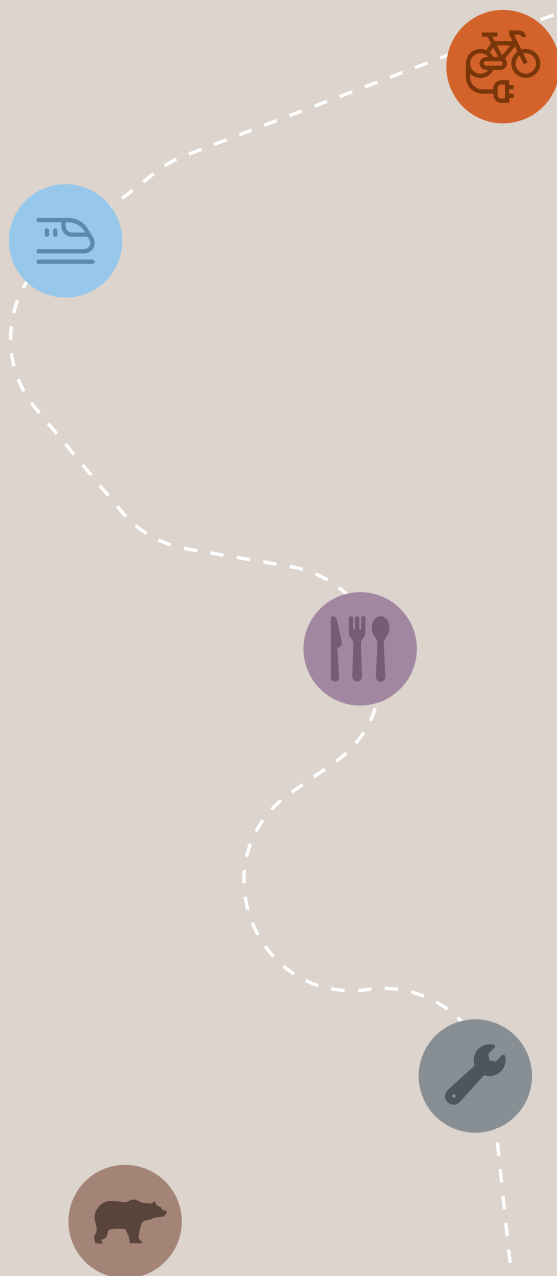


A CYCLING GUIDE FROM
THE VILLAGE OF **TURJAK** TO
THE **KOLPA** RIVER



FROM NATURE
TO CULTURE
BY BIKE



A Cycling Guide from the Village of Turjak to the Kolpa River

'From Nature to Culture by Bike' is a cycling route that connects the area from the village of Turjak to the Kolpa river, giving nature lovers an opportunity to cycle through one of Slovenia's most forested areas.

Along the way, you can stop and get to know the culture of the people who have been living in this undulating karstified area for centuries.

You can find the GPX trace [HERE](#).



You will be accompanied by refreshing forests that are home to all sorts of animals, see magnificent castles and learn the interesting stories of the people who used to inhabit them – one of the arguably best-known ones is the story of Veronika of Desenice. You will ride through picturesque roadside villages and if you are there at the right time, you may meet the famous travelling vendors – pack peddlers. If you miss them elsewhere, you are bound to meet them at various ethnological events, such as the Ribnica woodenware and pottery fair, Tamburanje va Kosteles and Psoglavski dnevi. For a bit of refreshment in cold water, have a swim in the green Kolpa river or in Lake Rudnik. On the way, observe the idle flow of the local sinking rivers, the Rinža, the Bistrica, the Ribnica, the Tržiščica and the Rakitnica, which for thousands of years carried the material that now forms the floor of the valleys between the Velika gora and Mala gora ranges. Thanks to these rivers,

a part of the route across the karst field is fairly flat and undemanding. Those cyclists who love focusing on elevation gain can take the uphill route towards Loški Potok – either from the direction of Osilnica or Sodražica.

The entire 'From Nature to Culture by Bike' cycling route is not waymarked in nature; its total length is 200 kilometres with more than 5,700 metres of elevation gain.

The route offers various cycling options – you can take several days to cycle around the mysterious forests of Slovenia and ride the entire route, or you can visit the area multiple times to do shorter trips and ride only the selected route sections. To get here, you can travel by the Ljubljana-Kočevje intercity train, which will take you to one of the stops that can be chosen as a starting point of your cycling trip.



For a more comfortable trip, you can rent e-bikes from one the rental providers listed below



If your e-bike has run out of energy on the way, this is where you will also find e-bike charging stations.

✚ **Hostel Bearlog** – <https://www.kocevsko.com/en/stories/bike-and-e-bike-rental-in-kocevje/>

✚ **Osilnica Tourist Society**,
Osilnica 11, 1337 Osilnica, +386 51 426 406,
td.osilnica@gmail.com

✚ **Kostel Culture and Tourism Institute**,
Vas 4, 1336 Kostel – <http://visitkostel.com/>

✚ **Ribnica Handicraft Centre**,
Cesta na Ugar 6, 1310 Ribnica – <https://visitribnica.com/cycling-in-ribnica-and-surroundings/>

✚ **Municipality of Sodražica**,
Trg 25. maja 13, 1317 Sodražica – <https://sodrazica.si/izposoja-e-koles>

✚ **Pri Kapcu Inn**, Travnik 74, 1318 Loški
Potok – <https://www.prikapcu.si/>

✚ **Kozolec TIC**, Rašica 69, 1315 Velike Lašče
– <https://velikolaska.si/aktivnosti/>

✚ **Klančar Homestead**, Zagorica 24a,
1312 Videm-Dobropolje +386 41 220 438
klancarjeva.domacija@gmail.com



Photo by: Žiga Marin for Zavod Kočevsko

Would you like to hire a cycling guide?



