

Dolo-Slovo Rocks 2018

Trip Description

This trip (Dolo-Slovo Rocks) includes and puts together two of the most outstanding regions of North-eastern Italy: the Dolomites and the Trieste/Carso (Karst) area, with parts of neighbouring Slovenia. All areas are unique in their own right: the Dolomites for their stunning peaks seemingly coming out of the dark green of spruce forests; Trieste and its gulf for the beauty of its azure sea, in a corner of Italy where the classical beauty of the Mediterranean landscape is tempered by the first hints of the Alps, which in clear days open up at the background and provide an almost magical backdrop to the area. Slovenia is a verdant nation – with a legacy of its Austro-Hungarian past, but culturally belonging to the Slavonic world.

These regions are also ideally linked by their history: both the Dolomites and the Trieste area were the last to join the Kingdom of Italy in 1866 – in fact, Trieste and its region remained torn well after WW2, when the city was finally declared Italian only in 1959, but lost its natural hinterland of Istria (now split between Slovenia and Croatia), while Slovenia gained its independence in 1991, to later join the EU only in 2007. So the long-standing Austrian-Hungarian presence can still be felt in the air here, in both countries; it has left many traces in the landscape, in the cuisine and in the local customs at large.

All of this adds charm and interest to the trip: the Carso (Karst) is in fact one cultural and geographical entity split between Italy and Slovenia, and it should be approached as such, even though it now belongs to two different countries. It is a region known far and wide for its geological features – so important that they even gave their name to a whole series of geological phenomena (defined precisely as '*karstic*'). The name 'Dolomites', instead, almost speaks for itself as a synonym for "magical mountains", which were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2009.

The trip will therefore include a series of highlights from all these regions: the majestic peaks of the Dolomites – with the immense views they offer, and the incredible experience of walking on what was once the bed of an ocean – will be complemented by the monumental caves we will see in the Carso and its open marine horizons, while the serene landscapes of rural Slovenia will be a resting delight for the senses. We will walk on historical trails and visit first class museums and sights, taking in the grandeur of nature as well as the cultural, artistic, historical and gastronomical plenty that these countries offer.

The Itinerary

Day 1. (Wed, June, 27th). Arrival and meeting of participants in Venice International Airport (Marco Polo). Coach from Venice to Ljubljana, Slovenia's capital, for the trip's introduction. Acknowledging oneself with Slovenia's capital city. Included dinner. Overnight stay in Ljubljana (1).

Resources: Ljubljana official website: <https://www.visitljubljana.com/en/visitors/>

Day 2. (Thurs, June, 28th). Morning: visit of Ljubljana (individual visit), then (after lunch) transfer to Lake Bled. Visit of the Lake Bled area and free time. Overnight stay at Lake Bled (1). Free evening.

Resources: Bled Official website: <http://www.bled.si/en/>

Wikipedia link: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lake_Bled.

Day 3. (Fri, June, 29th). Transfer from Lake Bled towards Trieste and the Carso (*Karst*) region; visit of the *Grotte di S. Canziano (Skocjanske jame)*. Škocjan Caves entered the UNESCO's list of natural and cultural world heritage sites in 1986, and represent the most significant underground phenomena in both the Karst region and Slovenia. The site also ranks among the most important caves in the world. Here the Timavo (*Reka*) river disappears into the 'Big Collapse Doline' (*Velika Dolina*; a huge sinkhole) then flows underground for 34 km, re-surfacing near Trieste (*we will see it again on the last day in the Carso region*). Included dinner at a restaurant along the '*costiera*' (seafront), north of Trieste, or in Trieste town center itself. Overnight stay at *Da Rosy B&B*, Duino (1).

Resources (from my website): <http://www.italy-tours-in-nature.com/skocjan-caves.html>

Official Škocjan Caves website: <http://www.park-skocjanske-jame.si/en>

Official Postojna Caves website: <https://www.postojnska-jama.eu/en/>

Day 4. (Sat, June, 30th). Trieste and the Carso (*Karst*) region. Morning: guided visit of the *Rilke Path*, an easy trail above the suspended white cliffs of Duino, with sweeping views over the gulf of Trieste, where it is also possible to admire many karstic features in a natural setting. Included lunch at the beautiful Restaurant "*Il Pescatore*", by the old fishing harbour of Duino. After lunch, it is possible to visit Duino castle and grounds (individual visit); otherwise, free afternoon to spend either at the local beaches or visiting the site of Miramare, or to the city of Trieste (connections by bus). The enchanting city of Trieste has retained in full the charm of its Imperial Austrian-Hungarian past. Overnight stay at *Da Rosy B&B*, Duino (2). Free evening.

