



Foto: Nea Culpa

CULINARY EXPERIENCE IN THE GORIŠKA REGION

Gourmet Exploration of Nova Gorica and the Vipava Valley, 3 days

The gently rolling hills, the chequered history and rich cultural heritage of the Goriška region and its surrounding area were the inspiration behind many a delectable culinary creation.

The fertile hillsides are teeming with vineyards from which the local winemakers produce premium wines. The exceptional air and gentle wind are harnessed in order to dry-cure meat products and mature the cheeses.

Embark on a culinary exploration tour of Nova Gorica and the Vipava Valley, and spice up your trip with sightseeing tours of the local places of interest.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Kostanjevica Monastery
- Europe Square and visit to the railway station, i.e. the oldest public building in Nova Gorica
- Hike between vineyards
- Solkan Bridge with the longest stone arch in the world, crossing the emerald green Soča River
- Tasting of local wines, prosciutto and cheese at local farms open to visitors
- Basilica of Sveta Gora
- Exhibition about “Alexandrian Women” in the village of Prvačina

DAY 1:

Itinerary: Nova Gorica – Kostanjevica Monastery – Europe Square – Museum Exhibition Kolodvor – Dinner at Local Farm – Wine Tasting – Branik

The town of Nova Gorica will be the starting point of our first adventure. A stroll down the Alley of the Famous Men, along the length of Erjavčeva Street will lead us to Bevkov Square which features an eye-catching fountain, and ends in Kidričeva Street which was constructed in order to serve as the town's main road. As such, following World War II, this was the location for the emergence of a vibrant town centre including the construction of a town hall and other major structures. Kostanjevica Hill, which is a stone's throw away from town, boasts the Church of the Annunciation of Our Lady and a monastery. This hilltop is a beautiful vantage point and offers a scenic view of Nova Gorica and the surrounding area. Franciscan monks act as caretakers of this cultural and historic monument. The monastery is most famous for the crypt of 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. Harboursing one of the largest and

most comprehensive collections of Bourbon roses in the world, a visit in May is indeed a spectacular sight. As a matter of fact, this collection is second only to the collection in Paris, but, of course, the flowers here are much more luxuriant. From here, we walk down to the centre of Nova Gorica, to the Europe Square which was designed and constructed after Slovenia joined the EU. 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.

Our next stop will be the railway station which is the oldest public building in town. It was erected on one of the most scenic European railway lines – the 717km long Bohinj Railway, designed to connect Prague and Trieste. Life on both sides of the state border is accurately portrayed in the museum exhibition *Kolodvor: State Border in Goriška Region 1945 – 2004*, which is housed in the building.

A night of fine dining and wine tasting awaits in Branik. We will finish the day off with a good night's rest.

DAY 2:

Hiking Tour between the Vineyards in Zalošče – Exhibition about Alexandrian Women – Lunch at a Local Farm near Dornberk – Wine Tasting – Kromberk Castle – Stop at a Wine Shop

The village of Zalošče is the starting point from which we will set out next morning on a hike between vineyards. The hiking trail through the village takes us past local orchards and olive groves. At its highest point, you can admire the beautiful view over the nearby village of Dornberk, the Vipava River and the cultivated hills surrounding them. In fact, the wine tasting will provide us ample opportunity to enjoy the bountiful crops of the hills. You can just sit back and enjoy the sight of this charming winegrowing country. The *House in the Square* (Hiša na placu) in the village of Prvačina hosts the exhibition dedicated to *Alexandrian Women* – the wives and girls from the Goriška region who set out at the end of the 19th century to seek employment in Egypt, mostly Alexandria. Their decision to leave saved many a farmstead in the villages around Gorica and Vipava from ruin, saving numerous families from destitution.

Lunch will be accompanied by a tasting of fine wines and will be followed up with a visit to 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. Alternatively, we can go see the exhibitions inside the castle curated by the Goriška Museum. Another wine tasting stop awaits us in the Solum wine shop. The vast selection of different wines includes indigenous wines from the Vipava Valley and Brda region such as zelen, pinela and klarnica, while the wine list also offers wines from the regions of Karst, Slovenian Istria and other parts of Slovenia.

After a pleasant evening meal, we will head back to our lodgings.

DAY 3:

Solkan Bridge – Ascent to Sveta Gora – Lunch and Stroll around the Herb Garden in Lokve – Cheese Tasting in Bate – Prosciutto and Wine Tasting at a Local Farm

Our first destination in the morning will be the emerald green Soča River and the centennial Solkan Bridge, which is in fact a railroad bridge. This impressive bridge boasts the longest stone arch in the world. Next, we will make our way up to Sveta Gora (which translates as *Holy Mountain*) which is a major religious centre with a rich history of pilgrimage. The trail will lead us past trenches and caverns dating from World War I, but it will all be worth it when we reach the top and catch a stupendous view of the Julian Alps, Trnovo Forest Plateau and the distinct karst landscape. We will look around the Basilica of St. Mary which has been a pilgrimage site since the 16th century for the Slovenian, Italian, Friuli, Austrian and Croatian populace. Upon returning to the valley, we will head to the Banjšice and Trnovo Plateaus. A lunch break in the village of Lokve which is said to be the highest village in the Plateau will delight us with traditional homemade specialties. Next, we will visit Bate and the local family farm open to visitors. A tasting of

the typical hard and semi-soft cheeses is in order. We will wrap up the day with a stop in one of the local *gostilnas* or farms, which offer a variety of prosciuttos, wine and other delectable regional dishes. The outdoor patio is ideal for relaxing while delighting in the harmony of flavours presented by the homemade dishes. After an eventful day in the Goriška region, it's time to head back to our lodgings.

More information:

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