To find a licenced cycling tour guide, who will take care of you, contact one of the following institutions:

✚ **Kočevsko Institute**
<https://www.kocevsko.com/en/activities/cycling/>

✚ **Ribnica Handicraft Centre**
<https://visitribnica.com/>

✚ **Primož Trubar's Area, Public Institute**
<https://jztk.si/>

✚ **Kostel Culture and Tourism Institute**
<http://visitkostel.com/>

Before you leave...



The cycling routes are not waymarked in nature.

- ✿ The routes run mostly on asphalt and gravel roads, so it is best to set out on a cycling trip with a mountain or trekking bike, which must be in perfect condition.
- ✿ It is also advisable to bring a spare inner tube, a bicycle repair kit (a multi-tool) and a bicycle pump.
- ✿ You should set out early enough, especially in spring and autumn, when the days are shorter.
- ✿ It is also recommended that you have a look at the individual stages of your trip before setting off.
- ✿ A part of the route leads through a fairly uninhabited area with poor mobile phone reception, so it is a good idea to download the route on your bike computer/mobile phone beforehand.

Access to cycling routes / how to get here



You can park your car at all the starting points and certain ones can also be reached by train if you get off at the Kočevje, Stara Cerkev, Ribnica, Žlebič, Ortnek, Velike Lašče and Dobropolje railway stops.

In the train timetable, these trains are marked with a special bicycle pictogram. An extra fee is charged for transporting bicycles by train. Before leaving, it is advisable to contact the Slovenian Railways and check whether bicycle transportation is possible due to a limited number of bicycles that can be taken on board and occasional alternative means of transportation used in place of the train.

Caution on the road



Some cycling route sections lead along main and regional roads, so you should be especially cautious while riding your bicycle there. The use of a homologated bicycle helmet is mandatory for cyclists under the age of 18 and strongly recommended for all others. To make your trip easier and safer, it is recommended that you hire a cycling guide, who will make sure you have the best possible experience.



Man and wildlife



The cycling route is within the animal kingdom inhabited by brown bears, wolves, lynxes and other wild animals, and we must all behave accordingly in their natural habitat. It's nice to see a roe deer, a hind or a rabbit from afar, but what to do should you meet a bear?

You can find more information about how to stay safe during brown bear encounters here: https://dinalpbear.eu/wp-content/uploads/Life-Dinalp-Bear_Kako-se-vesti_zlozenka_EN_web.pdf

Where can you have your bike fixed?



🚲 Bikeworkshop

bicycle repair shop, Martin Bastar, s. p.,
Pri Unionu 9, 1330 Kočevje,
www.bikeworkshop.si/

🚲 Kolesarski servis Žiga Češarek

bicycle repair shop, Nemška vas 4,
1310 Ribnica,
<https://www.kolesarska-klinika.si/>



Photo by: Vasia Marinc

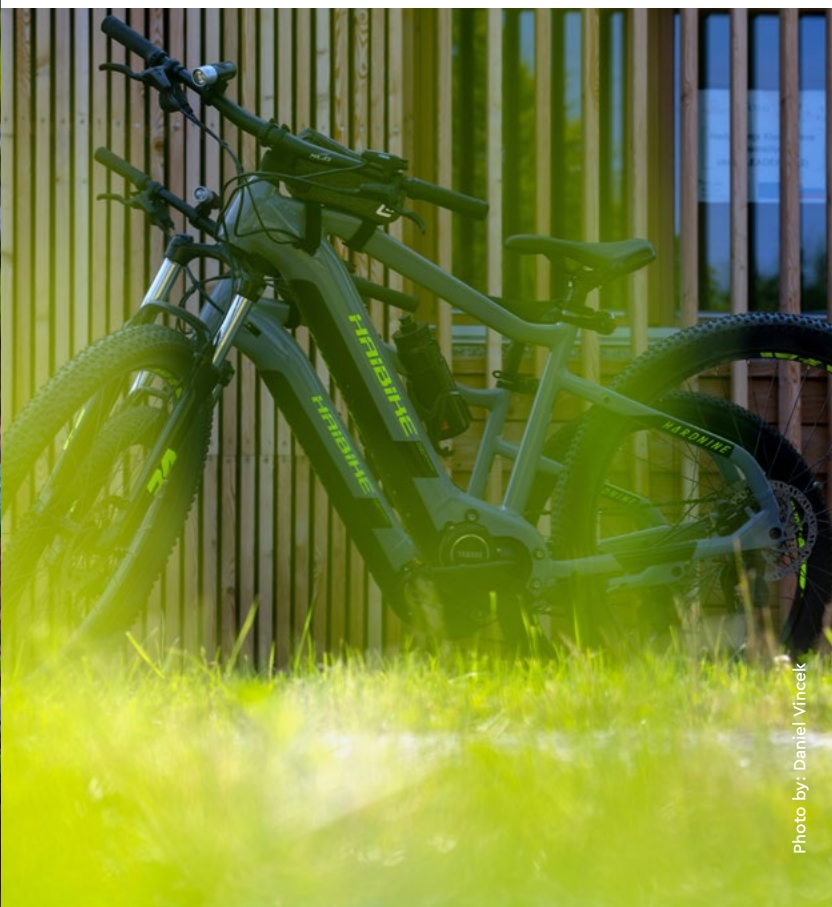


Photo by: Daniel Vincek



THE CYCLING ROUTE 'FROM
NATURE TO CULTURE BY
BIKE' STARTS...

