



# Slovenia: Villages, Castles, Vineyards, Scenic Valleys and the Julian Alps 2027

2 SEP – 17 SEP 2027

Code: 22731

Tour Leaders **Dr Adrian Jones, OAM, Martin Muhek**

Fitness Level 

**Level 2 - Intermediate**

For people with energetic lifestyles and very good mobility

Explore extraordinarily diverse Slovenia with its glorious landscapes, snow-capped peaks, ancient forests, charming villages and rich artistic traditions. Enjoy fine wines and innovative cuisine.

## Overview

Assoc. Professor Dr Adrian Jones, OAM leads this tour of little-known, extraordinarily diverse Slovenia. Adrian will be accompanied by Martin Muhek, who brings a profound knowledge of the Balkan region to ASA tours. Travel with them to this beautiful country in September, when the days are still long and warm and the autumn colours are beginning to appear.

- Travel through Slovenia's stunning natural landscapes including the soaring peaks of the Julian Alps and the subterranean magic of Postojna caves and UNESCO World Heritage-listed Skocjan caves.
- Dine in innovative restaurants including: the elegant [Hiša Linhart](#), avant-garde [Landerik](#), and the gastronomic [Otocec Castle](#).
- Enjoy the panorama from medieval Ljubljana Castle and explore the city's prehistoric and Roman past on a curator-led tour of the City Museum.
- Study the work of Joze Plecnik, Slovenia's renowned pioneer of modern architecture; view the National and University Library, the Central Market, Krizanke Summer Theatre and the picturesque Ljubljanica river, spanned by the Triple Bridge and Cobbler's Bridge.
- Explore Skofja Loka, with its fairytale castle and 14th-century Capuchin Bridge, and one of Slovenia's best-preserved medieval city centres.
- Enjoy Slovenia's pristine lakes: Lake Bled has a tiny Baroque chapel on a picturesque island and a castle looming above; at Lake Bohinj, ascend Mount Vogel for spectacular views of the Julian Alps.
- Visit Kobarid, immortalised in Ernest Hemingway's great novel *A Farewell to Arms*; and follow part of the historic trail along the emerald-green waters of the Soca river to view the Kozjak waterfall.
- Explore the wine towns of the Vipava Valley, and visit Maribor, the Styrian capital of Eastern Slovenia, which boasts the oldest grapevine in the world.
- Explore Ptuj, Slovenia's oldest town, featuring ornate monasteries and a hilltop castle.
- Visit the medieval fortress of Celje, built in the 13th century and transformed by the Counts of Celje, the greatest local rivals of the Habsburgs.
- Spend 2 nights in the pretty port town of Piran, one of the best-preserved historical centres on the Adriatic coast, encircled by 7th-century walls and rich in Venetian architecture.
- At Lipica Stud Farm view the training of famous Lipizzaner Horses who practice complicated paces, pirouetting and dancing to Viennese waltzes.

Overnight Ljubljana (4 nights) • Bled (3 nights) • Kobarid (1 night) • Piran (2 nights) • Postojna (1 night) • Celje (3 nights) • Ljubljana (1 night)

### Introduction

This fertile, 'foodie' and oft-forgotten region fascinates. This is a land of plenty. Nowadays, the good life also has a young and creative bent here. Cultures and traditions have always fused in these border wonderlands; here they do not constrict as much as in heartlands. Blithe Slovenia, on the one hand, links cultures and geographies: Slav and Magyar, Germanic and Italian. In the consonant-rich Slovene language, these intersections are known as *sticisce*. Well-worn mountain passes and old Roman roads traverse these hinterlands: alpine and agricultural, forest and fluvial. The produce here is as fresh as the air, and as varied as the soils, the sympathies and the seasons. Here, where the Julian Alps untangle, you also reach the Pannonian far end of the eternal Eurasian plain.

Where are the crowds? Where's the hubris? As the westernmost outposts of Slavic people in Europe, Slovenia is also a simply superb and unpretentious place to visit: verdant, lively, stylish, youthful and optimistic. Just three decades ago, the hinterland valleys, cultures and towns of Slovenia coughed up Communism and dispensed with Yugoslavia. No single culture dominates. Here all meet and all should

thrive, albeit with troubling exceptions in the fifteenth and twentieth centuries. Slovenia widens your wonder and renew your optimism. Take some roads less travelled.

Let Adrian tell you himself about the wonderful experiences you'll have when you visit Slovenia with him.

<https://youtu.be/YWi1rWvUxJg>

## Leaders



### Dr Adrian Jones, OAM

A retired Associate Professor of History, and a frequent contributor to ABC local radio, Adrian is a Harvard graduate and expert in Greek and Russian, Ottoman and Balkan history: ancient, medieval, modern. He leads ASA tours of the Balkans, especially both Macedonia and Albania, Romania, Istanbul and Slovenia-Croatia. Adrian loves to connect the Ancient to the Modern, and he loves to compare Europe's East to Europe's West.

Dr Adrian Jones, OAM was Associate Professor of European History at La Trobe University. Adrian loves to combine travel, cuisine and history, which he also reprises on segments on ABC radio. He enjoys the challenges of connecting epochs, cultures, languages and places. He graduated with a BA from the University of Melbourne, an MA from La Trobe University and an MA and PhD from Harvard University, eventually specialising in Russian, Turkish, French and Balkan history. His publications include a scholarly monograph, *Late-Imperial Russia: An Interpretation* (1997) and a local history, *Follow the Gleam* (2000), which won the prize for the best book on Victorian history in 2001. Adrian has published scholarly articles on the philosophy of history, historiography, educational theory, comparative revolutions, and French, Balkan, Russian and Turkish social and intellectual history. A foundation Director of the [Australian] National Centre for History Education and a former Chair of The History Council of Victoria, Adrian was awarded a national Teaching Council award in 2008, and an Order of Australia Medal in 2009 for his teaching and professional activities.



