



## **Exploring Slovenia's Julian Alps and Beyond:**

two treks and balkan culture in an undiscovered corner of the Alps

July 9, 2022 – July 23, 2022 (trip# 2211)



Triglav National Park

### **Overview**

Join us for a wonderful fifteen-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.



Slovenia's Place in Europe

## Trip Difficulty

This trip is rated [5/6 - vigorous](#). 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 Bled with its picturesque island church and cliffside castle and walk through a gorge with emerald cascades. 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 moderate 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 after this first trek. We will then embark on another five day trek staying in hotels along a south to north route ending at Kranjska Gora on Slovenia's northern border with Austria. 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.



Trenta Valley

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.**

## Trip Details



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

## Itinerary

### Day 0 (Friday July 8):

Fly from the US.

### Day 1 (July 9):

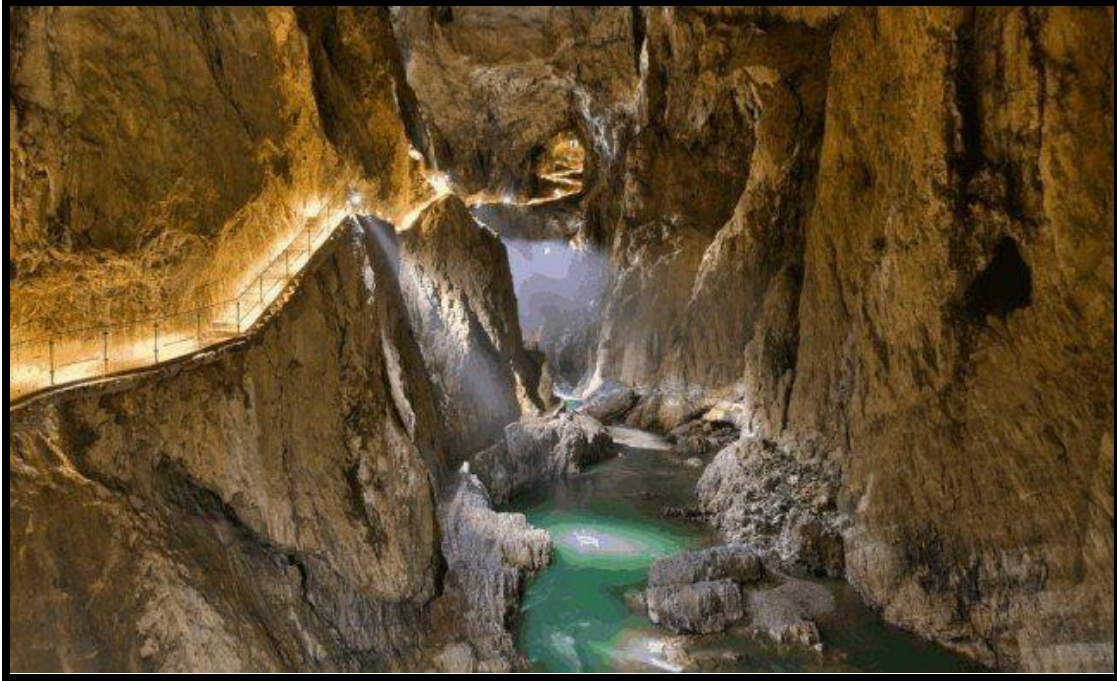
Arrive in Ljubljana, Slovenia. We will meet in the late afternoon at the hotel and then have a welcome dinner (overnight in a hotel in Ljubljana).

### Day 2 (July 10):

After breakfast at our hotel we set off by bus to visit **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 visiting the caves, we head to the village of Predjama, where the majestic **Predjama Castle** is located. 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 before returning to our hotel in Ljubljana. Dinner not included.



Škocjan Caves



Predjama Castle

**Day 3 (July 11):**

In the morning we will take a one hour public bus to 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 the lake in Bled.

Ascent and descent: 1300 ft.; 5.5 miles. Approximately 4 hours walking.



Lake Bled

**Day 4 (July 12):**

Today we walk to and then hike through **Vintgar Gorge**, which is just a few miles from Bled. Wooden walkways pass through this 1 mile gorge carved by the Radovna River and crisscross the often emerald colored river several times over rapids, waterfalls and pools. In the late afternoon we will be transported to Pokljuka to our night's lodging at a hotel. Ascent and descent: 1200 ft.; 8.8 miles. Approximately 4 hours walking.





