

Cycling Safaris

Best of Slovenia 2018 Self Guided Tour

346 - 386km | 11 days / 10 nights



Slovenia was formerly part of Yugoslavia (gaining Independence in 1992) and was one of the ten accession countries that joined the EU in May 2004 (indeed the richest and economically well advanced). A relatively small country in terms of size and population (just two million) it has a very varied geography. To the north it is bordered by Austria, to the west by Italy, to the south by Croatia and to the east by Hungary. Culturally, these neighbours have exerted influences over the Slovenian peoples (as it has changed hands between them, from the Roman Empire through to the Austro-Hungarian Empire and also being behind the Iron Curtain). The geography of the country almost seems to reflect these influences too, with the North West predominantly Alpine, the South West Mediterranean and the East low lying plains.

The stunning beauty of the country is certainly a good reason to come and visit, but for many, the friendliness of the Slovenians would be reason enough in itself. Many speak impeccable English (as well as other languages) and are delighted to share their country with foreign visitors.

This "Cross country tour" whisks you through the majority of Slovenia's most famous historical places, along with the many natural wonders this diverse little country has to offer. It is suitable for cyclists with plenty of time and an average fitness level.

Cycling tour highlights:

- Swim in crystal clear mountain lakes
- Take a break at "The Triple Bridge" in Ljubljana
- Visit Postojna or Škocjan caves, and the famous Lipizzaner horses
- Chill out with a cappuccino in the famous Piazza Unita, Trieste
- Stay on a vineyard, and sip the sumptuous Teran wine

TOUR ITINERARY

Day 1 ARRIVAL LAKE BLEĐ

Accommodation in 4* hotel.

You will arrive in Bled, a world famous town on the shore of a beautiful glacial lake. Defined by its unique island church sitting proudly in the middle of this immense body of water, surrounded by towering alpine mountains, and the castle perched high on a cliff standing guard over the town, Bled is one of Slovenia's most popular tourist attractions.

Day 2 BLEĐ - BOHINJSKA BISTRICA (BOHINJ VALLEY) 27 km / 44 km with a detour **An easy descent into the valley. Accommodation in 5* SPA-hotel.**

You will be taken by bus up to the high plateau at Pokljuka. From here you can marvel at the stunning views before gliding down into the neighboring Bohinj Valley, the jewel in the heart of the Triglav National Park. You will cycle through the many small alpine villages scattered across the valley until reaching the small settlement of Ribčev Laz (Fisherman's Pass) lying next to the stunning Lake Bohinj. Wedged into the corner of this dead end valley, Bohinj is the largest and deepest lake in the national park, and is surrounded by shimmering mountain peaks. The view across this lake from the bridge at Ribčev Laz is unrivaled. Cycle around the lake to Savica Waterfall, source of the Sava Bohinjka River, and then take the cable car up to Vogel Mountain for a spectacular view into the Bohinj Valley and of Mount Triglav, the highest peak in the Julian Alps. Explore the forests surrounding the lake before spending the evening in one of the cosy village pubs and trying the local home made honey brandy. Cycling downhill, at the foot of Mount Triglav. Triglav National Park, very peaceful area.

Day 3 BOHINJSKA BISTRICA (BOHINJ VALLEY) - ŠKOFJA LOKA 49 km **Accommodation 3* hotel.**

Leaving Bohinj you cycle to the lovely village of Bohinjska Bistrica, where you can admire the picture-perfect backdrop. Then it's up 750 m/2400 ft to the Jelovica high plateau (a "help out" lift to top of mountain pass is available for this part of the trip at extra cost of 15 EUR per person). From the top the route takes you through a deep forest which soon drops off into the Selška Dolina Valley leading to the Škofja Loka hills. The first stop is at the little alpine village of Sorica, set among low green hills. This is the birthplace of the famous Slovene painter, Ivan Grohar. As you ride into the village his statue will greet you. Visit his gallery where you'll find a limited collection of his work. The next stop is at the historic iron-smelting town of Železniki, where you will find the remains of an old blast furnace dating from 1826. Stop in one of the village inns along the way and try the delicious trout. Finally you arrive in the wonderful town of Škofja Loka, one of the oldest towns in Slovenia. If you are not too tired you can cycle up to the castle on the hill overlooking town. Spend the rest of the evening wandering through the old streets of this historic medieval town.

