

# Slovenia - Flowers of Lake Bohinj and the Julian Alps

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

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### Outline itinerary

<b>Day 1</b>	Fly Ljubljana and transfer to Ribčev Laz on Lake Bohinj
<b>Day 2/7</b>	Botanical walks and excursions from Bohinj
<b>Day 8</b>	Transfer to Ljubljana and fly London Stanstead

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### Departs

June

### Grading

Grade A/B. Easy to moderate day walks.

### Focus

Alpine flora...though butterflies and other natural history will also be enjoyed.

### Dates and Prices

See [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk) (tour code SVN01) or our latest brochure

### Highlights

- Look for butterflies such as Large Copper, Apollo, Common Glider & Spotted Fritillary
- Stay in Ribčev Laz, home of Slovenia's annual International Wild Flower Festival
- Look for Clustered Bellflower, Erect Clematis
- Orchids including Burnt tip, Common Spotted, Fragrant, Lesser Butterfly and Small White Orchids.
- Chamois & Alpine Marmot live in the mountains
- Carnic Lily, Sweet William, Alpine Butterwort, Erect Clematis & *Astrantia carniolica* among wayside flora



Images from top: Lake Bohinj, Pink Cinquefoil, Carnic Lily



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**NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather and other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.**

## Introduction

Slovenia is a small, unspoilt country located in the heart of Europe, between Austria, Hungary and Italy. It is a wild and beautiful land where the tall jagged mountains of the Julian Alps overlook tranquil lakes and spectacular waterfalls. Forest, some of it virgin, covers more than half the country which is predominantly mountainous.

Slovenia is home to 2,900 species of plant, 70% of which are unique to the south-western Alps, and Bohinj itself is the home of the annual International Wildflower Festival, held in May each year. We will explore the diverse habitats of the Triglav National Park, including rich river valleys and wetlands, flower-filled alpine meadows, forest tracksides and pathways and mountain pastures and screes, seeking out the flower species synonymous with this beautiful area. We will also enjoy the birds, mammals and butterflies that this beautiful country has to offer. Wallcreepers live in the mountains on the steep bare cliffs and amongst other birds we will hope to see are Alpine



Meadows above Mostinca Gorge (Kerrie Porteous)

Swift, Alpine Chough, and Black Woodpecker (which is quite common in the forests). The Three-toed Woodpecker is also a possibility, although rare. Butterflies that we will look out for include Large Copper, Apollo, Common Glider & Spotted Fritillary. Deer, Wild Boar, Chamois, Brown Bear, Wolf and Lynx inhabit the forests in good numbers, although the latter three are only seen by the very lucky few! In the National Park, meanwhile, there are also Ibex, Marmots and Golden Eagles to be found. Farming is traditional, with sheep (kept mainly for cheese making) grazing in the meadows and many of the fields have strange-looking racks to dry the hay, unique to parts of Slovenia. The people are most friendly and helpful and many, especially the young, speak very good English.

## Day 1

## Fly Ljubljana

We begin our holiday with a late morning easyJet flight from London Stanstead Airport to Ljubljana. On arrival, we transfer by minibus to the Hotel Jezero in Ribčev Laz, our base for the week on the banks of Lake Bohinj. The journey takes us roughly an hour, and so we expect to arrive by early evening, giving ourselves plenty of time to get unpacked, settle into the hotel, and enjoy our first evening meal together.