### Martin Muhek

With a postgraduate degree in Ancient Greek and Latin from the University of Zagreb, Martin has a profound knowledge of the Balkan region. He has led ASA's tours of the region since 2007.

Martin holds a postgraduate degree in Ancient Greek and Latin from the University of Zagreb. He is an accomplished linguist – as well as Croatian, he speaks English, French, Hungarian, Italian, Greek and Turkish. Martin has a deep, broad knowledge of the history of the Balkan region, from antiquity to the present day, as well as Central and Mediterranean Europe. He has been leading groups around Europe for more than 15 years including ASA's program An Adriatic Journey: from Trieste to Dubrovnik since 2007.

*Combine this tour with*

**An Adriatic Journey: from Trieste to Dubrovnik 2027**

19 SEP – 3 OCT 2027

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30 SEP – 17 OCT 2027

**Silver Coast and Golden River: Art, Architecture & Culture of Portugal 2027**

26 SEP – 11 OCT 2027



## Itinerary

This itinerary provides an outline of the proposed daily program. The daily activities described in this itinerary may be rotated and/or modified in order to accommodate changes in museum opening hours, flight schedules etc. The tour includes breakfast daily, lunches and dinners indicated in the detailed itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch and D=dinner.

### Ljubljana - 4 nights

Day 1: Thursday 2 September, Arrive Ljubljana

- Tour commences at 4.00pm in the foyer of the uHotel
- Welcome Meeting
- Orientation Walk
- Welcome Dinner at Georgie Bistro

**Meeting Point:** The tour commences at 4.00pm in the foyer of the Eurostars uHotel located in the heart of Slovenia's capital, Ljubljana.

We commence the tour with a short Welcome Meeting which will be followed by an orientation stroll through the city, along the Ljubljanica river, passing the triple bridge. Over the next four days, we return to other places in and around these districts, some introducing us to two millennia of art and history in this charming city, and others to the *Jugendstil* (Art Nouveau) world of Joze Plecnik, Ljubljana's famous architect, who lived near our hotel.

In the evening we enjoy a Welcome Dinner at Georgie Bistro located not far from the hotel. Georgie Bistro is a premier culinary hotspot that offers a delightful and inventive dining experience, all within a warm and inviting ambiance. Under the leadership of esteemed chef Gregor Jelnikar, the talented team is dedicated to crafting exceptional and diverse dishes that draw inspiration from various global cuisines. (Overnight Ljubljana) D

## Day 2: Friday 3 September, Ljubljana

- Ljubljana Castle
- Museum of Modern Art (*Moderna galerija*) (Optional visit) or Afternoon at leisure
- Dinner at Landerik

We shall explore the history and culture, old and new, of this beautiful, lively small city district by district. We begin today with an exploration of the Central Market in Vodnik Square, adjacent to the Dragon bridge. We then take the cable car up to Ljubljana Castle, the heart of historic Slovenia. The panoramic views of the city also introduce us to the distinct culture of Slovene borderland where ancient Roman, and old and current Slav, Italian (Veneto) and German (Habsburg) cultures blend. You will have lunchtime at leisure when you may wish to visit the market square below, or the castle courtyard above.

This afternoon is at leisure. You may decide to visit the Museum of Modern Art (*Moderna Galerija*) or explore Ljubljana by yourself. The Modern Art Museum charts the growing interaction of Western and Slovene art in the 19th and 20th centuries. We reconvene tonight for a delicious meal at Landerik, a new concept restaurant in the heart of Ljubljana, offering avant-garde and locally sourced cuisine. (Overnight Ljubljana) BD

## Day 3: Saturday 4 September, Ljubljana

- Prehistoric and Roman Ljubljana: guided tour of the City Museum (*Mestni Muzej*) with a Curator
- Walking tour of Roman sites in the city centre, with an expert guide from the Museum
- Lunch in the Balkan café courtyard in the Križanke neighbourhood: Gostilna Plecnikov Hram na Križanke
- Joze Plecnik's Ljubljana: Architectural tour of the city centre, including a visit to Plecnik's house
- National and University Library, designed by Joze Plecnik, including the renowned Reading Room

Today we remain close to our base, but journey back in time. With the older Aquileian castle looming high above, our tour centres around the neighbourhood of the *Križanke*, an ancient church (1268) and hall (1228) complex once associated with the Dukes of Carinthia (1144-1269). The Habsburgs eventually took over Ljubljana in 1335. Each section of the *Križanke* we see today, was later rebuilt, however, either in 1561 or 1715. Modified by the great Jozef Plecnik, the *Križanke* now acts as an Arts and Museums hub, and as a key summer venue of the Ljubljana Festival.

At the City Museum of Ljubljana (*Mestni Muzej*), we explore Slovenia's prehistory. One of its most fascinating exhibits is a decorated wooden wheel which is about 5200 years old; it is thought to be the oldest wooden wheel ever found. We also discover Ljubljana's Roman past: the town of Emona (*Colonia Iulia Emona*) was built on the site of the prehistoric settlement in the early 1st century AD, by Augustus' troops. The location of the city was of strategic importance, being at a crossroads of important trade routes; at the time the Romans were conquering new lands in the Balkan south and the Pannonian east.