Day 4 ŠKOFJA LOKA - LJUBLJANA 31 km **Flat lands, easy biking trip. Accommodation in 3* hotel.**

Once settled in to your hotel, you will visit the historic old town and marvel at the ornate, old-world architecture and lovely "fin de siecle" mansions. Then it's a short walk or ride up to the mighty Ljubljana Castle, perched high on a hill and standing guard over the old town and city center. From its tower you get a commanding view of Ljubljana's heart and soul. As the sun goes down you can choose between relaxing with a drink in the many outdoor bars/cafes beside the Ljubljanica River, or take an evening stroll, enjoying the lights and vibrant sounds of the city and its charismatic people. Or perhaps do both!

Day 5 LJUBLJANA - VRHNIKA**39 km / 57 km with a detour**

A nice easy first day across the historic and richly diverse plains surrounding the capital. Accommodation in 3* hotel.

As the morning sun begins to rise high in the sky, you will be cycling across an immense 160-square kilometer marshy plain. The Ljubljansko Barje was once a great lake until it dried up 6000 years ago, leaving behind an incredibly diverse landscape that is now home to some of Europe's rarest forms of bird, plant and insect life. Along the way you can take a short walk into the picturesque Iški Vintgar gorge nature reserve, carved deep into a stunning limestone dolomite plateau, and visit the remnants of the world's highest railway viaduct in Borovnica. Just before arriving in Vrhnika, you can visit the Technical Museum of the Republic of Slovenia housed in Bistra Castle, where you'll find a great hunting collection and an interesting exhibition of Tito's cars.

Day 6 VRHNIKA - POSTOJNA**32 km / 44 with a detour**

Hilly day, side roads. A slightly more demanding day over gentle hills, forest roads and a typical Carst polje (field). Accommodation in 4* hotel.

On this day the roads will take you away from the main tourist routes and off the beaten track. You will experience the real Slovenian countryside as you cycle past the beautiful Slivnica Mountain and the magical disappearing lake of Planina, and marvel at the wonders of this vast world of limestone. You can stop for a picnic lunch in the Rakov Škočjan nature reserve, where the Rak River has carved out a stunning gorge containing some of nature's most incredible landscape formations, including two natural bridges.

Day 7 POSTOJNA - ŠTANJEL**42 km / 48 with**

Easy routes, one long descend some hills afterward. Accommodation in 2* country inn.

So far nearly 30 million tourists have visited this stunningly beautiful underground Postojna cave formation, carved deep into the heart of the limestone hills. This is the most extensive cave system in Slovenia, covering a total of 21 kilometers. The 1½ hour tour will take you through a fairytale world full of large and colorful stalactites and stalagmites, not forgetting the unique "human fish", a mysterious creature that lives in dark pools inside the caves. You can also take a short detour to the impenetrable fortress of Predjama castle, wedged tight into a crevasse halfway up a 123-meter cliff-face protruding dramatically into the surrounding basin. Here lived a vivacious and daring knight. Erasmus kept a whole army at bay by utilizing the secret of the Predjama Caves to sneak out for supplies, which included freshly picked cherries which he used to throw at his adversaries to taunt them. Take the tour and learn how Erasmus met his untimely demise in less than poetic circumstances, as he was literally caught with his pants down.