FROM KOČEVJE, VIA RIBNICA AND TO VIDEM

length: 60.5 km
elevation gain: 1.630 m



Ascent: 1636 m

Descent: 1648 m

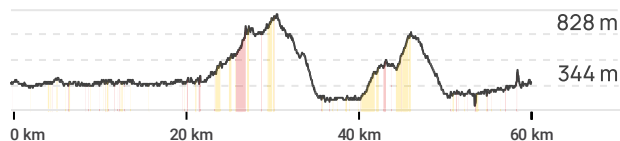


Photo by: Žiga Marin for Zavod Kočevsko

Welcome to Kočevsko

It took Kočevje a long time to get a rail link. Now that it finally has one, **train is an excellent means of transport also for visitors who would like to visit the town and the surroundings area by bicycle.** From the train station, you can ride to the town centre along the newly built and marked cycle path. You will get to see an idle karst river, the Rinža, and the **Church of St. Bartholome** next to it; to get to the other side, cross the **Charles Bridge (Karlov most)**. At the **Bearlog Hostel TIC** on the opposite river bank, **you can hire a guide** to take you around Kočevje, there are, however, a number of other tourist programmes available. You can read more about them and various other tourist offerings on the website www.kocevsko.com. On the south side of the town is the **Kočevje Regional Museum**, where you can see some interesting permanent and temporary exhibitions dedicated to the town and the surrounding area. The town's recent acquisition is the **Jezero Kočevsko Camp with a tourist information centre**. The friendly staff will be happy to tell you more about the things to see and do in the local area. **As suggested by its name, the camp – 'jezero' means lake – is located next to Lake Rudnik (Rudniško jezero)**, which was created in the hollow of a lignite mine, when the mine ceased operation in the 1970s. The lake is now a popular tourist spot for locals and visitors alike. The water in the lake is very clean, which is why the lake

is inhabited by a large number of animals, such as the European crayfish, and numerous freshwater fish species, including the pike, the zander, the sheatfish, the asp, the carp, the grass carp, the common perch, the common bream and small pelagic fish. **Many bird species nest by the lake, especially in the Kipa area.** The most common ones are the little grebe, the great crested grebe, the mute swan, the European wigeon, the Eurasian teal and the common pochard. In addition to watching animals, the lake is a great place for fishing, sailing, swimming, stand-up paddle boarding and diving. **There is also a popular footpath around the lake. Check out www.poyek.si if you'd like to hire a SUP board or an e-bike.**

SHORTER TRAIL SUGGESTION

Kočevsko's Springs Cycling route

The 31-km-long cycling route starts at Lake Rudnik (Rudniško jezero) and leads past Kočevsko's springs and the local villages. The route is at its most beautiful in spring, when the springs have the most water. On the way, you will get to see the villages of Mahovnik, Dolga vas, Livold, Črni potok, Mozelj and Kočarji. You can find all the information about the cycling route including the GPX trace on the following link: <https://www.kocevsko.com/en/paths/route-along-the-kocevje-springs-long/>

Lake Rudnik is also the starting point of the cycling route 'From Nature to Culture by Bike', the first part of which is fairly flat and suitable for family trips too.

From the lake, the route first leads through the village of **Šalka vas**, where you can visit **the MA-JA bee farm** and sample some fine forest honey or stop at **the Kobolas**, a family of craftsmen, who make a variety of products from the wood sourced in the local forests. From here, the route leads to the **village of Željne**, where you can see **the Željne Caves**, which provided shelter to humans as early as 20,000 years ago. Continue past the village of Klinja vas to Gorenje, where you can have a **craft beer tasting at the Matt Brewery**. After a cold refreshment, head towards the far end of the village and into the heart of a mysterious forest. **When cycling, pay attention to the wild-animal tracks on the forest road.** You are bound to spot the tracks left by roe deer, fallow deer, wild boars, wolves, lynxes or even brown bears, which Kočevsko is best known for. Riding along a gravel road, across woods and clearings, you will get to the **Ribnica area** in no time.