This afternoon we turn our focus to the extraordinary architectural heritage of the 20th-century Art Nouveau architect Joze Plecnik (1872-1957). Plecnik's influence on the architectural landscape of Ljubljana has been compared to that of Gaudí upon Barcelona. With a local expert, we tour his key city buildings and visit his charming house, which has been preserved as it was in his lifetime. It holds sketches, plans, models, and photographs relating to Plecnik's famous creations such as the National and University Library, the Ljubljana Central Market and the Church of St Michael in the Marshes.

We finish the afternoon with a visit to the National and University Library, including Plecnik's grand Reading

Room. (Overnight Ljubljana) BL

Day 4: Sunday 5 September, Ljubljana

- National Museum of Slovenia
- National Gallery of Slovenia

Today we explore the fascinating prehistory, migration history and flora and fauna of this beautiful, varied and fertile country at the National Museum of Slovenia. The highlights include a 1995 find in the submerged Divje Babe cave near Cerčno. We also encounter a Neanderthal bone flute (60,000 to 50,000 BC) fashioned from the femur of a cave bear, an oak dug-out canoe (9th century BC) discovered in 1927, and Iron Age armour from Slovene sites at Stična, Vir and Gradisce. We glimpse Slovenia's migration history in displays of sites resembling King Arthur's *Tintagel* at Ajdovski Gradec (5th to 6th century AD) and in displays revealing the Slav migrations.

In the afternoon, we visit the National Gallery of Slovenia, to contrast the liveliness of the master painters and wood carvers active in 15th-century Slovenia with the Byzantine-like austere piety of their medieval predecessors. In other halls, traversing the 16th and 17th centuries, the Habsburg Baroque emerges with all its emotion and exuberance. We also encounter the influence of Habsburg Flemish genre painting, for example, in the work of the Dutch artist Almanach, who worked in Slovenia in the 17th century. Other halls explore bourgeois life in prosperous 19th century Slovenia, culminating in a delightful series of works by local impressionists. We encounter the work of artists such as realist Ivana Kobilca, the most prominent Slovenian painter and a key figure in Slovenian cultural identity. Allow her *Kofetarica* (*Coffee Drinker*) of 1888 to prompt you to repose in the gallery café! (Overnight Ljubljana) BL

### Bled - 3 nights

Day 5: Monday 6 September, Ljubljana – Pustal – Skofja Loka – Crngrob – Bled

- Devil's Bridge, Pustal
- Skofja Loka Castle & Museum
- Church of Annunciation, Crngrob
- Bled Castle

We begin our journey through what is arguably Eastern Europe's loveliest country. Leaving Ljubljana, we drive northwest by private coach towards the grand Julian Alps, meandering along the basin of the River Sava. It continues to join the Danube at Belgrade.

Today, we stop in the picturesque little village of Puštal, on the Sora River, a tributary of the Sava. Our local guide will meet the coach and take us across the famed 'Devil's Bridge', which spans the river. This wooden footbridge is named after supposed ancient appearances of the devil. Across the river is the enchanting medieval town of Skofja Loka. The town's first written records date to 1248. In the 13th century it was a bustling market town of craftspeople and traders, who were organised into various guilds. From 973, it remained in the possession of the Bavarian Bishops of Freising for more than 900 years. The original city plan survives: an upper square, the *Plac*, is separated from a lower square, the *Lontrg*; narrow streets cross the town centre, and a bold castle (rebuilt in the 16th century) stands atop a nearby hill. With our guide, we walk through the town up to the Loski Muzej (Loski Museum), housed in the castle. One of the best-arranged museums in Slovenia, it houses archaeological, historical, cultural, artistic, natural science and ethnological collections. We also have the opportunity to view a very well-preserved 16th century farmhouse, Škopar's House (*Škoparjeva hiša*), in the castle garden.

After a simple lunch in the town centre, we shall take a short walk to Skofja Loka's Capuchin Bridge (Stone Bridge). Built in the mid-14th century from carved stone in a semi-circular shape, it is the only one of its kind in central Europe. At its centre is a statue of the Bohemian saint, St. John of Nepomuk (1345-1393), with the Škofja Loka coat-of-arms on its plinth; in its medieval days the Selca Gate, with a guard tower, stood beside it. It was renovated and equipped with railings in the late 19th century. From here, our guide accompanies us on our coach to the Church of the Annunciation to the Holy Virgin (*Marijino Oznanenje*) at Crngrob. Founded in the 13th century, this lovely church holds some of the finest frescoes in Slovenia. These detail the *Life of the Virgin* (late-13th to early-14th centuries) whilst Giotto-like (Slovene *Goriška* style) paintings portray the *Passion of Christ* (late 14th to mid-15th centuries).

We continue by coach to Bled, where we visit Bled castle (*Blejski Grad*), and thence opt to walk or to bus downhill to check into the Rikli Balance Hotel. Bled is a splendid resort town on a stunningly picturesque lake. Lake Bled comes complete with a medieval church on an island, overlooked by the castle high on an outcrop. While Bled Castle was an 11th-century fief of the Bishops of Blixen, the town of Bled only came into its own in the 19th-century as a bourgeois retreat. Naturopaths, like Dr Arnold Rikli (1823-1906), encouraged genteel promenading or venturesome hiking and climbing in fresh-air alpine destinations. (Overnight Bled) BL

#### Day 6: Tuesday 7 September, Lake Bohinj and Lake Bled

- Pletna cruise to Blejski Otok island and visit to the Church of the Mother of God on the Lake, Lake Bled
- Cable Car to Mount Vogel, Lake Bohinj
- Panoramic Boat along Lake Bohinj from Ukanc to Ribcev Laz, Lake Bohinj
- Dinner at Hiša Linhart

Today we immerse ourselves in some of Slovenia's most breathtaking landscapes. What could be better than to be rowed in a covered pletna boat to the island (*Blejski Otok*) in the middle of Lake Bled? Once a pagan site, it was re-invented in a national epic poem about the ancient loss of Slovene independence (*Krst pri Savici* or *Baptism on the Savica*, 1836) written by Slovenia's first national poet, France Prešeren (1800-49). In the Middle Ages Blejski Otok attracted Christian pilgrims to its little Assumption Church.