Resources (from my website): <http://www.italy-tours-in-nature.com/Carso.html>

<http://www.italy-tours-in-nature.com/duino.html>

Day 5. (Sun, July, 1st). Morning: visit of the '*Bocche del Timavo*' – one of the most important karstic rivers in Europe, which comes out of deep cavities as a fully formed river after about 34 km of subterranean journey – a journey that starts at the Škocjan Caves in Slovenia (*see above*). Included light lunch at the atmospheric site of the Livenza Springs; then geological sights in the Venetian Pre-Alps: visit of the Caglieron natural gorge (included visit to a local winery too: wines are strictly connected to soil and pedology – what the French would call '*terroir*') and other geological features of the Cansiglio karstic plateau (*Bus de la Lum*). Overnight stay at the Agriturismo *De Bertoldi*, near Belluno (1). Included dinner at the Agriturismo.

Resources (from my website): <http://www.italy-tours-in-nature.com/livenza-springs.html>

<http://www.italy-tours-in-nature.com/caglieron.html>

<http://www.italy-tours-in-nature.com/cansiglio.html>

Day 6. (Mon, July, 2nd). Geological sights around the Belluno area: the Dolomiti Bellunesi are rockier and wilder than the Dolomite's heartland, and will serve as a good introduction to the part of trip that follows: visit of the striking natural canyon of Brent de l'Art (walking for the most adventurous), then of the interesting sights of the *Cadini di Brenton* (natural erosion phenomena) and the Soffia waterfall. Light lunch at the Soffia waterfall café-bar. Free evening in Belluno. Overnight stay at the Agriturismo, near Belluno (2).

Resources (from my website): <http://www.italy-tours-in-nature.com/belluno.html>

(For Brent de l'Art) <http://www.italy-tours-in-nature.com/val-belluna.html>

(For Cadini di Brenton and Soffia waterfall) <http://www.italy-tours-in-nature.com/dolomiti-bellunesi.html>

Day 7. (Tue, July, 3rd). Transfer towards Cortina. Visit of the Tre Cime – one of the most outstanding sites in the Dolomites, renowned for its immense views over the whole region; the Tre Cime is also a designated 'serial property' within the Dolomites UNESCO World Heritage Site (2009). We will cover the circular walk (time permitting!) around the three celebrated peaks, with a light lunch at one of the three '*Rifugio*' of the area. Included dinner and overnight stay at Rifugio Auronzo (1).

Resources (from my website): <http://www.italy-tours-in-nature.com/cortina.html>

<http://www.italy-tours-in-nature.com/tre-cime.html>

Day 8. (Wed, July, 4th). Morning: transfer towards Trentino, along the Dolomite's Great Road. After taking in the great sights along the way and a light lunch, we will take the chairlift to the *Alpe di Pampeago*, and walk the historic geological trail of *Sass Capèl* in the Monzoni group – a Dolomite massif of volcanic origin near Predazzo. Time permitting, we will visit also Predazzo geological museum, then transfer to *Hotel Miravalle*, Fai della Paganella, near Trento (1). Included dinner and overnight stay at *Hotel Miravalle* (1).

Resources (from my website): <http://www.italy-tours-in-nature.com/trentino.html>

<http://www.italy-tours-in-nature.com/dolomites.html>

<http://www.italy-tours-in-nature.com/geology-of-the-dolomites.html>

Day 9. (Thurs, July, 5th). Visit of the Bletterbach gorge – an outstanding natural feature: this canyon shows, like an open book (and perhaps like no other site in the region), the geological history of the Dolomites at its best. The Bletterbach gorge is also one of the nine sites which have been designated ‘serial properties’ within the Dolomites UNESCO World Heritage Site (2009). Farewell dinner either at a typical Italian pizzeria in Mezzolombardo (or alternative location). Overnight stay at the *Hotel Miravalle*, Fai della Paganella (2).

Resources (from my website): <http://www.italy-tours-in-nature.com/bletterbach.html>

<http://www.italy-tours-in-nature.com/dolomites-UNESCO.html>

Day 10. (Fri, July, 6th). In the morning (time permitting), short stroll in the beautiful city center of Trento – site of the famous Council – then visit of *Muse Trento*: one of the most innovative science museums not only in Italy, but in Europe. Transfer by coach to Venice Marco Polo International airport and end of trip.

Resources: Muse’s official website: <http://www.muse.it/en/Pages/default.aspx>.

Resources (from my website): <http://www.italy-tours-in-nature.com/MUSE-Trento.html>