

Gorenjska



If you're into adventure sport, Gorenjska (Upper Carniola) is the province to head for. Less than an hour from the capital you'll find yourself surrounded by mountains, lakes and high plateaus. Indeed, the Kamnik-Savinja Alps and its ski fields begin just a short drive away from Ljubljana, and Triglav National Park, with hiking and biking trails galore as well as Slovenia's share of the Julian Alps, is just around the corner. The lakes at Bled and Bohinj are popular centres for any number of outdoor activities. A mountain trek is an excellent way to meet other Slovenes in a relaxed environment so take advantage of this opportunity if you're in Gorenjska during the hiking season.

But Gorenjska is not just about shimmering lakes and mountain majesties; it also contains some of the country's most attractive and important historical towns. Škofja Loka, Kamnik, Kranj and Radovljica – to name just a few – are treasure-troves of Gothic, Renaissance and baroque art and architecture, and they are wonderful bases from which to explore this diverse and visually spectacular province.

Because of the difficulty of eking out a living in mountainous areas, the people of Gorenjska have a reputation in Slovenia for being on the, well, let's just say 'thrifty' side. You probably won't see evidence of this yourself, but you'll surely hear a fair few jokes similar to the ones made about the Scots. A rather sophomoric joke reported by Ljubljana-based American Erica Johnson Debeljak in her memoir *And the Distance Smells of Apples: A Story of Migration* (p31) was that '...we'd know we were entering Gorenjska when we'd see toilet paper fluttering on the clothes lines'.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Enjoy the hair-raising views from **Mt Triglav** (p128), Slovenia's tallest peak
- Hammer away in the delightful iron-mongering village of **Kropa** (p109)
- Drive or bike over the spectacular **Vršič Pass** (p131) in the Julian Alps
- Learn more about the boards and bees at the fabulous **Beekeeping Museum** (p106) in Radovljica
- Take a 'flight' back in time via cable car to **Velika Planina** (p96) near Kamnik



KAMNIK

☎ 01 / pop 12,800 / elev 382m

In the bosom of the mountains just 23km northeast of Ljubljana, Kamnik is often given a miss by travellers en route to sezier Bled or Bohinj. But the town's tidy and attractive medieval core, with its houses and portals of hewn stone, balconies and arcades, is well worth a visit, as is the nearby arboretum.

Kamnik competed with Ljubljana and Kranj for economic and cultural dominance in Kranjska (Carniola) throughout the Middle Ages. For centuries it controlled the pass in the Tuhinjski Valley to the east, which was indispensable for moving goods from the coastal areas inland to Štajerska and Koroška. But when the route was redirected via Trojane to the southeast in the 1600s, Kamnik fell into a deep sleep and awakened only in the late 19th century when the town was linked by rail to Ljubljana.

Orientation

Kamnik lies on the west bank of the Kamniška Bistrica River and to the south of the Kamnik Alps. The Old Town consists of medieval Glavni trg and its southern extension, Šutna.

Kamnik's bus station lies beside the river east of Glavni trg and at the end of Prešernova ulica. The town has three train stations. The main station is on Kranjska cesta, southwest of Šutna. Kamnik-Mesto, which is convenient for the Old Town and its sights, is on Kolodvorska ulica west of the Little Castle. Kamnik Graben station, the terminus of the Ljubljana–Kamnik line, is northwest of Glavni trg on Tunjska cesta.

Information

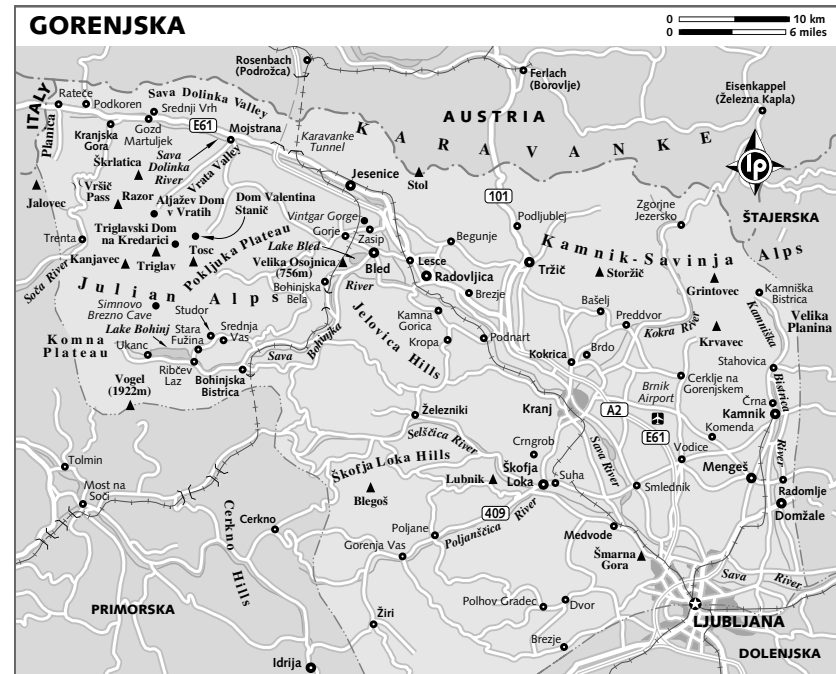
Kamnik Alpine Society (Planinsko Društvo Kamnik; ☎ 839 13 45; Šutna 42; ☎ 9am-noon Mon & Fri, 1-4pm Wed) Advice and guides for walking in the Kamnik Alps.

Nova Ljubljanska Banka (Glavni trg 10; ☎ 8am-noon & 2.30-4.30 Mon-Fri)

Post office (Glavni trg 27)

SKB Banka (Glavni trg 13; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri)

Tourist Information Centre Kamnik (TIC; ☎ 839 14 70; Glavni trg 2; <http://turizem.kamnik.si>; ☎ 9am-7pm daily Jul & Aug; 10am-6pm daily May, Jun & Sep; 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat Oct-Apr) Has internet access (per 10 min/1hr €0.40/2.10).



Sights

GLAVNI TRG & SURROUNDS

The **Franciscan monastery** (Frančiškanski Samostan; ☎ 831 80 37; Frančiškanski trg 2; ☞ by arrangement), a short distance to the west of Glavni trg, was built in 1492. It has a rich library of theological, philosophical and scientific manuscripts and incunabula dating from the 15th to 18th centuries (including an original copy of the Bible translated by Jurij Dalmatin in 1584). Next door is the **Church of St James** (Cerkev Sv Jakoba; Frančiškanski trg), which has a chapel designed by Jože Plečnik. He also did the attractive beige-and-orange **house with loggia** on the eastern side of the square; it's now the R Bar (p96).

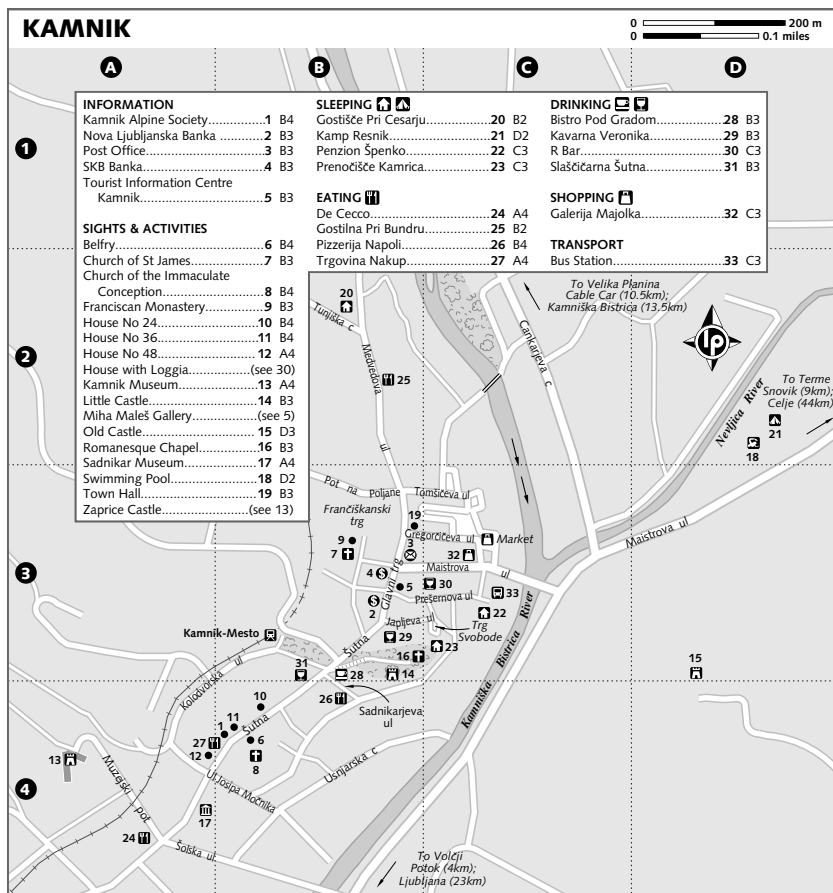
The **Little Castle** (Mali Grad; ☞ 9am-7pm), on a low hill above the southern end of Glavni trg, has

foundations going back to the 11th century and is Kamnik's most important historical sight. Behind the castle stand the ruins of a unique two-storey **Romanesque chapel** (adult/child €1.25/0.42; ☞ 10am-7pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep), which has 15th-century frescoes in its lower nave, wall paintings by Janez Potočnik (1749-1834) in the presbytery and a Gothic stone relief of a cross flanked by two angels above the main entrance. There are excellent views of the Old Town and surrounding countryside from here.

The **Miha Maleš Gallery** (Galerija Mihe Maleša; ☎ 839 16 16, 839 75 04; Glavni trg 2; adult/child €2.10/1.25; ☞ 8am-1pm & 4-7pm Tue-Fri) contains some 2600 works by the eponymous painter and graphic artist, who was born in Kamnik in 1903. Enter from the north side of the tourist office.

HELL HATH NO FURY

The Little Castle is home to Veronika, a legendary countess who was turned partly into a snake when she refused to help the Christian faithful build a church. The old gal was not only mean but spiteful, too. In her rage at having been asked to contribute, she struck the entrance to the castle with her fist. If you look to the right of the portal to the main courtyard as you go in, you'll see the imprint of her hand (sort of). Veronika continues to rule the treasure of the Little Castle and, in a way, the community of Kamnik too. She appears both on the town seal and on the license plate of every car registered here.



ŠUTNA

A walk along the quiet and attractive 500m-long main street of Šutna is a trip back in time: check the fine neoclassical house with columns at **No 24**, the stone relief of the Paschal Lamb above the door at **No 36** and the medieval fresco indicating a butcher's shop sign at **No 48** (now a grocery store).

In the centre of Šutna, opposite Šutna 36, stands the **Church of the Immaculate Conception** (Cerkev Marijinega Brezmadežnega Spočetja), erected in the mid-18th century but with a detached **belfry** (zvonik) that shows an earlier church's Gothic origins.

The **Sadnikar Museum** (Sadnikarjev Muzej; ☎ 839 13 62; Šutna 33; admission €1.25; ☞ by appointment), the first private museum to open in Slovenia (1893), exhibits Gothic artwork, period furniture and paintings from the 18th century amassed by pack-rat Josip Nikolaj Sadnikar (1863-1952), a local veterinarian and painter.

KAMNIK MUSEUM

Zaprice Castle (Grad Zaprice; Muzejski pot 3), with towers, ancient stone walls and an interesting chapel, was built in the 16th century but converted a century later into a baroque manor house. Today it houses the **Kamnik Museum** (Kamniški Muzej; ☎ 831 76 47; adult/child €2.10/1.25; ☞ 8am-1pm & 4-7pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm & 4-6pm Sat, 10am-1pm Sun), with dullish exhibits connected with Kamnik's glory days and 18th-century furniture by German designer Michael Thonet (1796-1871). More interesting are the **granaries** outside, from the 18th and 19th centuries, which have been brought here from

the Tuhinj Valley, and the **lapidarium** in the courtyard with stone bits and bobs from the 15th to 18th centuries.

OTHER SIGHTS

The **Old Castle** (Stari Grad), a 13th-century ruin on Bergantov Hill (585m) east of the centre, can be reached on foot from the end of Maistrova ulica in about 20 minutes; the brochure *Tourist Sights in Kamnik and Vicinity* includes a map of the walking trail.

About 4km south of Kamnik is **Volčji Potok** (☎ 831 23 45; www.arboretum-vp.si; Volčji Potok 3; adult/child/senior & student/family €4.20/2.75/3.35/10.50; ☞ 8am-8pm Apr-Aug, 8am-7pm Sep, 8am-6pm Mar & Oct), Slovenia's largest and most beautiful arboretum. With the heart-shaped park of a former castle as its core, the 85-hectare arboretum has more than 2500 varieties of trees, shrubs and flowers from all over the world. There are five buses from Kamnik (€1.30, 10 minutes) to the arboretum on weekdays (at 6am, 8am, 1.15pm, 2.45pm and 7.10pm) and one daily at the weekend (at 4.50pm on Saturday, 4pm on Sunday). A lot more buses go to Radomlje, which is 1.5km south of the arboretum.

Activities

The arrow-straight 14km road north to Kamniška Bistrica is tailor-made for **cycling**.

There's an outdoor **swimming pool** (☎ 839 12 92; Maistrova ulica 15; adult/child €4.20/3.35; ☞ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-8pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-Aug) near the camping ground.

On a warm day you might be tempted by **Terme Snovik** (☎ 830 86 31; www.zarja-kovis.si/snovik/terme.htm; adult/child/student from €6.30/4.60/5.45 Mon-Fri, from €7.10/5.45/6.30 Sat & Sun; ☞ 9am-8pm Sun-Tue & Thu, 9am-10pm Wed, Fri & Sat), a spa and water park with enormous covered and open-air pools and a gaggle of saunas in Potok, 9km northeast of Kamnik. Buses from Kamnik (€1.70, 15 minutes) go to the spa at 10.30am and 12.30pm weekdays and at 10.30am on Saturday and Sunday.

Festivals & Events

Major events in Kamnik (infocenter.kamnik@siol.net for information) are the **Medieval Days** (Srednjeveški Dnevi), also called **Venerina Pot** (Path of Venus) on the second weekend in July and the **National Costumes Festival** (Dnevi Narodnih Noš) held on the second weekend in September. But the biggest event by far is Kamfest (www.kamfest.org), the so-called

'Festival with a View', held in the Little Castle in August with two-dozen cultural events over three weeks.

Sleeping

Kamp Resnik (☎ 831 73 14, 041-435 380; Maistrova ulica 32; per person/car/tent/caravan €2/2/2/4; ☹ May-Sep; 📍) This tiny 1-hectare camping ground with 100 sites for 200 guests is northeast of the Old Town on the Nevljica River. There's a tennis court, and the public swimming pool and a popular pub are close by.

Penzion Spenko (☎ 831 73 30; romanspenko@email.si; Prešernova ulica 14c; s/d €30/50) This pension above a little bistro offers basic but very central accommodation in 10 rooms.