Photo by: Žiga Marin for Zavod Kočevsko



Photo by: Marjan Kapele

Welcome to the Ribnica area - A destination known for one- of-a-kind handicraft stories and inspirational forests

The route passes through the villages of Otavice and Goriča vas to Hrovača, where you can stop at **the Kojek beekeeping** and at **the Škrabec Homestead**, the birthplace of the Slovenian linguist Father Stanislav Škrabec. Here, you can learn about his life and the living culture of the 19th century. The next major stop is in the old town of Ribnica. **At the Ribnica Handicraft Centre**, which focuses on presenting **woodenware and pottery**, you can see various exhibitions and **meet the local craftsmen**. The museum shop offers a wide variety of local souvenirs and useful everyday items. **You can also charge your own e-bike or rent one, and there is also a bicycle repair station.** From here, head to the **Ribnica Castle**, where you can see the Rudež family's furniture collection and an exhibition on witch trials. Did you know

that the last witch in the territory of today's Slovenia was burnt right here, in Ribnica? **During the summer, the TIC at the castle offers information about everything that is on offer to tourists around here.** Cross the Bistrica river and continue to **the Miklova Hiša Gallery** and the mighty **Church of St Stephen**, whose bell towers were designed by the famed Slovenian architect **Jože Plečnik**. **The Harlekin Pizzeria and Restaurant** (Gostilna in picerija Harlekin) is a good place to stop for a meal or to spend the night; your bicycle will be perfectly safe in their bike shed. For more information on things to see and do, visit the website www.turizem.ribnica.si. Once you've had your fill of cultural and handicraft experiences in Ribnica, it's time for an uphill ride on the slopes of **the Mala gora range**; this section is just over 10 kilometres long with an elevation gain of 440 metres, followed by a descent. At the top, you can get off the route and head towards the **Church of St Ana**, which is a popular hiking destination and offers fine views of the Ribnica and Dobropolje Valleys.



Photo by: Marjan Kapele



SHORTER TRAIL SUGGESTION

Ribnica Circular Cycling Route

If Ribnica has convinced you to stay longer, you may want to check out the Ribnica Circular Cycling Route, which is perfectly suitable also for families and cyclists with a low level of physical fitness. The 23-km-long route is well marked with red waymarks. The route leads from Ribnica through the picturesque villages of Breže, Jurjevica, Sajevec, past the Ugar estate to Prigorica, Lipovec, Otavice, Hrovača and back to Ribnica. On the way, you can visit artisans in their workshops, woodenware makers in the northern part of the route and potters in the southern part, which is known as the 'Land of Pottery'. All the necessary information are available on www.hikr.si/ribniska-krozna-pot. A GPX file is available [HERE](#).

Dobrepolje

The descent from Mala gora is followed by a ride across picturesque fields, before reaching the **Dobrepolje Valley**, which is famous for two renowned artists, brothers **Tone and France Kralj**. Their works can be seen along the way, in wayside shrine, as well as at the **Videm cemetery**. To learn more about their work and life, head to the **Jaklič House (Jakličev dom)** in Videm.



If you get hungry, you can stop at the **Pri Petru eatery in the village of Lipa** or at **Pizzeria Adam in Ponikve**. The entire area is dotted with natural water-filled basins locally known as **'luže'**, i.e. puddles. In the northern part of Videm, towards Cesta, there is the so-called **Stara Luža – Old Puddle** – which significantly increases biodiversity, as it is home to various aquatic and riparian animals. In the village of **Podpeč**, you can visit the easily accessible entry

part of the **Podpeč Cave** (Podpeška jama). The very first known map of this cave was drawn in 1687 by the Slovenian polyhistor Janez Vajkard Valvasor. If you love the peace and quiet of the green valley so much that you would like to stay a bit longer, you can spend the night at **the Klančar Homestead (Klančarjeva domačija), an organic farm, which offers e-bike rentals**, among other things.



Photo by: Daniel Vincek



Photo by: Daniel Vincek

SHORTER TRAIL SUGGESTION

Dobrepolje Family Cycling Route

The Dobrepolje Family Cycling Route leads from Zagorica via Mala vas to Videm, and then along the foot of the Mala gora range in the direction of Podpeč and Podgora. You will cross the main road and ride through the village of Bruhanja vas back to Zagorica. The route is 11 kilometres long, passes through varied terrain and has an elevation gain of 220 metres. Nevertheless, it is suitable for families. Further information is available on www.dobrepolje.si A GPX file is available [HERE](#).

The route, which passes through the flat part of the Dobrepolje valley, continues in the **village of Zdenska vas**, where you can see the **traditional hayracks**, which represent the pinnacle of vernacular architecture. **The Church of St Anthony of Padua** boasts hundred years old linden grove. Just off the road in the village Ponikve stands the **Gačnik Homestead** with preserved architecture **by the Rašica**, a typical karst river that sinks into the system of sinkholes. A few more turns and the route will take you to the **village of Rašica and the Trubar Homestead**.

THE CYCLING ROUTE 'FROM NATURE TO CULTURE BY BIKE' CONTINUES...

FROM RAŠICA TO SODRAŽICA

length: 25.5 km
elevation gain: 780 m



Ascent: 776 m

Descent: 704 m

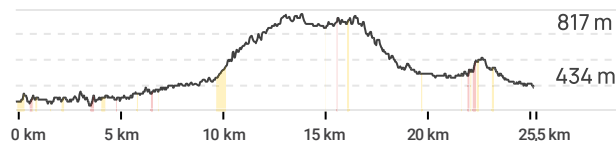


Photo by: Daniel Vincek



Photo by: Boštjan Podlogar

The Trubar Homestead stands near **the Rašica**, a **karst river** that used to power a water-driven saw and mill wheels back in the day. The homestead is now a popular place to visit for both Slovenian and foreign visitors, and also a monument to **Primož Trubar** and his contribution to the development of the Slovenian language and the first book in Slovenian. Among other things, the homestead features a **tourist information centre**, where visitors can get information about the local area, the homestead's history and Trubar's life, and also take part in a guided tour of the homestead. Refreshments are available at **the Trubar Tavern**.