## Day 2

## Lake Bohinj

Today we explore our surroundings by walking from our hotel right around the beautiful Lake Bohinj. Here we will explore the meadows and woodland fringing the lake, and begin to get to know the beautiful alpinists the area

has to offer. Meadow Clary (*Salvia pratensis*), Erect Clematis (*Clematis recta*), Clustered Bellflower (*Campanula glomerata*) and Twayblade (*Neottia ovata*) can all be found, and as we progress around the north coast of the lake, we may add *Cephalanthera damasonium* (White Helleborine), *Epipactis atrorubens* (Dark Red Helleborine), *Frangula alnus* (Alder Buckthorn), *Rhamnus saxatilis* (Rock Buckthorn), *Petrorhagia saxifraga* (Tunic Flower) and *Hacquetia epipactis* (Hacquetia). Three-leaved Anemone (*Anemone trifolia*), *Hepatica nobilis* and Lily of the Valley (*Convallaria majalis*) are also possible, and as we progress to the far side of the lake, Herb Paris (*Paris quadrifolia*). We'll carry our picnic lunch with us and stop to enjoy it along the way, making time for a refreshing dip in the lake for anyone that so wishes!

We will no doubt smell the Fringed Pink *Dianthus sternbergii* before we see it, as we get closer to the village of Ukanc. As we cross the meadows to the little jetty, we can look for *Dianthus sanguineus* and Perennial Honesty (*Lunaria redivida*), and arriving at the jetty, we catch the tourist boat all the way back to our hotel.

### Day 3

### Mostnica Gorge

This morning we will use our vehicles to give us a head start, travelling to the next village of Stara Fuzina and the start of today's walk. From here we cross the Devil's Bridge over the 20m deep gorge, and turn right towards the Mostnica gorge.

We pass through forest, wet rocks and open areas of scrub and grassy banks. Alpine Butterwort (*Pinguicula alpina*), Southern Greenweed (*Genista radiata*), Heath Speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*), and *Homogyne saxatilis* (a Purple Coltsfoot) can all be found during the walk along the river. Bird's-nest Orchids (*Neottia nidus-avis*), maybe slightly past their best at this time of year, can be seen, and we hope to be entertained by White-throated Dippers dashing up and down the river.

We emerge from the gorge at Koča na Vojah (kočas are mountain cafes, and fortunately never far away during our time in Slovenia!) where we can revive with a bowl of goulash or mushroom soup served straight from the copper pots warming over the open wood fire. From here we gently ascend along a path, through open hay meadows, filled with the beautiful Carnic Lily (*Lilium carniolicum*), Sweet William (*Dianthus barbatus*), Dark Rampion (*Phyteuma ovatum*), Wolf's-bane (*Aconitum lycoctonum* subsp. *vulparia*), Horned Rampion (*Phyteuma scheuchzeri*) and Dusky Crane's-bill (*Geranium phaeum*). Soon enough we re-enter the woodland and follow the path up to the mighty Slap Mostnice (Mostnice Waterfall). From here, we descend back to our vehicles and return to the hotel in time for dinner.



Burnt Orchid (Kerrie Porteous)

### Day 4

### Pokljuka

Today, we drive north by minibus through undulating farming country and little villages to the Pokljuka Plateau. Here we will explore the Sijec peat bog and enjoy its unique flora, including Bog Rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), a small shrub with bright pink bell-like flowers. Other ericaceous plants include Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccus*), Small Cranberry (*Vaccinium microcarpum*), Bog Whortleberry (*Vaccinium uliginosum*), Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera*

*rotundifolia*) and Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*). Here we also have the opportunity to look for higher Alpine species, including Alpine Clematis (*Clematis alpine*) and May Lily (*Maianthemum bifolium*).

Species typical of the pine forests are found here too: One-flowered Wintergreen (*Moneses uniflora*), Lesser Twayblade (*Neottia cordata*), Great Wood-rush (*Lužula sylvatica*), Alpine Colt's-foot (*Homogyne alpine*), Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Cowberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*), and Common Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*).



Traditional Slovenian hayracks (Kerrie Porteous)

On our way return we can stop in Studor to inspect the beautiful, traditional hayracks, typical of this area.

