



Foto: Jure Batagelj

# PILGRIMAGE DAY

## Finding your inner peace at the European Road of the Three Sanctuaries, 1 day

The European Road of the Three Sanctuaries connects three Marian sanctuaries: Sveta Gora on the Banjšice and Trnovo Plateau, the Kostanjevica Monastery and the Church of the Assumption in Vitovlje. Visit these sanctuaries and find your inner peace as you walk by the historic remains, and the natural and cultural sites of interest along the route. Draw inspiration from the sight of the Julian Alps, the emerald Soča River and the Adriatic Sea.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Kostanjevica Monastery and Church of the Annunciation of Our Lady overlooking Nova Gorica
- Sveta Gora with the Basilica of the Assumption, a pilgrimage centre and jewel of the European Road of the Three Sanctuaries
- Church of the Assumption in Vitovlje

## ITINERARY:

### Nova Gorica - Kostanjevica Monastery - Sveta Gora - Church of the Assumption in Vitovlje

After our morning cup of coffee, we climb to Kostanjevica Monastery, only a minutes' walk from the centre of Nova Gorica. The monastery, which is managed by the Franciscan monks, was an addition to the Church of the Annunciation of Our Lady. The Chapel, as the site is referred to by the locals, is an old pilgrimage sanctuary with a diverse history and filled with opulent treasures of the past. Experience the tranquillity of this spiritual site which is an important historic and cultural monument. The monastery library holds a collection of 10,000 books, among them the first Slovenian grammar book written by Adam Bohorič, featuring the author's inscription. Additionally, the library also keeps 30 incunables (early printed books). You can end this visit by unwinding in the stunning Rose Garden imbued with the sweet fragrance of the second largest Bourbon rose collection in Europe. The first Bourbon roses originated on the Île Bourbon and are descended from the dog rose. Their flowering season spans spring to late autumn, but the flowers reach their full bloom and their most intense fragrance in May. Following a wave of revolutions in France, Gorica provided sanctuary to the last King of France and the last descendants of the Bourbons, who are buried in the crypt below the church. In Solkan or Nova Gorica, we will enjoy a typical seasonal lunch.

The second pilgrimage stop along the Road of the Three Sanctuaries is located beneath Sveta Gora, from whence the small shrines indicating the way of the cross direct us along the most important pilgrimage route in western Slovenia. With the magnificent Basilica of the Assumption, the Franciscan Monastery, a pilgrimage hostel and a spiritual and educational centre, Sveta Gora stands out as a gem on the European Linking Road of the Three Sanctuaries. The jewel in the crown is the site's greatest treasure – the famous image of the Mother of God displayed at the main altar in the basilica.

The image is one of the most famous Marian depictions in Slovenia and is lovely to behold during mass. According to legend, this is where Mary appeared to a shepherdess, one Urška Ferligoj, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In fine weather, with one look, you can encompass the Julian Alps, the emerald Soča River, the Trnovo Forest and the Adriatic Sea.

(ADDITIONAL OPTION: After a lunch break, we will make our way upriver along the Soča to the ridge of the Kanalski Kolovrat Hill, dominated by the sanctuary Marijino Celje (Maria Zell). The first mention of the sanctuary dates back to 1325, and it has seen many restorations over the centuries. Today the church greets pilgrims by ringing the bells of a single bell tower; the second one had to be pulled down in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The church exudes deep serenity. To stretch our legs, we can take a hike in the vicinity of it.

Next, we will scale Stara Gora (Castelmonte) overlooking the Italian village Cividale del Friuli and visit the Church of Santa Maria del Monte. The interior will impress you with the statue of Our Lady dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which is considered one of the finest Marian images for miles around. Pilgrims call it *Madonna Bella* or *Madonna Viva*. Stara Gora holds special significance for the Slovenian nation because of the Castelmonte Manuscript, a Slovenian language monument found here, which was created in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century.)

A lovely way to end a day of reflection is to visit the village of Vitovlje and the local Gothic Church of the Assumption which is perched on a hill. One of the most significant cultural monuments of the Goriška region, it will however require some footwork. Once you reach the top though, a magnificent view over the whole of Vipava Valley makes up for the effort.

The interior, which is open on special occasions and holidays, hosts the image of the Assumption from 1687 and an elaborate pulpit from the same century. The pealing of church bells can be heard throughout the Vipava Valley, attracting crowds of pilgrims. We will finish off the day caressed by the rays of the setting sun.

#### More information:

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