Vintgar Gorge

#### Day 5 (July 13):

Our luggage will be picked up in the morning and delivered to our hotel in Bohinj, which we reach on day 10. Today we start our first trek with a hike into the heart of Triglav National Park and the Julian Alps. The trail slowly ascends amid glorious views of Mt. Triglav (Slovenia's highest mountain at 9396 ft.) and its neighboring peaks. We will spend the night at Planika Hut, right underneath Triglav.

Ascent: 3600 ft.; 6.5 miles. Approximately 6 hours walking.

#### Day 6 (July 14):

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 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 harnesses, 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.



Climbing Mt Triglav using the via ferrata

#### **Day 7 (July 15):**

We start today with a walk across the Ribarice Pass (7736 ft.). We will pass one of the Park's seven lakes, Zeleno Jezero (Green Lake), and then enjoy a beautiful view into the rest of the Valley of the Triglav Lakes. Another three hours walk will bring us to the Koca pri Savici mountain hut on the shore of Double Lake.

Descent: 2300ft.; 6.8 miles. Approximately 5 hours walking.

#### **Day 8 (July 16):**

Walking in a westerly direction, we will reach 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 Komarca rock face. We will end the day with a great view of Bohinj Lake and stay at Komna Hut.

Ascent: 1120 ft.; descent 1640 ft.; 5.3 miles. Approximately 4-5 hours walking.





Bohinj Lake

#### **Day 9 (July 17):**

Today we will visit 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 and subsequently feeds the mighty **Lake Bohinj**. Then we can ascend Mt. Vogel (5026 ft.) with a cable car and enjoy a perfect panoramic view of the Julian Alps over a piping hot stew. A walk along the northern shore of Bohinj lake will bring us to Ribčev Laz village, where we can celebrate the end of our first trek with delicious homemade brandy and schnapps in the local bars. Our luggage will be waiting for us at our hotel. Dinner not included.

Descent: 3940 ft.; 11.2 miles. Approximately 5-6 hours walking.

#### **Day 10 (July 18):**

After breakfast at our hotel we will be transported 2 ½ hours to start our second trek. All our accommodations for this trek are in hotels, and our luggage will be transported and waiting for us every night, so we can enjoy the next several days hiking with small day packs. We will start walking in Italy just over the border, where we visit an open air World War I museum, and then another museum when we return to Slovenia as we walk along the famous Walk of Peace (Sentiero della Pace). This is a memorial trail dedicated to the casualties of WWI. We will get breathtaking views from the Kolovrat Ridge and descend to the town of Tolmin.

Ascent: 2884 ft.; descent: 4291 ft.; 12.1 miles. Approximately 6 ½ hours walking.



### Day 11 (July 19):

Today's hike continues on the Path of Peace, with stunning scenery of the Western Slovenian Alps, and passes by more outdoor museums and numerous chapels. We will hike to the little village of Dreznica, set high above the Isonzo valley. Heavy fighting took place in this area during WW1. Following our hike we will be transferred to the nearby town of Kobarid where we stay in a hotel. If there is time, we will visit the small military museum with its collection of war memorabilia and the nearby Napoleon Bridge with views of the mountains and Soča River. Ascent: 440 ft.; descent 3250 ft.; 13 miles. Approximately 6 ½ hours walking.



World War I Memorial near Dreznica

### Day 12 (July 20):

Today is a day of waterfalls. After a short transfer back to the trail we start hiking. First we encounter **Boka Waterfall**, the biggest in Slovenia. Later we will see the beautiful Virje Waterfall. 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. Tonight's accommodation is in a hotel in Bovec.

Ascent: 1500 ft.; descent: 1930 ft.; 14.3 miles. Approximately 7 hours walking.

**Day 13 (July 21):**

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. A short transfer brings us back to our hotel in Bovec.

Ascent: 1770 ft.; descent: 1200 ft.; 13 miles. Approximately 6 1/2 hours walking.

