



Foto: Nea Culpa

HIGHLIGHTS

- Take in the Alps and the Adriatic Sea at one glance (in clear weather)
- Ascent to Sveta Gora and the Basilica of the Assumption via the preserved caverns and trenches of World War I
- Private collection with more than 3,000 artefacts from the Isonzo Front
- Kostanjevica Monastery housing the crypt of the last King of France and the last descendants of the French Bourbon dynasty

A CENTURY AFTER THE WAR, PROFOUND PEACE

From Sveta Gora to Sabotin Peace Park, 1 day

The period 2014-2018 marks the 100th anniversary of World War I – the first global war. A century ago, the Slovenian territory, stretching from the Goriška region, the Soča Valley and Karst, saw some of the fiercest mountain warfare in the history of man. The famous writer Ernest Hemingway portrayed the Isonzo Front in his novel Farewell to Arms. The war-scarred past is woven into the tapestry of history and heritage of the Goriška region. Wartime stories that were set against the backdrop of these valleys and forests, and these mountain sides and summits that offer such magnificent views of the Alps and the Mediterranean Sea, made their way into the oral tradition of the local people. In the past, war divided people, only to unite them today. You are invited to meet the friendly locals and private collectors of World War I artefacts, who have dedicated most of their lives to researching and preserving the memory of their grandfathers.

ITINERARY:

Sveta Gora – Solkan Bridge - Solkan War Museum: The Isonzo Front - Nova Gorica – Kostanjevica Monastery - Sabotin Peace Park

We will catch the first rays of the morning sun while we hike to the Sabotin Hill, which is the last hill of the Alpine mountain range and the first of the Mediterranean hills. This hill was the site of many a stirring tale. Did you know that the women here protested against the fighting of World War I by stuffing grenades with clothes instead of explosives? Sabotin Peace Park was designed to unite 22 nations that fought on the slopes of Sabotin during the Isonzo Front in World War I. We will visit the museum exhibition from World War I (the Isonzo Front) and take a hike along the ridge. With a bit of luck, we might even see the griffon vulture. Then it's downhill to the banks of the emerald green Soča River and the centennial Solkan Railway Bridge. This famous bridge boasts the longest stone arch in the world and has had aerobatic planes flying through it as well as several free-climbing stunts. In the vicinity of the bridge, there is an old military cemetery dating back to Austria-Hungary. We will honour the 100th anniversary of World War I with a visit to the Solkan War Museum: The Isonzo Front of 1915 – 1917. The private museum collection contains more than 3,000 artefacts and was designed to preserve the war legacy of the Slovenian territory. In fact, it was actually private collectors who first began to research and put together our war legacy. Many of them have had a lifelong fascination with the Isonzo Front, starting while they were children and ignited either by discovering their first cavern while playing outdoors or by stories about their grandfathers who had fought on the Front.

Lunch in one of the restaurants in the region will be followed by an ascent to Sveta Gora which is a major religious centre with a rich history of pilgrimage. The Basilica of St. Mary has been a pilgrimage site since the 16th century for the Slovenian, Italian, Friuli, Austrian and Croatian populace. The route uphill runs between trenches and caverns dating from World War I, marking the location of the Isonzo Front. Sveta Gora affords us with a stunning view of the Julian Alps, the distinct karst landscape and the Trnovo Forest Plateau. If the weather is clear you might also catch a glimpse of the sea. We continue to Nova Gorica and the famous Europe Square where the Slovenian Nova Gorica and the Italian Gorizia merge together. 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.

(ADDITIONAL OPTION: The history of Nova Gorica is represented in great detail in the museum exhibition *Kolodvor: State Border in Goriška Region 1945 – 2004*. The oldest public building in town houses photographs, uniforms, flags, maps and documents relating to the formation and alteration of the state border of the current Slovenia, the erstwhile Republic of Yugoslavia and adjacent Italy.)

A minute's walk from town, the Kostanjevica Monastery overlooks Nova Gorica / Gorizia and the surrounding area. For several years now, Franciscan monks have acted 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 vast collection of 10,000 books, among them the first Slovenian grammar book written by Adam Bohorič. Additionally, the library also holds a collection of 30 incunables (early printed books). Next, we will take a stroll along the south wall of the monastery. Along the wall, you will find one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of Bourbon roses in the world, which are in full bloom in spring. As a matter of fact, this collection is second only to the collection in Paris, but, of course, the spring flowers here are much more luxuriant and their scent much sweeter.

More information:

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