Exploring Slovenia’s Julian Alps and Beyond II
Two Treks and Balkan Culture in an Undiscovered Corner of the Alps
August 31, 2020 – September 15, 2020 – Trip 2037

Overview

Join us for a wonderful sixteen-day trip to the undiscovered hiking and scenic paradise of Slovenia. We will pass medieval castles, churches, and traditional mountain villages as we walk through valleys, across mountain pastures, and traverse mountain ridges with towering peaks all around us. This trip combines two rugged short treks (one carrying all our gear and staying in mountain huts, and the other staying in hotels with luggage transport), an exciting ascent to Slovenia’s highest peak, and visits to the most scenic and interesting regions of this small, but incredibly beautiful country.

A few words about Slovenia itself: it is a small country located in southern central Europe at the intersection of major trade routes and of the Slavic, Germanic, and Romance languages and cultures. Historically part of many empires including Rome, Austro-Hungarian, Venice, and France, it is currently a prosperous, democratic European country of two million persons. Over
50% of its landmass remains forested. It is exceptionally bio-diverse for its size particularly as pertains to endemic cave species.

Trip Difficulty

This trip is rated vigorous to strenuous #5/#6. Trip Rating System. Excluding breaks we will hike from five to seven hours per day, between 6 and 14 miles, with an average elevation gain of about 2500 feet. The terrain is rugged and steep in places, and requires agility. There will be sections on narrow trails with exposure (steep drop-offs). We will hike at a moderate pace, which will permit time for photos and rest breaks. Participants should be in excellent shape and be able to hike for most of the day.

Itinerary Summary

Beginning in the Prague-like capital of Ljubljana, we will take a day trip to visit a stunning cave with an underground waterfall, and a castle built into a cliff. We will then travel to the town of Kranjska Gora near Slovenia’s border with Austria to begin our first trek. The next five days we will complete a five-day trek staying in hotels along a north to south route ending at Tribilj
Superiore over the border in Italy. This route will take us through a region that had intense fighting during World War I and we will pass open air museums and monuments. We will cross a mountain pass and follow the Soca River through the gorgeous Trenta Valley. During this portion of the trip, our luggage will be transported from hotel to hotel so we only need to carry smaller day packs. From Tribilj Superiore, we will be transported to Ribcev Laz on Lake Bohinj to begin our second trek. The next five days we will trek in the heart of the Julian Alps and stay in traditional mountain huts. For these days we need to carry a moderately-sized pack with only the clothes and accessories needed for that portion of the trip. Our luggage will be waiting for us at our hotel in Pokljuka after this second trek. We will complete the trip with a day at Vintgar Gorge followed by a day at Lake Bled, with its picturesque island church and cliffside castle.

Our traveling arrangements will facilitate a unique exposure to this remarkable area:

- Extensive exploration on foot to fully explore and immerse ourselves in the region’s splendor. We will be walking/hiking 6 to 14 miles each day at a moderate pace. Daily elevation gains go from about 1,200’ to ~4,400’.

- Small group travel - this allows us to fully experience the landscape and its treasures, enjoy hassle-free travel arrangements, stay in small, local hotels and dine in intimate village restaurants.

**The climb of Mt Triglav:** A highlight of this trip is an exciting climb to the summit of Slovenia’s highest peak, Mt. Triglav. Motivated by national pride, every Slovene desires to climb this mountain at least once in their lifetime. We will climb Triglav with the help of *via ferrata*, literally “iron way” in Italian. These are cableways permanently bolted to the mountain to provide protection along sections of a climbing route with steep drop offs. Rather than being required to carry ropes and carabiners and be skilled in their use, hikers wear a harness that allows them to
clip onto the via ferrata for protection. They are able to climb in areas that otherwise would require technical climbing techniques. Here is a link to a description of climbing using via ferrata. For our ascent of Triglav we will have one licensed guide for every four participants. They will provide helmets, climbing harnesses, and, most importantly, instruction and guidance in their use. Since we will start and end this climb from the same mountain hut, it is possible for those who do not want to do the via ferrata to stay at the hut or do a local walk originating from the hut on their own.

