

Strategic project of the programme Interreg Italy-Slovenia »MULTISENSORIAL EXPERIENCES LINKED TO THE CASTLES AND VILLAS OF THE CROSS-BORDER REGION FOR EXCELLENCE IN TOURISM« (1. 1. 2019-31. 12. 2021)



NEWSLETTER: INTERREG ITALY-SLOVENIA. 'MERLINC'V' PROJECT

Number 18, November 2020 Cycling tourism

In this month's Newsletter you can read about:

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»This project is supported by the Interreg V-A Italy-Slovenia Cooperation Programme funded by the European Regional Development Fund.«

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ACTIVITIES CONNECTED WITH THE VALORISATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE: CYCLING AND CYCLE TOURISM IN THE TERRITORY OF COMUNITÀ COLLINARE

The hilly region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia has all the right characteristics to propose many interesting cycling trails for tourists who are also bicycle lovers.

Gently rolling hills, beautiful landscape or technical uphill climbs offer different types of outdoor entertainment suitable for Sunday cyclists or even professional cyclists. The aim is to

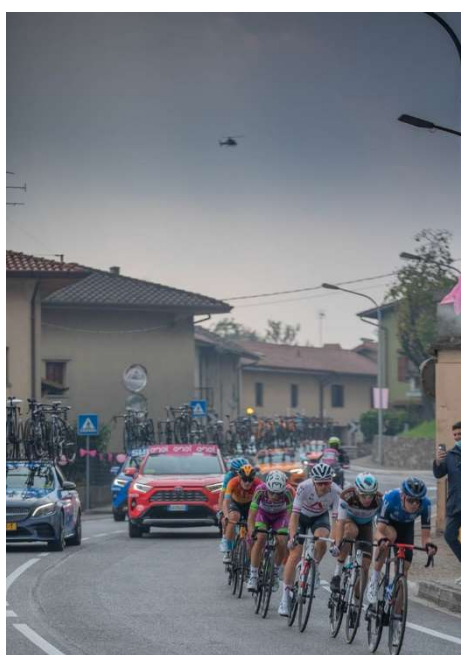


Photo by Gianpaolo Scognamiglio

provide services and the necessary infrastructure to accommodate tourists and bike lovers, cycling enthusiasts and the increasing number of e-bikers.



Photo by Gianpaolo Scognamiglio

The consortium of municipalities

“Comunità Collinare del Friuli” participated in events organized during the 16th stage of the Giro d’Italia 2020 from Udine to San Daniele del Friuli which took place on the 20th October. The stage was 229 km long and was won by the Slovenian rider Jan Tratnik.

The race is always very much acclaimed in the region and was followed by a great number of fans achieving a huge public success this year again. The finish line was set in San Daniele del Friuli, a small village famous in Italy and abroad for its prosciutto DOP, as well as for its cultural treasures like the old public library. Guarneriana is among the ten oldest libraries in Europe. On Monday, 19th October the consortium „Comunità



Photo by Monica Paolini_ Di Giusto Alessandro, Delle Case Valter, Pischiutta Massimo, Moreno Argentin

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Collinare del Friuli“ presented the MerlinCV project in Castello di Susans (Majano, UD) in a live streaming session in which the objectives of the project and the partners working to achieve these objectives were presented.

Informative material produced within the project has also been distributed in the region, especially in San Daniele.

The consortium Comunità Collinare is also engaged in the production of a new publication presenting 16 routes for cycle tourists with the title “I Like Bike”. The routes are running through all the 15 municipalities joined in the consortium and the leaflet should be printed by December 2020.



CYCLING TRAILS IN THE VIPAVA VALLEY

In recent years Slovenia has experienced a significant surge in the general interest for cycling. This does not just refer to the excitement over the successes of top Slovenian cyclists like Primož Roglič and Tadej Pogačar who regularly classify among the world’s top bikers; it is also noticeable as increased investments in cycling infrastructure and an ever-greater offer in the field of sustainable mobility and cycling tourism.

As one of the most attractive Slovenian tourist destinations, Vipava Valley has seen a rapid development of tourism over the last years including an expansion of services

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and products for cycling tourists. There are ample possibilities for encouraging this type of tourism in Vipava Valley which has many tar and gravel roads in the beautiful countryside for undemanding flat rides, but also some difficult climbs to the nearby plateau Trnovski gozd and the peak Nanos, perfect for mountain biking. Along the way, cyclists can stop at one of the numerous agritourism farms to restore their strength with local delicacies.