Gostišče Pri Cesarju (☎ 839 29 17, 041-629 846; fax 839 11 96; Tunjška cesta 1; s/d €30/50; 📍) This 10-room guesthouse 500m north of Glavni trg is an excellent choice but the mansard rooms on the 2nd floor are rather cramped.

Prenočišče Kamrica (☎ 831 77 07, 041-222 700; kamrica.kamnisk@siol.net; Trg Svobode 2; per person €32; 📍) The Kamrica is even more central than the Špenko but half the size with only five rooms. It's a cosy, flower-bedecked place; ask for the charming room in the back with views (just) of the Little Castle and use of the kitchen.

Eating

Pizzerija Napoli (☎ 839 27 44; Sadnikarjeva ulica 5; pizza €4.15-5.85, pasta €2.50-6; ☹ 11am-11pm Mon-Sat, noon-10pm Sun) South of the Little Castle in Šutna, this homey pizzeria, one of the few places for a meal in central Kamnik, has a great terrace and does takeaway as well.

De Cecco (☎ 831 74 47, 031-667 139; Šutna 68, meals from €6.50; ☹ 10am-midnight Mon-Thu, 10am-1am Fri & Sat) South of Kamnik Museum at the end of Muzejski pot, this pasta and pizza place is housed in a rather poshly done-up old village house.

Gostilna Pri Bundru (☎ 839 12 35, 041-679 457; Medvedova ulica 24; meals from €10; ☹ 9am-1am Mon-Fri, 10am-1am Sat) This popular inn 200m north of Glavni trg is a good place for a lunch or dinner of traditional Slovene fare.

There's a small supermarket called **Trgovina Nakup** (Šutna 48, ☹ 7am-9pm Mon-Fri, 7am-7pm Sat, 7-11.30am Sun) in the centre of the Old Town.

Drinking

Kavarna Veronika (☎ 839 11 43; Glavni trg 6; ☹ 8am-1am) This old-style café with a terrace, on the corner of Japljeva ulica, is a good place to cool

your heels over a cup of something warm and a slice of cake.

Slašičarna Šutna (☎ 831 97 30; Šutna 2; ☹ 7am-10pm Mon-Sat, 8am-10pm Sun) A pleasant café-bar on the old main street, this place has good cakes and ice cream.

R Bar (Maistrova ulica 2; ☹ 7am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat, 8am-1pm Sun) This bar in the house that Plečnik built keeps early-bird hours but has big plate-glass windows from which to observe the action on Glavni trg.

Bistro Pod Gradom (Sadnikarjeva ulica 1a; ☹ 9am-midnight) This café-bar just below the castle attracts the young bloods of Kamnik throughout the day.

Entertainment

Slovenia's first choir, **Lira**, founded in 1882 and still going strong, occasionally gives local concerts. Ask the tourist-office staff for information.

Shopping

Galerija Majolka (☎ 839 10 81, 041-791 411; Maistrova ulica 11; ☹ 9am-noon & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) This shop just west of the bus station has a nice range of antiques, paintings, porcelain and souvenirs.

Getting There & Around

Buses from Ljubljana (€3, 45 minutes, 23km) run almost every 30 minutes on weekdays and hourly at the weekend. You can also reach Gornji Grad (€3, 40 minutes, 23km) on five buses a day (one daily at weekends) and Kamniška Bistrica (€2.20, 30 minutes, 14km) on three (two daily at weekends). From June to September there's a bus leaving for Logarska Dolina (€7.60, two hours, 81km) in Štajerska at 6.55am weekdays, returning at 4.55pm from the Rinka Waterfall.

Kamnik is on a direct rail line to/from Ljubljana (€2, 40 minutes, 23km, up to 16 a day) via Domžale.

You can book a taxi on ☹ 041-791 411.

VELIKA PLANINA

☎ 01 / elev to 1666m

Reaching a height of almost 1700m, the Velika Planina (Great Highlands) is a wonderful place to explore and is accessible to 1418m by cable car from the lower station just 11km north of Kamnik.

Velika Planina is where traditional dairy farmers graze their cattle between June and

September. If you follow the road from the upper station up the hill for about 2km, you'll reach a highland plain filled with more than 50 shepherds' huts and the tiny **Church of Our Lady of the Snows** (Cerkev Sv Marije Snežne) modelled after traditional local dairies. The low-lying rounded buildings with conical roofs are unique to Velika Planina, but they are replicas; the originals dating from the early 20th century were burned to the ground by the Germans in WWII.

Velika Planina is also an excellent spot for hiking and mountain biking. Ask the tourist office (p93) in Kamnik for the brochure *Velika Planina: A Treasure of Nature*, which outlines biking trails of up to 30km and hiking ones of up to 3½ hours. A circular walk of the plain and **Mala Planina** (1569m) to the south, for example, will take about three hours. In summer, the friendly shepherds in their big black hats will sell you curd, sour milk and white cheese.

The popular **Velika Planina ski grounds** (☎ 839 71 77; www.velikaplanina.si; day pass €11/10/8) have 4km of ski slopes and 10km of cross-country trails. When the slopes are skiable, a chairlift ferries skiers up to Gradišče from the upper cable-car station daily between December and April, where three T-bar tows should be running.

Sleeping & Eating

Domžalski Dom na Mali Planini (☎ 721 57 14, 051-340 730 ☹ daily Jun-Sep, Sat & Sun Oct-May) This Category II lodge at 1534m, with 13 rooms of three to eight beds, is one of a handful of mountain huts and lodges with accommodation in the area.

Okrepčevalnica Pri Žičnici (☎ 832 55 66; Kamniška Bistrica 2; ☹ 7.30am-5/9pm) This place is just what it says it is: a 'Snackbar at the Lower Cable-car Station'. There are picnic tables and barbecue pits here too.

Okrepčevalnica Zeleni Rob na Veliki Planini (☎ 041-678 266; ☹ 9am-3.30pm Mon-Thu, 9am-8am Fri, 8am-10pm Sat, 8am-4pm Sun) The snack bar and pub at Zeleni Rob (Green Edge) is about 1km up the hill from the upper cable-car station.

Getting There & Around

The cable-car station can be reached from buses bound for Kamniška Bistrica. The **cable car** (žičnica; ☎ 839 71 77, 832 55 66; www.velikaplanina.si; adult/child return €9.20/6.70; ☹ hourly 8am-6pm Mon-Thu, 8am-8pm Fri-Sun, mid-Jun-mid-Sep; 8am, noon & 4pm Mon-Thu, 9am & hourly noon-6pm Fri, hourly 8am-6pm Sat &

Sun mid-Sep-mid-Dec, Apr-mid-Jun; hourly 8am-6pm daily mid-Dec-Mar) runs year-round.

KAMNIŠKA BISTRICA

☎ 01 / pop 20 / elev 580m

This pretty little settlement in a valley near the source of the Kamniška Bistrica River is 3km north of the Velika Planina lower cable-car station, and the Category II **Dom v Kamniški Bistrici** (☎ 832 55 44; info.pdljmatica@siol.net; ☹ year-round) offers hostel-like accommodation in 11 rooms of two to five beds with a total of 36. Check-in is from 8am to 10pm in summer, 8am to 8pm in winter.

Kamniška Bistrica is the springboard for some of the more ambitious and rewarding Kamnik Alps treks, such as the ones to **Grintovec** (2559m; 11 hours return), **Brana** (2252m; eight hours) and **Planjava** (2394m; 10 hours). Information is available from the tourist office in Kamnik (p93).

The most popular hikes, however, are the easier, 3½-hour ones northwest to the mountain pass or saddle at **Kokra Saddle** (Kokrsko Sedlo; 1791m), with accommodation at the Category I **Zoisova Koča na Kokrskem Sedlu** (☎ 839 13 45, 051-635 549; pdkamnisk@siol.net; ☹ mid-Jun-mid-Oct), with 135 beds, and north to **Kamnik Saddle** (Kamniško Sedlo; 1903m), where you'll find the Category I **Koča na Kamniškem Sedlu** (☎ 839 13 45, 051-611 367; ☹ mid-Jun-mid-Oct) mountain lodge with 142 beds.

Kamniška Bistrica can be reached from Kamnik (€2.20, 20 minutes, 14km) on three buses a day, leaving at 7am, 11.30am and 4.35pm Monday to Friday, at 7.20am and 4.45pm on Saturday, and at 7.50am and 4.55pm on Sunday.

ŠKOFJA LOKA

☎ 04 / pop 12,000 / elev 354m

Among the most beautiful settlements in Slovenia, Škofja Loka (Bishop's Meadow) has an Old Town protected as a historical and cultural monument since 1987. When the castle and other old buildings are illuminated on weekend nights, Škofja Loka takes on the appearance of a fairy-tale village.

History

Škofja Loka, like Ptuj and Piran, is among the oldest settlements in Slovenia. In 973 German Emperor Otto II presented the Bavarian Bishops of Freising with the valleys along the Poljanščica and Selščica Rivers. The point

where the two tributaries merge to form the Sora River began to develop as a town.

In the Middle Ages Škofja Loka developed as a trade centre along the Munich–Klagenfurt–Trieste route, doing particularly well in iron, linen and furs. A circular wall with five gates protected by guard towers was built around the town in 1318 to ensure that this success continued.

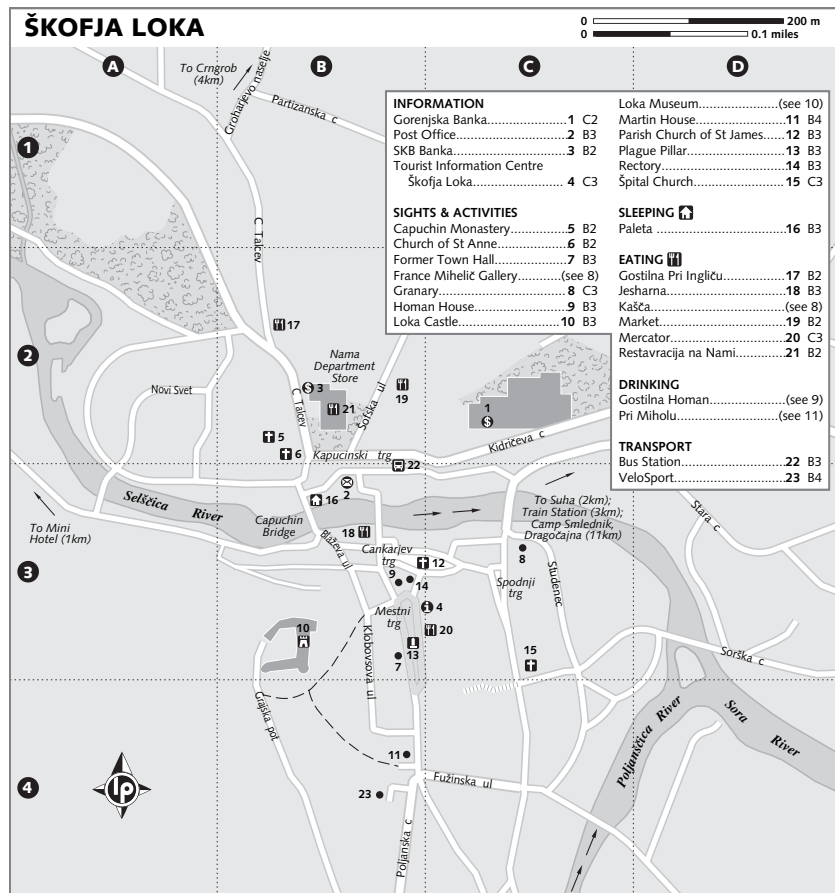
But it was all for naught. An army of the Counts of Celje breached the wall and burned the town to the ground in 1457; two decades later the Turks attacked. Then natural disasters struck: an earthquake in 1511 badly damaged the town, and several great fires at the end of the 17th century reduced most of Škofja Loka's finest buildings to ashes.

In 1803 the Habsburgs took possession of the town, and the advent of the railway later in the century put Škofja Loka on the road to industrialisation.

Orientation

The newer part of Škofja Loka and central Kapucinski trg lie to the north of the Selšica River. The Old Town to the south of the river consists of two long squares, Mestni trg, which runs south from Cankarjev trg and the river, and to the east the rat-run that is busy Spodnji trg.

Škofja Loka's bus station is on Kapucinski trg. The train station is 3km to the northeast at the end of Kidričeva cesta in the industrial suburb of Trata.



Information

Gorenjska Banka (Kapucinski trg 7; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 8am–noon Sat) Diagonally opposite the bus station.

Post office (Kapucinski trg 14)

SKB Banka (Kapucinski trg 4; ☎ 8.30am–noon & 2–5pm Mon–Fri) In the Nama department store.

Tourist Information Centre Škofja Loka (☎ 512 02 68; td-skofja.loka@siol.net; Mestni trg 7; ☎ 8.30am–7pm Mon–Fri, 8.30am–12.30pm & 5–7.30pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun–mid-Sep; 8.30am–7pm Mon–Fri, 8.30am–12.30pm Sat mid-Sep–mid-Jun)

www.skofjaloka.si Useful website courtesy of city hall.

Sights

CANKARJEV TRG

Some parts of the **Parish Church of St James** (Župnijska Cerkev Sv Jakoba; Cankarjev trg) date back to the 13th century, but its most important elements – the nave, the presbytery with star vaulting (1524) and the tall bell tower (1532) – were added over the next three centuries. On either side of the choir are black marble altars designed in about 1700. On the vaulted ceiling are bosses with portraits of the Freising bishops, saints, workers with shears and a blacksmith; two crescent moons in the presbytery are reminders of the Turkish presence. The dozen or so distinctive ceiling lamps and the baptismal font were designed by Jože Plečnik.

On the south side of the church is the **rectory** (*župnišče*), part of a fortified aristocratic manor house built in the late 16th century. Below the rounded projection on the corner are curious consoles of animal heads.

MESTNI TRG

The group of colourful **16th-century burgher houses** on this square have earned the town the nickname 'Painted Loka'. Almost every one is of historical and architectural importance, but among the more impressive is **Homan House** (Homanova Hiša; Mestni trg 2), dating from 1511 with sgraffiti and bits of frescoes of St Christopher and of a soldier. The **former town hall** (stari rotovž; Mestni trg 35) is remarkable for its stunning three-storey Gothic courtyard and the 17th-century frescoes on its facade. Further south, **Martin House** (Martinova Hiša; Mestni trg 26) leans on part of the old **town wall**. It has a wooden 1st floor, a late Gothic portal and a vaulted entrance hall. The **plague pillar** in Mestni trg was erected in 1751.

SPODNJI TRG

This square to the east of Mestni trg was where the poorer folk lived in the Middle Ages; today

it is a busy thoroughfare. The 16th-century **granary** (kašča; Spodnji trg 1) at the northern end is where the town's grain stores, collected as taxes, were once kept. It now contains the Kašča restaurant and wine bar. On the 1st floor is the **France Mihelič Gallery** (Galerija Franceta Miheliča; ☎ 517 04 00; adult/child €1.25/0.85; ☎ 1–5pm Tue–Sat), which displays the works of the eponymous artist born in nearby Virmaše in 1907. The **Spital Church** (Spodnji trg 9) was built in 1720 around the town's almshouse, and the poor lived in the cells of the courtyard building behind.