## Day 5

## Mangart Saddle

An early start this morning takes us west of our base to the Triglav National Park and another botanical highlight. Our destination is part of the vast Mangart Saddle (2,678 metres) which has a rich and unique flora unrivalled in the Julian Alps. Walking down through alpine meadows from the limestone ridge below the Mangart Saddle, we will be on the lookout for Long-flowered Primrose (*Primula balleri*), Dwarf Snowbell (*Soldanella pusilla*), a white-flowered buttercup, *Ranunculus seguieri*, and the wonderful Globe Flower (*Troillius europaeus*). Several saxifrages also grow on rocky outcrops along with beautiful displays of the Triglav Rose (*Potentilla nitida*).

In the short turf grow an interesting selection of louseworts, plus Trumpet Gentian (*Gentiana clusii*) and patches of Spring Gentian (*Gentiana verna*). In rocky scree lurk *Silene acaulis* and a variety of saxifrages. Crevice plants include Rock Sandwort (*Minuartia rupestris*) and Austrian Whitlow Grass (*Draba dubia*). These are just a few of the spectacular plants awaiting us!

## Day 6

## Vogar

This morning we make the journey up to the mountain meadows at Vogar (1054m), high above the north coast of Bohinj. From the rough car park in the forest, we can explore the woodland where Horned Rampion (*Phyteuma scheuchzeri*), Alpine Laburnum (*Laburnum alpinum*) and Sword-leaved Helleborine (*Cephalanthera longifolia*) all grow. From here we will walk through the alpine meadows, looking for Fragrant Orchids, (*Gymnadenia conopsea* subsp. *conopsea*), Slender Cotton-grass (*Eriophorum gracile*) and Common Spotted Orchids (*Dactylorhiza fuchsia*), and if the sun is shining, numerous butterflies including perhaps Scotch Argus, Grizzled Skipper, Woodland Ringlet, Purple-shot Copper and Clouded Apollo.



*Campanula scheuchzeri* (Kerrie Porteous)

As we pass the local koča the meadows become filled with the incredible orange colour of the Carnic Lily (*Lilium carnolicum*) and we find further orchids including Burnt Orchid (*Neottia ustulata*) and Small White Orchid (*Gymnadenia albida*). Finally, we make our way through more forest to the spectacular view point over Lake Bohinj, enjoying Herb Paris (*Paris quadrifolia*), Wolf's Bane (*Aconitum lycoctonum subsp. vulparia*), Common Lungwort (*Pulmonaria officinalis*) and Wood vetch (*Vicia sylvatica*) on the way. Our final meadow, overlooking the lake with views all the way back to our hotel, might just yield Round-headed Orchid (*Traunsteinera globosa*) or perhaps Sticky Flax (*Linum viscosum*).

We must also keep our eyes peeled on the journey home, as the towering cliffs bordering the road are home to Bear's-ear (*Primula auricular*), *Campanula scheuchzeri* and a fabulous show of Encrusted Saxifrage (*Saxifraga crustata*).

## Day 7

## Črna Prst

For our final morning, we begin the day by driving eastwards to Bohinjska Bistrica and taking the road towards Nemski Rovt, before turning onto a forest road, which we follow for about 6 or 7 kilometres. Along the way we can look out for Alpine Sowthistle (*Cicerbita alpina*) and Austrian Leopard's-bane (*Doronicum austriacum*) growing along the roadside. Leaving the vehicles at a footpath, we then set off up the steep forested hillside towards the Oroznova Koča. The path is steep but our efforts will be rewarded, and we take the journey slowly. Along the way Bulbous Corydalis (*Corydalis cava*), Waldstein's Willow (*Salix waldsteiniana*), Red-berried Elder (*Sambucus racemosus*), Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*), Mountain Currant (*Ribes alpinum*), Interrupted Clubmoss (*Lycopodium annotinum*) and Wood Stitchwort (*Stellaria*



Alpine Clematis (Kerrie Porteous)



Bird in the Bush (Kerrie Porteous)

*nemorum*) are all possible, and it won't be long until we emerge from the forest at the koča at 1344m, in time for a well-earned morning coffee.