Nowadays tourists can choose from a great variety of cycling options, searching for helpful information in the numerous descriptions of cycling tours suitable for all levels of cyclists, from demanding sporting tours to short tours for families with small children. All those who wish to try the local cycling trails will be happy to learn that renting a bike, or even an e-bike, is no longer a problem since rental facilities are on the rise in recent years. For information on rental bikes, please check the official tourist info website for Vipava Valley: <https://www.vipavskadolina.si/ostani/izposoja-sportne-opreme>.

Information on interesting cycling trails and tours is available in certain local spots or in local Tourist Info Centres (TIC), however, you may also browse the web pages and prepare your personal plan in advance of your visit. Among websites offering such information, we would like to point out the official tourism portal of the Vipava Valley (<https://www.vipavskadolina.si/si/>), and the interactive on-line map, set up within the Interreg project INTERBIKE II, which offers many proposals for cycling excursions (<https://www.bike-alpeadria.eu/sl/map>). Cycling trails of varying difficulty levels can be looked up on the RockVelo website, which also provides rental services for different types of bicycles (<https://www.rockvelo.com/kolesarjenje-po-vipavski-dolini/?lang=sl>).

As a way to start exploring the region's charming landscape on two wheels, cycling fans should probably start with a round trip through the upper Vipava Valley and Branica valley. The trip is easy and perfect for families, with only a few short ascents. It takes visitors through the most beautiful parts of the valley where natural environment and cultural heritage blend into an idyllic setting.

Basic info:

Difficulty level: easy

Distance: 46,8 km

Duration: 2h 30 min

Ascent: 504 m

Descent: 504 m

Min. altitude: 57 m

Max. altitude: 237 m

The tour starts in Vipava, the ancient centre of the valley and the place where the river Vipava originates from many springs, joining in a unique delta shaped water stream, one of a kind in the whole of Europe. From Vipava, we take the main road in the direction of Podnanos, turning right towards Štanjel. We continue along

through the village of Manče and the remarkable settlement of Goče. The descent to the valley of the Branica river is interesting primarily for the mighty castle of Rihemberk, one of the biggest and best-preserved castles in Slovenia. The main road takes us on to Dornberk where we make a turn towards Ajdovščina. Before reaching Ajdovščina, we pass a medieval village of Vipavski Križ on our right. In Ajdovščina we can visit the town centre with remains of a Roman fortification. From Ajdovščina we ride on to Vipava passing a pilgrim church of Virgin Mary in Log. Before arriving to Vipava we spot a sightly Zemono Mansion which hosts a well-known restaurant Pri Lojzetu. From the same hilltop, you may admire a wonderful view of the upper Vipava Valley. A descent from Zemono takes us back to Vipava in conclusion of this agreeable round trip.

Detailed information of the tour, including GPX data, is available at: <https://www.vipavskadolina.si/aktivno/kolesarjenje/cestno-kolesarjenje/dolina-branice>