**NOTE:** The climb up Triglav using via ferrata has more exposure and higher risk than the rest of our trip. Based on their observations during the days prior to the Triglav ascent, the leaders will evaluate each participant’s fitness for the climb and, may EXCLUDE any participant that, in their best judgement, is not ready for the ascent.

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**Trip Details**

Map of the Region of Slovenia showing our sites and trekking routes
Itinerary

Day 1 (Monday August 31):
Fly from the US.

Day 2 (September 1):
Arrive in Ljubljana, Slovenia. We will meet in the late afternoon at the hotel and then have a welcome dinner (overnight in a hotel in Ljubljana).

Day 3 (September 2):
After breakfast at our hotel we set off by bus to the village of Predjama, where we visit the majestic Predjama Castle. The castle is carved into a cave entrance on a 403-foot high stonewall built into the side of a mountain. We will explore the Renaissance castle and learn about the legend of Erazem of Predjama. After visiting the Castle we drive a short distance to the Škocjan Caves, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Škocjan Caves were created by the Reka River, which left a gorge ending with a wall where the river disappears underground. We will walk through the cave, filled with many fossils and numerous formations, and follow the Reka River to an underground lake and waterfall. After a full day, we drive to Kranjska Gora to spend the night. Dinner on your own.
Day 4 (September 3):

A fabulous start to the trip begins with a hike over Vršič, Slovenia's highest mountain pass. We climb out of the alpine town of Kranjska Gora, over the pass, and then descend into the Trenta Valley with the Soča River thundering beside us. We will get panoramic views into the heart of the Julian Alps, and its most majestic peaks. Day ends in Trenta. Transfer to Bovec for overnight accommodations.

Ascent: 3350ft.; descent: 4000ft., 11.8 miles. Approximately 7 hours walking.

Day 5 (September 4):

We begin the day with a transfer back to Trenta. Today the Soča Trail takes us along the sparkling emerald Soča river as it snakes its way through the valley. Reputed to be one of the planet's most beautiful rivers, we will criss-cross wooden bridges and follow it through the Great Soča Gorge (Velika Korita). This section is so magical that the Chronicles of Narnia was partly filmed here. Tonight's accommodation is again in Bovec. Ascent: 1200 ft.; descent: 1770 ft.; 13 miles. Approximately 6 1/2 hours walking.
Day 6 (September 5):

Today is a day of waterfalls. First we encounter the beautiful Virje Waterfall. Later we will see the Boka Waterfall, the biggest in Slovenia. Pure alpine water from the Gljun River flows down from the nearby Kanin mountains and bursts out into a multi-stranded waterfall 60 feet wide, cascading into a beautiful pool of varying shades of green. We hike to the little village of Dreznica, set high above the Isonzo valley. Heavy fighting took place here during WWI. If there is time, we will visit the small military museum with its collection of war memorabilia. We transfer to Kobarid for accommodations. Ascent: 1930 ft.; descent: 1500 ft.; 14.3 miles. Approximately 7 hours walking.

Day 7 (September 6):

We begin our day with a transfer back to Dreznica. With today’s hike we begin the Path of Peace, a memorial trail dedicated to the casualties of WWI. It passes by more outdoor museums and numerous chapels. We will view the stunning scenery of the Western Slovenian Alps. The hike ends in Tolmin. Ascent: 3070 ft.; descent 4150 ft.; 13 miles. Approximately 7 1/2 hours walking.
Day 8 (September 7):

We begin with a transfer from Tolmin to the parking lot at Monte Poclabuz/Na Gradu where we visit an open air World War I museum. We will get breathtaking views from the Kolovrat Ridge. We then descend along the Path of Peace. When we reach the town of Tribilj Superiore we will be transferred to Ribcev Laz near Lake Bohinj for accommodations. 
Ascent: 0 ft.; descent: 2725ft.; 6.5 miles. Approximately 3.5 hours walking.
Lake Bohinj

Day 9 (September 8):

We leave our excess baggage behind and begin our trek through the Julian Alps. We will visit the Savica Waterfall, one of the most famous and popular in Slovenia. An alpine karst spring flows to the top of the waterfall and then cascades 250 feet. We stay at the Komna Hut. Ascent: 3250 ft.; descent 200 ft.; 9 miles. Approximately 6 hours walking.

