



SLOVENIA - The Karavanke Alps

INTRODUCTION

The Karavanke Alps cut right across northern Slovenia, a seldom explored land of beautiful mountains, sleepy villages and amazing mountain bike trails. This hidden corner of Alpine Europe is covered in ancient tracks, walking paths and mule trails that used to cut across the peaks and passes between mountain villages. Abandoned and unused many of these trails grew over and became wild forests and alpine meadows, until very recently.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Experience the culture, food and stunning landscapes of this remote Alpine region
- Breathtaking singletrack and real exploration
- Expert local guides working alongside SMBLA qualified UK guides
- Vehicle uplifts to take the sting out of the climbing and access the best high mountain singletrack

OUR SLOVENIAN MTB PARTNERSHIP

Each of these tours is guided by a qualified, experienced CycleActive guide from the UK working alongside the very best Slovenian mountain bike guides. This combination gives you the best mix of trail knowledge, route choices, coaching skills and mountain safety – ensuring that you have the best holiday possible.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT HOLIDAY

At CycleActive we carefully grade our trips according to both the level of fitness you need and, for mountain biking, the level of skill you need. We also offer personal advice to anyone who needs it, by email or on the phone, to ensure that you find a holiday suitable for your abilities and desires.

This trip is Fitness Grade 2 & 3. The trip has a mixture of ascents and descents so a reasonable level of fitness is required. However having two guides and a vehicle for many of the uplifts allows for a flexible approach, based upon the groups' abilities.

This trip is Skill grade B & C.

This is a very flexible trip with a mix of terrain. We have focussed on the best singletrack trails with some double track, some scenic fire roads and a range of wild cart tracks, and forest trails too. With two guides and vehicle uplifts we can be flexible in catering for different abilities.

SUMMARY ITINERARY From the UK.

Day 1 (Saturday). Fly to Graz or Ljubljana where we collect you and bring you to our hotel in Crna na Koroskem.

Day 2. Podpetza Mountain ride on the ridgeline singletrack through Santa Helena village.

Day 3. Panorama Tour around mount Olsheva to the stunning Logarska Valley.

Day 4. Green Volcano ride through lush forests on the very joining point of the European and African continental plates.

Day 5. Rest day with optional morning ride on the Motnik Miners Singletrack.

Day 6. Riding beneath Mount Petza in the morning then Jani's Wild Ride in the afternoon.

Day 7. Underground biking through Mount Podpetza followed by the incredible singletrack trails of the White Valley.

Day 8. Transfer to the airport for flights home.

Full details of dates, prices and what is included can be found on our website.



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Detailed Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrival

On arrival day we collect you from the airport and take you up into the mountains to our hotel in the village of Crna na Koroskem (pronounced: churna-na-koroshkm). Here you will meet your guides who will help you to put together your bikes before leaving you to freshen up, ready for dinner. After the meal the guides will give you a short briefing on the trip ahead and the plans for the following day.

Day 2 – Santa Helena Ridge Ride

Our first day on the bikes starts with a short drive to the hamlet of Mizket on the slopes of Podpetza. With two vehicles and a specially built bike trailer we have everything unloaded in no time then we're off on a series of climbs and descents on smooth singletrack trails.

These flowing trails take us through seldom explored montane forests where you're unlikely to see another person. A final fast descent before lunch brings us to the beautiful old church of Santa Helena, situated opposite an old fashioned mountain restaurant where we stop for lunch. Sitting on the terrace, perched on the edge of a great view, we enjoy a meal of traditional smoked meats, cheeses, yoghurts, fresh salads and home made bread.

This afternoon we ride the next ridgeline trail, and it really is a stunner. There are some challenges which you might want to try over again to get them right, but everyone will enjoy this breathtaking start to the week.

Day 3 – Panormama Tour

After the fast flowing singletrack of yesterday we now head out for possibly the most amazing scenic journey in this part of The Alps. Again we transfer upwards to cut out some of the leg work, starting our ride at the highest farm in Slovenia.