LOKA CASTLE

Overlooking the town from a grassy hill west of Mestni trg, the **castle** (Loški Grad; Grajska pot 13) was built in the early 13th century but extensively renovated after the earthquake in 1511. Today it houses the **Loka Museum** (Loški Muzej; ☎ 517 04 00; adult/child €3/2.10, with guide €3.35/2.50; ☎ 9am–6pm Tue–Sun Apr–Oct, 9am–5pm Sat & Sun Nov–Mar), which has one of the best ethnographical collections in Slovenia spread over two-dozen galleries that extend over two floors. The area around Škofja Loka was famous for its smiths and lace-makers, and there are lots of ornate guild chests on display. And don't miss the spectacular **Golden Altars** in the castle chapel. They were taken from a church destroyed during WWII in Dražgoše, northwest of Škofja Loka.

OTHER SIGHTS

The 18th-century **Capuchin monastery** (Kapucinski Samostan; ☎ 512 09 70; Kapucinski trg 2; ☎ by appointment), west of the bus station, has a priceless **library** of medieval manuscripts, as well as the *Škofja Loka Passion*, a processional with dramatic elements, from around 1720.

The stone **Capuchin Bridge** (Kapucinski Most) leading from the monastery's **Church of St Anne** (1710) dates from the 14th century and is an excellent vantage point for the Old Town and castle as well as the river with its deep gorge, dams, abandoned mills and 18th-century barracks.

Activities

The Škofja Loka Hills to the west, a region of steep slopes, deep valleys and ravines, is an excellent area for **walks** or **hikes**, and there are several huts with accommodation in the area. Before you set out, buy a copy of the 1:50,000 hiking map *Škofjeloško in Cerkljansko Hribovje* (Škofja Loka and Cerklno Hills; €8.20) and ask the tourist office for the pamphlet

Škofja Loka Walk around the Town and Surroundings, which will direct you to both Suha and Crngrob on foot (opposite).

One of the easiest trips in the brochure is to **Lubnik**, a 1025m peak northwest of the Old Town, which can be reached on foot in two hours via Vincarje or the castle ruins near Gabrovo. Start the walk from Klobovsava ulica in Mestni trg. A mountain hut near the summit, Category II **Dom na Lubniku** (☎ 512 05 01, 512 06 67; pd.skofjaloka@volja.net; ☎ daily Mar-Dec, Sat & Sun Jan & Feb), has seven triple rooms.

A hike to 1562m **Blegoš** further west would be much more demanding, but it takes only about three hours from Hotavlje, a village about 2km from Gorenja Vas and accessible by bus from Škofja Loka. There are two huts in the area. Category II **Koča na Blegošu** (☎ 512 06 67, 041-212 612; ☎ daily late Apr-Oct, Sat & Sun Nov-late Apr), at 1391m, has 61 beds. **Zavetišče GS na Jelenčih** (☎ 518 11 28, 041-541 997; pd.gorvas@volja.net; ☎ Sat & Sun Nov-early May), about 2km to the southwest and at 1185m, has 20 beds.

This area is also superb for **cycling**. Ask the tourist office for *In the Shade of Lubnik*, which outlines the new 50km circular cycle route around Škofja Loka.

The **Stari Vrh ski centre** (☎ 518 80 39; matej.demsar@krajnik.net; half-day pass adult/child €12.50/11.30, day pass €16.30/13), 12km west of Škofja Loka, is situated at altitudes of 580m to 1216m and covers 10km of ski slopes and trails. There are five T-bar tows and a chairlift.

Festivals & Events

A music festival called **Pod Homanovo Lipo** takes place under the big linden tree in front of Homan House on Mestni trg on certain nights in July and August. **Venerina Pot** (Path of Venus; http://venera.skofjaloka.si) is a medieval-inspired festival held on the last weekend in June. In recent years the *Škofja Loka Passion* has been staged during this time.

Sleeping

Camp Smladnik (☎ 01-362 70 02; www.dm-campsmlednik.si; Dragočajna 14a; per adult/child €6.25/3.15, 2-/3-/4-person bungalows €40/50/60; ☎ May-mid-Oct; ☎) This 4-hectare camping ground in Dragočajna, 11km to the east, is the closest one to Škofja Loka. It is situated on the left bank of the Sava River and beside Lake Zbilje. There is also a beach with separate facilities set aside for naturists. The bun-

galows measure 36 sq metres and are like little cottages.

Pri Marku farmhouse (☎ 513 16 26, 041-711 260; www.pri-marku-porenta.si; Crngrob 5; per person €17-24; ☎) This idyllic farmhouse in Crngrob (opposite), within praying distance of the Church of the Annunciation, has eight doubles, an apartment for five and, for those looking for a roll in the hay, there's accommodation in the barn.

Paleta (☎ 512 64 00, 041-874 427; paleta.art@siol.net; Kapucinski trg 17; s/d/tr/q €30/54/81/108; ☎) This colourful and upbeat new place above an art-supplies shop (thus the name) just over Capuchin Bridge has four Ikea-standard but comfortable rooms with exceptional bathrooms. Room No 3 has views of the river and the castle.

Mini Hotel (☎ 515 05 40; www.minihotel.si; Vincarje 47; s/d/tr/q €40/60/75/90; ☎) This brand-new guesthouse is in the suburb of Vincarje, about 1km west of the bus station, and has eight sparkling rooms, an outdoor swimming pool, squash and tennis courts, a sauna and a gym.

Eating

Restavracija na Nami (☎ 512 50 19; Kapucinski trg 4; set lunch €3.35-5, pizza €5; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat) This self-service restaurant is on the 2nd floor of the Nama department store (enter from Cesta Talcev).

Jesharna (☎ 512 25 61; Blaževa ulica 10; pizza & pasta €3.35-7.20; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Fri, 10am-11pm Sat, 11.30am-10pm Sun) This very friendly, very upbeat *picerija* in *špageterija* (pizzeria and spaghetti house) overlooking the river has free internet access. It's more or less opposite the post office.

Gostilna Pri Ingliču (☎ 512 66 30; Cesta Talcev 4a; starters €4.20-5.85, mains €5.85-10, pizza €4-5.85; ☎ 9am-11pm Thu-Tue) This popular *gostilna* just a wee bit out of the centre serves standard Slovenian dishes as well as pizza and has both a big courtyard and an inviting terrace

Kašča (☎ 512 43 00, 041-688 597; Spodnji trg 1; starters €4.40-7.30, mains €5-11.50; ☎ noon-11pm Mon-Sat) This attractive pub and wine bar in the cellar of the town's 16th-century granary also serves good Slovenian dishes, including ones peculiar to the Škofja Loka area.

The covered **market** (Šolska ulica; ☎ 7am-1pm Thu & Sat) is northeast of the Nama department store. You'll find a **Mercator** (Mestni trg 9; 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7am-1pm Sat, 8am-noon Sun) supermarket in the Old Town.

Drinking

Gostilna Homan (☎ 512 30 47, 041-635 162; Mestni trg 2; ☎ 8am-11pm Mon-Thu, 8am-2am Fri & Sat, 8am-11pm Sun) This ground pub and café in historical Homan House is always busy, especially in the warm weather when tables are set out on Mestni trg under the giant linden trees.

Pri Miholu (☎ 512 00 59; Mestni trg 26; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Thu, 9am-midnight Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) This old-style pub is in historic Martin House and is built into part of the defence walls at Poljane Gate.

Getting There & Away

Count on at least hourly buses between 7.10am and 10.15pm to Kranj (€2.60, 20 minutes, 16km) and between 5.10am and 9.10pm to Ljubljana (€3, 30 minutes, 21km).

Škofja Loka can be reached on up to 12 trains a day from Ljubljana (€1.45, 30 minutes, 20km) via Medvode. An equal number continue on to Jesenice (€3.30, 50 minutes, 44km) via Kranj, Radovljica and Lesce-Bled. Up to eight of these cross the border for Villach, 87km to the north in Austria.

Getting Around

Local buses make the run between the train station in Trata and the bus station on Kapucinski trg. You can order a taxi on ☎ 041-625 875. **VeloSport** (☎ 512 32 00; Poljanska cesta 4; 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) rents mountain bikes (per day/week €5.50/25).

AROUND ŠKOFJA LOKA

Suha

☎ 04 / pop 158 / elev 338m

The 15th-century **Church of St John the Baptist** (Cerkev Sv Janeza Krstnika) at Suha, about 2.5km east of Škofja Loka, is unexceptional except for the presbytery, which has an interior completely covered with amazing frescoes painted by Bartholomew of Loka in the 16th century. The paintings on the vaults show various Apostles, the coronation of Mary and scenes from the life of Christ. The panels below depict the five wise and five foolish virgins (the latter forgot to put oil in their lamps, according to the Gospel of St Matthew). Inside the arch facing the altar is a frightening scene from the Last Judgment.

If the church is locked, request the key from the house at No 32, the first building on the left as you enter Suha village and about 150m beyond the church.

Crngrob

☎ 04 / pop 35 / elev 420m

The **Church of the Annunciation** (Cerkev Marijinega Oznanenja; adult €1.25/0.85; ☎ by appointment) at Crngrob, about 4km north of Škofja Loka, has one of the most treasured frescoes in Slovenia. Look for it on the outside wall under a 19th-century portico near the church entrance. Called Holy Sunday (Sveta Nedelja) and produced in the workshop of Johannes de Laibaco (John of Ljubljana) in 1460, it explains in pictures what good Christians do on Sunday (pray, go to Mass, help the sick) and what they do not do (gamble, drink, play bowls or fight). The consequence of doing any of the latter is damnation – vividly illustrated with souls being swallowed whole by a demon. On the south wall there's a large fresco of St Christopher from the same era.

The interior of the church, which was built and modified between the 14th and 17th centuries, contains more medieval frescoes on the north wall as well as a huge gilded altar built in 1652. The colourful star vaulting of the presbytery has a number of bosses portraying the Virgin Mary, the Bishops of Freising, and a man on horseback, probably a church benefactor.

Crngrob is easily accessible on foot or by bicycle (p99) from Škofja Loka via Groharjevo naselje, which runs north from the Capuchin monastery and Cesta Talcev. An alternative is to take the bus bound for Kranj, get off at the village of Dorfarje and walk northwest for about 1.5km.

KRANJ

☎ 04 / pop 34,840 / elev 386m

Backed by a battalion of mountain peaks, including snow-capped Storžič (2132m), the Old Town in Kranj, Slovenia's fourth-largest and most industrialised city, looks most picturesque when seen from across the Sava River, looking to the northeast. This is a view you'll enjoy briefly from the right-hand windows of buses headed from Ljubljana to Bled or Kranjska Gora, between gaps in the light-industrial foreground.

History

A secondary Roman road linking Emona (Ljubljana) and Virunum (near today's Klagenfurt in Austria) ran through Kranj until about the 5th century; a hundred years later the marauding Langobards established a base

here. They were followed by tribes of early Slavs, whose large burial grounds can be partly seen below the floor of the Gorenjska Museum in the old town hall.

In the 11th century, Kranj was an important border stronghold of the Frankish counts in their battles with the Hungarians, and the town gave its name to the entire region – Kranjska (Carniola in English). It was also an important market and ecclesiastical centre, and within 200 years Kranj was granted town status by the new rulers, the Bavarian Counts of Andechs. More wealth came with the development of iron mining and foundries, and when the progressive Protestant movement reached Gorenjska, it was centred in Kranj. The city grew faster after the arrival of the railway in 1870.

Orientation

The attractive Old Town, sitting on an escarpment above the confluence of the Sava and Kokra Rivers, barely measures 1km by 250m and contains everything of interest in Kranj. It is essentially composed of three pedestrian streets running north to south. The main one begins as Prešernova ulica at Maistrov trg and changes its name to Cankarjeva ulica at Glavni trg, the main square and market place in medieval times. Cankarjeva ulica ends at Pungert, the 'Land's End' at the tip of the promontory.

Kranj's bus station is about 600m north of Maistrov trg on the corner of Bleiweisova cesta and Stošičeva ulica. The train station is on Kolodvorska cesta below the Old Town to the west.

Information

Gorenjska Banka Bleiweisova cesta (Bleiweisova cesta 1; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 8am–noon Sat); Old Town branch (Prešernova ulica 6; ☎ 9–11.30am & 2–5pm Mon–Fri, 8–11am Sat)

Mladinska knjiga (☎ 201 58 35; Maistrov trg 1; ☎ 8.30am–7pm Mon–Fri, 8.30am–1pm Sat) Sells regional maps.

Post office (Poštna ulica 4)

SKB Banka (Koroška cesta 5; ☎ 8am–3.30pm Mon–Thu, 8am–2.30pm Fri) In the Hotel Creina building.

Tourist Information Centre Kranj (☎ 236 30 30; www.tourism-kranj.si; Koroška cesta 29; ☎ 8am–7pm Mon–Fri) Has internet access (per hour €2).

Sights

MAISTROV TRG

The gateway to the Old Town, this was the site of the upper town gates in the 15th cen-

tury. It was the most vulnerable part of Kranj; the steep Kokra Canyon protected the town on the eastern side and thick walls did the trick on the west from Pungert as far as the square. The **Spital Tower** (Spitalski Stolp; Maistrov trg 3), one of seven along the wall, now forms part of a butcher shop. The best view of the cone-shaped tower is from Kokrški breg. The unusual Art Deco building with the three statues facing the square to the north is the **former post office** (stara pošta; Koroška cesta 1), which dates from the 1930s. It has four Atlases on the south side.

The restored **Prešeren House** (Prešernova hiša; Prešernova ulica 7) was home to the poet France Prešeren (1800–49) for the last two years of his life; he died in the front bedroom. It now contains the **Prešeren Memorial Museum** (Prešernov Spominski Muzej; ☎ 201 39 80; adult/child/student & senior/family €2/1/1.25/4.20; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun) in five rooms, two of them with original furnishings. Unfortunately, most of the explanatory notes next to the poet's letters, diaries and manuscripts are in Slovene only. Prešeren is buried in the parish cemetery, now called **Prešeren Grove** (Prešernov Gaj), about 500m to the north.

GLAVNI TRG

A beautiful plaza, Glavni trg (Main Square) is populated by Gothic and Renaissance buildings; the ones on the western side with their painted facades, vaulted hallways and arched courtyards are masterpieces. The 16th-century one opposite is the **former town hall** (mestna hiša; Glavni trg 4), which now contains most of the collection of the **Gorenjska Museum** (Gorenjski Muzej; ☎ 201 39 80; www.gorenjski-muzej.si; adult/child/student & senior/family €2/1/1.25/4.20; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun). Among the eye-catching bits and bobs lying around is a large porcelain stove topped with a Turk's turbaned head, an embroidered sheepskin coat called a *kožuh* and a child's toy consisting of a devil sharpening a gossip's tongue on a grindstone. Below the floor of the vaulted vestibule at the entrance to the museum, Slavic tombs (complete with bones) from the 9th and 10th centuries can be seen through glass panels.