From the koča, the path continued upwards to Črna Prst at 1844m. On the lower section of the path we may find Woodruff (*Galium odoratum*), Pleurospermum (*Pleurospermum austriacum*), the beautiful Narcissus-flowered anemone (*Anemone narcissiflora*), Blue-berried Honeysuckle (*Lonicera caerulea*) and Three-leaved valerian (*Valeriana tripteris*). At this time of year we can hope to find large snow patches above the trees, the margins of which can be littered with Alpine Snowbell (*Soldanella alpina*). Adjacent boulders may yield Bear's-ear Primrose (*Primula auricular*), Host's Saxifrage (*Saxifraga hostii*) and Blue Saxifrage (*Saxifraga caesia*). Further up the path still we look for Alpine Pasque Flower (*Pulsatilla alpina*), Oxlip (*Primula elatior*), Spring Gentian (*Gentiana verna*) and perhaps a small colony of *Ranunculus traunfellneri* (an Alpine Buttercup). We will take our time enjoying the splendours of this mountain, before making our way back down to the vehicles the way that we came.

## Day 8

## Bled / London

This morning we load our luggage onto the minibuses and depart Bohinj for the final time. About half an hour from Bohinj, we find the beautiful Lake Bled where we will spend our final morning. In Bled, we walk up to a high vantage point to enjoy the spectacular view, along with the flowers and birds, one last time. Afterwards, depending on our flight time, we may choose to take a boat trip to the little island in the centre of the lake to visit the 15th century church, or alternatively head to one of the cafes and enjoy a slice of Bled's famous cream cake! Finally, after lunch, our time in the Julian Alps draws to a close and we must return to Ljubljana Airport in time for our mid-afternoon flight home.

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## Grading

Grade A/B – Easy to moderate day walks. We will be on foot, on mountain trails, for the best part of each day. We tend to cover between 3 and 8km on a typical day, and you should note that some of the trails are narrow, steep and rocky in places. In particular, the path up to Črna Prst begins with a steep ascent. Enjoyment of this tour, therefore, demands a reasonable level of fitness and a love of walking in the hills. All walks will be taken at a leisurely 'botanical' pace, and a built-in flexibility will take account of the overall abilities of the group. We will gladly arrange an alternative outing to the Botanical Garden in Bohinj Bistrika for anyone that does not wish to ascend Črna Prst on the final day.



The meadows above Lake Bohinj

## Focus

The holiday will focus on the outstanding flora and fantastic scenery of the area, but we will also enjoy the rich diversity of butterflies, along with mammals and birds.

## Our daily schedule

We usually rise for breakfast around 8 am and aim to leave our hotel no later than 9 am for a full day in the field. We break the day to relax and enjoy a picnic lunch, which we will normally make ourselves at breakfast from a selection of delicious local produce. We will aim to return to our hotel between 5 and 6 p.m., depending on the weather and our success in the field. This should allow a little time at the end of each day to relax, shower, and enjoy a drink before dinner. After dinner, for those with energy remaining, your leader will be keen to run through the plants and animals seen during the day, and discuss findings with you before retiring to bed. Please note that we may well choose to vary our day to day schedule depending on the weather forecast, to ensure we save the sunniest days for when we venture to higher ground!

## Weather

At this time of year, the weather should be sunny and warm with daytime temperatures typically ranging from 15 to 25°C. However mountain weather is always variable, with cloud and rain always a possibility, especially in the afternoons. At higher altitudes, overcast conditions can rapidly reduce temperatures, and here waterproofs and a warm jacket should be carried at all times.

## Food & accommodation

This is a one-centre holiday and we stay in the Hotel Jezero on the banks of Lake Bohinj, a beautiful glacial lake 4.5 km long. All rooms are en-suite and have tea and coffee making facilities, hairdryers and Wi-Fi. The hotel also has a swimming pool and sauna. In the evening we will eat in the buffet restaurant at the hotel, with drinks included with the meal.



Hotel Jezero & Lake Bohinj

## Your safety & security

You have chosen to travel to Slovenia. Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) prior to travel.

## How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk), or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.

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