**Day 14 (July 22):**

A fabulous end to the trip with a hike over Vršič, Slovenia's highest mountain pass. After a short transfer back to the trail we ascend out of the Trenta Valley with the Soca River thundering beside us we will get panoramic views into the heart of the Julian Alps, and it's most majestic peaks. We will descend into the alpine town of Kranjska Gora, where we will be surrounded by the beauty of the western Julian Alps to spend our last night in a hotel.

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



Soča River

## Day 15 (July 23):

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.



Relaxing together after a great day on the trail

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.

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 first trek. On the second trek we will be staying in hotels with showers and sheets and towels provided.



Planika Hut

## **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.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

For those interested, this excursion can involve more than a splendid hiking trip. Dan is a talented, semi-professional photographer whose photographs have been exhibited and published in many places. Among other honors, he won the AMC photo contest three times. There is absolutely no requirement that you be interested in photography, or even bring a camera, and this is not a class or workshop. First, and foremost, it is a hiking trip in a beautiful region. However, if you are a seasoned photographer or a budding novice, or just curious, Dan will share his perspective on any of your photographic interests. When convenient we will try to be out in the early morning and early evening light to take advantage of the best times for photography. Our hikes will also be paced to allow for photo stops.

## **TRIP COST**

The trip price is \$4,225 for AMC members and \$4,325 for non-members. To join the AMC and get the lower price, (2020 membership pricing \$50 individual, \$75 family) click [here](#). 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

## **REGISTRATION and CANCELLATION**

To apply, you must complete and submit the application, confidential medical form, supplemental medical form (if appropriate) and acknowledgement and assumption of risk and release form. You can download them from this website: [Slovenia 2022 Participant Documents](#). Mail the registration deposit of \$1,500 and all required forms to Steve Cohen 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 is due February 1, 2022. 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*.

The AMC Adventure Travel cancellation policy is based on the fact that your cancellation may not raise the cost to the other participants or to the leaders. Once you are notified the trip is declared to run as scheduled, the minimum cancellation fee is \$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. Should the leaders be able to replace you, you may be charged a reduced penalty. This will generally not be determined until after the trip. Failure to make trip payment(s) in a timely manner will be considered a cancellation.

On rare occasions AMC Adventure Travel may need to cancel all or a portion of a trip due to force majeure [e.g. terrorism, local health conditions, natural disaster, changes in local regulatory environment, etc.]. In the event of such a cancellation, your trip fee will be refunded



less any trip expenses already incurred plus any non-cancellable future trip expenditures. AMC Adventure Travel is not responsible for additional expenses incurred by you in preparing for the trip (including non-refundable air tickets, visa fees, gear or medical expenses, etc.

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 Steve or Dan. Steve can be reached at 617 997-6861 before 9PM Eastern Time or at [scohen1234@gmail.com](mailto:scohen1234@gmail.com). Dan can be reached at 617 750-0511 before 9PM Eastern Time or at [danstone987@gmail.com](mailto:danstone987@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



**Steve Cohen** leads three season hikes for the Hiking/Backpacking Committee of the AMC Boston Chapter. Since 2012 Steve has planned and led nineteen hiking/trekking-oriented Adventure Travel trips to such destinations the Haute Route (from Chamonix, France to Zermatt, Switzerland), the Alta Via II through the Italian Dolomites, the tour of the Jungfrau region (Switzerland), Patagonia, the high mountains

huts of Austria, etc. He lived in Europe for four years and is fluent in both French and German. Steve is currently chair of Adventure Travel.

**Dan Stone** is a three-season leader with the Hiking/Backpacking Committee of the AMC Boston Chapter. He has led or co-led AMC adventure travel trips to Yosemite, Albania, Colorado and the Alsace in France. He has completed all the 48 NH 4,000 footers in winter as well as New England's 100 highest peaks. He has also hiked the entire Appalachian Trail mostly as a series of day hikes. He has traveled extensively, having visited 49 states and over 60 countries.



With a few exceptions, he has designed all his travel adventures himself, as well as coordinating many trips with friends to tackle the AT. Dan is an avid photographer, has had hiking photos published in calendars and books, and has won first place in the AMC photo contest three times. Dan has designed and led a series of AMC hiking weekends that incorporate photography. He enjoys sharing his photos and knowledge of photography with others.