

Family Adventures worldwide



Slovenia

Land of

Caves & Castles

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JOINING INFORMATION

Please consult your agent for flights to reach the joining point of this trip.

When a booking has been made a separate 'joining instructions' voucher will be forwarded to you giving details of our joining hotel and where to rendezvous with the Tour Leader. **NB You must bring a copy of your insurance policy with you to show to the tour leader at the start of the tour.**

NB The joining information is occasionally subject to change and must be checked with your agent immediately prior to departure.

JOINING TOUR ABROAD

**8 days/7 nights Land Only
Ljubljana back to Ljubljana**

**Join Ljubljana on Friday (day 1)
End Ljubljana on Friday (day 8)**

Clients booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their own way to the joining point in Ljubljana. Please refer to separate 'Joining Instructions' for name and address of hotel and time of rendezvous with tour leader.

SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Among the many highlights on this tour, we particularly mention:

- * **LJUBLJANA** Walking tour of old town
- * **SKOFJA LOKA** One of the oldest and most beautiful small towns in Slovenia
- * **LAKE BLEĐ** Picturesque town with a tranquil lake and islet
- * **TRIGLAV NATIONAL PARK** Walks in the Julian Alps from Lake Bohinj
- * **TRAIN FROM BOHINJSKA BISTRICA TO NOVA GORICA** One of the most scenic rides in Slovenia
- * **SKOČJAN CAVES** Spectacular UNESCO World Heritage site – cave system
- * **PIRAN** Venetian Gothic architecture of old Adriatic town
- * **PREDJAMA CASTLE** Built into a sheer craggy cliff

Lying on the sunny, south-eastern slopes of the Alps, Slovenia is a young state with an old culture. It has been a crossroads for travellers traversing the eastern Alps for 1,500 years. With over a million hectares of woodland, Slovenia is extremely green, and one of the most densely forested countries in Europe. There is plentiful wildlife in the woodlands and mountains including red and roe deer, marmot, mountain sheep, chamois and mountain eagle. The Slovene culture has developed rapidly since the 16th century and the food is well worth sampling especially the local produce: juicy forest berries, local cheese produced from Alpine milk, 'potica' (Slovenia's national dessert – a light cake filled with nuts and raisins), and not forgetting the home made cherry, blueberry and juniper brandies.

This active short break includes the quaint old towns of Ljubljana, Skofja Loka and Piran, ancient castles, walks in the Triglav National Park and the spectacular cave system at Skočjan.

Walking grades and fitness:

Grading is a somewhat difficult topic as much depends on the individual's own perception of his or her abilities. The following is intended as a general guide to our walking grades. This is rated **Grade A/B. Please note all the walks are optional.**

Grade A walks (Easy): tend to be short day walks and rambles at low altitudes which are suitable for people of all ages. They can be enjoyed by anyone who leads a reasonably active life and no special preparation is required.

Grade B walks (Moderate): will usually involve some longer walks (4-6 hours per day) at low altitudes (below 3000m). Some previous hill walking experience would be beneficial but these walks should be within the capabilities of those who lead a normal active life. Grade B walking tours may contain some optional strenuous days, and in order to get the best out of the trip we would advise that you tone up your fitness before you join.

LAND ONLY ITINERARY

Note: While our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day route printed below, a degree of informality and flexibility is built into the itinerary.

Day 1. Friday. Join tour Ljubljana; walking tour of Old Town

Arrive Ljubljana and check into hotel. Ljubljana is a small, majestic baroque city, situated in the Ljubljana basin between the Polhov Gradec hills to the west and Golovec hills to the east and south-east; a river separates the old and the new town. In the late afternoon we explore the Old Town on foot. Walking along the cobblestone passageways, we'll see medieval houses with wooden shop fronts, peaceful courtyards, fountains, churches and several bridges. There are two major landmarks: the Magistrat (town hall), originally built in the 15th century and restored in the 17th century, and the 18th century Cathedral which overlooks the vibrant central market. **Overnight hotel with breakfast. H+.**

Day 2. Drive to Triglav National Park via Skofja Loka & Lake Bled

This morning we drive to Skofja Loka, one of the oldest and most beautiful small towns in Slovenia, dominated by its castle overlooking the town. We will soak up the atmosphere of this medieval town which is now protected both historically and culturally. Later we continue to the picturesque resort town of Bled situated on a tranquil lake. Widely acclaimed as one of the most fashionable European resorts in the early 20th century, this was the home of the Yugoslavian Royal Family and also the summer residence of President Tito. You may like to visit the island by travelling across in a traditional gondola known as a pletne. On the island is the baroque Church of the Assumption and perched on a steep cliff above the lake is the 11th century Bled Castle with towers, ramparts, moats and a terrace. You may also