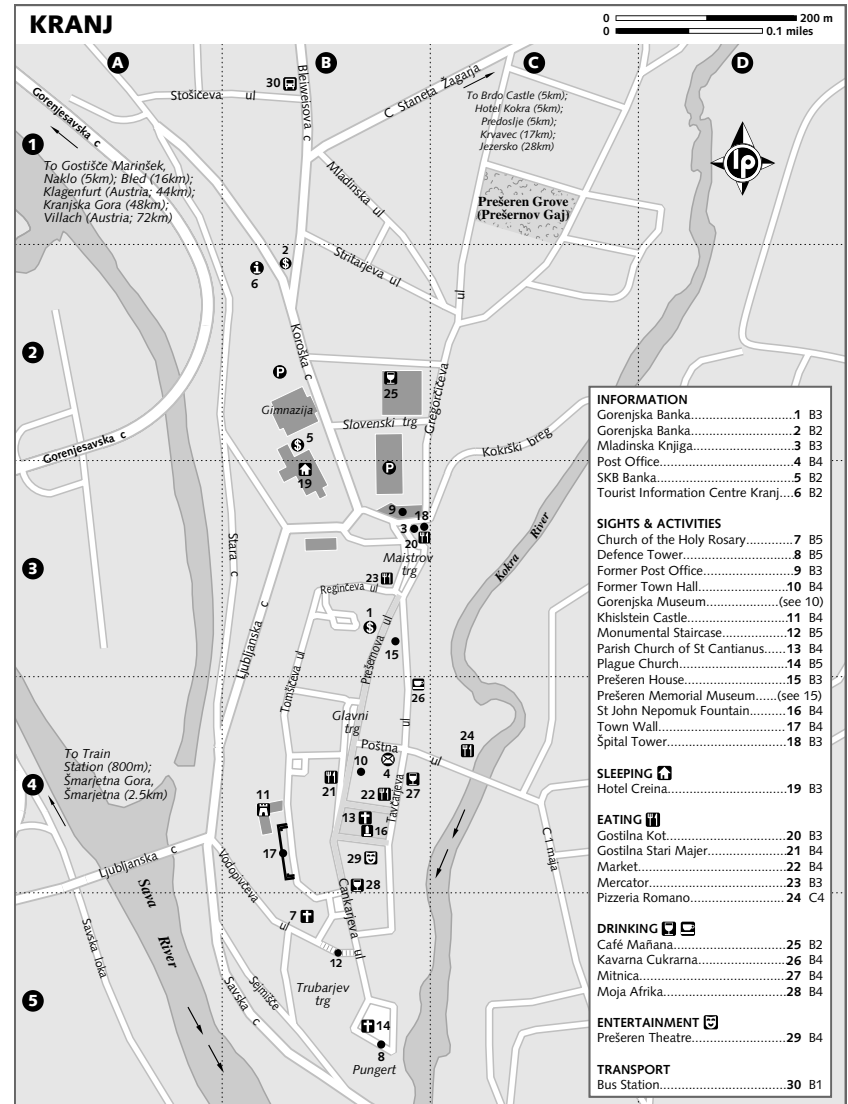
The **Parish Church of St Cantianus** (Župnijska Cerkev Sv Kancijana), which was built on to part of an older church starting in about 1400, is the best example of a hall church (ie one with a nave and aisles of equal height) in Slovenia. The Mount of Olives relief in the arch above the main portal dating from 1450

is well worth a look before entering, as is the modern altar (1934) designed by Ivan Vurnik. Below the north side of the church there are more old bones from early Slavic graves and a medieval ossuary. On the south wall is a lapidarium of tombstones dating from the Middle Ages and nearby the **Fountain of St John Nepomuk**, with a stone statue of the 14th-

century Bohemian martyr complete with a doleful-looking octopus in the water.

PUNGERT

Another 300m further south, the Old Town dead-ends behind the **Plague Church**, built during a time of pestilence in 1470 and dedicated to the three 'intercessors against the plague' –



Sts Rok, Fabian and Sebastian. It is now used by Serbian Orthodox Christians. The three-storey **defence tower** (*obrambni stolp*) beside the church was built in the 16th century.

OTHER SIGHTS

At the end of Tomšičeva ulica northwest of Pungert is the **Church of the Holy Rosary** (Rožnenska Cerkev), built in the 16th century. It was a Protestant sanctuary during the Reformation. Beside the church are arcades, a fountain and a **monumental staircase** designed in the late 1950s by Jože Plečnik to give Kranj a dramatic entrance up from the Sava River.

To the north of here is a lengthy section of the restored **town wall** and **Khislstein Castle** (Grad Khislstein; Tomšičeva ulica 44), part of which was built during the Turkish invasions of the 15th century; check out the lovely arcaded courtyard. Today it houses the offices of several cultural institutes, including the Gorenjska Museum.

Activities

A very easy destination for a walk is **Šmarjetna Gora**, a 643m hill 3km northwest of the Old Town, where a fort stood during the Hallstatt period. The reconstructed **Church of St Margaret** is atop the hill. The views from here of Kranj, the Alps and the Sava River are astonishing.

Another easy walk follows the left bank of the **Kokra River** north from the eastern end of Poštna ulica for 8km and then back again. Ask the tourist office for the *Kokra River Gorge* brochure.

The Hotel Kokra sells **fishing licences** (per day €83.50) for use in the dozen-odd lakes on the hotel grounds and rents rods for €12.50 a day. They also offer **horse riding** (€10.50 to €18.80).

Festivals & Events

If you're in Kranj on the second Sunday in August, follow the flocks to Jezersko, on the Austrian border 28km northeast of Kranj, for the annual **Shepherds' Ball** (Ovčarski Bal). It's a day and evening of folk music, dancing and drinking *žganje* (brandy) – the ovine alternative to the bovine event in Bohinj (p122).

Sleeping

Most of the private rooms available within striking distance of Kranj are in Naklo, 5km northwest of the centre, including those at **Drinovec** (☎ 257 27 45; Ulica Bratov Praprotnik 9; per person €17; P)

Gostišče Marinšek (☎ 257 22 20, fax 257 11 15; Glavna cesta 2; s/d €25/49) This B&B in Naklo is above a popular restaurant and pub that sells its own homemade beer.

Hotel Creina (☎ 281 75 00; www.hotel-creina.si; Koroška cesta 5; s/d €60/80; P) This central brick-and-timber hotel with 87 rooms, the only game in town if you want to stay central, is popular with Austrian business people, tour groups headed for the Alps and airline crews who don't want to travel all the way to Ljubljana from Brnik airport, which is only 7km to the southeast.

Hotel Kokra (☎ 260 10 00; www.brdo.com; s/d/st €34/54/80; P) Although it's hardly castle quality, this four-star hotel with 80 rooms and suites is near the entrance to Brdo and is surrounded by lovely parkland, plus a protected 478-hectare forest and a dozen lakes stocked with trout, carp and pike. While Kokra's new addition **Vrelec Brdo** (Brdo Spring; ☎ 260 18 16; open 5pm to midnight Monday to Friday, 4pm to midnight Saturday and Sunday) wellness centre is one of the most attractive in Slovenia. Don't miss the superb *toplar* (double hayrack) just outside the hotel and the nearby painted beehive.

Brdo Castle (☎ 260 10 00; www.brdo.com; apt from €547; P) If you have more than ample funds and you really want to treat yourself, check into one of the six apartments available at this 16th-century castle on 72 hectares of garden in Predoslje, about 5km northeast of Kranj, and managed by the State Protocol Service. It has two towers on the northern side, corridors crammed with artwork and a library containing a priceless copy of the Bible translated by Protestant reformer Jurij Dalmatin (1547–89). Nonguests can only view the interior by guided tour (€6.25 to €7.50) organised in advance.

Eating

Pizzeria Romano (☎ 236 39 00; Tavčarjeva ulica 31a; pizza €4-5.25, grills €4.40-6; ☎ 7am-11pm Mon-Thu, 7am-midnight Fri & Sat, 4-11pm Sun) This simple place northeast of the post office and perched precariously above the Kokra River Gorge has pizza, pasta and great grilled dishes.

Gostilna Kot (Corner Inn; ☎ 202 61 05; Maistrov trg 4; starters €2.10-7.10, mains €4-13.80; ☎ 7am-10pm Mon-Thu, 7am-11pm Fri, 7am-6pm Sat) Squeezed right into the thick of things in Maistrov trg, this is justly famed for its affordable and quite good daily specialities (€3.25 to €4).

Gostilna Stari Majer (☎ 280 00 20; Glavni trg 16; starters €5-6.25, mains €5.25-10.80; ☎ 9am-10pm) The stick-to-the-ribs Slovenian dishes at this old-style eatery will keep you going for longer than you'd think.

The large **market** (Tavčarjeva ulica; ☎ 6am-6pm mid-Mar-mid-Oct, 7am-3pm mid-Oct-mid-Mar) northeast of the Parish Church of St Cantianus sells mostly fruit and vegetables. You'll find a branch of **Mercator** (Maistrov trg 11; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7am-1pm Sat) supermarket in the Old Town

Drinking

Kavarna Cukrarna (☎ 281 82 90; Tavčarjeva ulica 9; ☎ 8am-11pm Mon-Thu, 8am-midnight Fri & Sat, 8am-10pm Sun) This café with a balcony overlooking the dramatic Kokra River Gorge is a great place for a drink and a slice of something sweet.

Mitnica (☎ 040-678 778; Tavčarjeva ulica 35; ☎ 7am-11pm Mon-Wed, 7am-1pm Thu, 7am-3am Fri & Sat) This lovely and very welcoming *kavarna*, in the basement of a 16th-century toll house with a huge covered terrace backing onto the river, is just the place to relax in Kranj on a warm afternoon.

Moja Afrika (My Africa; ☎ 202 55 95; Cankarjeva ulica 3; ☎ 9am-midnight Mon-Thu, 9am-2am Fri & Sat, 5pm-midnight Sun) Tastefully decorated with African masks, bamboo, vines and contemporary sculptures, this attractive café-bar, turns into a club with DJ and/or live music at the weekend.

Café Mañana (☎ 236 41 21; Slovenski trg 7; ☎ 6am-midnight Mon, 6.30am-1am Tue & Wed, 6.30am-4am Thu & Fri, 9am-4am Sat, 1pm-midnight Sun) This enormous pub next to the Storžič cinema is popular with a very young crowd and is about the only place worth mentioning in 'new' Kranj. It's a dance club from 10pm on Friday and Saturday nights.

Entertainment

Prešeren Theatre (☎ 280 49 00; Glavni trg 6) This provincial theatre is very active, staging four plays and up to 200 performances a year. Note the rather dashing statue of Prešeren out front.

Concerts – both classical and popular – are held in the courtyard of Khislstein Castle in summer and sometimes at the Parish Church of St Cantianus during the year.

Getting There & Away

Buses depart from Kranj at least hourly for Bled (€3.50, 40 minutes, 26km), Bohinjska Bistrica (€5.10, 1½ hours, 45km), Ljubljana (€3, 40 minutes, 23km), Radovljica (€2.60,

30 minutes, 19km) and Škofja Loka (€2.60, 20 minutes, 16km). You can also reach Bovec via Kranjska Gora (€6.20, two hours, 57km) and the Vršič Pass on one bus a day in July and August. There's also a bus to Varaždin (€18, four hours, 201km) in Croatia at 5.50am on Saturday and Sunday.

Up to 15 trains a day pass through Kranj from Ljubljana (€2, 30 minutes, 29km) via Medvode and Škofja Loka. They continue to Radovljica, Lesce-Bled and Jesenice (€4, 40 minutes, 35km), where up to eight cross the border for Villach, 72km to the north in Austria.

Getting Around

Local buses make the run from the train station to the bus terminus on Stošičeva ulica.

You can ring a local taxi on ☎ 202 61 00.

KRVAVEC

☎ 04 / elev to 1971m

The **Krvavecski centre** (☎ 252 59 30; www.rtc-krvavec.si; half-day pass adult/child/senior & student €20.50/13.30/18.40, day pass €23.40/14/21), 17km northeast of Kranj and easily done as a day trip from Ljubljana, is one of the most popular (and crowded) in Slovenia. A cable car transports you up to the centre at 1450m, and seven chairlifts and four T-bar tows serve the 33km of slopes and 3km of cross-country runs. Krvavec is also an excellent starting point for hikes in summer to **Kriška Planina** or **Jezerca**, about an hour's walk from the cable car's upper station.

RADOVLJICA

☎ 04 / pop 5935 / elev 496m

A charming town full of historic buildings, Radovljica enjoys an enviable position atop an outcrop 75m above a wide plain called the Dežela, literally 'Country' in Slovene.

Radovljica was settled by the early Slavs and grew into an important market town by the early 14th century. With increased trade on the river and the iron forgeries at nearby Kropa and Kamna Gorica, Radovljica expanded. The town was built around a large rectangular square fortified with a wall and defence towers. Radovljica's affluence in the Middle Ages can be seen in the lovely buildings still lining Linhartov trg today.

Orientation

The centre of old Radovljica is Linhartov trg; the new town extends primarily north and northwest along Gorenjska cesta towards

Lesce. Radovljica's bus station is 500m north-west of Linhartov trg on Kranjska cesta. The train station is below the Old Town on Cesta Svobode.

Information

Gorenjska Banka (Gorenjska cesta 16; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 8am–noon Sat)

Post office (Kranjska cesta 1; ☎ 7am–7pm Mon–Fri, 7am–noon Sat)

SKB Banka (Gorenjska cesta 10; ☎ 8.30am–noon & 2–5pm Mon–Fri)

Tourist Information Centre Radovljica (☎ 531 53 00; tdradovljica@siol.net; Gorenjska cesta 1; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 8am–noon Sat May–Sep; 9am–4pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat Oct–Apr)

Sights

BEEKEEPING MUSEUM

Although it might not sound like a crowd-pleaser, this **museum** (Čebelarški Muzej; ☎ 532 05 20; www.muzeji-radovljica.si; Linhartov trg 1; adult/child/family €2.10/1.70/5; ☎ 10am–1pm & 3–6pm Tue–Sun May–Oct; 10am–noon & 3–5pm Wed, Sat & Sun Mar, Apr, Nov & Dec) is one of the most interesting in the country, and there's not a whole lot you won't know about things apian after buzzing around for an hour or so inside. The museum is housed (together with a music school) in **Thurn Manor**, which began life as Ortenburg Castle in the early Middle Ages but was rebuilt with a large hall on the ground floor after the earthquake of 1511. The cream-and-white structure has interesting reliefs and stucco work on its facade.