Day 10 (September 9):

We hike to the Koca na Prehodavcih hut. Walking in an easterly direction we reach the Black Lake - the lowest-lying and warmest of the seven Triglav lakes. It is named for its location in a basin in the middle of the forest, which stretches right to the edge of the Komarča rock face.

Ascent: 1275 ft.; descent 700 ft.; 5.0 miles. Approximately 5 hours walking.

Day 11 (September 10):

Today we admire the beauty of one of the Park’s seven lakes, Zeleno Jezero (Green Lake), enjoy beautiful views into the valley of the Triglav Lakes and end the day with a walk across the Hribarice pass (2358 m). We will stay at Planika hut.

Ascent: 3100 ft.; descent 930 ft.; 6.5 miles. Approximately 7 hours walking.
Climbing Mt Triglav using the via ferrata

Day 12 (September 11):

It is said that every Slovenian citizen should climb Mount Triglav at least once in their lifetime, and after today you can count yourself among that distinguished group. After breakfast, we will ascend to the top of Slovenia's highest peak at 9396 ft. with the help of a via ferrata ("iron way," a type of protected, anchored climbing route). Three licensed guides will accompany our group. We will wear helmets and climbing harness, which clip onto a steel cable permanently affixed to the mountain. From the summit, the expansive views extend all the way to the Adriatic Sea, Italian Dolomites, and the glaciers of East Tyrol. After the climb, we return to Planika Hut.

Ascent and descent: 1300 ft.; 1.4 miles. Approximately 5 hours walking.

Day 13 (September 12):

We reluctantly leave the heart of the Julian Alps and descend slowly to Pokljuka getting glorious views of Triglav and its neighboring peaks. We'll stay in a hotel in Pokljuka, and will be reunited with our luggage. Ascent 500 ft. descent 3635 ft.; 6.5 miles. Approximately 5 hours walking.

Day 14 (September 13):

Today we will have a morning transfer to Bled, and we will walk to and then hike through Vintgar Gorge, which is just a few miles from Bled. Wooden walkways pass through this one mile gorge carved by the Radovna River and crisscross the often emerald colored river several times over rapids, waterfalls and pools. Ascent and descent: 1200 ft.; 8.8 miles. Approximately 4 hours walking. Dinner on your own. Overnight in Bled.
Day 15 (September 14):

Today we will enjoy the beautiful town of Bled, nestled at the foot of the Julian Alps. Slovenia’s only island sits in the middle of a glacial alpine lake. A church on the small island is still visited by pilgrims today. We will cross the lake by a traditional boat called a “pletna” to visit the church as well as circumnavigate the lake on foot, hiking to the medieval Bled Castle perched high above the lake on a towering precipice. We will tour the castle and enjoy great views of the lake and mountains. We will stay at a hotel near Lake Bled and enjoy a farewell dinner. Ascent and descent: 1300 ft.; 5.5 miles. Approximately 4 hours walking
Day 16 (September 15):

Our trip ends at the hotel after breakfast. We will make our way on our own to the Ljubljana airport and home, or possibly other destinations if you wish to extend your trip...

PARTICIPANT PROFILE AND EXPECTATIONS

You should have a keen interest in cultural explorations and enjoy moderate - strenuous hiking. On an average day we will walk for 5-8 hours and cover 6-14 miles. Daily elevation gain ranges from 1,200’ – to 4,000’. You need to be prepared to commit yourself to keeping in shape between the time you sign up for this trip to the time you depart on it.

You should recognize that you may find yourself in closer quarters or be less comfortable than you are used to at home. You should make it a priority to help others on the trip and contribute to their having a great time. If you do that, you will have a great time.