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wish to walk the 6 kms around the lake past linden, chestnut and willow trees, swans and water lilies on the water. We continue to Lake Bohinj. En route if the weather is clear, we may see Triglav, at 2864m the highest Alpine peak. The name means 'Three Heads' and pagan Slovenes believed the mountain was the home of a three-headed deity who ruled the Sky, the Earth and the Underworld. It is a sacred mountain and according to tradition every Slovene should climb it at least once in their lifetime. The peak was first climbed in 1778 by an Austrian and three Slovenes, and the mountain features prominently on the Slovene national flag. Lake Bohinj is a naturally preserved glacial lake enclosed by steep mountain cliffs on the southern edge of the Triglav N.P. – an ideal base from which to explore these magnificent mountains. **3 nights hotel with breakfast. H+.**

Days 3 & 4. At Lake Bohinj; various activities

The Triglav National Park nestles in the Slovene Julian & Kamnik Alps. Founded in 1924, it is one of the oldest Alpine nature reserves covering an area of 82,000 hectares. The Julian Alps is the first of the mountain barriers separating the Mediterranean Sea from continental Central Europe. On our first day we can walk to the Savica Waterfall, the source of Slovenia's longest and mightiest river, the Sava. The breathtaking cascade of water tumbles into a pool 60m below. You could also take a cable car (if operating) up Mount Vogel to a height of 1922m from where impressive views extend over the lake and the Julian Alps. Another possibility is an easy walk around Lake Bohinj (12km) or hire a mountain bike and cycle quiet country roads. There are several walks to choose from on our second day which could take us through deep-carved glacial valleys, across rolling hills and past springs, waterfalls, rivers and lakes. The park is rich in flora and fauna (keep an eye open for chamois), and the ground is covered with a rich abundance of flowers; more than 10 species are endemic such as the Zois



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Days 3 & 4 (contd)

bellflower, Frolich gentian and Carniola cowslip. Throughout the countryside we will see *kokolec*, a special kind of rack for drying hay that is unique to these regions. Also known as mountain harps, there are over 30 different types. There is also the opportunity for some river rafting on the Sava Bohinjka.

Day 5. Train to Nova Gorica; bus to Skocjan Caves; drive to Piran

We take the train from Bohinjska Bistrica to Nova Gorica. This journey is one of the most scenic in Slovenia with a back-drop of the Julian Alps. We pass through the Vipava Valley, a wine-growing region, onto one of the highlights of Slovenia, the amazing underground caverns at Skocjan, which have been protected by UNESCO since 1986. These 5km long caves descend 250m into a gigantic hollow into which a river disappears. Prehistoric people once sheltered in these caves and used them to make sacrifices to the gods of the underworld. After a guided tour, we continue to Piran, situated on the Slovenian Adriatic Sea. There are two distinct regions separated by a long shelf of steep cliffs extending down to the Istrian peninsula. In the past, this natural divide has been used as a border between kingdoms: the Venetian coastal lands and the inland domains of the Hapsburgs. Olive and tangerine trees grow in abundance along the 40kms of coastline.

2 nights hotel and breakfast. H+.

Day 6. Walking tour of Piran; optional boat cruise

We spend the morning exploring Piran, a beautiful town full of narrow streets, vaulted passages, arcaded courtyards and Venetian Gothic architecture. It is one of the best preserved historical towns anywhere on the Adriatic and is entirely protected as a cultural monument. From the remains of the 15th century walls, there are some great views over the town and the sea. The ancient central square is surrounded by beautiful patrician villas and there is a monument dedicated to the local composer and violinist Giuseppe Tartini. The afternoon is left free for personal exploration or you may like to take a boat trip along the coast.

Day 7. Predjama Castle en route to Ljubljana

Today we begin with a visit to Predjama Castle built into a dramatic 123m craggy cliff. This four-storey castle dates back to the 16th century and has all the features a castle should have such as a drawbridge over a roaring river, holes in the entrance ceiling for pouring boiling oil on intruders, a dark and dingy dungeon and a 16th century treasure chest. We drive on to Ljubljana, where there is time to visit the castle. The original dates back to Celtic times, but the present one was mostly built after the 16th century. After climbing the 150 steps up to the tower, you can walk along the ramparts where there are some great views over the Old Town.

