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Essential Slovenia

This route is ideal for first-time visitors wanting to experience the highlights of the country’s alpine, karst and coastal regions.

Begin in the country’s capital, Ljubljana, allowing at least two nights to take in the sights, restaurants and beautiful riverside setting. Next, head north to Lake Bled, overnighting to allow time for lakeside ambles and taking a pletna (gondola) to Bled Island. Lovely Lake Bohinj, 26km southwest of Lake Bled, makes for a more rustic, less touristy base and has direct views to Mt Triglav.

From here, travel northward to Kranjska Gora, the country’s skiing capital and another good base for hiking. It’s the northern terminus of the spectacular Vršič Pass, a high-altitude roadway (open May to October) that zigzags for some 50km down to the white-water rafting capital of Bovec. Overnight here and the next day continue along routes 102 and 103 to the amazing cave at Postojna. An easy side-trip from here is Predjama, where an impregnable castle set in a cliffside cave defies description.

It’s just a skip to the coastal resorts of Piran and Portorož. If you’re seeking romance, choose Piran; if it’s sun and fun, Portorož is the centre of the action.
With two weeks to explore little Slovenia, you’ll be able to experience the best of the country’s mountains and coast, plus get a good look at the country’s untrampled east.

Allow a couple of nights in Ljubljana, then head north, stopping at one or both of the historic towns of Škofja Loka or Radovljica, to Lake Bled. Overnight and explore the lake and Bled Island, or stay a bit longer for adventure, such as rafting or canyoning. To the southwest, picturesque Lake Bohinj is an excellent base for exploring Triglav National Park or even climbing Mt Triglav itself.

Next head north to ski-capital Kranjska Gora to start your climb up and then down to the Soča Valley via the Vršič Pass. After 50km of hairpin turns you’ll arrive at the country’s white-water rafting capital of Bovec. Overnight here – especially if you plan to do any adventure sports – or in nearby Kobarid, a pretty town with a Mediterranean feel, an amazing WWI history and some of Slovenia's best restaurants.

Continue southward through Nova Gorica to the Vipava Valley and on to the Karst region. Little towns here, like Štanjel to the west, are rich in olives, ruby-red Teran wine, pršut (air-dried ham) and red-tiled roofs.

Further south, following the main Hwy E70 to the coast near Divača, is the awe-inspiring Škocjan Caves, part of an immense system of limestone caves. From here, go coastal. Piran is the most romantic spot on the Adriatic, but Izola has better restaurants and Portorož is more fun. Nearby is Sečovlje and its famous salt pans.

The return journey to Ljubljana passes through Postojna, another amazing cave, with a side trip to Predjama Castle. Avoid the capital altogether and continue driving along Hwy E57 to Celje, stopping to visit the awesome Roman necropolis at Šempeter. Celje is worth an afternoon for its wonderful castle and rich museums but Maribor, Slovenia's second-largest city and regional centre, awaits. The surrounding highlands, the Maribor Pohorje, rate a look but by now you just might want to spend some downtime along the Drava in atmospheric Lent.

Finish your journey in Ptuj, a charming town with a delightful castle and some excellent accommodation.
Eastern and southern Slovenia are known for both their wines and spas. This tour includes the best of each.

From Ljubljana drive southeast to the delightful spa town of Dolenjske Toplice. Otočec ob Krki isn’t far away. Further east, Brežice draws visitors to its Terme Čatež spa complex and the wonderful Bizeljsko-Sremič wine district, known for medium-dry whites and reds and for repnice (caves for storing wine).

Head north on route 219 to Podčetrtek and another inviting spa, Terme Olimia. From here it’s a short distance through the Haloze Hills to atmospheric Rogaška Slatina, Slovenia’s oldest and largest spa, a veritable ‘cure factory’ with a dozen hotels and far more treatments offered.

Head north to the charming town of Ptuj and its nearby Terme Ptuj spa then go east to Ormož, for the start of the important Jeruzalem-Ljutomer district, home to some of the country’s best whites. Walk or hike the wine trail here.

The region’s biggest city and cultural hub, Maribor, is not very far away. Who could possibly resist seeing the world’s oldest (and still productive) grapevine dating back more than three centuries?
Map Legend

### Sights
- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Jain
- Jewish
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Jain
- Jewish
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Jain
- Jewish
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

### Activities, Courses & Tours
- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

### Sleeping
- Sleeping
- Camping

### Eating
- Eating

### Drinking & Nightlife
- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

### Entertainment
- Entertainment

### Shopping
- Shopping

### Transport
- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- S-Bahn/S-train/Subway station
- Taxi
- T-bane/Tunnelbana station
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Tube station
- U-Bahn/Underground station
- Other Transport

### Information
- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

### Geographic
- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

### Population
- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

### Routes
- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

### Boundaries
- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

### Hydrography
- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

### Areas
- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

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*Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book*
OUR WRITERS

Carolyn Bain
Lake Bled & the Julian Alps, Western Slovenia & the Soča Valley, The Karst & the Coast, Southern Slovenia & the Krka Valley

A sucker for Alpine peaks and fairytale lakes, Melbourne-based Carolyn jumped at the chance to add more Central Europe to her guidebook portfolio, which has been heavy on Nordic destinations of late. A travel writer for 15 years, she was delighted to revisit Slovenia on a mission to hike, raft, swim, glamp, explore caves, sample wines, rank waterfalls and castles, and taste-test kremšnita in the name of research. Carolyn also wrote Travel with Children. See more at carolynbain.com.au.

Steve Fallon
Ljubljana, Eastern Slovenia

Steve has been travelling to Slovenia since the early 1990s, when almost no one but the Slovenes had ever heard of the place. Never mind, it was his own private Idaho for over a decade. Though on Se govori slovensko kot jamski človek (he still speaks Slovene like a caveman), Steve considers part of his soul to be Slovenian and returns as often as he can for a glimpse of the Julian Alps in the sun, a dribble of bučno olje and a dose of the ‘dual’. Steve also wrote Plan Your Trip (except Travel with Children), Understand Slovenia and Survival Guide. See more at www.steveslondon.com.