After returning to shore, we drive further into the sublime limestone range of the Julian Alps. We take a cable car from Lake Bohinj to high Mt Vogel (1846m), where a breathtaking panoramic vista of the entire Triglav National Park beckons, capped by Mt Triglav (2864m) across the lake and to the north. After free time for lunch, we descend by cable car and cruise along Lake Bohinj from Ukanc to Ribcev Laz. Here, we cross a bridge to visit the Romanesque/Gothic Church of St John the Baptist (*Cerkev sv. Janeza Krstnika*).

In the evening, we drive to Radovljica and dine well in another country restaurant: chef Uroš Štefelin's Hiša Linhart, then return to Bled. (Overnight Bled) BD

#### Day 7: Wednesday 8 September, Bled – Trzic – Kropa – Radovljica – Bled

- Trzic Museum: Cobblery exhibition in the former dye house and tannery
- Light lunch in Trzic
- Iron Forging Museum in Kropa
- Medieval town of Radovljica
- *Fijaker* (horse drawn carriage) around Lake Bled
- Dinner at Julijana Restaurant on Lake Bled

Today we have a unique opportunity to explore the hardy, thrifty life of small Slovenian communities. The villages in the foothills of mountains and in the knots of their valleys in Upper Carniola (*Gorenjska*) near the border with Austria offer rare chances to savour the small places so often overlooked. We'll venture by coach into different valleys, each with its raging river, visiting Trzic to consider shoemaking and leatherwork, and Kropa to encounter iron forging.

After our visit to Kropa, we drive to the nearby market town of Radovljica to look at the art of beekeeping and to explore its medieval heritage.

Returning to Lake Bled, we opt to succumb at day's end to gentility, not agility: a half-hour carriage ride (*fijaker*) takes us around the lake in time for sunset. The carriages leave us at our dinner venue, the elegant Julijana restaurant. After dinner, we walk the short distance back to our hotel. (Overnight Bled) BLD

### Kobarid - 1 night

Day 8: Thursday 9 September, Bled – Vrsic Pass – Kobarid

- Scenic journey across the Julian Alps through Triglav National Park via the Vrsic Pass (1611m)
- Kozjak Waterfall

Departing Bled, we drive 4 hours on a mountain journey, regularly getting on and off the bus, exploring northwest Slovenia's Triglav National Park. We are now in the part of Slovenia closer to Italy, heading for Kobarid (*Caporetto* in Italian), once a battle front of the First World War, now a charming Slovene town with an Italian 'feel' where we'll stay one night.

When Italy entered the war belatedly on the side of Britain and France in May 1915, the Italians found the going surprisingly tough attacking the Habsburg Empire all along the Isonzo River (*Soca* in Slovene; *Sortig* in German, *Aesontius* in Latin) from its Adriatic estuary to the tips of the Julian Alps. The Vrsic Pass (1611m) and the Trenta Valley offer the most superlative views of the tour. We will walk to the waterfall at Kozjak and explore its WWI heritage. After some time to freshen up at our hotel, we enjoy dinner at a local restaurant. Note: no portage is available at the Hotel Hvala in Kobarid. The hotel has a lift. (Overnight Kobarid) BLD

### Piran - 2 nights

Day 9: Friday 10 September, Kobarid – Tolmin Gorges – Sempas – Skocjan – Piran

- Guided walking tour of the Tolmin Gorge (1.5-2hrs, gravel trail and boardwalk)
- Lunch at Arkade Cigoj in the Vipava Valley
- UNESCO World Heritage-Listed Skocjan Caves

We now head away from Kobarid and from the mountains down through the Tolmin Gorge. Also called Tolminska Korita, this is one of Slovenia's most magnificent natural attractions. Our local guide will take us along the 1-kilometre-long moss-covered gorge, which has been carved out by the crystal-clear Tolminka and Zadlascica Rivers.

Back on the coach, the mountains will eventually give way to rich agricultural land, where we will have a simple lunch in the Vipava valley, the most "foodie" destination of Slovenia. Then the same mountains will also cleave into limestone caves, where we will explore the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Skocjan Cave. We then turn west over other cave (*karst*) landscapes towards the sea.

This evening we reach the delightful Adriatic port town of Piran, the birthplace of the Baroque composer Giuseppe Tartini (1692-1770). You will enjoy the sea air here for two nights. Lovely little Piran dominates Slovenia's tiny 20-kilometre stretch of Adriatic coast; it is just 60 kilometres south of the Italian city of Trieste. Piran, sitting at the tip of a narrow peninsula, is one of the best-preserved historical towns anywhere in the Mediterranean. With an abundance of Venetian Gothic architecture, atmospheric winding alleyways, a bustling main square and harbour and plenty of seafood restaurants, Piran is a unique stop on this tour of mostly-landlocked Slovenia. Here is your chance to watch the sun set over the Adriatic! (Overnight Piran) BL

#### Day 10: Saturday 11 September, Piran – Lipica – Piran

- Lipica Stud Farm: View the training of Lipizzan Horses & tour the stud farm
- Afternoon at leisure in Piran