The biking first brings us around the slopes of Mount Olsheva. It's exciting in places with high speed descents on loose tracks. You have to remind yourself to look up now and again to enjoy the views across the ridgelines to little churches perched on the hillsides, or the craggy peaks at the end of the Logarska Valley.

Lunch is taken at a little farm where everything is made on the premises. Once we're stuffed we can blast down the long descent to the valley floor to ride across a dried riverbed then on to the sweet singletrack of the Logarska Nature trail. This pops us out right in the heart of the valley, amongst cows with jangling bells chewing on alpine pastures. Diving in to a café we enjoy some cold beers in the sunshine while bikes are loaded for the drive back to the hotel.

Further Info

Slovenia adopts the Euro in 2007 so you may not need to visit a bank if you already have these. If not then there is a bank in the centre of the village where you can withdraw money using your cashcard.

The mix of climbs and descents today makes for a great journey over Podpetza Mountain. Sections can be missed or added depending upon the abilities within the group and the guides can split the group if needed so everyone rides at the right level.

At the end of the day full bike washing facilities are provided in the hotel garden, where we also enjoy freshly baked cakes with tea or cold drinks.

Today's biking is enjoyable for all levels of riders – you can take it easy and enjoy the views or attack the loose descents at high speed, testing your cornering skill and nerve. The main technical challenge is the nature trail which is a rooty, twisty track following a little stream along the valley floor. This can be missed out if needed. For riders who want more singletrack it is possible to take the vehicle transfer just part way back then ride another more demanding trail all the way in to the hotel.



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Day 4 – The Green Volcano

A short morning transfer, or optional fire road climb, brings us to the eastern edge of the Savinjske Alpe. This unique ridge of mini summits ranging from 1200m-1600m makes for an amazing day of mountain biking as we travel almost its entire length from East to West.

Today's ride gets us back into ancient woodlands on some fabulous trails. There is singletrack galore with plenty of roots, shoots and thrilling descents to keep everyone interested. We stop for lunch at an impressive viewpoint – a farm where the lime tree is reputed to be over 700 years old, making it the oldest in the country. From here the descent off the ridge takes in some twisting trails which cut down through dense, natural forest and occasionally pops out into open meadows for some cracking views. We finish in the Bistra Valley for a fast blast back to the hotel.

Day 5 – Rest Day or Motnik Miners Trail

Today is normally a rest day after 3 good, full days out on the bike. The village of Crna has some good little cafes and bars, the hotel itself has a nice garden to relax in and you can enjoy some short walks or bike rides in the nearby area. If you want to visit a good local bike shop then this is just 8km down the valley and you can either go on your bike or we can organise a transfer for you.

For those who want to get out for a few hours on their bikes we'll still be leading a ride. The route starts with a climb to the village of Motnik, a place that used to be home to hundreds of miners but is now just a tiny hamlet. These miners used to walk around the contours of the mountains to get to Crna and their track is still used today, but now by bikers. Its very narrow and hangs on the edge of the hillside so this isn't one for the feinthearted. Just before the end we join up with a fast, rocky descent that fires us out back on the edge of Crna, just minutes from the hotel.

Day 6 – Mount Petza and Jani's Wild Ride

Today we explore two totally different mountains on opposite sides of the same valley. First we transfer part way up the slopes of Petza Mountain, one of the biggest and most significant peaks of the region. We spend the morning exploring the rocky, loose trails which contour round its slopes before cutting down through singletracks and fast trails to the valley floor for lunch.

After a cracking meal at one of our favourite local bars we jump into the vehicle and head back up to the highest farm that we visited on day 3 (this is a great climb for those who prefer to pedal up). From here we join Jani's Wild Ride, an amazing route through wild forests, climbing first then descending on crazy singletrack through dense undergrowth, across log bridges and onto a technical, rooty, rocky trail to finish. It's a great end to the day and from the bottom we're just minutes away from our tea and cakes!