Day 8 ŠTANJEL - LIPICA - DIVAČA**48 km**

Rolling terrain with flat sections. Accommodation in 3* hotel. First stop is the lovely botanical garden in Sežana, then its on the stud farm of Lipica, where you can visit those beautiful thoroughbred Lipizaner horses whose glistening white coats and gentle, graceful dancing have earned them a worldwide reputation. The history of the Lipica horses is closely linked to the Vienna riding school. Take a tour in a traditional carriage, wath them perform and visit them close-up in their stables. This will be a day to remember. If you have time you can also visit an interesting War Museum set in the village tover of Lokev.

Day 9 **DIVAČA - MUGGIA** **38 km**

Initially rolling terrain, then a long downhill. Accommodation in 4* hotel.

Postojna Caves, you can visit Karst Škocjan Caves this morning – listed as UNESCO natural monument. You can take a slight diversion into the Italian town of Trieste – once an important port of Slovenia (whilst under the rule of Austrian monarchy) with its worldly flair and wonderful atmosphere. Visit the castle, cathedral, Piazza Unita central square and relax with a cappuccino in one of many old-fashioned cafes. The day trip ends in Muggia – south of Trieste. After the days cycling it is time to enjoy a gelato in old center of town or relax on one of the beaches.

Day 10 **MUGGIA - PIRAN** **37 km / 48 km optional side trip to saltpans Seca)**

Easy trip. Accommodation in 3* hotel.

You will cycle on a new cycling path following a former railway line. Enjoy great vistas of Slovene coast and Trieste Bay. A coffee shop in the fashionable resort of Portorož is a must. The trip ends in the gorgeous Venetian little harbour village of Piran.

SUMMARY: "Best of Slovenia" tour, emphasis on main Slovene attractions and many natural points of interest. It is suitable for cyclists with average fitness.

2018 TOUR PRICE AND DATES

€1005.00 per person sharing (17th March – 11th May, 22nd September – 13th October)

€1200.00 single room occupancy (17th March – 11th May, 22nd September – 13th October)

€1025.00 per person sharing (12th May – 21st September)

€1225.00 single room occupancy (12th May – 21st September)

Half board supplement €180.00 (includes 8 dinners)

Tour can start any day from 17th March until 13th October.

WHAT THE TOUR PRICE INCLUDES

- 10 nights accommodation in 3* and 4* hotels and country inns with breakfast
- 21 speed touring bike (equipped with lock, pannier bag, spare tube, set of Allen keys and basic puncture repair set). Bike hire starts at 9am on day 2 of the trip and ends at 6pm on day 10.
- Luggage transfers (one piece per person, more on request)
- Information package including detailed route description (one per booking party)
- Wine tasting in Staniel/Kodreti (3 sorts of wine)
- Back up (hotline service) during the trip

Additional items

- 'Help out lift' to top of the pass on day 3 - €15 per person, needs to be booked at least 2 days in advance – payable on spot)
- Additional bike rental: €15/day
- Helmet rental: €18
- Bike insurance: bikes are insured against minor breaks and normal wear. They are not insured against theft or frame break.
- E-Bike rental – supplement of €130 (upon delivery you will be asked a deposit of €100 in cash only – this money will be returned to you when the e-bike is given back under condition it is not damaged or missing parts such as battery lock keys)

EXTRA ACCOMMODATION

- **Additional accommodation in Bled**
 - 3 star accommodation
 - €65 per person sharing
 - €95 per single
 - €20 half board
 - 4 star accommodation
 - €85 per person sharing in Lake View room
 - €145 per single
 - €30 half board (4 course)
- Additional accommodation in Ljubljana - 3 star accommodation
 - €60 per person sharing
 - €88 per single
 - €20 half board
- Additional accommodation in Piran: - 3 star accommodation
 - €70 per person sharing
 - €105 per single
 - €20 half board

BIKE / FITNESS

This tour is perfect for those who like mountain scenery, but don't want to take too much effort to get it. This is NOT a mountain bike tour. It is suitable for cyclists of average fitness.