We shall have ample time to relax in this beautiful coastal town with only one firm engagement today. In the morning we shall view the training of famous Lipizzaner Horses on a stud farm about an hour northwest of Piran. Lunchtime and the afternoon will be at leisure. (Overnight Piran) B

#### Postojna - 1 night

#### Day 11: Sunday 12 September, Piran – Hrastovlje – Vipava – Postojna – Predjama – Postojna

- Church of the Holy Trinity with the famous *Dance Macabre* fresco, Hrastovlje
- Lunch at Gostilna Podfarovž in the village of Vipava
- Postojna Cave
- Castle of Predjama

We depart Piran, and meander back towards the 'real' Slovenia of stones and castles, inland foothills with fertile farms, vineyards and caves with amazing stalactites. We first drive 40 kilometres to the tiny fortified Church of the Holy Trinity (*cerkev sv. Trojice*) in Hrastovlje, a village not far from the border with Rijeka province in north-west Croatia. The church's fortified character reflects the depth of fear of Ottoman invasion in the 15th and 16th centuries. Within is a rare version of a subversive religious fresco known as *The Dance of Death* (*La danse macabre* in French, *Mrtvaški ples* in Slovene).

We then lunch at Gostilna Podfarovž, in the heart of the Vipava wine country, lands dear to Slovenia's greatest Habsburg diplomat, *Freiherr* Sigismund von Herbestein (1486-1566); he was one of the few diplomats to meet both an Ottoman Sultan and a Russian Grand Prince.

After lunch we take the cave train at Postojna, then walk through mighty caverns; they have some of the grandest stalagmites and stalactites in Europe. We then visit the impregnable castle at Predjama (*Predjamski Grad*). Predjama nestles inside a cliff. The castle only ever succumbed to one siege, in 1484. Once a frontier between Aquileian (*Alto Veneto*) clerical-feudal and Habsburg spheres, Predjama was constructed in the 13th century, but what you see now dates from 16th century. (Overnight Postojna) BLD

#### Celje - 3 nights

#### Day 12: Monday 13 September, Postojna – Kamnik – Laze v Tuhinju – Celje

- Arboretum Volcji Potok, Kamnik
- Lunch in Kamnik
- Walking tour of medieval Kamnik including the Franciscan church and its library
- Beer and Schnapps tasting at Domaca pivovarna pod Menino

From Postojna, we'll skirt north of Ljubljana to reach the town of Kamnik. Our first stop is the Volcji Potok Arboretum. Established in 1885 as part of the Souvan family estate, it was made accessible to the public in 1952 when the University of Ljubljana took over. It has since been officially recognized as a site of significant cultural and natural heritage.

Following lunch at a local restaurant, we will explore the medieval town of Kamnik. Its origins can be traced back to the 11th century, and it was first mentioned as a town in 1229. Situated as an important trading post along the route connecting Ljubljana and Celje, Kamnik is one of Slovenia's oldest towns. During the Middle Ages, it held significant influence as a power centre for the Bavarian counts of Andechs in the Carniola region. The remnants of this noble lineage can still be seen in the form of two ruined castles strategically positioned on elevated ground near the town centre. Additionally, the Franciscan monastery, constructed within the town, serves as a testament to Kamnik's historical importance. We will have the opportunity to visit the church and its library, which houses a collection of *incunabula* – books printed prior to 1500.

The Tuhinj valley, known as "*Tuhinjska Dolina*" in Slovenian, serves as a connection between Ljubljana and Celje. As we journey through this route, we will be treated to breathtaking landscapes, expansive farmlands, traditional Slovenian hay racks called "*kozolci*," fortified churches, and picturesque villages. Along the way, we will make a stop at a local farm craft brewery where our hosts will treat us to a beer and schnapps tasting experience.

We continue east to Celje for a three-night stay. Celje is a beautiful Renaissance town in the *Savinja* (east-central Slovenia). This afternoon's drive takes us from the alpine sublime to Celje's fertile Balkan borderlands of pigs and grain, hops and grapes, beer and wine. (Overnight Celje) BL

#### Day 13: Tuesday 14 September, Celje

- Regional Museum of Celje: 'Princely Palace'. Guided tour with Curator, Dr Jure Krajsek: *in situ* remains of antique Celeia; Guided tour with Curator, Mr Damir Zeric: Counts of Celje exhibition
- Celje Castle: Guided tour with Mr Damir Zeric
- Lunch at a local restaurant Gostilna Francl
- Regional Museum of Celje: 'Old Counts' Mansion'. Guided tour with Curator, Dr Jure Krajsek: *in situ* remains of antique Celeia; Guided tour with Curator, Ms Gabrijela Kovacic: Cultural History Collection and the Celje Ceiling

We spend all day in this charming town, the third largest in Slovenia, still with only 40,000 people. After the long era of barbarian migrations and invasions, the old Roman *colonia* of Celeia, in Noricum province, with its fertile hinterland, became medieval Celje guarded now by the incomparable castle (*Stari Grad*, late 14th century) of Counts of Žovnek-Celje (12th-15th centuries). This castle, across the Savinj River from the town, enabled Counts of Celje to stem Habsburg ambitions until 1456, projecting their power over Croatia and making a major contribution to the failed Crusade at Nikopolis against the Ottomans (1396). Highlights of the city include visits, led by local museum experts, to the two parts of the regional museum (*Pokrajinski Muzei*), one being the Townhouse of the later Princes (*Knežji Dvorec*) with the rare survival of a Renaissance *trompe d'oeil* ceiling (*Celjski Strop*, 1600), and the other being the earlier 15th-century porticoed barracks and townhouse of the Counts (*Stara Grofija*) housing the archaeological and medieval-historical museum. We will first visit the Princes' Townhouse, then drive to the Castle. We lunch in a restaurant in the hills, dating from 1895: Peter Zaveršek's *Gostilna Francl*. In the afternoon we visit the Old Counts' Townhouse as well as the town centre. (Overnight Celje) BL