The museum's exhibits take a close look at the history of beekeeping in Slovenia (which was at its most intense in the 18th and 19th centuries), the country's unique contribution to the industry with the development of the Carniolan grey bee species (*Apis mellifera carnica*) and the research of men such as Anton Janša (1734–73), who set up a research station in the Karavanke and is considered around the world as the 'father of modern beekeeping'. And the museum doesn't fail to pass on a few fun facts to know and tell. Did you realise that bees cannot see the colour red but go gaga over yellow? The museum's collection of illustrated beehive panels (*panjske končnice*) from the 18th and 19th centuries, a folk art unique to Slovenia, is the largest in the country.

Bees are still kept in Slovenia for their honey and wax but much more lucrative are such by-products as pollen, propolis and royal jelly used as elixirs and in homoeopathic medicine. Propolis is a brownish, waxy substance collected from certain trees by bees and used to cement or caulk their hives. Royal jelly, so beloved by the European aristocracy of the 1920s and 1930s and by the Chinese today, is the substance fed to the queen bee by the workers.

THE BOARDS & THE BEES

The keeping of honeybees (species *Apis*) has been an integral part of Slovenian agriculture since the 16th century when *ajda* (buckwheat) was first planted on fallow ground to allow the more intensive use of farm land. Bees favour buckwheat, so Slovenia, especially the alpine regions of Carniola (Kranjska), was soon awash in honey for cooking and beeswax for candles.

Originally bees were kept in hollow logs or woven baskets, but the entire hive was damaged when the honeycomb was removed. The invention of the *kranjič* hive, with removable boxes that resembled a chest of drawers, solved the problem by creating individual hives. It also led to the development of Slovenia's most important form of folk art.

Kranjič hives have *panjske končnice* (front boards) above the entrance, and painting and decorating these panels with religious motifs soon became all the rage. Ethnographers are still out to lunch over whether the illustrations were appeals to protect the hives from fire or disease, meant to guide the bees (they can distinguish colour) back home or to help beekeepers identify their hives.

The first panels (from the mid-18th century) were painted in a 'folk baroque' style and the subjects were taken from the Old and New Testaments (Adam and Eve, the Virgin Mary, Sts Florian and George, and especially patient Job, the patron of beekeepers) and history (the Turkish invasions, Napoleon, the Illyrian Provinces and the Counter-Reformation with Martin Luther being driven to hell by a devil). The most interesting panels show the foibles, rivalries and humour of the human condition. A devil may be sharpening a gossip's tongue on a grindstone or two women fighting over a man's trousers (ie his hand in marriage). A very common illustration shows the devil exchanging old wives for nubile young women – to the delight of the husbands. Another – in a 'world turned upside down' – has gun-toting deer and bears laying the hunter in his grave.

The painting of beehive panels in Slovenia enjoyed its golden age between about 1820 and 1880; after that the art form went into decline. The introduction of a new and much larger hive by Anton Žnidaršič at the end of the 19th century obviated the need for small illustrations, and the art form degenerated into kitsch.

Nowadays you'll see the best examples of painted beehive panels in museums, such as the ones at Radovljica and Maribor, but there are still a few traditional – and protected – ones around, such as those at Muljava in Dolenjska. An interesting twist is the beehive at Brdo Castle (p104) near Kranj painted in the 1970s by some of Slovenia's most outstanding artists. Nowadays the most common hives are the large box ones painted bright yellow (a colour bees like) and the 'hives on wheels', which can be moved into the sun or to a promising meadow.

LINHARTOV TRG

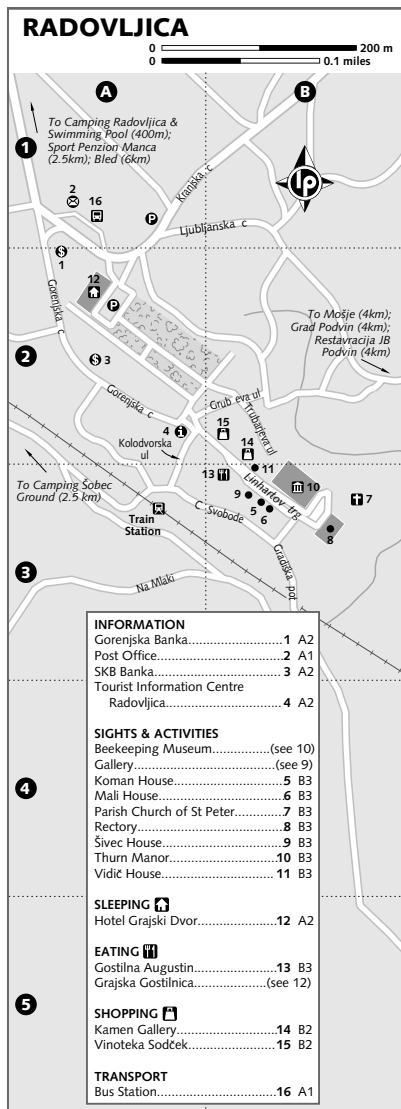
Radovljica's main square is named in honour of Slovenia's first dramatist and historian, Anton Tomaž Linhart (1756–95), who was born here. It is lined with houses mostly from the 16th century and has been described by the National Tourist Office as 'the most homogeneous old town core in Slovenia'.

Several lovely buildings are opposite the Beekeeping Museum, including **Koman House** (Komanova Hiša; Linhartov trg 23), which has a baroque painting on its front of St Florian, the patron saint of fires (he douses, not sets, them) and **Mali House** (Maljeva Hiša; Linhartov trg 25), which has a barely visible picture of St George slaying the dragon. The 17th-century **Vidič House** (Vidičeva Hiša; Linhartov trg 3) has a corner projection and is colourfully painted in red, yellow and blue, while **house No 17** has a

fresco of Martin of Tours sharing his cloak with a beggar.

The most important house here is 16th-century **Šivec House** (Šiveva Hiša; ☎ 532 05 20; Linhartov trg 22; ☎ 10am–noon & 6–8pm Tue–Sun Jul & Aug; 10am–noon & 5–7pm Tue–Sun Jun & Sep; 10am–noon & 4–6pm Tue–Sun Oct–May), which is an interesting hybrid: Renaissance on the outside and Gothic within. On the ground floor there is a vaulted hall, which now serves as a **gallery**, and on the 1st floor there is a wood-panelled late-Gothic drawing room with a beamed ceiling used as a wedding hall. There is also a chimneyless 'black kitchen' and an interesting collection of children's book illustrations by celebrated Slovenian artists. There fresco on the exterior that shows the Good Samaritan performing his work of mercy.

East of the square is the Gothic **Parish Church of St Peter** (Župnijska Cerkev Sv Petra), a hall



church modelled after the one in Kranj. The three portals are flamboyant Gothic, and the sculptures inside were done by Angelo Pozzo in 1713. The building with the arcaded courtyard south of the church is the **rectory** (*župnišče*).

Activities

There is a public **swimming pool** (☎ 531 57 70; Kopalniška cesta; ☎ 9am-9pm Jun–mid-Sep) near the camping ground open in summer, with tennis courts nearby.

The **Sport Riding Centre** (☎ 532 52 00) at Grad Podvin (Podvin Castle; right), about 4km south-east of Radovljica, has horses (€10.50 to €19) available for riding individually or with an instructor.

Festivals & Events

The biggest event of the year is the two-week **Festival Radovljica** (<http://festival-radovljica.amis.net>), one of the most important festivals of ancient classical music in Europe, held in mid-August.

Sleeping

Camping Radovljica (☎ 531 24 57, fax 531 57 70; Kopalniška cesta 9; per person/car/caravan/tent €6.70/1.50/2.10/1.50; ☎ Jun–mid-Sep; ☎) The town's smallest camping ground (1.5 hectares) is next to the public swimming pool, and the daily rate includes use of it.

Camping Šobec (☎ 535 37 00; www.sobec.si; Šobčeva cesta 25; camping per adult €9.50-11, child €7-8.50, bungalows for 2 €76-90, for 3-6 €98-115; ☎ late Apr-Sep; ☎) The largest (15 hectares with 500 sites) and arguably the best-equipped camping ground in Slovenia is in Lesce, about 2.5km northwest of Radovljica. Situated on a small lake near a bend of the Sava Dolinka River, the camping ground can accommodate 1500 people in tents and bungalows.

Hotel Grajski Dvor (☎ 531 55 85; www.hotel-grajski-dvor.si; Kranjska ulica 2; s €40-42, d €60-64; ☎) Radovljica's only hotel, the five-floor, 55-room 'Castle Courtyard' is central but certainly not luxurious. The attached Grajska Gostilnica restaurant is worth a visit.

Sport Penzion Manca (☎ 531 40 51; www.manca-sp.si; Gradnikova cesta 2; s €43-50, d €68-76, tr €84-96; ☎) This excellent-value pension about 2.5km north of Linhartov trg has 17 spic-and-span modern rooms and all sorts of sports facilities – from swimming pool and sauna to bicycles. Some rooms have views of the Karavanke range, others of Mt Triglav itself.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Gostilna Augustin (☎ 531 41 63; Linhartov trg 15; starters €5-6.70, mains €8-11.70; ☎ 10am-9pm) This delightful restaurant with a bar open daily till 10pm or 11pm is one of the most welcoming in Gorenjska. It serves excellent Slovenian dishes to order and bans pizzas altogether. Weekday set lunch is a snip at €6.25. Don't miss the cellar dining room, which was once part of a prison (and may have seen an execution or two), and the wonderful back terrace with stunning views of – wait for it – Mt Triglav itself. Does travel get any better than this?

Grad Podvin (☎ 532 52 00; www.grad-podvin.si; Mošnje 1; s €44-51, d €60-68; ☎) If you missed out on (or couldn't afford) staying at Brdo Castle (p104), this 17-room hotel might be some compensation. It's a rather boxy Italianate affair about 4km southeast of Radovljica in the village of Mošnje but, hey, it's still a castle. Podvin Castle is surrounded by a lovely park and has tennis courts, an outdoor pool and a popular horse riding centre. The Restavracija JB Podvin next door is another draw.

Eating

Grajska Gostilnica (☎ 531 44 45; Kranjska ulica 2; starters €4.10-6.25, mains €7.75-12.50; ☎ 11am-11pm) The flagship at the Hotel Grajski Dvor, this place has become popular for its pasta (€5 to €6.70) and Dalmatian dishes, a great wine list and an atmospheric cellar below. All the metalwork was produced by UKO (p110) in Kropa.

Restavracija JB Podvin (☎ 532 52 80; Mošnje 1; starters €8.35-12.50, mains €14.60-18.80; ☎ 11am-11pm) This sister-restaurant of the similarly named establishment in Ljubljana has raised the standards of dining in Gorenjska in one fell swoop. It's next door to the Grad Podvin hotel.

Shopping

Vinoteka Sodček (☎ 531 50 71; Linhartov trg 8; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) This shop has an excellent selection of Slovenian wines and tastings too.

Kamen Gallery (☎ 531 00 61; Linhartov trg 4; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) This shop specialises in quality Slovenian folk craft of ceramics, wood and glass. The selection of beehive panel reproductions is phenomenal.

Getting There & Away

Buses leave Radovljica for Bled (€1.70, 10 minutes, 7.5km) almost every 30 minutes between 6.15am and 10.15pm and for Ljubljana (€5, one hour, 43km) via Kranj between 7am and 8.15pm. There are also buses to Kranjska Gora (€4.60, one hour, 39km, three a day) and Kropa (€2.20, 20 minutes, 11km, five to eight a day).

Radovljica is on the rail line linking Ljubljana (€3.30, 55 minutes, 48km) via Jesenice (€1.45, 20 minutes, 16km) via Škofja Loka, Kranj and Lesce-Bled. Up to 15 trains a day pass through the town in each direction. About eight of the northbound ones carry on to Villach, 54km to the north in Austria.

BREZJE

04 / pop493 / elev 488m

The **Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help** (Bazilika Marije Pomojaj; ☎ 537 07 00; www.brezje.si, Brezje 72) in this village about 5km southeast of Radovljica has been a centre of pilgrimage since the time of the Illyrian Provinces and today attracts some 300,000 Catholic faithful each year. It is to Slovenia what Lourdes is to France, Knock is to Ireland and Częstochowa is to Poland; indeed, this was Pope John Paul II's first port of call when he first visited Slovenia in 1996. Still, apart from Janez Vurnik's stunning main altar, the altar painting of May (the main focus of attention) by Leopold Layer and some works by Ivan Grohar, the neo-Moorish basilica dating from 1900 is unexceptional. Brezje can be reached by bus from Bled (€1.30, 10 minutes, 5km, three or four daily) via Radovljica.

KROPA

☎ 04 / pop 835 / elev 531m

While in Radovljica, don't miss the chance for an easy half-day trip to visit Kropa, a delightful little village tucked away in a narrow valley below the Jelovica Plateau 11km to the southeast. Kropa has been a 'workhorse' for centuries, mining iron ore and hammering out the nails and decorative wrought iron that can still be seen in many parts of Slovenia. Today Kropa has turned its attention to screws – the German-owned Novi Plamen factory is based here – but artisans continue their work, clanging away in the workshop on the village's single street. The work of their forebears is evident in weather vanes, shutters and ornamental street lamps shaped like birds and dragons.

Sights

BLACKSMITH MUSEUM

The fascinating collection at this **museum** (Kovaški Muzej; ☎ 533 72 00; www.muzeji-radovljica.si; Kropa 10; adult/child €1.70/1.25, with forge display €2.10/1.70, with forge display & film €2.50/2.10; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun May-Oct; 10am-noon & 3-5pm Wed, Sat & Sun Mar, Apr, Nov & Dec) traces the history of iron mining and forging in Kropa and nearby Kamna Gorica from the 14th to the early 20th centuries. Nail and spike manufacturing was the town's main industry for most of that period; from giant ones that held the pylons below Venice together to little studs for snow boots, Kropa produced more than 100 varieties in huge quantities. You did not become a master blacksmith here until you could fit a horseshoe around an egg – without cracking the shell.

The museum has working models of forges, a couple of rooms showing how workers and their families lived in very cramped quarters (up to 45 people in one house) and a special exhibit devoted to the work of Jože Bertonec (1901-76), who turned out exquisite wrought-iron gratings, candlesticks, chandeliers and even masks. The museum shows two films, one on nail production and one on local customs.

The house itself was owned by a 17th-century iron baron called Klinar, and it contains some valuable furniture and paintings. Among the most interesting pieces is a 19th-century wind-up 'jukebox' from Bohemia. Ask the curator to insert one of the large perforated rolls and watch the piano, drums, triangle and cymbals make music.

OTHER SIGHTS

An 18th-century furnace called **Vice Forge** (Vigenj Vice) lies a short distance north of the museum behind **house No 56**, birthplace of the Slovenian painter Janez Krstnik Potočnik (1749-1834), whose work can be seen in the baroque **Church of St Leonard** (Cerkev Sv Lenarta) on the hill to the east, and in Kamnik. Below it is the **Kroparica**, a fast-flowing mountain stream that once turned the 50 water wheels that powered the furnaces for the forges. Kropa has many other lovely old houses, including several around **Trg Kropa** (also called Plac), the main square, which also has an interesting old wayside shrine. The scary-looking neo-Gothic pile up on the hill to the west is the **Church of the Mother of God** (Cerkev Matere Božje).

