

Lake Bohinj to Lienz

A hut to hut tour of the Julian Alps and the Karnischer-Höhenweg in nine days

by Molly and Martin Joffe

At the end of August we arrived in Slovenia for a short tour of the Julian Alps, then connecting with the western half of the Karnischer-Höhenweg (Friedensweg Nr. 403). The Karnischer section appeared to be straightforward with numerous online sites providing detailed information while the connection across the border seemed do-able albeit a tad expensive. The challenge of planning the short hike in Slovenia was to navigate the various names for each of the huts, and acquire the most accurate walking times and details about each section. Finally we decided on a short trek from south to north starting at Lake Bohinj and arriving in Kranjska Gora on the night of the fourth day.



Karnischer Alps - Martin Joffe

Our start at Vogel Mountain began with a gondola ride to the Ski Hotel Vogel followed by a quad chairlift leaving us with a short climb to a point signed as Sija (1800m). From there an easy well-signed walk brought us to the summit (1992m). It was a clear morning with marvellous views in every direction including Triglav to the north. By mid-afternoon we reached the comfortable but busy Komna hut (1520m) above the western end of Lake Bohinj.

The next day walking north we passed the bustling Koca pri Triglavskih jezerih (1685m) (seven lakes hut) and reemerged above the tree line while walking north towards Kanjavec and passing some of the other alpine tarns. Soon to our left the popular Zasavska koca na Prehodavich hut perched on a high plateau overlooking the Trenta valley came into view. However, we veered to the right at the Zeleno jezero (lake) on a trail climbing around the eastern flank of Kanjavec (2568m). Here we could see walkers making their way back south on the high ridge trails along the Zelnarrica. Once over the saddle and on to the desolate Cez Hribararice, we made our way down to the Dolič pass between Kanjavec and the Triglav massif. In little over six hours we had reached the crowded Tržaška koča na Doliču (Dolic hut – 2151m). Despite the lack of any running

water, no indoor toilets and the hut being packed to capacity due to its proximity to Triglav, we appreciated the friendly staff, the dinner company and the challenge of the midnight trip to the outhouse toilet perched not far from a very steep drop!



Dolic Hut - Martin Joffe

On the third day the trails were much less travelled and we began with the long downhill walk to the Luknja pass (1758m). We then climbed steeply ahead to the Bovski Gamsovec (2392m) including a section requiring focused steep scrambling to gain the summit. A long vertical descent between a narrow gapobstan was initially unaided. Then progress eased with the help of metal pins and stairs followed by a series of wires. This section would not be advisable in wet weather or recommended for inexperienced hikers. After a seven hour outing we were rewarded with a delightful stay at the Pogacnikov dom (2050m) standing on the edge of the huge limestone plateau of Kristi podi.

The next morning a long winding WWI track brought us to the tiny hamlet of Trenta. Here we caught the midday bus going to the Vrsic Pass (1611m) and Kranjska Gora.

The connection to Austria next day required an early morning taxi to the nearest railway station of Neuhaus/Gail on the Villach line. Because of track maintenance so we were redirected east to Villach connecting a few minutes later with a train to Oberdrauburg where we immediately boarded the bus to Kotschach, then another bus to the Plockenpass. The coordination between the railway and bus services was amazing and within three hours we were able to begin walking from the Untere Valentin trailhead. On a cloudy day with intermittent rain we ascended 900 metres to the Wolayersee hut. This is the most delightful hut with a traditional exterior and very modern comfortable interior, with amazing window views of the lake below and the most delicious Kaiserschmarrn.

Over the next four days we continued along the Austrian 403 route. The highlight for us was the long hike from the Gemütlichkeit of the Hochweißsteinhaus to the Porzehütte. The high, narrow and often exposed ridge with sections aided by wires crisscrosses the border between Italy and Austria. The views are spectacular. To the south the white dolomite rock spires stand in contrast to the darker rock face and green slopes on the northern side of the ridge. On the next day's walk to the lovely Obstansersee Hütte we could see the Großglockner and a little while later the Tre Cime.



Descent to Obstansersee hutte - Martin Joffe

Between the Obstansersee and Sillianer Hütte we encountered even more ruins of WWI encampments and caves as well as the small military cemetery. By midday we reached the Sillianer hut, which was in the midst of a major remodel. This did not appear to deter the hoards of walkers who had arrived by way of a cable car from either Sesto or Versciaco. We walked to the Versciaco funicular and a short while later we were on the Rex train to Lienz.

For the Slovenian section of this route we used information from via-alpina.org (Red trail), Carey and Clark's first Cicerone book and suggestions from various online forums to guide us. The Slovenian alpine club maps 1:25000 Bohinj and Triglav were purchased in Ljubljana. For the Karnischer tour we also used the [via-alpina](http://via-alpina.org) trail information as well as the tyrol.com and lesachtal.com sites. We were unable to find the recommended map for purchase-(Wanderkarte Hochpustertal 1:25000 section Sillian to the Wolayersee hut), but fortunately the trails were well travelled and clearly marked. En route we were shown the newly released Cicerone guide by John Hayes. This book is full of good information and includes more options especially on the Italian side. Finally, please feel free to contact us for more information: martin.joffe1@gmail.com.