

A multi-day hike through the farmland of the Dolenjska, Slovenia



Photos: Bostjan Pucelj, Tea Brenko, Tomaz Levicar and Hans Plas

Choosing a multi-day hike in the Dolenjska region of Slovenia is choosing a green, peaceful and romantic hiking adventure.

History

Slovenia declared independence in 1991, during the Yugoslav Wars. Before that, the country was part of the Yugoslav Republic. Today, Slovenia is one of the youngest sovereign states in Europe and also a member of the EU. The currency is the euro.

We chose the farmland in the southeast corner of the country: the Dolenjska region in the historic area of the Krain, a former duchy. In the nineteenth century, this area was transformed into a crown country... Are you still there?

Indeed, from the thirteenth century, the Austrian dukes held sway over region. As a result, in the early nineteenth century, the Krain was absorbed into the Austrian empire, which then covered much of the Balkans. In 1849, the region was then granted the status of a crown country within the empire. For the following seven decades, the Habsburg monarchy ruled the Krain. Most people know this royal house mainly from Empress Sissi, with that nasty and aloof mother-in-law of hers. Or of Emperor Franz Joseph with his many mistresses, who, by the way, do not appear in later films. After all, the fairy tale of the empire had to remain romantic. The monarchy came to an end in the last year of World War I (1918).



Europe's oldest hiking trail

The country has thousands of kilometers of hiking trails. Popular are the trails in the Julian Alps through Triglav National Park. A particular attraction here is Lake Bled on the edge of the Park. Many hikers come here for the Slovenian Mountain Trail, also known as "the oldest hiking trail in Europe." This trail runs through the Pohorje, the Julian Alps, the Kamnik-Savinja Alps, the Karawanks and the southwestern part of Slovenia. Here you will find the "oh's" and "ah's" views.



Krka river Novo Mesto

The capital of the Dolenjska region is Novo Mesto, on the Krka River. Among its features are eight castles richly decorated with historical buildings. Also a great place to start a tour of the region.

The walk

The walk goes along farm tracks, country roads and cart tracks that connect the various lovely villages. Left and right you see the vineyards on the hills. With in between the white farmhouses with red roofs and old churches in the same color and style. These characteristic buildings nicely complement the fresh green surroundings.

When you read these sentences like this, I can imagine that all sorts of cliché images come to mind. And so it is! A few more fitting traits: peaceful, traditional, handicrafts and delicious food from what the region grows and makes. We read an account of a hike in this area that included the sentence, "We took a small detour and suddenly found ourselves at a fantastically beautiful piece of nature. Really, the Efteling* is nothing like it". Although the landscape sometimes indeed reminds of the cliché image of an Efteling-nature, the environment "still" forces admiration. Strange but true.

With good preparation, it is possible to visit the necessary castles and monasteries during your hike. Some of these buildings are fantastically restored, such as the castle Otočec, near Novo Mesto. If you want to spend the night here in a bedroom with marble, oriental carpets, antiques and parquet floors, this is your place. In doing so, make sure you bring enough euros.

Local wine and folk architecture

Slightly simpler but just as intense are the wine tastings along the way. Simply at the farmer's home or cellar. The local winemakers here are only too proud of their wine. And you will notice! An additional advantage: mass production is (still) rare here. According to connoisseurs, this makes the local wine pure and genuine. Just like many other products. Like fruit cake with coffee along the way. Indeed: then you also get fruit, instead of a dubious beet pulp with all kinds of E-numbers. And, for lovers: sausage is sausage here!



Potica

Special attention, in our opinion, requires the kozolec, special wooden "drying racks." These racks are used, among other things, for hay in the spring and corn in the fall. The kozolec are therefore a fine example of "folk architecture". There is even an open-air museum set up for these racks (also wedding venue). Beautiful specimens can be seen in the village of Šentrupert.



kozolec, hay rack

General rout-tips

- Wild camping is not allowed.
- Hikes in the Dolenjska are generally easy to do. Most tours are also suitable for children.
- A good map is Planinska Zveza Slovenije Wanderkarte Dolenjska 1:50,000.
- Possibly a bit limited in its range. Publisher: Freytag & Berndt.
- Anno 2020 accommodation along the way is sufficient, we think. When we walked there it gave a problem once but a mediating café owner found an ex-postman, who was willing to open his attic with beds. And also his wine cellar.
- If you enter Slovenia through the Karawank Tunnel, a detour to Lake Bled is recommended. Just keep in mind that hundreds of thousands of tourists have gone before you.
- Try to find local cuisine when dining out. Quality can hardly be surpassed! Moreover then you can get most dishes for very reasonable prices. Try at least once the potica (a cake made of rolled dough with a filling of walnut, tarragon, honey, raisins and poppy seeds).

*

Efteling is a fantasy-themed amusement park in Kaatsheuvel, the Netherlands. The attractions reflect elements from ancient myths and legends, fairy tales.....(Wikipedia)



Tasting with the farmer(s)



a sausage is a sausage