Sleeping & Eating

Gostilna Pr' Kovac (At the Smith's; ☎ 533 63 20, 041-414 046; Kropa 30; per person €20-25) This convivial and very popular *gostilna* (starters €1.70 to €8, mains €7.10 to €10; open 10am-11pm Tuesday to Sunday) in a lovely old house with outside seating just north of the Blacksmith Museum has three rooms available for between two and six people.

Gostilna Pri Jarmu (☎ At the Yoke; ☎ 533 67 50; Kropa 2; starters €2-3.75, mains €4.60-8, pizza €2.50-4.20; ☎ 10am-midnight daily May-Sep, 10am-midnight Fri-Tue Oct-Jun) This humble *gostilna* at the southern end of Kropa serves hearty Slovenian favourites as well as a decent range of vegetarian dishes (€2.50 to €5).

There's a **Mercator** (Kropa 3a; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7am-1pm Sat) supermarket branch between Gostilna Pri Jarmu and the post office.

Shopping

UKO Kropa forgers' workshop (☎ 533 73 00; Kropa 7a; ☎ 7am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat Jul & Aug; 7am-3pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat Sep-Jun) Across from the museum, this place has a shop selling all manner of articles made of wrought iron.

Getting There & Away

Between five and eight buses run to Radovljica (€2.20, 20 minutes, 11km) daily. They stop in front of the Mercator supermarket.

BLED

☎ 04 / pop 5250 / elev 501m

With its emerald-green lake, picture-postcard island church, cliff-topping medieval castle and its mountain backdrop, Bled is Slovenia's most popular resort and its biggest tourist money-spinner. Not surprisingly, it can be overpriced and swarming with tourists.

But as is the case with many popular destinations around the world, people come in droves – and will continue to do so – because the place is special. On a clear day you can make out Mt Stol (2236m) and Slovenia's highest peak, Mt Triglav (2864m), in the distance – and then the bells start ringing from the belfry of the little island church. You should visit Bled at least once. It's quite simply magical.

History

Bled was the site of a Hallstatt settlement in the early Iron Age, but as it was far from the main trade routes, the Romans gave it short

shrift. More importantly, from the 7th century the early Slavs came in waves, establishing themselves at Pristava below the castle, on the tiny island and at a dozen other sites around the lake.

Around the turn of the first millennium, the German Emperor Henry II presented Bled Castle and its lands to the Bishops of Brixen in South Tyrol, who retained secular control of the area until the early 19th century when the Habsburgs took it over.

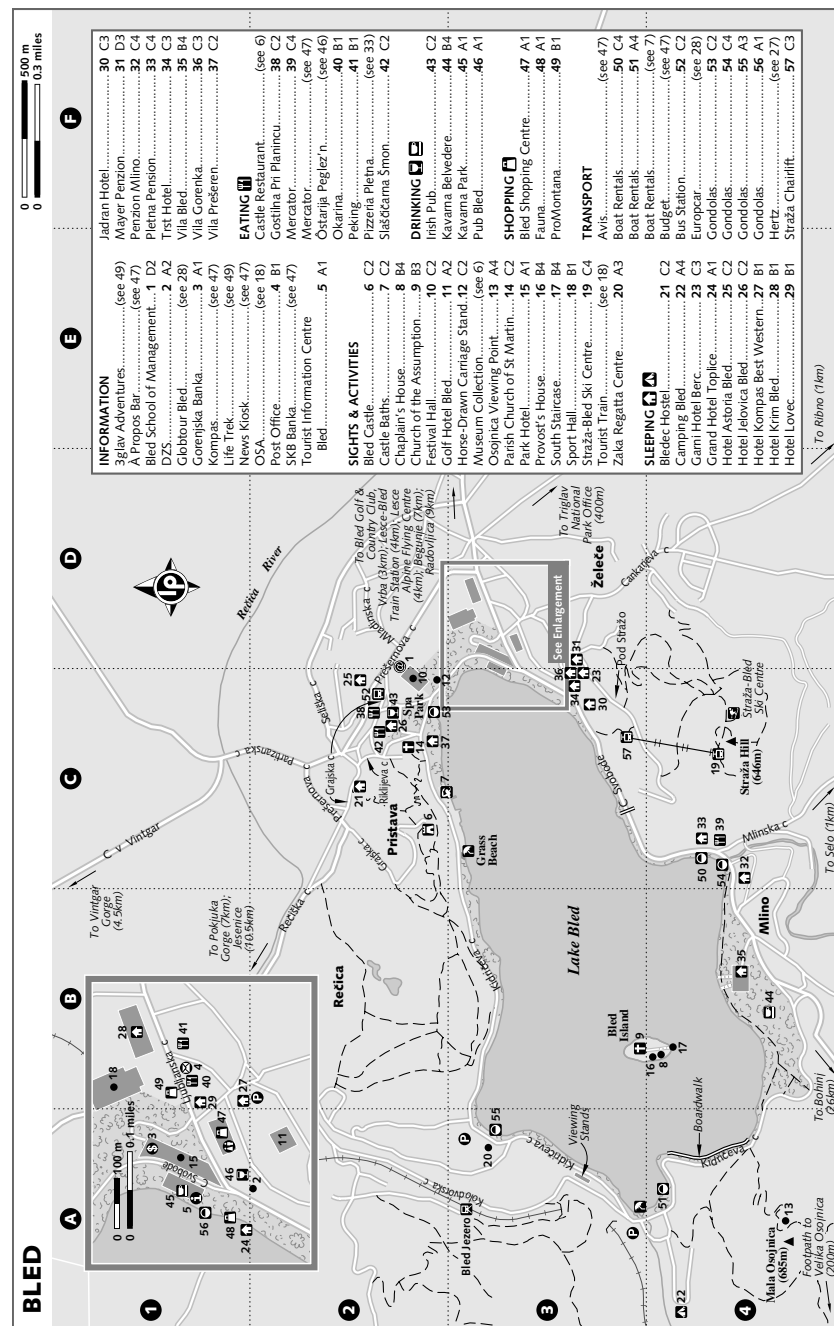
Bled's beauty and its warm waters were well known to medieval pilgrims who came to pray at the island church; the place made it into print in 1689 when Janez Vajkard Valvasor described the lake's thermal springs in *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*. But Bled's wealth was not fully appreciated at that time, and in the late 18th century the keeper of the castle seriously considered draining Lake Bled and using the clay to make bricks.

Fortunately, along came a Swiss doctor named Arnold Rikli, who saw the lake's full potential. In 1855 he opened baths where the casino now stands, taking advantage of the springs, the clean air and the mountain light. With the opening of the railway from Ljubljana to Tarvisio (Trbiž) in 1870, more and more guests came to Bled and the resort was a favourite of wealthy Europeans from the turn of the century right up to WWII. In fact, under the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Bled was the summer residence of the Karadžordževići, the Yugoslav royal family.

Orientation

'Bled' refers both to the lake and to the settlements around it, particularly the built-up area to the northeast where most of the hotels are located. This development is dominated by a modern shopping complex called the Bled Shopping Centre (Trgovski Center Bled). Bled's main road, Ljubljanska cesta, runs eastward from here. Footpaths and a road called Cesta Svobode (when south of the lake) and Kidričeva cesta (when to the north) circle the lake.

Bled's bus station is at the junction of Cesta Svobode and Grajska cesta, just up from the Hotel Jelovica. There are two train stations. Lesce-Bled is 4km to the southeast on the road to Radovljica and on the line linking Ljubljana with Jesenice and Austria. Bled Jezero station, on Kolodvorska cesta northwest of the lake,



connects Jesenice to the north with Nova Gorica, Sežana and Italy to the southwest.

Information

BOOKSHOPS & NEWSSTANDS

DZS (☎ 574 56 51; Cesta Svobode 19; ☎ 8.30am–7pm Mon–Fri, 8.30am–1pm Sat) Has some regional maps and guides in English.

New kiosks (Ljubljanska cesta 4; ☎ 7am–1pm & 2–7pm Mon–Sat, 8am–1pm & 2–6pm Sun) English-language newspapers at the eastern end of Bled Shopping Centre.

INTERNET ACCESS

À Propos Bar (☎ 574 40 44; apropos@g-kabel.si; Ljubljanska cesta 4; per 15/30/60 min €1.25/2.10/4.20; ☎ 8am–midnight) In Bled Shopping Centre (with wireless connection).
Bled School of Management (☎ 579 26 10; www.iedc.si; Prešernova cesta 33; access free; ☎ 8.30am–12.30pm & 4–8pm) Free internet access at one of the best small business schools in Europe.

MONEY

Gorenjska Banka (C Svobode 15; ☎ 9–11.30am & 2–5pm Mon–Fri, 8–11am Sat)
SKB Banka (Ljubljanska cesta 4; ☎ 8.30am–noon, 2–5pm Mon–Fri) In Bled Shopping Centre.

POST

Post office (Ljubljanska cesta 10; ☎ 7am–7pm Mon–Fri, 7am–noon Sat)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist Information Centre Bled (☎ 574 11 22; www.bled.si; Cesta Svobode 10; ☎ 8am–10pm Mon–Sat, 10am–10pm Sun Jul & Aug; 8am–8pm Mon–Sat, 10am–6pm Sun Jun & Sep; 8am–7pm Mon–Sat, 9am–5pm Sun Oct & Mar–May; 9am–5pm Mon–Sat, 9am–2pm Sun Nov–Feb) Has probably the best website in Slovenia.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

3glav Adventures (☎ 041-683 184; www.3glav-adventures.com; Ljubljanska cesta 1; ☎ 9am–noon & 4–7pm Apr–Oct) The number one extreme-sport specialists in Bled, offering adventure trips throughout the area lasting six to 10 hours for individuals and groups.
Globtour Bled (☎ 575 13 00; www.globtour-bled.com; Ljubljanska cesta 7; ☎ 8am–8pm Mon–Sat, 8am–noon & 4–8pm Sun Jul & Aug; 8am–7pm Mon–Fri, 9am–2pm Sat Sep–Jun) In the eastern wing of the Hotel Krim Bled.
Kompas (☎ 572 75 00; www.kompas-bled.si; Bled Shopping Centre, Ljubljanska cesta 4; ☎ 8am–8pm Mon–Sat, 8am–noon & 4–7pm Sun Jul & Aug; 8am–7pm Mon–Sat, 8am–noon & 4–7pm Sun Sep–Jun)
Life Trek (☎ 578 06 62; www.lifetrek-slovenija.com; Ljubljanska cesta 1; ☎ 9am–8pm Jun–Sep, 9am–4pm Oct–

May) Adventure-sport agency attached to the ProMontana sporting-goods shop (p117).

OSA (☎ 576 85 85, 040-984 150; www.osa.si; Ljubljanska cesta 5 ☎ 9am–8pm Jun–Sep, 9am–noon & 3–6pm Oct–May) In the Sport Hall.

Triglav National Park Office (☎ 578 02 00; www.tnp.si; Ljubljanska cesta 27; ☎ 8am–3pm Mon–Fri) Information about Slovenia's only national park.

Sights

BLED CASTLE

Perched atop a steep cliff more than 100m above the lake, **Bled Castle** (Blejski Grad; ☎ 578 05 25; Grajska cesta 25; adult/child/student €5/3.10/4.60; ☎ 8am–8pm May–Oct, 8am–5pm Nov–Apr) is how most people imagine a medieval fortress to be – with towers, ramparts, moats and a terrace offering magnificent views on a clear day. The castle, which is built on two levels, dates back to the 11th century (although most of what stands here now is from the 16th century) and for 800 years was the seat of the Bishops of Brixen.

The baroque southern wing houses a **museum collection** that traces the history of Lake Bled and its settlements from the Bronze Age to the mid-19th century. None of the furniture is original to the castle, but it helps give you an idea of how the leisured class lived in the Middle Ages. There's a large collection of armour and weapons (swords, halberds and firearms from the 16th to 18th centuries), jewellery found at the early Slav burial pits at Pristava, a few interesting carvings, including a 16th-century one of the overworked St Florian dousing yet another conflagration, as well as tapestries and ancient tiled stoves. The smallish 16th-century Gothic **chapel** contains paintings of castle donor Henry II and his wife Kunigunda on either side of the main altar.

Admission to the castle includes entry to the rather touristy **Castle Printworks** (Grajska Tiskarna) and **Castle Wine Cellar** (Grajska Klet), which is essentially a shop. The terrace of the castle restaurant affords wonderful views of the lake and surrounding mountains.

You can reach the castle on foot via one of three trails signposted 'Grad'. The first trail starts from the car park behind the Bled-dec Hostel; the second is a tortuous path up from the Castle Baths; and the third starts just north of the neo-Gothic **Parish Church of St Martin** (Farna Cerkev Sv Martina; Rikljijska cesta). This church was designed by Friedrich von Schmidt

in 1905, who also did the city hall and Votive Church in Vienna. Outside there's a small shrine designed by Jože Plečnik.

BLED ISLAND

The tiny, tear-shaped Bled Island (Blejski Otok), the only true island in Slovenia, has been the site of a Christian church since the 9th century. But excavations have shown that the early Slavs worshipped at a pagan temple here at least a century before that.

Getting to the island by a piloted **gondola** (pletna; ☎ 041-293 424; per person return €10) is the archetypal tourist experience; there are jetties below the tourist office, below Spa Park (Zdraviliški Park) to the north, in Mlino on the south shore and near Zaka Regatta Centre. You get about half an hour to explore the island. In all, the trip takes about 1½ hours. Alternatively, you can rent a rowing boat at the Castle Baths, at Mlino or at the large beach at the southwest end of the lake.

The boat sets you down on the island's south side at a monumental **South Staircase** (Južno Stopnišče) built in 1655. As you walk up you'll pass the **Chaplain's House** (Meznarija) and the **Provost's House** (Stavba Proštije) from the 17th and 18th centuries, with the Brixen bishops' coat of arms on the facade.

The baroque **Church of the Assumption** (Cerkev Marijinega Vnebovzetja; ☎ 7am–dusk), dating from the 17th century, contains some fresco fragments from the 14th century, a large gold altar and, under the floor of the nave, part of the apse of a **pre-Romanesque chapel**, the only one in Slovenia. Outside is a 15th-century **belfry** with a 'wishing bell' that visitors can ring if they want to ask a favour. Naturally everyone and their grandmother does it – again and again and again.

LAKE BLED

This lake is not a very large body of water – it measures only 2km by 1380m – and the second-best way to see it is from the shore. A walk around the lake (6km) shouldn't take but a couple of hours at the most, including the short (but steep) climb to the brilliant **Osojnica viewing point**. Along the way, you'll pass linden, chestnut and willow trees hanging over the water, boat slips, wooden walkways, anglers, the start of several hikes and a couple of interesting sights.