Aluminium frame
Shimano gear system with "rapid-fire" shifters
21 speed
Rack on back
1 rear pannier
Repair kit
Computer and map holder

Helmets are not included.

WHAT TO BRING

- We would recommend that you bring padded cycling shorts or even a gel saddle cover to make your days cycling more comfortable (if you wish to bring your own saddle this is no problem). Cycling gloves are also a good investment.
- Although it is not obligatory to wear a helmet we highly recommend that you wear one. If you own a bicycle helmet please bring it, otherwise helmets can be rented for €18 each.
- Don't forget sun cream, sunglasses and sun hat.
- If you wish to use toe clips we advise you to bring your own pedals with toe clips, as the pedals on our bikes do not accommodate them.
- We do not provide rain gear so be sure to bring your own lightweight waterproofs.

GENERAL INFORMATION

What is the currency and how much money should I bring?

Slovenia now uses Euro.

By UK/US/Irish standards Slovenia is a cheap destination with a ½ litre of beer costing around €1.50 and a glass of wine €2.00. A Pizza would be about €5 euro and a decent 3-course meal with a couple of drinks €10 - €15 euro.

What is the Language?

The official language is Slovenian. Most Slovenians speak good English and many speak German and Italian as well! Lots of places will have menus in several languages and, if not, the ever-helpful locals are more than happy to explain. The guide is, of course, fluent in English.

What happens if I am delayed on the first night?

If you know in advance that you will be late please contact our office. If you are unexpectedly delayed you should call the meeting point on Saturday evening and leave a message as to what time you expect to arrive.

What is the weather like?

Slovenia is a small country that enjoys a varied climate based around its distinct regions - Alpine, Continental and Mediterranean. It is known for being on the sunny side of the Alps. The summer days can be extremely warm (30 C) and sunny with rainfall occurring late into the afternoon (5.00 pm or thereabouts).

TRAVEL INFORMATION

Slovenia is a relatively small country with a small dispersed population (around 2 million inhabitants). Therefore the entry/exit points are fairly limited and it is often better served by places outside of the country.

The main access point is to fly into Ljubljana (the capital). There is a direct bus service from the airport to the centre of Bled. From Ljubljana buses depart from Bay 7 at the main bus station every hour on the hour and takes 1 hour and 15 minutes. You can also take a train up to Bled (the train station in Bled is called "Lesce Bled"). The journey takes just under an hour.

The national airline is Adria Airways and it has a number of direct flights to major European cities including London (Gatwick), Manchester and Dublin (depart Dublin Friday Nights/returning Saturdays only). For more information check (www.adria-airways.com).

Easyjet fly daily into Ljubljana from Stansted (www.easyjet.com)

There are also many alternatives connections through other European hubs such as Frankfurt, Paris, Prague and Budapest with most of the major European Flag Carriers.

Ryanair (www.ryanair.com) fly to Trieste on the Italian side of the border where again you can take a train to and from Bled. The service to and from Trieste is more complicated (as you may have to change trains and train stations in Nova Gorica or Ljubljana) so you should take care in your travel plans if coming to and from this airport. The airport is actually called Ronchi and is some 30km outside the city, which is actually closer to Gorizia (which is one of the trains stopping points).

All the details for the above train journeys are on the website

<http://reiseauskunft.bahn.de/bin/query.exe/en>

(remember that the train station in Bled is called "Lesce Bled" and is 7km from the town of Bled itself)

We can pre-order taxis for you from various locations on request, so please contact us well in advance of the tour if you would like help.

The approximate cost per transfer each way: (price per person one way)

	Up to 3 people 2 persons minimum (one way), price per person
Ljubljana Airport to Bled	€30
Klagenfurt Airport to Bled	€70
Piran to Bled	€90
Piran to Ljubljana Airport	€75
Piran to Ljubljana city	€65
Piran to Trieste Downtown	€40
Piran to Trieste Airport	€60