There are a number of other points of interest in the vicinity, including **the Turjak Castle** (Auersperg Castle), which was first mentioned in 1220 and is considered one of the oldest Central European castles. It was named after its owners, the Counts of Auersperg. Its best known features include Slovenia's largest bulwark and the Renaissance defensive triangular corridor,

which is one of the first of its kind in Slovenia. All this makes the castle an important part of the development of castle architecture not only in Slovenia, but also in Central Europe. At the castle, you can see an interactive exhibition dedicated to the Middle Ages, medieval weapons, armour and hunting, a reconstructed **castle printing works, the castle dungeon, a torture chamber and Dalmatin's Chapel**, and have some refreshments at **the Castle Tavern**.

On the other side of the road to Grosuplje, in **Gradež**, there is a **fruit drying facility**, which was built in 1938 and renovated in 2003. The facility features a built-in wood-fired drying oven and operates in a traditional and eco-friendly way, which makes it a unique example of technological and cultural heritage preservation in Slovenia. Near the **village of Krvava peč**, you can see **the red-coloured rocky cliffs** that boast **wonderful views of the Bloke, Vid and Rakitna plateaus**. The name of the cliffs and the village is based on a legend dating back to the Ottoman times, according to which three girls jumped off the precipice to avoid being captured by the Ottomans. The cliffs can be accessed via an easy and marked circular trail; on the way there, you can see the Church of St Leonard and the B'č water catchment.

The terrain on this section of the route 'From Nature to Culture by Bike' is quite varied. It includes both ascents and descents and is suitable for more experienced cyclists.

SHORTER TRAIL SUGGESTION

Cycling Route to the Kobilji Curek Waterfall

If you decide to stay in the Velike Lašče area a bit longer, a good cycling option is the Cycling Route to the Kobilji Curek Waterfall, which will take you to the highest waterfall in the Dolenjska region. The route is 26 kilometres long and has an elevation gain of 690 metres. More information about the route and the things to see and do is available on the website www.velikolaska.si. A GPX file is available [HERE](#).

The route starts at the **Trubar Homestead** and continues towards **the villages of Knej, Stope and Karlovica**. It leads past the village of Lužarji, where **the source of the Iška river** and **the Church of St Oswald** are located. The area around Iška's source has been inhabited since circa 500 BC and the Romans began consolidating their power in this area in 35 BC. Towards the late 1st century AD, the Roman Empire started building walls, defensive fortresses, watchtowers, lookout spots, toll booths and other military outposts to fortify their military presence and defend the boundary between the Alpine and Adriatic areas. An important trade route used for transporting salt and wine passed through this village, connecting Stična and Aquileia. The spot where the trade routes used to cross is marked with **the milestone No. 10**.

The route continues through some beautiful villages to the border of the Municipality of **Sodražica**, from where you descend along the Bistrica stream to the village of Žimarice. You can stop for refreshments at **the Pri Lukatu inn** (Gostilna pri Lukatu). Following the flat main road, you will soon arrive in Sodražica, where this route section ends.



THE CYCLING ROUTE 'FROM
NATURE TO CULTURE BY
BIKE' CONTINUES...

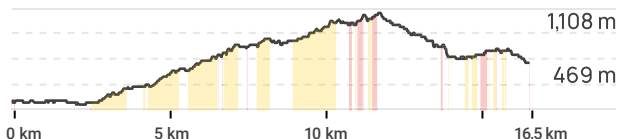
FROM SODRAŽICA TO LOŠKI POTOK

length: 16.5 km
elevation gain: 760 m

Photo by: Marjan Kapele



Ascent: 761 m Descent: 538 m



The Sodražica valley occupies the north-western part of the Ribnica valley. It starts in the Bistrica river's headwaters at the foot of the Boncar hill, continues towards the southeast, before finally expanding into a hollowed-out karst valley with a flat floor and slightly raised edges between two faults at Velika and Mala gora. The inhabitants of Sodražica are teasingly called the dog-headed men. Legend has it that they got this name when the church in Ribnica burnt to the ground back in the day and the people from Sodražica went there to search for nails in the ashes. This angered the locals so much that they called the residents of Sodražica dog-headed men, as the latter rooted around the site of the fire much like dogs. **Sodražica is known for woodenware making and selling, as well as some fine musicians** – it is home to Ansambel Franca Miheliča, a pop-folk ensemble.