On the south shore you'll pass through the hamlet of Mlino, then leave the main road for

a path that passes beneath the grand edifice of the Hotel Vila Bled. Around the far end of the lake, beyond a 300m stretch of boardwalk over the lake and past the camping ground, is the **Zaka Regatta Centre**, where an international rowing competition is staged in late June and a Slovenia-wide one in September. The **Castle Baths** are a bit further on.

The lazy or infirm can jump aboard the **tourist train** (adult/child €2.50/1.70; ☎ 9.30am–9.30pm May–mid-Oct) for the 45-minute twirl around the lake. It departs from in front of the **Sport Hall** (Športna Dvorana; Ljubljanska cesta 5) up to 20 times a day in season. Romantics will prefer one of the **horse-drawn carriages** (fijaker; ☎ 041-710 970) from the stand near the **Festival Hall** (Festivalna Dvorana; Cesta Svobode 11). A spin around the lake for five people costs €25, and it's the same price for two people to the castle. You can even get a carriage for four to Vintgar; the two-hour return trip costs €62.50.

Activities

ADVENTURE SPORTS

Agencies such as 3glav, Life Trek and OSA (opposite) organise a wide range of outdoor activities in and around Bled, including trekking, mountaineering, rock climbing, ski touring, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, rafting, kayaking, canyoning, caving, horse riding and paragliding.

The 3glav agency's most popular trip is the Emerald River Adventure (€55), an 11-hour **hiking and swimming** foray into Triglav National Park and along the Soča River. A two-day guided ascent of Triglav from Pokljuka, the Vrata Valley or Kot Valley costs €148. More challenging mountaineering traverses lasting between three and five days cost between €248 and €498. If you don't fancy scaling summits, a day-long trek through the alpine meadows of the Triglav Lakes Valley costs €68.

A 2½-hour **rafting** trip down the Sava Bohinjka/Soča River costs €23/30, and a three-hour **canyoning** descent is €45. Kayak trips lasting three hours cost €38. **Paragliding** is €70. **Horse riding** starts at €40 for a two-hour outing.

A half-day tour of the (easy) **Bobji Zob cave** near Bohinjka Bela is €20, while the more challenging **Simnovno Brezno cave**, just below Triglav and north of Lake Bohinj, costs €12 including equipment rental. It takes all day and has a 50m abseil descent.

You can hire a kayak and accessories from ProMontana (p117) for €5/15 per hour/day and mountain bikes, which are replaced annually, for €4/8/12 per hour/half-day/day.

OSA (p112) has **quad trips** of 20km (€39) and 45km (€58.50) lasting two and four hours respectively.

BOATING

You can rent **rowing boats** (per hr up to 4/6 people €10.50/15; ☞ mid-Apr–Oct) for getting to the island or just pottering about (motor boats are banned on the lake) from the Castle Baths (right). Boats for up to four people are also available from the Pension Pletna in Mlino or further west near the entrance to the camping ground for €10.50 per hour.

FISHING

The tourist office sells **fishing permits** valid for a day on the lake (€23), the Radovna River (€51) and the Sava Bohinjka River (€46 to €51, depending on location and catch). Fauna (p117) sells equipment and has a guide service.

FLYING

The **Lesce Alpine Flying Centre** (Alpski Letalski Center Lesce; ☎ 532 01 00; www.alc-lesce.si; Begunjska cesta 10) 4km to the southeast has panoramic flights in Cessna 172s over Bled (€70 for three people), Bohinj (€120) and even Triglav (€170), or anywhere you want for €108 an hour. You can even rent a glider here for €150 a day.

GOLF

The 18-hole, par-73 King's Course at the **Bled Golf & Country Club** (☎ 537 77 11; www.golf.bled.si; Mon-Fri €51, Sat & Sun €62; ☞ 8am–7pm Apr–Oct), about 3km to the east of the lake near Lesce, is Slovenia's best golf course and, with its dramatic mountain backdrop, one of the most beautiful in Europe. This club also has the nine-hole, par-36 **Lake Course** (Mon-Fri €35, Sat & Sun €44) open the same hours. You can rent a set of clubs for €15, and there's a PGA pro who gives lessons from €18.

HIKING

There are many short and easy signposted hikes around Bled (numbered signs correspond to numbered routes on the local hiking maps). One of the best is trail No 6 from the southwest corner of the lake to the summit of Velika Osojnica (756m). The view from the top – over the lake, island and castle, with the

peaks of the Karavanke in the background – is stunning, especially towards sunset. The climb to the first summit is steep, but the round trip, returning via Ojstrica (610m), takes only three hours or so. For details of longer treks see p113.

SKIING

Beginners will be content with the tiny (6-hectare) **Straža-Bled ski centre** (☎ 578 05 30; www.bled.si; half-day pass adult/child/student & senior €5.40/4.20/4.60, day pass €10.50/6.70/8.30), southwest of the Grand Hotel Toplice. A chairlift takes you 634m up the hill in three minutes; you'll be down the short slope in no time. Rental skis and poles are available from ProMontana (p117) and Kompas (p112). In summer it becomes a **summer tobogganing track** (poletno sankanje; per 1/2/3 rides adult €4.20/6.30/8.40, child €2.50/4.20/5.85), on which you wend your way down a metal chute sitting on a mini 'bobsled'.

SWIMMING

Bled's warm (23°C at source) crystal-clear water – it now rates a Blue Flag – makes it suitable for swimming well into the autumn, and there are decent beaches around the lake, including a big gravel one near the camping ground and a grass one on the northern side. Just east of the latter is the large **Castle Baths** (Grajsko Kopalnice; ☎ 578 05 28; Kidričeva cesta 1; adult/child/student €5/3/3.35; ☞ 7am–7pm Jun–Sep), with an indoor pool and protected enclosures in the lake itself with huge water slides.

Hotels with indoor swimming pools filled with thermal water and saunas that are open to non-guests include the **Grand Hotel Toplice** (☎ 579 10 00; www.hotel-toplice.com; Cesta Svobode 12; €6.26), the **Park Hotel** (☎ 579 18 00; Cesta Svobode 15; Mon-Fri €6.26, Sat & Sun €7.52), **Hotel Jelovica Bled** (☎ 579 60 00; www.hotel-jelovica.si; Cesta Svobode 8; €11.27) and the **Golf Hotel Bled** (☎ 579 20 00; Cankarjeva ulica 4; under/over 3 hr 1600/2800).

Tours

In summer the **Old Timer Train** (Muzejski Vlak; adult/child return €3/19, with lunch & side trips €61/31; ☞ monthly May, Jul & Aug) offers excursions in vintage carriages hauled by a steam locomotive. Trains usually run between Jesenice, 13km to the northwest, and Most na Soči, stopping at Bled Jezero station and Bohinjka Bistrica. Ask the tourist office about departure times; there have been fewer trips scheduled for individuals in recent years, amounting to only about

one a month in summer. You can buy tickets from most travel agencies in Bled, including Kompas (p112) or through the organiser **ABC Rent a Car** (☎ 01-510 43 20; abc-tourism@europcar.si; Ulica Jožeta Jame 16) in Ljubljana.

Festivals & Events

A number of special events take place during the summer in Bled, including the **International Rowing Regatta** in late June, the **International Music Festival** of violinists in early July, **Bled Days** (Blejski Dnevi) in late July, a multimedia festival where there are fireworks and the entire lake is illuminated by candlelight, and the **Okarina Etno Festival**, a two-day international festival of folk and world music in August. For information, visit www.bled.si.

Summertime concerts take place at the castle and the parish church, which houses one of the finest organs in Slovenia. In winter, the Pokljuka Plateau west of Bled is the venue for the **Biathlon World Cup** championship of cross-country skiing and rifle shooting.

Sleeping

Befitting a resort of such popularity, Bled has a wide range of accommodation – from Slovenia's first real hostel to a five-star hotel in a villa that was once Tito's summer retreat.

BUDGET

Camping Bled (☎ 575 20 00; www.camping.bled.si; Kidričeva cesta 10; adult €8.50–11, child €6–7.70; ☞ Apr–mid-Oct; ☎ ☑) This popular 6.5-hectare site fills a rural valley behind a waterside restaurant at the western end of the lake about 2.5km from the bus station. There's space for 900 campers. It is strictly forbidden to camp elsewhere on the lake, and the law is enforced.

Vila Gorenka (☎ 051-369 070; vila.gorenka@siol.net; Želeška cesta 9; per person €16–20; ☎ ☑) This new budget establishment has 10 double rooms with washbasins in a charming old two-story villa just next to the Mayer Penzion. Toilets and showers are shared and internet access is free. Some rooms on the 2nd floor have balconies overlooking the lake.

Bledec Hostel (☎ 574 52 50; www.mlino.si; Grajska cesta 17; HI members/nonmembers dm high season €17.50/20, low season €15.50/18, d high season €23.50/26, low season €21.50/24; ☎ ☑ ☑) This well-organised HI-affiliated hostel in the shadow of the castle has 13 rooms of three to five beds with attached bathrooms. It also has a bar, an inexpensive restaurant, a laundry room

(per load €8.35) and internet access (per half-hour €2.10).

Private rooms are offered by dozens of homes in the area. Both Kompas (p112) and Globtour Bled (p112) have extensive lists, with prices for singles/doubles at around €24/38. Apartments, which only require a minimum stay of three nights, cost from €45/87 a night for two/four people.

MIDRANGE

Penzion Mlino (☎ 574 14 04; www.mlino.si; Cesta Svobode 45; per person €25–30; ☎ ☑) This 15-room pension, perhaps better known for its restaurant than its accommodation, is just about as close as you'll get to the lake at this price. The same owners operate the Bledec Hostel

Hotel Astoria Bled (579 44 00; www.hotelastoria-bled.com; Prešernova cesta 44; s €39–55, d €54–86; ☎ ☑) This 72-room hotel near the bus station is run in cooperation with Bled's Vocational College for Catering and Tourism, so staff are generally young, enthusiastic and, well, new. It's just got a much-needed overhaul; choose one of the rooms on the south side, as they face the lake.

Hotel Jelovica Bled (☎ 579 60 00; www.hotel-jelovica.si; Cesta Svobode 8; s €40–70, d €50–110; ☎ ☑ ☑) Close to the bus station, the 100-room Jelovica fronts Spa Park above the lake and has a fully equipped health and spa centre and a swimming pool.

Garni Hotel Berc (☎ 576 56 58; www.berc-sp.si; Pod Stražo 13; s €40, d €65–70; ☎ ☑ ☑) Just opposite the Mayer, this new, purpose-built pension reminiscent of a Swiss chalet has 15 rooms on two floors and gets good reviews from readers.

Hotel Krim Bled (☎ 579 70 00; www.hotel-krim.si; Ljubljanska cesta 7; s €40.50–55, d €61–90; ☎ ☑ ☑) This sprawling 115-room hotel charges a lot less than most for its singles and doubles, but its location – up from the lake along busy Ljubljanska cesta – is not the best.

Pletna Pension (☎ 574 37 02; pletna@bled.net; Cesta Svobode 37; s & d €48–53, tr €57–62; ☎) This friendly little pension with attached shop and pizzeria has a couple of pleasant rooms fronting the lake.

Vila Prešeren (☎ 578 08 00; www.vila.preseren.s5.net; Kidričeva cesta 1; s lake view €58–64, park view €50–55, d lake view €78–88, park view €67–72, ste €112–154; ☎) A positively charming mini-hotel, this place has just six rooms and two suites in a lovely old villa dating from 1865 facing the lake just west of Spa Park.

Mayer Penzion (☎ 574 10 58; www.mayer-sp.si; Želeška cesta 7; d/q €70/90, apt €65–75; ☎ ☑ ☑) This delightful 13-room inn in a renovated 19th-century

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Vila Bled (☎ 579 15 00; www.vila-bled.com; Cesta Svobode 26; s €130-150, d €170-190, ste lake view €210-240, park view €190-210; 📞 📺 📺 📺) Now a Relais & Chateaux property, this 30-room hotel is where Tito and his foreign guests once put their feet up and their heads down. The 10 rooms and 20 suites (one with Jacuzzi) are furnished in retro-style 1950s decor. The hotel is surrounded by a large park with a tennis court, and it has its own covered lido and private boat dock. Guests can use the indoor pool at the Grand Hotel Toplice.

house is in a quiet location above the lake. Even if you're not staying here, have a meal at Mayer's excellent restaurant.

TOP END

Hotel Kompas Best Western (☎ 578 21 00; www.kh-bled.si; Cankarjeva ulica 2; s €78-110, d €98-130, ste €140-170; 📞 📺 📺 📺 📺) This rather bizarrely designed 95-room hotel – the atrium staircase is dizzying – has everything, including a huge pool under a glass dome. Some rooms have balconies overlooking the lake.

Hotel Lovec (☎ 576 86 15; www.lovehotel.com; Ljubljanska cesta 6; s €108-144, d €129-165, ste €206-246; 📞 📺 📺 📺 📺) A new favourite, the Lovec has been completely overhauled and now boasts 60 of the most attractive rooms in town. We love the rooms with blond-wood walls, red carpet, and bath with Jacuzzi in front of a massive window facing the lake. It has a pool and sauna.

Grand Hotel Toplice (☎ 579 10 00; www.hotel-toplice.com; Cesta Svobode 12; s €105-170, d €130-210, ste €220-260; 📞 📺 📺 📺 📺) With a history that goes back to the mid-19th century, the 87-room Toplice is Bled's 'olde world' hotel, with attractive public areas, rooms renovated in 2002 and superb views of the lake on its northern side.

The Toplice's two extensions – the **Trst Hotel** (Cesta Svobode 19; s €46-81, d €62-96) just opposite and the more attractive **Jadran Hotel** (Cesta Svobode 23; s €46-81, d €62-96) up on the hill – are half the price.

Eating

Pizzeria Pletna (☎ 576 72 11; Cesta Svobode 37; pizza €4.50-5.85, grills €5-6.70; 📞 noon-11pm) If you just want something cheap, cheerful and fast, head

for this simple pizzeria with a wood-fired oven above the main road in Mlino.

Peking (☎ 574 17 16; Ulica Narodnih Herojev 3; rice & noodles €3.60-4.80, mains €5.25-12.50; 📞 noon-11pm) This Chinese eatery opposite the Hotel Krim Bled has such favourites as *hui guo rou* (stir-fried pork) and *ma po doufu* (spicy bean curd). They ain't exactly what you'd get in Chengdu, but this is Slovenia, after all.

Gostilna Pri Planincu (At the Mountaineer's; ☎ 574 16 13; Grajska cesta 8; starters €4.20-8, mains €5.85-15; 📞 noon-10pm) In situ since 1903, this is a homely pub-restaurant just down the hill from the Bledec Hostel. It offers simple Slovenian mains and grilled Balkan specialities like *čevapčiči* (spicy meatballs of beef or pork; €5.65) and tasty *pljeskavica z kajmakom* (Serbian-style meat patties with mascarpone-like cream cheese; €6.25).

Mayer Penzion (☎ 574 10 58; Želeška cesta 7; starters €7-8, mains €9.20-18.80; 📞 5pm-midnight Tue-Fri, noon-midnight Sat & Sun) The restaurant at this delightful inn serves such tasty Slovenian fare as sausage, trout, roast pork and *skutini štruklji* (cheese curd pastries). The list of Slovenian wines (only) is a cut above.