#### Day 14: Wednesday 15 September, Celje – Ptuj – Maribor – Celje

- Ptuj Castle & Old Town
- Walking tour of Maribor including wine-tasting and visit to the oldest vine house

We venture today by coach through the Štajerska wine region to the beautiful medieval city of Ptuj (Roman *Poetovio*), touring its castle, then lingering over a coffee and wandering the old town. Then we venture a half-hour further to Maribor (pop. 100,000), the second largest city in Slovenia. We encounter a vine in Maribor city itself reputed, on good visual evidence, to be the oldest living vine in Europe: at least 450 years old! This is the vine outside 'The Old Vine House', where we quaff, lunch and learn heaps more about local wines. Maribor is also important because it is a minor place in the history of the Second World War that nonetheless can tell us a great deal about the nature of that war. As we enjoy the wine and the mix of cultures in this wonderful heritage region, we can still contemplate barbarous follies it had to endure, and indeed overcome, to achieve this convivial hospitality. (Overnight Celje) BL

### Ljubljana - 1 night

Day 15: Thursday 16 September, Celje – Kostanjevica na Krki – Otocec – Ljubljana

- Kostanjevica na Krki, a small settlement on an island in the Krka river
- Božidar Jakac Art Museum, Cistercian Monastery Samostan Kostanjevica na Krki
- Lunch at the 16th-century castle of Otocec

We depart Celje today by coach and travel via southern Slovenia (lower Carniola; Dolenj). On the way, we explore a little heritage town on an island in the Krka River: Kostanjevica na Krki, dating from the mid-13th century. On arrival in Kostanjevica na Krki we take a morning coffee break, then encounter a Cistercian monastery (Samostan), dating from the early 13th century, which encouraged the growth of the adjacent market town. Cistercians were a reformed Benedictine Order of muscular monks and colonisers who valued agricultural labour, and fine, spare architecture. As in Transylvania, further east, they were invited here by Kings of Hungary to stabilise and colonise a wild region. Their extensive monastery complex was abandoned in 1785 at the order of the Habsburg Emperor, Joseph II, who began to dissolve the great monastic estates (der Klostersturm) in 1782, seizing their revenues. The charming shell of the church and the imposing monastery complex now houses one of the best art collections in Slovenia: the Božidar Jakac Art Museum, which we shall tour. Highlights include the work of Anton (Tone) Kralj (1900-75).

Next we stop for lunch at the beautiful 16th-century castle of Otocec, the retirement home of one the great leaders of the Habsburg resistance against Ottoman incursion: Ivan Lenkovic. He was the leader of a Cossack-like corps of raiders, wild free-booters who were known as the Uskoks of Senj. Otocec Castle and its elegant restaurant sit in a lovely forest surrounding another island in the Krka River.

After lunch we head to Ljubljana and the rest of the day is at leisure. (Overnight Ljubljana) BL

Day 16: Friday 17 September, Ljubljana

- Tour concludes in the morning
- At leisure/Check out

Our tour ends in Ljubljana after breakfast. In the morning you will be required to check out of the hotel. Please contact ASA if you require assistance with a transfer to Ljubljana Airport. B

## Accommodation

ASA has selected 4- and 5-star hotels that are themselves historical buildings and/or are located in historical centres. All hotels provide rooms with en suite bathrooms.

