

## Multi-day hiking tour through Istria

Most people know Istria mainly for its beautiful beaches and clear blue sea. But did you know that you can also enjoy hiking in the interior of this peninsula? With its vineyards, wooded hills and ancient villages, Istria is a true hiking paradise!



### Istria

Istria is a peninsula stretching across three countries, surrounded by the Adriatic Sea. To the west lies an Italian headland and the part to the north belongs to Slovenia. However, most of Istria belongs to the westernmost province of Croatia.

According to Wikipedia, tourism in Istria dates back to Roman times. Even the wealthy citizens of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy (1867-1918) already knew how to appreciate the peninsula. As early as the 1960s, you could book eight-day bus trips to Opatija or Pula ( from the continent) , two beautiful old port towns on the Adriatic. Two bus days there, two days back and two hot meals in southern Germany! Where else?



inland vineyard

Still the coastal areas of the peninsula are extremely popular with tourists. For the hiker, the largely unspoiled, much quieter interior of the peninsula is more rewarding. Several years ago, we made a six-day hike there, partly through the Croatian part, partly through the Slovenian part.

### **The hike**

Possibly because of the popularity of the coastal areas, there was not much information beforehand about the hiking possibilities in the interior. With which the motto this trek became, "we'll see!" Such an attitude alone can be reassuring and liberating. After all, it relieves you of the task of reaching a predetermined sleeping place on time. Or keeping an eye out to make sure you don't miss anything you read in advance. Instead, you spontaneously follow the advice of a family in whose garden you accidentally wandered in to walk toward Momjan. No strings attached! "Tamo vrlo lijep dvorac," says the family.

Now it turned out that the advised castle was nothing more than a ruin, but the road to it was beautiful! Olive groves, vineyards and church towers on the inhabited hills. The Italian influences are palpable. Istria has the same ancient towns, pastel-colored houses and rolling hills that we know so well from Italy. The comparison to Tuscany is obvious. "Agroturizam" became a household word after the first night in one of those sleep-at-the-farm facilities. Including a best wine and a delicious meal.

### **Buzet**

When the farmer inquired the next morning what our plans were this day, his reaction was a mixture of disbelief and disgust. "I to ne radiš!" What then? In the end, we set off first for a bit with his car (the son happy again, too) and then continued on foot to Buzet. Again, a beautiful walk through a hilly landscape. Buzet is a town on the Mirna River with many Italian influences, both in the architecture and in the number of pizza restaurants. Furthermore, you'll notice that truffles are brought up almost everywhere, appropriately and inappropriately, but who cares? Amsterdam is also full of wooden shoes in the summer!

### **Across the border**

The next day we crossed the border into the Slovenian part of Istria. Now Slovenia has been a member of the EU since 2004, while Croatia would only join years later. In other words, without preparation, this was going to be something of a "smuggler's border crossing. And so it did. But a very nice one! Residents of the village of Crnica had set out a marked hiking trail (blue-white-red hearts), which led through the mighty rocky outcrops and into a kind of tundra landscape, of impressive vastness and beauty. The route explanation by the Kovačić family lasted over an hour. After drinking a couple of large glasses and eating delicious Kremšnita pastries for fitness, we set out on the climb.



### **Border crossing**

If you don't have everything prepared, chances are you will again experience deliciously exciting small-child feelings of forbidden-and-doing it. By the way: we don't advise it, because after all, it is forbidden. The stage ended in Gračišče, Slovenia. Where the owner of the sobe (a kind of B&B) put us on the trail of extraordinary frescoes.

### **Hrastovlje**

From here it is a two-hour walk to Hrastovlje. Along the way, culture and history buffs can delight in the medieval frescoes in a three-aisled walled Romanesque church. Holy Trinity Church from the 12th century. The 1490s frescoes depict, among other things, the creation of the world, the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden, the work of peasants in different seasons and the famous Dance of Death. The Danse Macabre. The latter is the most famous part of the fresco. Fascinating!

[See also the video on our website.](#)



The closing days took us through the beautiful hill country between Gračišče and Koper, with the villages on the steep hills. Then we traveled through the Dragonja valley. No shortage of vineyards. Finally, to be taken by the now familiar sobe owner in Gračišče to the airport of Trieste (Italy), only 25 kilometers away.

### General route tips

- Chances are that there is currently a better infrastructure for hikers in the area. For example, in terms of marked hiking trails.
- We do not yet have reader's advice for a good hiking map. The Rother hiking guide Istria describes 50 hikes on the peninsula.
- If it is possible to fly again then Trieste airport is the obvious choice. The city itself does not have much to offer, in our opinion. Venice is still 160 kilometers away to the west....
- In about 1.5 hours by bus you will be in Buje, where we started our hike.
- If you want to combine your hike with a city visit think Croatian Rovinj or Poreč, on the west coast, or Motovun at the top of a hill.
- Free camping is not officially allowed in Croatia and Slovenia.
- In the restaurants, try to avoid the tasteless Western cholesterol-bombs of fast food and orient yourself to the original Istrian cuisine. Hikingmagazine.nu is not about gastronomic highlights but you can rightly call the Istrian cuisine "a paradise for gastronomes." There's really no need to add truffles (all the time)....



**Momjan and Buzet (above)**