This trip has two moderate-strenuous treks geared towards the experienced hiker and outdoors traveler. We will be hiking for 12 consecutive days. Some days will be lengthy with significant elevation gains; others will be shorter and easier. You should have at least intermediate to advanced hiking skills and be able to hike at least 10 miles every day, with moderate elevation gains, while carrying everything you need for 5 days as well as enough equipment to keep you safe in the event of bad weather or injury.

When you participate in this activity, you should be in proper condition for the challenges outlined in this prospectus and equipped with appropriate gear. You should always be aware of the risks involved and conduct yourself accordingly. You are ultimately responsible for your own safety. Prior to your acceptance as a participant in this trip, you will be asked to discuss your capabilities and experience with us. We may also request references to confirm your fitness level and suitability for participating in trip activities. Please do not be offended by our questions.

While the itinerary in this prospectus is what the leaders have planned at the time of writing, various factors may require changes for reasons of safety, transportation or lodging availability, and unforeseeable circumstances (such as weather considerations, natural disasters in areas to be visited, or recommendations of governmental agencies). The leaders reserve the right to make such changes as necessary, both before and during the trip.

It may happen on any trip that a trip member is or becomes unable to participate in one or more of the planned activities. Leaders in their sole judgment have the right and obligation to refuse participation in any activity to any group member for reasons of safety, whether it be of the group or of the individual. Illness, injury or lack of proper gear or fitness for a particular activity are examples of some conditions that might result in a participant's being unable to perform one or more activity. Leaders may try to find a substitute activity for the trip member, but this may not always be possible.
ACCOMMODATIONS
We will spend 10 nights in 2- and 3- star hotels, two persons/room with private baths, and 4 nights in mountain huts. The hotels will provide twin-bedded (i.e. two separate mattresses) rooms. In Europe twin beds are sometimes immediately side-by-side in a single bed-frame, while in the US twin beds are in separate bed-frames and are separated by a few inches. On the first trek we will be staying in hotels with showers and sheets and towels provided.

The huts provide blankets and pillows: you must have a sleep sack and a travel towel. Accommodations are typically in bunk rooms with shared bathrooms. They will be simple and rustic, but comfortable. There are facilities for washing, but most likely do not have showers. Meals are served in cozy dining areas, and wine or beer is available (at individual expense). Each hut has its own charm, unique character, and spectacular view! The hut experience only applies to the second trek.

WEATHER
Weather is likely to be warm in the cities and towns, with a high of 85 degrees F at that time of year. In the higher elevations it is likely to be 50-60, and perhaps in the forties in the evening or early morning. There is always a possibility of precipitation, particularly in the mountains where thunderstorms are not uncommon.

SAFETY AND RISKS
Participant safety is a high priority for all AMC-sponsored events. Participants should be aware that there are risks associated with outdoor adventure activities, including but not limited to adverse weather and environmental conditions, remote locations of our trips, and
transportation in vehicles or on foot. Aside from any personal medical problems, participants should be aware of the possibilities of bug bites, dehydration, sunburn and other heat or cold related problems. You should regularly use sunscreen, take care to be adequately hydrated and bring water on all day trips. While on the via ferrata portion of the trip participants need to follow the instruction and guidance of the licensed guides. Please carefully read and sign the AMC liability waiver document.

TRIP COST

The trip price is $3,875 for AMC members. Non-members can join AMC for $50, and get the same price. This will cover the following items:

- Lodging, breakfasts and dinners (with the exception of two dinners on your own on days three and ten) from the welcome dinner in Ljubljana through breakfast on the last day of the trip
- All transportation between Ljubljana and Kranjska Gora
- Entrance fees to all sites
- Emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage

All lunches, trail snacks, beverages (e.g. coffee/tea, mineral water, alcohol, etc) and other personal expenses are NOT included. Your transportation to Ljubljana and return from Kranjska Gora is your responsibility. The trip leaders will advise you as much as you need and will facilitate group travel. There are several flight options to Ljubljana via other European cities. At this time, we estimate that the price for a round trip between the east coast and Ljubljana, Slovenia will be ~ $1200.

