

First week | 5<sup>th</sup> day

# The descent towards the Adriatic

## Lipica - Škocjan - Portorož

*A slow, gentle ride from the Karst to Istria, with a visit to the spectacular Škocjan Caves*



Before diving into the blue of the Adriatic, this route concentrates on the Karst *tópoi*: grottos, caves, sinkholes, underground rivers, stony territory with little vegetation.

Along the route – a very pleasant downhill ride – you can find one of the three Slovenian sites which have been declared world heritage sites by Unesco, that is **Škocjanske jame**. This is a complex system of caverns and galleries covered by stalactites and stalagmites shaped by the underground river Reka which, after 40 kilometres underground, flows into the Gulf of Trieste near Štivan.

You head towards **Kozina**, on the outer edge of the Karst and from here you reach Črni Kal with its characteristic leaning bell-tower (the gate of Benko House is also interesting, this is the oldest farmhouse in Slovenia).

Then you go down along the Rižano valley, reaching the old Parenzana railway line which at the beginning of the XX century connected Trieste to Poreč. This well-equipped and much-used cycling path – which goes along beside the Škocjanski zatok Nature Reserve – leads to **Koper (Capodistria)**, Izola (Isola) to finally reach **Portorož (Portorose)**.

### ROUTE INFORMATION

**Starting point:** Lipica

**Arrival:** Portorož

**Length:** 61 km

**Conditions:** some stretches of gravel road, mainly on asphalted roads with light mixed traffic

**Indications:** partial (along the Parenzana cycling path)

**Inter-modality:** train + bike

### USEFUL ADDRESSES

#### Tourist Office Equile di Lipica

Lipica 5, 6210 Sežana, tel. +386 05 7391580

info@lipica.org, www.lipica.org

#### Park Škocjanske jame

Škocjan 2, 6215 Divača, tel. +386 05 7082110

psj.info@psj.gov.si, www.park-skocjanske-jame.si

#### Tourist Office Koper

Titov trg 3, 6000 Koper

tel. +386 05 6646403, tic@koper.si, www.koper.si

#### Tourist Office Izola

Ljubljanska ulica 17, 6310 Izola

tel. +386 05 6401050

tic.izola@izola.si, www.izola.eu

#### Tourist Office Portorož

Obala 16, 6320 Portorož, tel. +386 05 6742220

ticpo@portoroz.si, www.portoroz.si

#### Tourist Office Piran

Tartinijev trg 2, 6330 Piran

tel. +386 05 6734440, ticpi@portoroz.si

www.portoroz.si

**Railway stations:** Divača, Hrpelje-Kozina, Koper

**Ferries:** the Trieste-Rovinj line is active in July and August 5 times a week with a stop at Piran (Pirano). The number of bikes allowed on board is limited.



1 Koper - Capodistria, seafront  
 2 Škocjan, Škocjanske jame caves  
 3 Portorož - Portorose, beach



## TRAVELLERS' DIARY

From the centre of Lipica the itinerary continues on gravel road until reaching Lokev, where we find an imposing fortified stone tower, erected as a defence from the Turkish invasions, today hosting a great collection of arms, uniforms and other military objects. You continue, reaching the entrance to the Škocjanske Jame Park – in the town of Divača – you must not miss seeing its magnificent caves, one of the greatest attractions in Slovenia. After the visit carry on pedalling until you reach the edge of the plateau, that is Kozina where another cycling path crosses, the Trieste-Hrpelje (which you will use partially on the second day of the second week), along a stretch of

the sediment of the Trieste-Ljubljana railway line. Further down there is the village of Črni Kal, nestled in the green from where the white church of St. Valentine stands out. Now the road goes down with wide bends and weaves its way into the Rižana river valley until reaching the old Parenzana railway track – narrow gauge and only one track – which from 1902 connected Trieste to Poreč in 123 kilometres. It went out of use in 1935, a few years ago it was transformed into a cycling lane (D8 cycling route) called "Parenzana: road of health and friendship". Pedalling along this nice route you reach the Škocjanski zatok Nature Reserve, greatest salt mars area in Slovenia,

then you reach Koper (Capodistria), with its wonderful historical town centre of obvious Venetian influence. To reach Izola (Isola) you pedal next to the sea on a special cycling lane also reserved for other users. Then you go through a tunnel and reach Štrungan (Strignano), the former salt mine area. A second tunnel allows us to reach Portorož (Portorose), famous tourist resort in Slovenian Istria – in the municipality of Piran (Pirano) – with its centuries-old spa tradition. The mud for the spas comes from the salt mines in Sečovlje (Sicciole), the nature reserve 10 kilometres away from Portorož (Portorose) in the direction of the Croatian border.