



Foto: Nea Culpa

IN THE HEART OF THE SUNNY GORIŠKA REGION

Experience Nova Gorica, the Banjšice and Trnovo Plateau and Vipava Valley, 2 days

Enjoy the sunshine of the Goriška region. Exciting stories that took place in the valleys and forests, mountain sides and green hilltops made their way into the oral tradition of the people of western Slovenia. Draw inspiration from the sight of the emerald Soča River, the Julian Alps and the Adriatic Sea. Meet the friendly locals, experience the local traditional crafts and indulge in the culinary delights of the region.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Nova Gorica, where the fun never ends
- Europe Square and visit to the railway station, i.e. the oldest public building in Nova Gorica
- Solkan Bridge with the longest stone arch in the world, crossing the emerald green Soča River
- Time to unwind on the Banjšice and Trnovo Plateau
- Renaissance-style Kromberk Castle
- Tasting of wines from Vipava Valley

DAY 1:

Solkan - Sveta Gora - Lokve - Lokovec – Banjšice - Bate - Grgarske Ravne - Nova Gorica

We will catch the first rays of the morning sun in Solkan. The centennial Solkan Bridge crossing the emerald Soča River is both majestic and eye-catching. This famous railroad bridge boasts the longest stone arch in the world and has had aerobatic planes flying through it as well as several free-climbing stunts. Next, we will make our way up to Sveta Gora (*Holy Mountain*) which is a major religious centre with the magnificent Basilica of the Assumption crowning its summit. A fine view of the Julian Alps and Karst landscape greets you on arrival at the top. If the weather is clear you might also catch a glimpse of the sea.

Both hills – Skalnica nad Sabotin – are pitted with trenches and caverns from World War I. The Peace Park is located on Sabotin Hill as a reminder of the war that ravaged this area one hundred years ago.

We will have lunch in Lokve which is the highest village in the Banjšice and Trnovo Plateau, and taste their homemade goodies seasoned with organically grown herbs. Following this snack, we will visit the eco-corner with its nine energy points where we can rest and recuperate. The stop at Lokve will be finished off by a visit to the small bucket museum. We will continue to Lokovec, one of the longest villages in Slovenia, which used to

be a village of blacksmiths, as almost every family had one. Did you know that word of the Lokovec blacksmiths even reached the Viennese Imperial Court? Together with the local blacksmith, we will try our hand at forging iron. In an eco-farm located in the village of Banjšice we will find out all about the local horse breeding tradition and will even get to gallop across the vast velvety meadows. In Bate, there is a family farm where the owner knows all his cows by name. It is only natural that we try some of their hard and semi-soft cheeses.

Time stands still on the Banjšice and Trnovo Plateau. Off the beaten track, and away from the towns and cities, this is the perfect place for an active, yet relaxing break. The village of Grgarske Ravne hosts a herbal centre. There, we will have an opportunity of tasting some homemade dishes made with fresh herbs. The visit will be spiced up with a stroll through the herb gardens where we will be given plenty of useful tips about the art of growing herbs. We will go to the village well and visit a barn which is constructed from crates that were used to store ammunition in World War I.

Our day will come to an end in Nova Gorica. After a day of exploration we will recuperate in a select hotel and try our luck at the nearby casino.

DAY 2:

Nova Gorica – Europe Square - Kostanjevica Monastery - Kromberk Castle - Energy-themed Hiking Trail from the Lijak Stream to Sekulak Hill – Vipava Valley Wine Road

We begin the day at the point where Slovenia and Italy meet – at Europe Square, which is shared by Nova Gorica and Gorizia. The square features a floor mosaic, which symbolizes cross-border cooperation, and was created specially in order to celebrate Slovenia's entry into the European Union. Facing north, we can accurately tell the time from the sundial made from a driving wheel of a steam locomotive. The railway station is the oldest public building in town. It was erected on one of the most scenic European railway lines – the Bohinj Railway, connecting Prague and Trieste. Life on both sides of the state border is portrayed in great detail in the museum exhibition *Kolodvor: State Border in Goriška Region 1945 – 2004*, which is housed in the building. A minute's walk from town, the Kostanjevica Monastery, situated on a hill, overlooks Nova Gorica / Gorizia and the surrounding area. Franciscan monks act as caretakers of this cultural and historic monument. The monastery is particularly famous for the crypt belonging to the last King of France and the last descendants of the French Bourbon dynasty who found refuge in this region. The monastery library holds a collection of 10,000 books, among them the first Slovenian grammar book written by Adam Bohorič. Next, we will take a stroll along the south wall of the monastery, which is lined by Bourbon roses that are in full bloom by May. As a matter of fact, this collection ranks among the best in the world, and in Europe comes second only to the collection in Paris, but, of course, the spring flowers here are much more luxuriant. From here, we hike down the Alley of the Famous Men, along the length of Erjavčeva Street and to Kidričeva Street, which was constructed in order to serve as the town's main road. This was the location

for the emergence of a vibrant town centre. Not far from Nova Gorica is the Renaissance-style Kromberk Castle dating from the 17th century. There, we will take a stroll through the park, which features a Baroque fountain, to admire the vines. For lunch, we will let our taste buds indulge in the rich flavours of the region in one of the local restaurants or *gostilnas*.

We will set off on the "Energy-themed Hiking Trail" from the Lijak Stream to Sekulak Hill, leading through a series of picture-postcard villages: Šmihel, Ozeljan, Šempas, Vitovlje and Osek, and past chestnut groves, vineyards, fields, springs and a natural lake. With a bit of luck, fine weather will provide us with an aerial spectacle – paragliders and hang-gliders dancing in the light wind.

The adventure will continue along the Vipava Valley Wine Road. Embraced by the Trnovo forest, surrounded by steep slopes and influenced by the Alpine and Mediterranean climate, this is the perfect place for vine cultivation. Experienced winemakers carefully tend to their vines year in and year out to ensure a bountiful crop. We will visit one of the many wine cellars and taste the premium local wines and raise our glass to the beautiful Goriška region.

More information:

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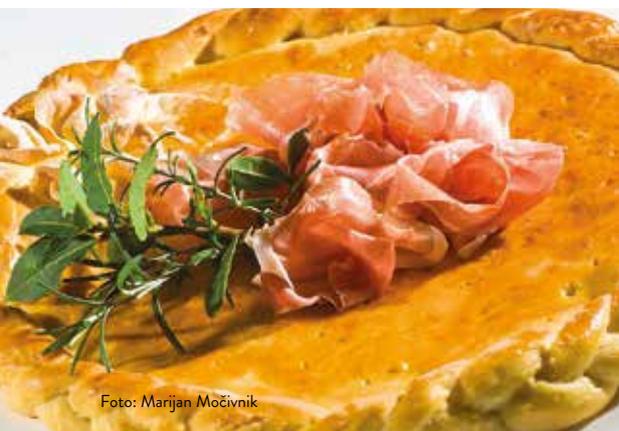


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