The final trip cost may be adjusted in accordance with the best final arrangements we can make and currency fluctuations. Any savings we achieve, as well as any cost increases, will be passed back to you. Our cost estimates are conservative, and so a refund is considerably more likely than a price increase.

AMC Adventure Travel trips are run on a non-profit basis. Leaders are volunteers who are not compensated except for their travel costs associated with the trip. The advertised trip cost includes a surcharge which goes toward the administrative expenses of the AMC Adventure Travel program.

The trip fee includes emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage, which is required by the AMC. It does not include insurance for travel delay, interruption, or cancellation, or for baggage loss. If the possibility of such problems concerns you, individual travel insurance is suggested. The AMC has a recommended vendor whose material will be sent to you if your application is accepted.

Any unspent funds will be refunded to the participants. If the trip’s financial position is strong enough at the start, the leaders may make partial refunds during the trip, in the form of payments toward some meals and/or free time activities which would otherwise not be included.

APPLICATION and CANCELLATION

We expect a group of 12 people, including the leaders. If you would like to sign up for this trip, send Ron or Jess an email. We will send you a link to the application forms. Mail the registration deposit of $1,500 and all required forms to Ron Janowitz at the address shown on the application form. You will not actually be accepted, and your check will not be deposited, until the leader has determined by telephone conversation with you that you and the trip are a good match. The final balance of $2,375 is due February 1, 2020. Deposit checks from waitlisted
applicants will not be cashed until they confirm continued interest in joining the trip. All payments by check should be payable to the Appalachian Mountain Club.

Our cancellation policy is based on several considerations. Cancellation will not be allowed to raise the cost to the other participants or to the leaders. Minimum penalty schedule: $200. If actual costs (expenses already incurred on your behalf, and any unavoidable future expenses that will be incurred as a result of your registration and cancellation) are higher, they will be assessed instead, unless they can be applied toward another acceptable participant.

This trip is likely to fill quickly. If you are interested, you should apply as soon as possible. When registration is complete, we will send all participants the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all those going on the trip. In the unlikely event that the trip is cancelled because not enough acceptable participants apply, everything you have paid will be refunded in full.

QUESTIONS and REQUESTING APPLICATION MATERIALS

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Ron or Jess. Ron can be reached at 603-625-9848 before 9PM Eastern Time or at ron@ronjanowitz.com. Jess can be reached at (203) 710-6637 before 9PM Eastern Time or at jlhalvorsen@gmail.com.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Video showing one company’s via ferrata ascent of Mt Triglav:

https://youtu.be/MB566p5tr30

Good overview of best Slovenian sites (we visit most of these):

https://www.cntraveler.com/gallery/best-places-to-visit-in-slovenia

Another guide with Slovenia tourist suggestions including how to spend extra time in Ljubljana:

https://www.treksplorer.com/what-to-do-in-slovenia-itinerary-10-days/

Good article about Slovenia:

https://www.britannica.com/place/Slovenia

Interesting Article about Predjama Castle:

https://perceptivetravel.com/blog/2016/10/03/the-legend-of-predjama-castle/
TRIP LEADERS

Ron Janowitz: Ron lives in New Hampshire and regularly hikes in the White Mountains. He has been leading AMC Adventure Travel trips for ten years. He has led AMC trips to the National Parks in Utah, Olympic National Park, Sedona, the Cascade Mountains, Death Valley, Idaho, Slovakia, Patagonia, Peru, Scotland, India, Switzerland, Ireland, Italy and Albania. He looks forward to exploring this unique area with the participants on this trip.

Jess Halvorsen: Jess is a 4-season volunteer leader with AMC Boston’s Hiking and Backpacking committee, and has led or co-led more than 50 trips with the group. She is the coordinator of the 2017-18 and 2018-19 Boston Chapter Winter Hiking Program, and has completed all-season ascents of the New England 67 4,000-footers. She has also spent a season with Olympic National Park’s Wilderness Resources crew, including several week-plus backpacking trips. She holds a master’s degree in Environmental Management, is Wilderness First Aid certified, and in her daily life, she works in an office and enjoys running to stay in shape for her hiking adventures.