



Julian & Carnic Alps

HIGHLIGHTS

- Winding forest paths and soaring alpine rock walls on the **Fusine–Mangart Loop** (p181)
- The rich flora and stark, stony landscape of high limestone plateaus on the **Slovenian Two-Step** (p182)
- Rifugio Corsi, in a spectacular natural amphitheatre at the foot of mighty **Jôf Fuart** (p185)
- Wide, open spaces and airy ridge-tops around **Monte Carnizza** (p187)

Signature food: *Jota* soup

Celebrated native: Julius Kugy
(mountaineer and writer)

Famous for... Solitude

Ignoring the porous and historically interchangeable borders of Central Europe, the Julian and Carnic Alps sit like a forgotten apostrophe at the end Europe's grandest mountain range.

Encased in the semi-autonomous region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, the area has long been a melting pot for a culturally ambiguous mix of Celts, Lombards, Romans and Venetians. Today, the Carnics straddle the post-1919 border with Austria while large tracts of the Julians spill into neighbouring Slovenia. While Germanic and Slavic influences are rife, the main cultural identity is Friulian, a distinctive northeastern spin on Italian traditionalism.

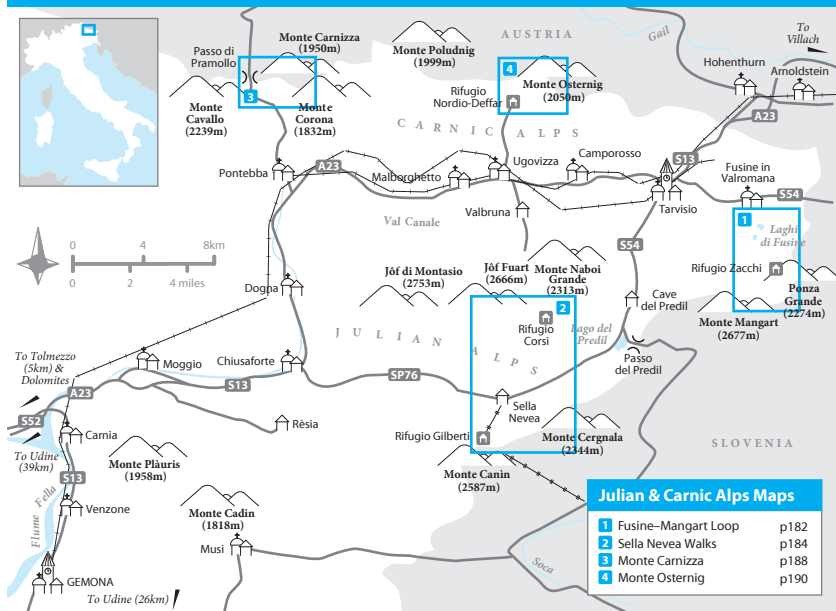
To the walker, the historical background lends an intriguing, if sometimes sobering, air to a visit here. You're bound to notice traces of two world wars, even in improbably high, remote corners but, these days, the mood is anything but antagonistic. On trails in the Carnic Alps it's as common to be greeted with the German 'Grüss Gott' as the Italian 'Salve', and in parts of the Julian Alps you'll hear the occasional Slovene 'Dober dan'.

Greetings in any language, though, are far from frequent. Once away from places where walkers' paths converge – trailheads, passes and some of the more popular *rifugi* (mountain huts) – seeing any person is like spotting a rare bird.

Heavily forested and mostly free of large-scale development (though a new ski lift has ominously just straddled the Slovenian border), the Julian Alps are protected by Slovenia's Triglavski Narodni National Park, a factor that has helped to safeguard the region's environmental integrity. No less appealing or important are the lush uplands of the Carnic Alps, along the Austrian border, which host a great variety of wildflowers and offer walking in a rounded, rolling uplands that contrast majestically with their more rugged eastern cousins.



JULIAN & CARNIC ALPS



CLIMATE

An Alpine climate prevails across the region. Summers are cool and rainy, though fine spells are not uncommon. Winters can be bitterly cold – pre-Alps to the south block warmer air currents from the Mediterranean – and snowfall is abundant. Snow depths reach 2m in Tarvisio, at less than 800m altitude, and snow banks may lie across higher trails well into the summer. Avalanches are common in spring. Conditions vary markedly between the warmer, more sheltered valley floors and the exposed tops, and between sunnier slopes with a southerly aspect and colder, north-facing ones. A couple of glaciers cling to existence on the northern slopes of Monte Canin and Jôf di Montasio in the Julian Alps.

PLANNING

Maps

Many maps are good for planning and access information, including the 1:250,000 *Friuli-Venezia Giulia: carta turistico-stradale*, distributed free by tourist offices in Udine and elsewhere. The Tabacco

1:150,000 *Friuli-Venezia Giulia* map is more detailed and accurate.

Books

Wild Italy (2005), by Tim Jepson, has an enticing couple of pages on the area's natural history. There are numerous publications in Italian, including a comprehensive Club Alpino Italiano (CAI) guide to the marked trails. Free from the APT in Tarvisio, and particularly strong on geology, is the *Discover Nature* series of leaflets describing short walks in the Julian and Carnic Alps – including some of those described in this chapter.

Weather Information

There's a telephone **weather service** (☎ 800 860377) for all of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. The tourist office in Tarvisio posts up-to-date local weather bulletins – most days.

Emergency

The **national mountain rescue service** (☎ 118) can be contacted 24 hours a day. Outside populated areas, making a telephone call will generally mean using a mobile or reaching a *rifugio*.