Overnight hotel with breakfast. H+.

Day 8. Friday. Tour ends Ljubljana

PERSONAL EXPENSES

You'll also need some extra money to cover meals not included in the tour price, other sightseeing, souvenirs etc, and items of a personal nature such as laundry. Sterling pounds, US Dollars and Euro cash and travellers cheques are all accepted. Major towns have ATMs for cash withdrawal. Credit cards are also generally accepted.

Local Payment

Payable in **GBP Sterling or US Dollars cash** to Explore leader at the start of the tour.

Meal Plan

Local Food and drink: Meals other than those included in the itinerary are paid for separately by the traveller. You should calculate for buying 7 lunches and 7 evening meals. Some examples of comparative costs are given below.

	UK	Slovenia
Coffee/tea	£0.70	£0.60
Soft drink	0.80	0.70
Bottle of water	0.70	0.70
Beer	1.00	0.90
Bottle of wine	7.00	5.00
2 course Meal*	7.50	4.50
3 course Meal**	15.00	8.50

*Cheap local fare in a small café or restaurant

**Typical food in a simple, reasonably comfortable mid-range restaurant

Other Sightseeing

The following tours and excursions are usually available and may be booked and paid for through the tour leader during your trip. Estimated costs are provided.

LAKE BLEĐ Pletne boat ride £4.50

RIVER RAFTING On Sava Bohinjka river £16

BOAT TRIPS Along Adriatic Coast £15-£20

TRIGLAV NATIONAL PARK Bike hire £3 per hour. Allow £5 for local transport to and from optional walks in Triglav National Park.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Seasonal Climate

Slovenia has a continental climate, with warm summers and the possibility of some rain in the Alps. Generally warm sunny days in the summer. Average of 5-6 hours of sunshine in April, May & Sep, 7-8 hours in July & August.

Visa Requirements

An entry visa is NOT required by citizens of Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and USA. Other nationalities should consult their travel agent or consular office.

Vaccinations & Protection

Nothing compulsory though we recommend protection against Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid and Polio.

Special Note: Visa and Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

A complete list of clothing and personal gear is contained in Explore's '**General Information Booklet**', available after a booking has been accepted. Here we make a few specific recommendations with regard to your tour.

Luggage: One main piece of baggage (not a suitcase) and a daysack for personal items. **Total allowance: 44lbs/20kgs.** Remember that you'll have to carry your own luggage – so don't overload yourself.

Clothing: Pack for '**All Tours**' and '**Hot Conditions**' in July and August. Temperatures are cooler in the Julian Alps so a fleece is essential plus a wind-proof/water-proof acket whilst hiking in the Alps. Swimwear for the Adriatic.

Footwear: Walking boots with ankle support and good tread for the Julian Alps. Light shoes or sports sandals for general travel.

Equipment: We also recommend taking a water bottle, insect repellent, sun cream and a torch for the underground tour of the Skocjan Caves.



Imposing Predjama Castle battlements/Piran harbour

EXPLORE ACCOMMODATION RATINGS : The following key is intended as a guide to the type of accommodation listed for each night stop. We stress that standards may vary and reserve the right to make changes as necessary without warning.

Hotels / Pensions / Lodges

H+ : Usually twin bedded rooms, normally with private facilities. Local grading 2/3/4 star.

H : Usually twin bedded rooms, sometimes 3-4 bedded rooms may have to be used. Normally with shared facilities. Local grading 1/2/3 star.

ROOMING : We would also stress that unlike resort-based family holidays, we use a variety of accommodation on any one tour. This means that although we will always do our best to find rooms that suit your family, the choice of accommodation in some places may be limited.

To help us with your rooming arrangements, please detail any preferences on the Booking Form (page 27 of the brochure). **For further details on Rooming, please see p.9.**

Local Style Accommodation

L+ : Usually twin bedded rooms, may be some 3-4 bedded. Normally shared facilities.

L : Could be twin bedded but more usually multiple share or dorm style sleeping arrangements. Normally shared facilities.

Camping – under canvas or bivouac

C+ : Designated campsite, usually with fixed WC/shower. Possibly with fixed pre-erected tents.

C : Natural/Rough/Wild/Bush Camp. Limited or no facilities. Temporary WC. Usually need to pitch own tents.

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