Author: Matic Batič

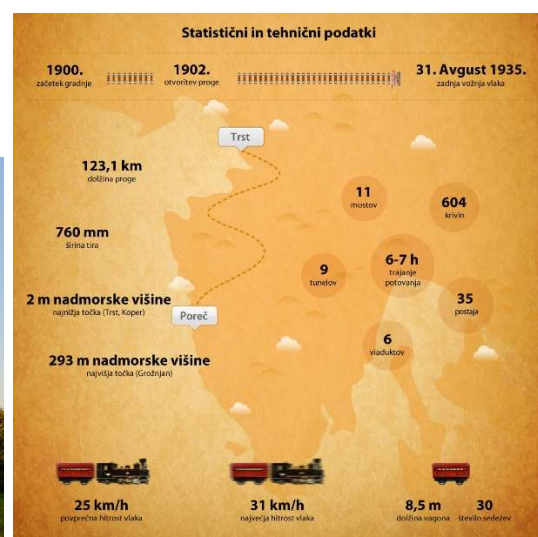
CYCLING ALONG PARENZANA

If one tries to evaluate what Istria has to offer in the field of cycling tourism, or tries to understand the significance of crossborder project cooperation, one cannot get past the „Parenzana“ cycling trail along the former railway line between Trieste and Poreč. The line operated from 1902 to 1935, connecting 33 stations in the territories of Italy (13 km), Slovenia (32 km) and Croatia (78 km), running through a scenic and very diverse landscape, it had 604 curves and 9 tunnels, and as many as 11 bridges and 6 viaducts. The discussions on the need to suitably revitalise the abandoned railway line started to show some progress on the centenary of its opening. The Association for the Reconstruction of the Poreč-Koper-Trieste Railway, the City Municipality of Koper and the County of Istria laid the foundations to the current “Route of Health and Friendship”. The project “PARENZANA I - the Route of Health and Friendship” within INTERREG IIIA Neighbourhood Programme Slovenia - Hungary - Croatia 2004-2006, for the 2006 to 2008 period, brought about the reconstruction of the line for recreational and tourism purposes. Further enhancement of the infrastructure and greater recognition of its value for different target groups was achieved with a continuation entitled “PARENZANA II - Revitalisation of the Route of Health and Friendship” (Programme IPA CBC SI-HR 2007-2013) carried out in 2009-2012 period. However, this project initiative did not include Italy. Hence, in the Italian territory the route ends already between Muggia and Trieste. Still, there is a certain interest in establishing the Parenzana route and maintaining its heritage in Italy, too. After all, the cycling route has been included in the development plan of Trieste.

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The cycling trail is suitable for all cyclists, especially in Slovenia, whereas in Croatia the tar road is replaced by gravel and some stretches are rather steep. In Grožnjan, the trail reaches 293 m above sea level, offering wonderful views on the astounding landscape. Apart from breath-taking nature and charming towns along the trail, there are two museums dedicated to Parenzana (in Izola, a narrow-gauge locomotive is placed on display), and the buildings of former railway stations in Koper, Dekani and Izola, for example, are also interesting. In Muggia, you can visit the remains of the former station and a canopy for passengers; an additional attraction that could enrich the visit of the planned recreational trail is a railway museum at Campo Marzio in Trieste. Unfortunately, the railway infrastructure at Aquilinia has been destroyed by the oil refineries and there are no traces of the former station in Servola either. The Parenzana railway station in Trieste was also demolished, but the building for passengers remains almost unchanged.

It is worth noting that the average train speed was 25 km/h and the entire journey from Trieste to Poreč took 6 to 7 hours. Cyclists in a good shape could have even overtaken the train!



Former railway station in Izola



Remains of the Muggia station



Based on: Parenzana - Pot zdravlja i prijateljstva/Pot zdravja in prijateljstva/Route of Health and Friendship, DVD, publisher: Istria County in cooperation with other partners of PARENZANA II project.

There are many options for renting a bike, even an e-bike, in the area of Parenzana, and it is regrettable that the pilot project CITY BIKE did not have success through the entire project area. In fact, its original idea is only kept in Piran (a system of free-of-charge bike rental Piranko). Other providers of rental services are: GO Portorož, KPE Rent a bike and Beel Store (e-bike rental) in Koper and Rent a bike in Izola. There is, however, a new initiative of all four municipalities of Slovenian Istra to introduce a common project of »bike sharing«. INTERREG PROJECT ITALY-SLOVENIA CROSSMOBY offered a new service that started this summer offering a regular bus line with the option of bringing a bike along on the bike trailer. The service was available to residents on both sides of the border and visitors to Istria and Kras. This free-of-charge service of bus and bike transport on the circular route from Koper to Štanjel, with stops at Kozina, Lipica, Divača and Sežana, is more than welcome. Parenzana is also a convenient starting point or one stretch of a journey that takes visitors to Istria or Kras along less travelled roads. In this period of travel restrictions and partial border closings, the residents of larger municipalities in Slovenia and residents of Friuli-Venezia Giulia can at least afford several hours of cycling.

Author: Gašper Mithans

CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE AS A NEW POTENTIAL FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: NEW CYCLING ROUTE ALONG THE «CASTLES TRAIL»

On Saturday, 17th October 2020, the Municipality of Pivka organised a guided cycling tour along a thematic bike route called “Castles Trail” which is designed to introduce cycling fans to the rich heritage of the area, from a different perspective. The event

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was part of the cross-border strategic project MerlinCV, under the Interreg V-A Italy Slovenia programme. Considering the current situation, the tour was planned in strict respect of all sanitary measures to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus.

The opening ride along the new cycling trail in the Pivka surrounding took the participants to the castles and villas spread in the countryside. The starting point was the Park of Military History, where two experienced cycling guides of Bike Slovenia company guided participants in the direction of the village of Kal, known for its quarry, and on to the Ravne mansion. The excursion continued on flat terrain through the villages Šmihel and Narin, followed by a climb to the top of Šilentabor where a castle, together with a refuge fort represented in the Middle Ages the largest fortified system against the Turkish invasion on Slovenian territory. The last part of the tour was a descent from Šilentabor to the village of Raduhova vas and on to Pivka returning to the starting point.