At Matic's Ethno-House in Ravni dol, you can see the collection of farm tools and learn about the 20th-century dwelling culture of a family of woodenware makers. The house also features a room used for social gatherings. From Matic's Ethno-House, the route leads to **the well-known pilgrimage Church of St Mary of the Assumption in Nova Štifta**. It was built in the 17th century and boasts three golden altars, which are considered some of the most beautiful carving monuments of that era, alongside the church pulpit. The church

SHORTER TRAIL SUGGESTION

Cycling Route along the Edge of Forests

You can visit a number of sights in the Sodražica area by following the Cycling Route along the Edge of Forests. This 20-km-long route from Sodražica will take you past the Smrekovec pond to Sedlo, where you can stop at the Church of the Holy Family with a view of the valley. From here, the route continues through the village of Globel to the Kadice forest reserve. In the village of Žimarice, turn left onto a forest road and enjoy another fine view of the valley at the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows in Strmca, before returning to the starting point. This route has an elevation gain of 620 metres. A GPX file is available [HERE](#).

is visited by about 100,000 visitors every year, most of them on the Feast of the Assumption, 15 August. In the **village of Zamostec**, you can stop at **Okrepčevalnica Urška**, an eatery that serves fine food and drinks.

Those who would like to go fishing, can head to **the Smrekovec pond**, which is located 600 metres from the Sodražica-Žimarice road. Another place that can be visited all year round is the **Kadice gorge**. At the signpost in the village of Podklanec, turn off the main road and onto the side road. Leave your bicycle in the parking lot and follow the uphill path to the gorge. The path will take you past waterfalls and pools. In the upper part, water has hollowed out deep erosion channels that look like tubs. The gorge is best visited at a time when the stream has a high discharge.



From Sodražica, the cycling route leads via Nova Štifta towards the mountain lodge on the **Travna Gora plateau**. **This part of the route includes a great deal of uphill riding and a high elevation gain, and is thus recommended for more experienced cyclists.** On Travna gora, you can enjoy some refreshments and admire the fine views of the surrounding meadows, or continue on a hiking trip to the nearby peaks. If you head southwest, you can make a stop at the remains of the **Ogenjca Partisan Hospital**

and learn about the Yugoslav Partisans' military medical services during World War II. The field hospital operated in secret and was the scene of one of the most tragic events in the history of Partisan medical care, i.e. during the 1942 Rog Offensive, the wounded were taken to a nearby karst cave, where they committed a mass suicide just before the occupiers got there. From here, the route leads **to Loški Potok**.



THE CYCLING ROUTE 'FROM
NATURE TO CULTURE BY
BIKE' CONTINUES...

FROM LOŠKI POTOK TO OSILNICA

length: 32.5 km
elevation gain: 890 m



Ascent: 854 m

Descent: 1326 m

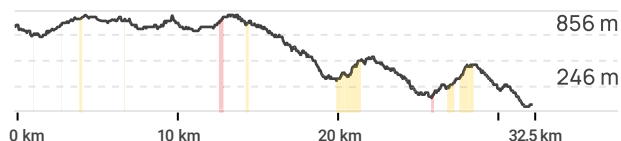


Photo by: Marjan Kapele

In the village of Hrib, you can see the **Tabor rise**, the main higher-lying ground and vantage point in the village. Tabor got its name, which means 'encampment', at the time of the Ottoman incursions, when the inhabitants of the surrounding villages headed here, seeking refuge from the attacks. Today, Tabor boasts two bell towers, one belonging to **the Church of St Leonard** and the other one to **the Church of St Barbara**. In 2014, a **memorial park was built in Loški Potok** to commemorate the most prominent cultural figures who had been born or had lived in Loški Potok and who left a deep mark with their work. Its creator, the academy-trained sculptor Jurij Smole, erected four statues depicting the poet

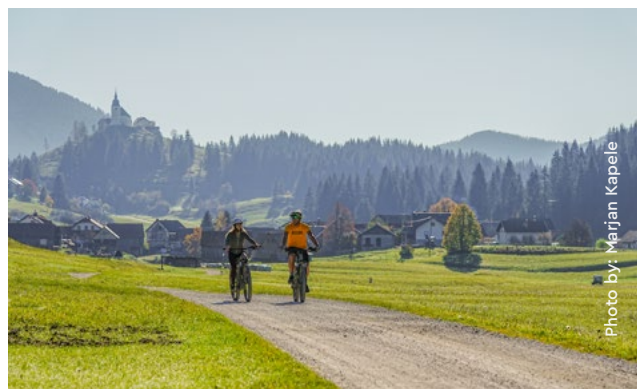


Photo by: Marjan Kapele

Dr Anton Debeljak, journalist Drago Košmrlj, agrochemist Dr Jakob Turk, and writer and poet Zofka Kveder. In the village of Travnik, you can see **the Jakob Bartol Ethnographic Collection**, which consists of a wide variety of old objects **from the former Anton family's homestead**. You can also see a pig-feed kitchen, a hen house, a hayrack and

a barn, and thus learn about the local farmers' life back in the day. The Loški Potok area is dotted with **various karst features, such as dolines, sinking rivers, karst caves** etc. This is also where you will find one of Slovenia's best-known uvalas, i.e. closed karst depressions. **During heavy rains, the uvala bottom gets filled with water that flows from the surrounding hills and turns the nearby village of Retje into a peninsula.** For a day or two, it is possible to get around the lake that is formed during the flooding on a boat, raft or SUP board. For more interesting things to see and do, visit the website: www.turizem.loskipotok.si. If you would like to stay in the valley a bit longer, **two accommodation options** are **Gostišče Ana**, an inn in the village of Retje, and **Hotel Oskar** in the village of Hrib.