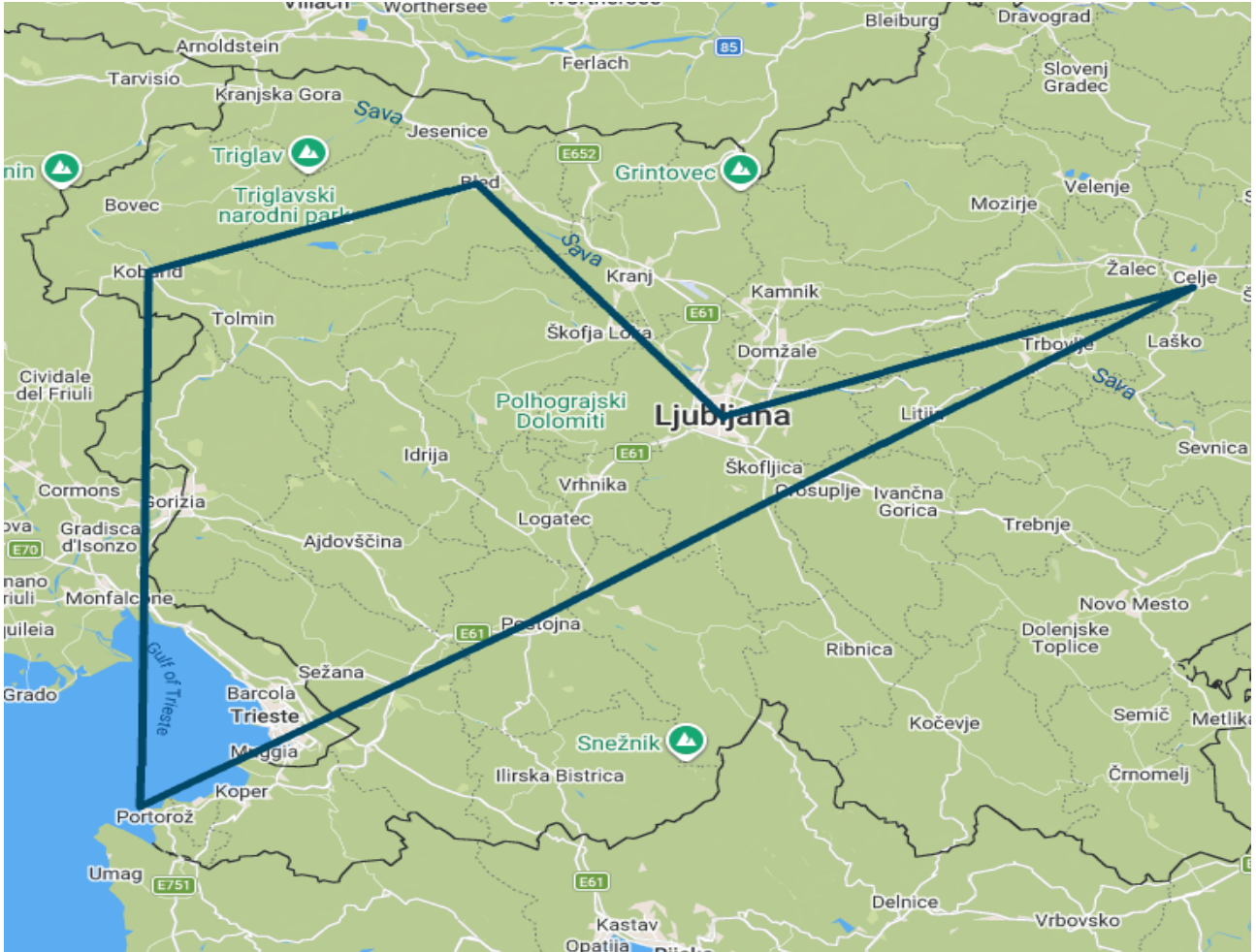
- Ljubljana (4 nights): [uHotel](#) – in the heart of the city with views of the medieval castle.
- Bled (3 nights): [Rikli Balance Hotel](#) – renovated modern hotel, offering panoramic views of Lake Bled and the Julian Alps.
- Kobarid (1 night): [Hotel Hvala](#) – a family-run hotel & restaurant located in the Soca Valley.
- Piran (2 nights): [Hotel Piran](#) – a historic hotel with a sea front location in the old town centre.
- Postojna (1 night): [Hotel Jama](#) – located in the Postojna Cave Park.
- Celje (3 nights): [Hotel Evropa](#) – 19th century historic hotel, in the heart of the medieval town.
- Ljubljana (1 night): [uHotel](#) – in the heart of the city with views of the medieval castle.

*Note: hotels are subject to change, in which case a hotel of similar standard will be provided.*

### Single Supplement

Payment of this supplement will ensure accommodation in a double/twin room for single occupancy room throughout the tour. The number of rooms available for single occupancy is extremely limited. People wishing to take this supplement are therefore advised to book well in advance.

## Tour Map



## Tour Price & Inclusions

AUD \$TBA Land Content Only – Early-Bird Special: Book before 30 July 2026

AUD \$TBA Land Content Only

AUD \$TBA Single Supplement

Tour Price (Land Content Only) includes:

- Accommodation in twin-share rooms with en suite bathroom in 4-star hotels
- Lunches and evening meals indicated in the tour itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch & D=dinner.
- Drinks at welcome and farewell meals. Other meals may not have drinks included.
- Transportation by air-conditioned coach
- Porterage of one piece of luggage per person where available
- Lecture and site visit program
- Local guides
- Entrance fees
- Use of audio headsets during site visits
- Tips for the coach driver, local guides and restaurants for included meals

Tour Price (Land Content Only) does not include:

- Airfare: Australia-Ljubljana, Ljubljana-Australia
- Personal spending money
- Airport-hotel transfers
- Luggage in excess of 20kg (44lbs)
- Travel insurance
- Visas (if applicable)
- Porterage at Hotel Hvala, Kobarid



## Fitness Criteria & Practical Information

Fitness Level 

### Level 2 - Intermediate

For people with energetic lifestyles and very good mobility

You must be able to:

- manage at least five to six hours of physical activity per day with ease.
- walk at a regular to moderate pace to explore towns and historic sites extensively on foot. Some days include walking tours of at least 5-7kms. Many walks include uneven terrain, cobble streets and steep ascents/descents.
- negotiate challenging visits to historic sites including castles accessed by steep/cobble streets, whose interiors include several staircases; and cave complexes which include up to 600 steps.
- keep up with the group at all times.
- stand for one to two hours during visits to galleries and museums without the need to sit.
- board/alight coaches, cable cars and boats with steep steps unassisted.
- contend with a shower over a bath; walk-in showers may not be available at all hotels.
- manage your own luggage at some hotels.

### Fitness Levels

Please also view the fitness criteria required for our tours, graded from Level 1 to Level 3, at [www.asatours.com.au/fitness-level/](http://www.asatours.com.au/fitness-level/)

All ASA tours are active programs suitable for people with a good level of mental and physical fitness and good mobility. They are not suitable for people who lack stamina, have difficulty walking at the group's pace or who have mobility issues. An unavoidable aspect of every tour is the need to manage walking, stair-climbing and standing for long periods of time.

It is a condition of travel that all participants agree to accept ASA's directions in relation to their suitability to participate in activities undertaken on the tour, and that ASA retains the sole discretion to direct a tour participant to refrain from a particular activity on part of the tour. Before enrolling on an ASA tour please read the fitness requirements carefully.