The guided cycling tour along a 16 km stretch of Castles Trail took the participants to just a fraction of many available sights along the diverse trail. After the initial common stretch, the trail splits in three directions at Šilentabor: the first leads visitors past the Kalc castle, known for its owner Miroslav Vilhar, a poet and politician, on to the village of Bač; the second leads to the village of Podtabor where a castle once stood; the third will take visitors to the village of Ratečevo Brdo. Hikers and cyclists can roam the new trail and explore its many directions freely and in stages, or they can visit with a guide to discover the stories of abandoned mansions and castles that represent an important part of the cultural heritage of Pivka and the wider region.



The Castles Trail was designed as a thematic tourism product within the scope of MerlinCV project, supported by the Interreg V-A Italy-Slovenia Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 funded by the European Regional Development Fund. The overall project objective is to increase the tourism appeal and visibility of the Bač; the Italo-Slovenian cross-border region through innovative, integrated and thematic tourism products focussing on sustainable tourism. The Municipality of Pivka as one of the eight project partners joined the activities with a well-defined plan for

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enhancing and revitalising the heritage of castles in Pivka and its surroundings. Project activities will have an important effect on tourism development in the region and will increase its recognition at home and abroad.

The brochure with a description of the cycling route “Castles Trail” is available here: <https://www.pivka.si/objava/324249>

Author: Ana Čič





ARIES HAS LAUNCHED BIKETHON, A HACKATHON DEDICATED TO CYCLING TOURISM

Bikethon 2020 is the name of a hackathon event dedicated to the city of Gorizia, the area along the Isonzo river, the Grado Lagoon, the areas of Collio/Brda and Carso/Kras, and the city of Grado. The hackathon will be focused on the cycling trails connecting the Province of Gorizia to other provinces of Friuli Venezia Giulia, to Slovenia and Austria.

It is a real challenge among working groups to find the best and most innovative preliminary project for adapting the tourism services and infrastructure to the needs of cycling tourists. The solutions will have to take into account also the various options of trails and connections among various areas.

The hackathon events were originally organised by computer companies trying to find new proposals for software or hardware. However, this type of events is now used by companies from all different sectors in order to find fresh ideas not only with the help of developers, but also by involving fans of marketing, business and design.

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That is why Aries scarl intends to organise a hackathon open to everyone with knowledge and capabilities to develop the requested solution. All they need to do is enter the competition. The challenge will be taking place on-line, using a dedicated platform with all the necessary information for participation and the actual carrying out of the challenge. The website address is: www.bikethon.it.

The proposed solutions will have to take into consideration various tourist sights, cultural offerings, connections provided by means of integrated transport services (for example: train/bicycle, bus/bicycle, ferry/bicycle), logistic services and assistance available to cycling tourists, a schedule of events in the territory, the availability of tourist accommodations and enogastronomy.

The aim is to obtain from the working groups digital proposals which will be used to create a dynamic and personalised tourism product based on profiling the cycling tourists. The elements adopted for profiling shall include the period of interest and the geographic position to increase the attraction of the Province of Gorizia.

The preliminary project should consider the various options for paths and connections between the areas like the town of Gorizia, the area along the Isonzo river, the town of Grado and its lagoon, the areas of Collio/Brda and Carso/Kras bearing in mind the main connecting lines linking the cycling paths of the Province of Gorizia to other provinces of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and to Slovenia and Austria.

The registration was open until the 16th of November and many teams have been admitted to participate. The proposals will have to be delivered by the 15th of December; the jury will then evaluate the presented results from the 2nd to the 9th of December. The panel of judges is composed of members who are actively involved in tourism development of the area and have a thorough knowledge of cycling tourism sector: Promoturismo FVG, Camera di Commercio Venezia Giulia, Comune di Gorizia, Consorzio turistico isontino, Federalberghi Confcommercio Gorizia, Consorzio turistico di Grado, G.I.T. GRADO Impianti Turistici, Dipartimento di Scienze Economiche, Aziendali, Matematiche e Statistiche Università di Trieste, Trenitalia e F.I.A.B. Monfalcone.

The working groups will be awarded prizes for the most innovative solutions that respond to the objectives of the Hackathon.

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Project web site: www.ita-slo.eu/sl/merlincv

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