SHORTER TRAIL SUGGESTION

Little Bear Cycling Route

If you've decided to stay longer to see a bit more of the area and nature, you can go on various hiking and wildlife watching tours, or ride the Little Bear Circular Cycling Route with a length of 21.5 kilometres and an elevation gain of 400 metres, which goes up and down, following an asphalt road. For further information, visit the website <https://turizem.en.loskipotok.si/> A GPX file is available [HERE](#).



In this part of the route, you will cycle past the villages of Travnik, Lazec, Podpreska, Draga, Srednja vas and Trava, before descending towards the village of Osilnica.

The first part of this route section is not demanding and also is suitable for families.

Before the Podplanina border crossing, turn left towards the village of Črni Potok, where you can refresh yourself in the **Čabranka river** on the border between Slovenia and Croatia.

From here, you will start a climb along a forest skid trail to the village of Žurje; this is quite an elevation gain along the unpaved skid trail, so this part of the route is recommended for more experienced mountain bikers.

You will be greeted by the first wonderful views of three rocky cliffs, namely Žurgarska, Velika, Rdeča and Taborska stena, rising above the Kolpa valley. The most interesting of the four is the **Taborska stena cliff** with the nearby **Tabor Cave (Taborska jama)**, which was used by the command of the National Liberation Army. The cave used to house the Partisans' printing works and a Partisan runners' link between the main headquarters of Slovenia and Croatia also ran through it. A short ascent past the villages of Belica, Papeži and Bezgarji to Bezgovica is followed by an adrenaline-filled descent to Osilnica, where you can enjoy some refreshments at **Hotel Kovač** after all the tiring riding you've done.



THE CYCLING ROUTE 'FROM
NATURE TO CULTURE BY
BIKE' CONTINUES...

FROM OSILNICA TO KOSTEL

length: 20 km
elevation gain: 410 m



Ascent: 410 m

Descent: 480 m



Cycling **in the direction of Kostel**, you will have plenty of opportunities to refresh yourself in **the green Kolpa river**, as there are a number of pebble beaches and islets. In recent years, tourism has become an important activity in this area, especially during the summer, when visitors can enjoy swimming or boating on the clean and warm river. **There are several official campsites, agritourism farms and lodgings options very close to the river.** Sport fishing is also very important, both on the Slovenian and Croatian sides of the river.

The Municipality of Osilnica is known as the land of Peter Klepec, a mythological character who drove the Ottomans out of the valley with his supernatural strength. As a little boy, Peter had covered a sleeping mountain fairy with branches to protect her from the scorching sun and she gifted him supernatural strength as a thank you.

The arguably best-known inhabitant of the village of Osilnica is **the academy-trained sculptor Stane Jarm**, a recipient of the Prešeren Fund award, whose works are known throughout Europe. Jarm's statue commemorating victims of the war stands in the centre of Osilnica. Another noteworthy sight is **the Church of Saints Peter and Paul**, which was turned into an encampment during the Ottoman incursion so the local inhabitants could take refuge from the invaders. **Behind**

the village lies the confluence of the Kolpa and Čabranka rivers. Riding from Osilnica, you can put your physical fitness to the test by cycling to the top of the **Strma Reber pass**, where a longboarding camp and a recreational cycling ascent to its top ('Navkreber na Strmo Reber') take place in the summer. The top of Strma Reber is a starting point for **hiking trails and viewpoints on Šajbnik, Loška stena and Cerklj** with a view of the Krokav virgin forest. More ideas for active leisure time activities are available on the website www.osilnica.si.

By the side of the road in the village of Bosljiva Loka, you will be greeted by a **statue of a 'vurmohar'**. Back in the day, the **Osilnica valley** was known for watchmaking. In local parlance, the watch sellers and repairers, who travelled far and wide to make a living, were called 'vurmoharji'. **The village has a swimming and bathing spot on an islet in the middle of the Kolpa**, which is also the starting point for various water activities, such as rafting and boating.

The neighbouring **village of Mirtoviči** features the **Gorše family's old smithy and blacksmithing museum**, where you can learn about the trade that was a source of livelihood for many a family in the Kolpa valley back in the day. At the far end of the village, you can turn left and walk up the hill to the source of the **Mirtoviči stream**, which is known for its

Cycling Route In the Footsteps of Peter Klepec – Osilnica – Čačič – Osilnica

If you decide to stay in Osilnica for a day or two, you can opt for a shorter cycling route, which is 11 kilometres long and has an elevation gain of 400 metres. The village of Padovo affords a view of a rocky cliff called Loška Stena and of the Kolpa river valley. In the village of Spodnji Čačič you can see one of the oldest churches in this area; the earliest mention of the Church of St Nicholas dates back to as early as 1526. You can find the GPX route [HERE](#).



rich flora and fauna. The stream has created some extraordinary geomorphological forms – evorsion channels, pools and overflowing grooves. A few hundred meters further along the main road, you will start the ascent to the **Peščenjak viewpoint hill** with **the Church of St Ana** on top of it. At the church, you can enjoy a fine view of the Slovenian and Croatian villages along the Kolpa. In the village of Kuželj, you will be greeted by a lovely view of **the Kuželj rocky cliff and window** – an approximately 7-metre-tall natural opening in the cliff, which boasts a view not only of the Kolpa valley, but also of the peaks of Gorski Kotar.

