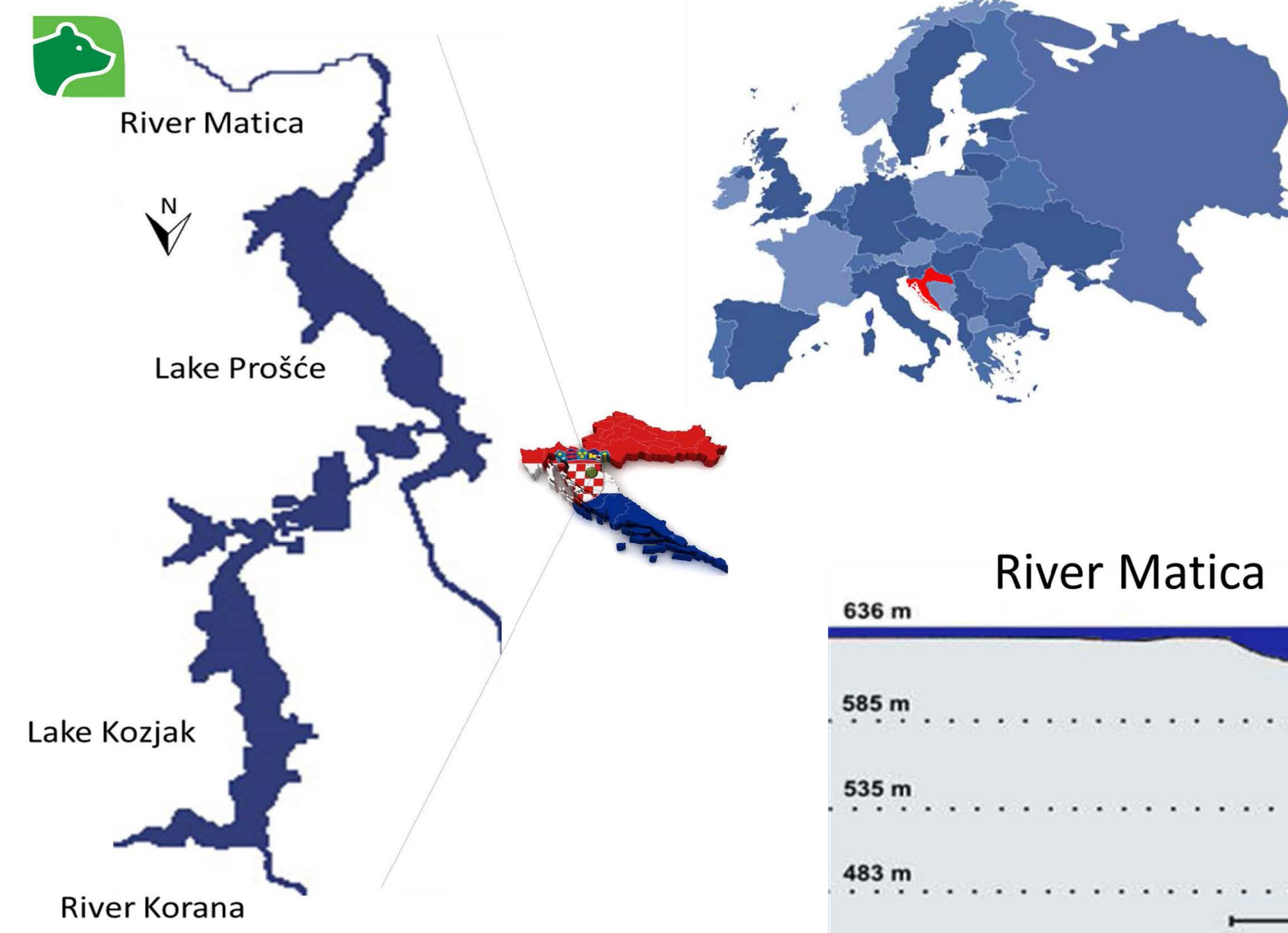
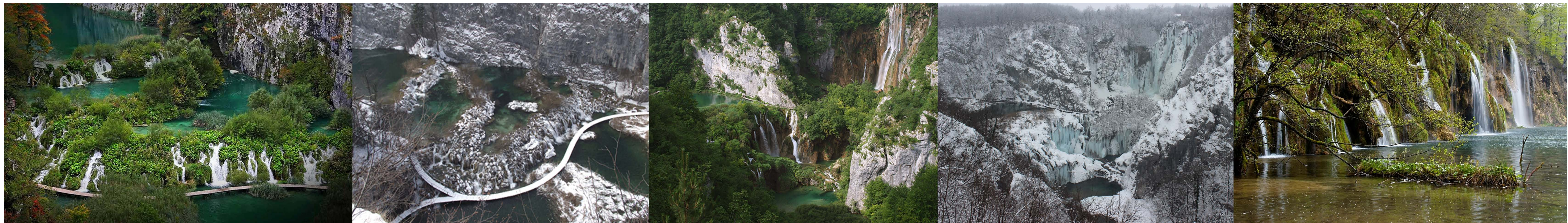


# National Park Plitvice Lakes, Croatia

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On April 8, 1949, the Plitvice Lakes were declared as a National Park area (297 km<sup>2</sup>) and rigorous nature protection measures were established. The Park was inscribed on the UNESCO World Natural Heritage List in 1979 in recognition of its "*outstanding natural beauty, and the undisturbed production of travertine (tufa) through chemical and biological action*".



Plitvice Lakes lies within the Dinaric karst region of Croatia, an area dominated by limestone and dolomite. The Park is world-famous for its interconnected 16 lakes arranged in cascades, separated by natural dams of travertine which grow at the rate of about 1 cm (0.4in) per year. The particularly sensitive travertine barriers are the result of an interplay between water, air and living organisms. In geological terms, the actual phenomena molding the Plitvice Lakes are quite young (existed since the end of the ice age about 12,000 to 15,000 years ago).



With regard to plant and animal diversity, the Plitvice Lakes belongs to the most significant areas of Croatia. The Park is heavily forested, mainly with beech, spruce, and fir trees, and features a mixture of Alpine and Mediterranean vegetation. The large diversity of species, the presence of relic, endemic, rare, protected species species, many of which are found in the Red List of Plant Species of the Republic of Croatia and the IUCN Red List of Endangered Plant Species, places the Park in a highly valuable floristic area not only in Croatia but in Europe and the world. This area is home to an extremely wide variety of animal and bird species such as the European brown bear, wolf, eagle, owl, lynx, wild cat, and capercaillie. The National Park is also home to 4,000 inhabitants. The local economy is based on tourism and farming. Each year, more than 1 million visitors are recorded.