The Savinjske Alpe ridge exactly marks the line where the European and African Continental Plates moved together and joined. This collision of plates so many millions of years ago made the area volcanic, although there are no active volcanoes here today. However, the minerals from lava do create incredibly rich soil, making this one of the lushest areas within the Karavanke region. Hence the name – Green Volcano.

The guided ride today is optional but if you want to do something different on your bike then talk to the leaders. This area is covered with trails, some very easy and some very tough, so let them know what you want and they'll give you some ideas.

In the spring of 2006 an old, overgrown track from the highest point of the Panormama Tour all the way back to Crna was uncovered by local bikers. Jani and his brother were two of the first to ride it and later went back to clean the trail and make it flow. When their chainsaw ran out of petrol they kept working with axes until the job was done. Real dedication, and a really great trail.



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Day 7 – Underground Biking and the White Valley Ride

Today you will ride right through a mountain a full 6km across. This won't be on a road or through a big tunnel but on a journey through the vast mine network that sits beneath Podpetza, the mountain we rode over on day 2.

This incredible ride takes almost two hours and is led by a former miner, now trained up as an underground biking guide. You'll be issued with a caving light to fit to your helmet and then, in small groups, we'll head into the dark. Along the way there are places where we stop to explore the caverns and old mine workings. Its night riding but not as you've ever experienced it, and even though it is not technical mountain biking this unique ride is truly memorable.

Once we pop out of the mountain its time to climb up to our first singletrack of the day, the Mejitza Mine Trail. This snaking trail winds down into the ski area of the town far below, where we finally arrive at our lunchtime café stop.

This is a lot of riding already but there is more great stuff to come. While you eat lunch our staff load the bikes onto the trailer for the final ride transfer of the trip, a short drive up to the top of the White Valley. This final descent is truly breathtaking – pictures of this trail are on the cover of our brochure and have featured in the mountain bike press too, its that good and that scenic. But like all rides it has to come to an end and we emerge on the edge of Crna for a last spin to our final round of cakes and drinks to end the trip.

Day 8 – Heading home

This morning we pack up bikes and bags ready for the transfer to Ljubljana and the flights home. Our guide will be on hand throughout the morning to help with any bike issues and make sure everything is secured and ready for the journey.

Today we pack in some great riding but for those who are feeling a little tired the singletrack from the mine is easily avoided to allow for a longer lunch break.

Until now we've not mentioned the wonderful Slovenian hospitality, the quality of the Zlatorog Beer or their ability to stay up very late while drinking, talking and partying. If you've not discovered this national trait by this stage in the trip then tonight, with no biking in the morning, might be the time!

We normally recommend arriving at airports at least 2 hours prior to departure time. Both Graz and Ljubljana are very pleasant airports with good cafes so if you are waiting a while at one of these it is quite comfortable for you.



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TRAVEL FACTS

Geography & Climate

Slovenia sits between Austria and the Adriatic sea, giving it a pleasantly warm Alpine climate for most of the spring, summer and autumn months. The region we visit is the Karavanke Alps, which stretch along the border with Austria and reach peaks of just over 2000m

Cycling terrain

This is a very flexible trip with a mix of terrain. We have focussed on the best singletrack trails with some double track, some scenic fire roads and a range of wild cart tracks, and forest trails too. With two guides and vehicle uplifts we can be flexible in catering for different abilities.

Accommodation & Food

We stay in a simple but comfortable 2* hotel, using rooms which are suites so you have your own small lounge, separate bedroom and en-suite bathroom. Meals in the evening are simple but filling local food taken either in the hotel or one of the nearby local restaurants. By day we will sample the best local produce at rural farms and village cafes.

Cycle Rental

We have Specialized bikes available to rent in Slovenia – these are fitted with good front suspension and hydraulic disc brakes. If you prefer to bring your own bike then this is not a problem as most airlines now offer additional baggage space for a small additional fee. If you are uncertain about bike carriage or rental please call to discuss the options.

Passports and Visas

A full passport is required.

Pre-Travel Information

When you book a more detailed pre-travel pack will be sent to you with details on clothing to bring, money, bike packing and other useful topics.



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