A few more turns and you will arrive at **the Kostel TIC, located in the village of Petrina**, where this route section ends. This part of the route is very picturesque and boasts wonderful views of the Kolpa valley's natural features. **With the exception of the ascent to Peščenjak, the route leads along the Kolpa and is also suitable for families.**

THE CYCLING ROUTE 'FROM NATURE TO CULTURE BY BIKE' CONTINUES...

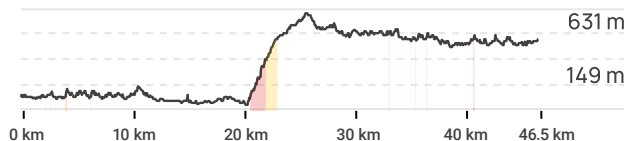
FROM KOSTEL (‘The Land of Water’) **TO KOČEVJE**

length: 46.5 km
elevation gain: 1.250 m



Ascent: 1248 m

Descent: 992 m





The name of **the village of Kostel** is based on the name of the castle fortress and the settlement below, called **Castell** (Germ. Graffenwarth; a fortress.) In written sources, Kostel was first mentioned in 1336 and, coincidentally, this is now Kostel's postal code. **The castle complex is the second largest in Slovenia and the only one where people still live within the former castle walls.** Throughout its history, the castle passed into the hands of different people, from the Counts of Ortenburg to the Langemats, and also provided refuge from Ottoman incursions. Today, the castle **features exhibitions on its history and the life in Kostel.** Visitors can also try their hand at an escape game or enjoy some tasty treats from a picnic hamper.

Another good place to eat is **the Padovac homestead in the village of Selo pri Kostelu.**

Not far from **the village of Vas**, there is a **white willow** growing by the Kolpa river; its tree trunk is over 550 centimetres in circumference and the willow was thus declared an outstanding tree in 2009. In **the village of Fara**, you will find **the Flower Garden**, a natural wellness retreat, where you can spend the night and recharge your batteries with various experiences amid the woods.

Above **the village of Fara** is the source of **Prifarski jarak**, also known as the Nežica stream, and a waterfall of the same name. They were named after a girl called Nežica, who once shepherded a pair of oxen near the village of Drežnik. The water suddenly disappeared into the ground, pulling the girl and the animals along. After a heavy downpour, a yoke wrapped in the girl's hair was washed up. Ever since, the waterfall and the stream have been called Nežica. The waterfall is 15 metres high, and there is a hiking trail leading to the source of the stream. The hike is certainly at its most beautiful in spring, when the stream has a lot of water and there is wild garlic growing all around. Passing the village of Fara, the stream becomes more sluggish and beavers have recently found home in its lower reaches. You can find more information about Kostel on the ZKT Kostel website: www.visitkostel.com

Kostel offers ample opportunities for an active family holiday, hiking trails, and all sorts of natural and cultural attractions, so there is plenty to do if you stay for more than one day. One of the options is the Kostel Family Cycling Route.

SHORTER TRAIL SUGGESTION

Kostel Family Cycling Route

It is 8 kilometres long and has an elevation gain of 170 metres, which makes it suitable for families with small children. The cycling route initially runs along the road and then turns into the forest, allowing for a peaceful ride under the shelter of treetops. The final part passes through two larger villages, where you can watch animals, enjoy local specialties (goat cheese, honey, etc.), stop at a hundred-year-old white willow tree with a trunk branched into four parts, or enjoy some refreshments in a nearby restaurant. A GPX file available [HERE](#).

The route leads along the Kolpa river. Passing **the village of Dolenja Žaga**, you will get to a **triple bridge**, where the Kotnica streams flow over moss-covered stones. **The source of the streams is 300 metres higher up in the Jelovička Cave**, whose entrance is under a 20-meter vertical rocky cliff. The cave is important in terms of hydrology and geomorphology. **It can**

be visited with a caving guide. In **the village of Bilpa**, the **Rinža river's water** comes to the surface beneath a high rocky cliff; here, it's called the Bilpa and it flows into the Kolpa river 200 metres further downstream. On the way to the village of Lazi, you will be accompanied by the Kolpa, its dams and the remains of old mills. In Lazi, make a sharp turn to the left and continue along a steep road towards Kočevje. To be able to leave the Kolpa river's gorge, you will need to make a difficult ascent with an elevation gain of 400 metres. **For this reason, families are advised to cycle this part of the route along the Kolpa, whereas the stage is recommended for experienced cyclists.** Just before the village of Lapinje, you will get to enjoy one last view of the Kolpa valley. **Continue through Kočevje's magnificent forests, past Podlesje and Prelesje, to the town of Kočevje and the end of your cycling adventure.**



Photo by: Florjan Jurjevič



From Nature to Culture by Bike - A Cycling Guide from the Village of Turjak to Kolpa River

Descriptions of sights are based on:

www.kocevsko.com

www.kocevje.si

www.rokodelskicenter-ribnica.si

www.turizem.ribnica.si

www.dobropolje.si

www.velikolaska.si

www.trubarjeva-domacija.si

www.zavod-parnas.org

www.gradez.si

www.sodrazica.si

www.maticova-etno-hisa.si

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www.turizem.loskipotok.si

www.osilnica.si

www.kostel.si

www.visitkostel.com

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Evropski kmetijski sklad za razvoj podeželja: Evropa investira v podeželje