## Booking Conditions

### ASA INTENTION TO TRAVEL APPLICATION FORM

Some ASA tours fill almost immediately. Don't miss out! You can register your 'Intention to Travel' by completing this application and returning this to ASA with a AUD \$200.00 per person deposit. Once the tour price has been published, the itinerary and ASA Reservation Application Form will be sent to you. From the time you receive the itinerary you will have two weeks to either:

- Send us a completed ASA Reservation Application Form together with an additional deposit of AUD \$800.00 per person. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation. At this time your deposit of AUD \$1000.00 is subject to the tour's Booking Conditions.

Or

- CANCEL your Intention to Travel in writing. ASA will refund your AUD \$200.00 per person deposit, less a \$66.00 service fee (including GST).



# Intention to Travel Application

TOUR NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
TOUR DATES \_\_\_\_\_

## Booking before the tour price is available

Some ASA tours fill almost immediately. Don't miss out! You can register your 'Intention to Travel' by completing this application and returning this to ASA with a AUD\$200.00 per person deposit. Once the tour price has been published, the itinerary and ASA Reservation Application Form will be sent to you. From the time you receive the itinerary you will have two weeks to either:

- Send us a completed ASA Reservation Application Form together with an additional deposit of AUD\$800.00 per person applicable for International tours OR AUD\$300.00 per person applicable for Australian tours. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation. At this time your full deposit is subject to the tour's Booking Conditions.

### OR

- Cancel your Intention to Travel in writing. ASA will refund your AUD\$200.00 per person deposit, less a \$66.00 service fee (including GST).

## Applicant Details (as in passport)

TITLE Mr  Mrs  Ms  Miss  Dr  Other \_\_\_\_\_  
FIRST NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Preferred FIRST NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
MIDDLE NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SURNAME \_\_\_\_\_  
POSTAL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTRY \_\_\_\_\_ POSTCODE \_\_\_\_\_  
TEL. (AH) ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ TEL. (BH) ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile Tel: \_\_\_\_\_  
EMAIL address \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of birth / / \_\_\_\_\_ GENDER Male  Female

## Tour Accommodation (rooming preferences)

I/we would like:  a twin-bedded room  a double-bedded room  a room for sole occupancy  
I am travelling:  on my own  with a friend/family member Travel Companion \_\_\_\_\_

## Meals

I do not have any specific dietary requests

Please **X** the box if you **CAN NOT** eat any of the following:

fish  poultry  red meat  dairy products

eggs  pork  nuts

Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Correspondence

Your preferred method of correspondence  Postal Mail  Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

## Participation Criteria

To participate in an ASA tour, you must be reasonably fit, in good health and able to participate in all activities without assistance from Tour Leaders or other tour members. If you require assistance, a fit and able travel companion must undertake to accompany and assist you with all tasks for the duration of the whole tour.

ASA's ability to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your specific needs, your health and safety and the health and safety of other tour members, is of paramount importance to us. For this reason the ASA Reservation Application includes a Medical Information section. As a general guideline, you must be able to accomplish each of these activities *without assistance or support*:-

- walk & stand unassisted for at least 2-3 hours a day in hot, humid conditions
- walk confidently on and over uneven surfaces
- climb at least 3 flights of stairs
- embark and disembark from ferries, buses and trains
- walk up and down steep slopes
- walk at a steady pace and no less than 1 km every 15 - 20 minutes
- organise, manage and carry your own luggage
- follow and remember tour instructions
- meet punctually at designated times and places
- administer your own medication.

Applicant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Dated \_\_\_\_\_



# Intention to Travel Payment

## Tour / Course Name

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Name of Traveller 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Traveller 2 \_\_\_\_\_

I have enclosed a payment to the value of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (including CC or bank fee if applicable) for this tour

Payment by (please indicate):  Cheque  Direct Debit (see below)  Credit Card (see below)

## International Payments

Welcome to our international travellers! If you are making a payment and do not have an Australian bank account/credit card, we can only accept payment as follows:

- via credit card with the applicable fee - the credit card company/bank will set the exchange rate
- via bank transfer; please give your surname and tour code (eg. Smith 21705) as a reference and ask your bank to allow for all charges.

Bank cheques or personal cheques will not be accepted.

### By Cheque (accept Australian cheques only)

Please make cheques payable to *Australians Studying Abroad*

### Direct Deposit or Internet Banking

You will need to:

1. Provide your bank with ASA's bank details (see below) and the amount you wish to transfer OR make a direct deposit through any ANZ branch
2. Include any fees levied by the banks
3. Provide a reference number (Mobile or last name recommended).
4. Complete section below, including confirmation no. (given when transaction completed).

### Australians Studying Abroad bank details

Bank ANZ  
Branch 420 St Kilda Road, Melbourne Vic  
Swift Code ANZBAU3M  
BSB 013-423  
Account No 3472-32759

Bank confirmation No. \_\_\_\_\_

Reference used: Mobile or last name recommended  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date Money Transferred \_\_\_\_\_

### Credit Card Payment

Credit card fees apply: Mastercard, Visa & American Express 2%

Please debit my:  Mastercard  Visa  American Express

I authorise ASA to debit my credit card for the amount due plus the applicable fee as above

Credit Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code (CVC) \_\_\_\_\_

Bank the Card is linked to (eg. NAB or ANZ) \_\_\_\_\_

Cardholders Name \_\_\_\_\_

Cardholders Billing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Cardholders Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## AUSTRALIANS STUDYING ABROAD

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