Castle Restaurant (☎ 574 16 07, 041-337 696; Grajska cesta 25; starters €5-10.85, mains €10.85-18.80; 📞 10am-10pm) The fabulous views are 'free' from the superbly situated terrace of the restaurant in the castle. It's run by the Bled's catering and tourism school and staffed by its charming students.

Okarina (☎ 574 14 58; Ljubljanska cesta 8; starters €6-12, mains €9-22; 📞 noon-midnight) This very upmarket restaurant has lost its parklike location just northwest of the Pri Planincu and is now in a modern dining room next to the post office. Still, the ethnic decorations and traditional musical instruments (an *okarina* is a small clay flute) remain, and along with well-pre-

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Östarija Peglez'n (☎ 574 42 18; Cesta Svobode 19a; starters €4.60-7.50, mains €6.30-16.30; 📞 11am-midnight) A new favourite restaurant in Bled, the 'Iron Inn' is just opposite the landmark Grand Hotel Toplice. It has fascinating retro décor with lots of old household antiques and curios (including the eponymous iron) and wooden floors. It serves some of the best fish dishes in town. What's more, it is nonsmoking throughout.

pared Slovenian and international favourites, the Okarina's tandoor oven produces decent Indian dishes like chicken *tikka* and *rogan josh*. There are a fair few vegetarians choices.

Slašičarna Šmon (☎ 574 16 16; Grajska cesta 3; 📞 7.30am-9pm) Bled's culinary speciality is *kremna rezina* (cream cake; €1.70), a layer of vanilla custard topped with whipped cream and sandwiched neatly between two layers of flaky pastry, and while Šmon may not be its place of birth, it remains the best place in which to try it.

You'll find a **Mercator** (Ljubljanska cesta 4; 📞 7am-7pm Mon-Sat, 8am-noon Sun) supermarket at the eastern end of Bled Shopping Centre and a smaller **Mercator** (Mlinska cesta 1; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 7am-1pm) branch on the south side of the lake.

Drinking

Kavarna Park (☎ 579 18 00; Cesta Svobode 10; 📞 10am-10pm) The lovely 'Park Café' above the Casino Bled has a commanding position over the lake's eastern end.

Kavarna Belvedere (☎ 579 15 00; 📞 2pm-midnight Mon-Fri, 11am-midnight Sat & Sun May-Oct) This delightful café-bar just southwest from (and part of) the Vila Bled is perched atop a 30m concrete tower overlooking the lake and has a great period-piece socialist mosaic on the back wall of the front room.

Pub Bled (☎ 574 26 22, 041-755 265; Cesta Svobode 19a; 📞 9am-2am Sun-Thu, 9am-3am Fri & Sat) This friendly pub above the Östarija Peglez'n restaurant has great cocktails and a DJ most nights.

Irish Pub (☎ 041-672 069; Cesta Svobode 8a; 📞 7am-2am Mon-Fri, 9am-2am Sat & Sun) This raucous boozier next to the Hotel Jelovica is the pub of choice among locals and visitors alike.

Shopping

Promontana (☎ 578 06 62; www.promontana.com; Ljubljanska cesta 1; 📞 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm & 3-7pm Sat & Sun Jun-Sep; 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm & 3-7pm Sat & Sun Oct-May) This shop next to Life Trek sells and rents all kinds of sporting equipment including skis.

Fauna (☎ 574 26 31, 041-633 147; www.faunabled.com; Cesta Svobode 12; 📞 8am-noon & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat, 8-10am Sun) This shop sells fishing tackle and has a guiding service.

Getting There & Away

BUS

There are buses every 30 to 40 minutes to Radovljica (€1.70, 15 minutes, 7.5km) via

both Lesce and Begunje and at least one an hour to Bohinjska Bistrica (€3.50, one hour, 26km), Kranj (€3.50, 40 minutes, 26km) and Ljubljana (€6.10, 1¼ hours, 57km). Other destinations served from Bled include Bovec (€7, three hours, 74km) via Kranjska Gora and the Vršič Pass. A bus leaves daily at 7.50am in July and August, and on Saturday and Sunday only in June and September. Note that three bus lines operate between Bled and Bohinj, and if you buy a return ticket from one bus line, you will not be able to make your return journey on either of the other buslines.

CAR

All the big rental-car agencies have offices in Bled, including the following:

Avis (☎ 576 87 00; Ljubljanska cesta 4; 📞 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat & Sun) In the Bled Shopping Centre.

Budget (☎ 578 03 20; Ljubljanska cesta 4; 📞 8am-noon & 5-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat, 9-11am Sun) In the Bled Shopping Centre.

Europcar (☎ 236 79 90, 031-382 051; Ljubljanska cesta 7; 📞 8am-2pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) In the Hotel Krim Bled.

Hertz (☎ 574 55 88; Cankarjeva cesta 2; 📞 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) In the Hotel Kompas Best Western.

TRAIN

Bled has no central train station. Trains for Bohinjska Bistrica (€1.45, 20 minutes, 18km, seven a day), Most na Soči and Nova Gorica (€5.05, 2¼ hours, 79km, seven a day) use little Bled Jezero station, which is 2km west of central Bled – handy for the camping ground but little else. From there you can make connections for Sežana, 40km to the southeast, and Italy. This mountain railway is one of the most picturesque in Slovenia. If you are headed southwest to Nova Gorica, sit on the right-hand side of the train to view the valley of the cobalt-blue Soča River.

Trains for Ljubljana (€3.90 to €5.30, 55 minutes, 51km, up to 17 a day) via Škofja Loka, Kranj and Radovljica use Lesce-Bled station, 4km to the east of town.

Getting Around

You can order a local taxi on mobile ☎ 041-631 629 or ☎ 041-597 935. Bicycles and mountain bikes can be rented from Kompas and Globtour for €3.75/6.25/10 per hour/half-day/day.

AROUND BLED

Vintgar Gorge

One of the easiest and most satisfying day trips from Bled is to **Vintgar Gorge** (Soteska Vintgar; adult/child/student €3/2.10/2.50; ☎ 8am-7pm late Apr-Oct), some 4km to the northwest. The highlight is the 1600m wooden walkway, built in 1893 and continually rebuilt since. It criss-crosses the swirling Radovna River four times over rapids, waterfalls and pools before reaching 13m-high **Šum Waterfall**. The entire walk is spectacular, although it can get pretty wet and slippery. There are little snack bars at the beginning and the end of the walkway and picnic tables at several locations along the way.

It's an easy walk to the gorge from Bled. Head northwest on Prešernova cesta then north on Partizanska cesta to Cesta v Vintgar. This will take you to Podhom, where signs show the way to the gorge entrance. To return, you can either retrace your steps or, from Šum Waterfall, walk eastward over Hom (834m) to the ancient pilgrimage **Church of St Catherine**, which retains some 15th-century fortifications. From there it's due south through Zasip to Bled. Count on about three hours all in.

Those unable or unwilling to walk all the way can take the train from Bled Jezero station to Podhom (€1, five minutes, 2km, seven a day). From there it's a 1.5km walk westward to the main entrance. From mid-June to September, a **tourist bus** (☎ 578 04 20; www.alpetour.si in Slovene; one-way/return €2.50/4.50) leaves Bled bus station daily at 10am and heads for Vintgar, stopping at the Krim and Grand Toplice Hotels, Mlino, the far end of the lake and Bled Castle, arriving at 10.30am. It returns from Vintgar at noon.

Pokljuka Plateau

The area around Bled offers endless possibilities for excursions, notably the forests and meadows of the Pokljuka Plateau below Triglav to the west. Here you can go exploring in the 2km-long Pokljuka Gorge (Poključka soteška), some 7km west of Bled and 2km from Gorje (€1.30, 10 minutes, 5km), which is served by up to two dozen buses a day from Bled on weekdays and up to nine at the weekend. Well-marked trails crisscross the plateau from town and are outlined on the 1:30,000 map *Bled* (€7.10) GZS and the 1:50,000-scale *Triglavski Narodni Park* (Triglav National Park; €7.50) PZS map, both available from the tourist office in Bled. You can also begin an ascent of Triglav from Pokljuka (p130).

BOHINJ

☎ 04 / pop 5260 / elev 523m

Bohinj, a larger and much less developed glacial lake 26km to the southwest, is a wonderful place to chill out after experiencing the tourist hordes at Bled in season. OK, it doesn't have a romantic little island or a castle looming high on a rocky cliff. But it does have Triglav itself visible from the lake when the weather clears, and it lies entirely within the borders of Triglav National Park (p128) and has a wonderful naturalness that doesn't exist at Bled. The Bohinj area's handful of museums and historical churches will keep culture vultures busy during their visit, and for action types there are activities galore – from kayaking and mountain biking to scaling Triglav via one of the southern approaches (p130).

History

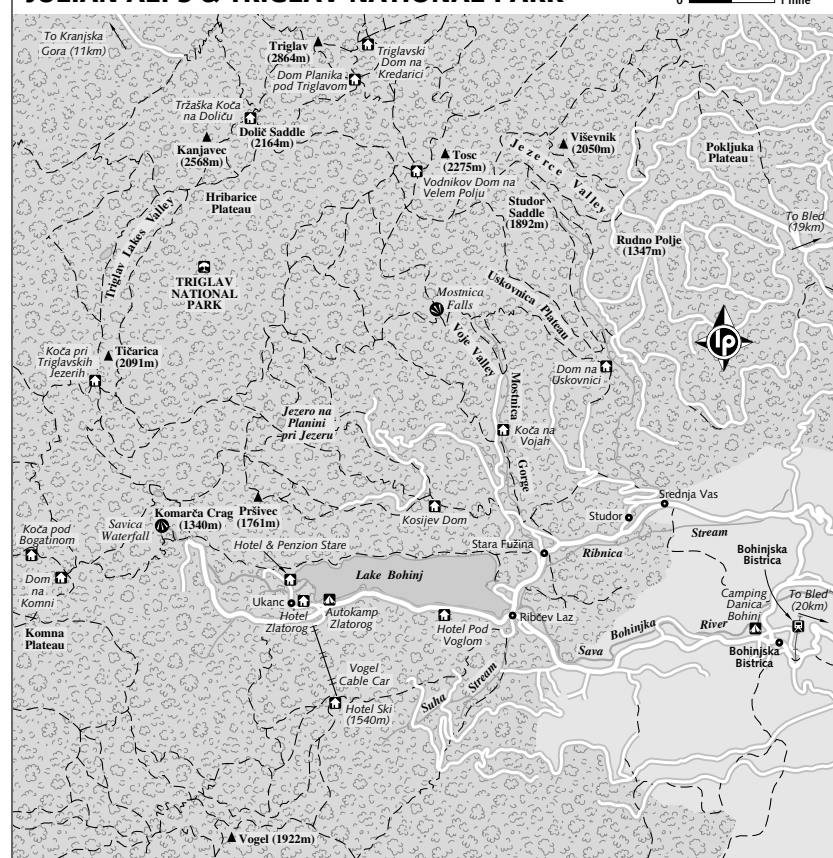
Bohinj was densely settled during the Hallstatt period due to the large amounts of iron ore in the area, and a trade route linked the lake with the Soča Valley and the Adriatic Sea via a pass at Vrh Bače southeast of Bohinjska Bistrica. During the Middle Ages, when the area fell under the jurisdiction of the Bishops of Brixen at Bled, Bohinj was known for its markets and fairs, which were held near the Church of St John the Baptist. Here peasants from the Friuli region around Trieste traded salt, wine and foodstuffs with their Slovenian counterparts for iron ore, livestock and butter. As the population grew, herders went higher into the Julian Alps in search of pasture land while charcoal burners cleared the upper forests for timber to fuel the forges. Triglav was 'conquered' from Bohinj for the first time in the late 18th century.

Orientation

Lake Bohinj, 4.5km long and up to 45m deep, lies in a valley basin on the southern edge of Triglav National Park. The Savica River flows into the lake from the west and the Sava Bohinjka flows out from the southeastern corner.

There is no town called Bohinj; the name refers to the entire valley, its settlements and the lake. The largest town in the area is Bohinjska Bistrica (population 1775), 6km to the east of the lake. Small villages on or near the southern and eastern shores include Ukanc; Ribčev Laz, where you can find everything of a practical nature; Stara Fužina at the mouth of the Mostnica Gorge; Studor, a veritable

JULIAN ALPS & TRIGLAV NATIONAL PARK



village of hayracks; and Srednja Vas. There are no settlements on the northern side.

In Ribčev Laz, buses stop near the tourist office and in Bohinjska Bistrica at the combination police station/town hall (*občina*) on Triglavska cesta and at the train station, 700m northeast of the town at Triglavska cesta 1.

Information

Alpinski sport (☎ 572 34 86; www.alpinsport.si; Ribčev Laz 53; ☎ 9am-7pm Jun-Aug, 10am-6pm Sep-May) In a kiosk at the stone bridge over Sava Bohinjka.

Bohinjska Bistrica post office (Triglavska cesta 35; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat)

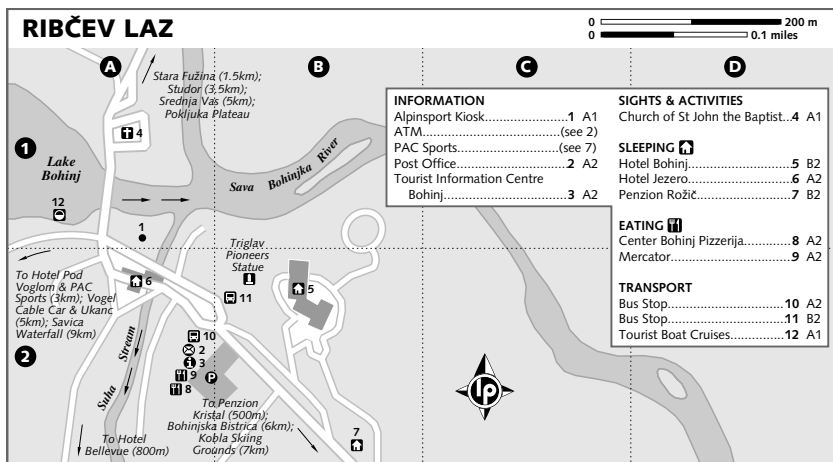
Gorenjska Banka (Trg Svobode 2b; ☎ 9-11.30am & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 8-11am Sat) In Bohinjska Bistrica 100m east of the post office.

PAC Sports Hotel Pod Voglom (☎ 574 65 11, 041-698 523; www.pac-sports.com; Hotel Pod Voglom, Ribčev Laz 60; ☎ 10am-6pm); Penzion Rožič kiosk branch (Ribčev Laz 42; ☎ 8.30am-8pm Jul & Aug; 10am-6pm late Jun & early Sep; 10am-1pm & 5-7pm early Sep-late Jun)
Ribčev Laz post office (Ribčev Laz 47; ☎ 8-9.30am, 10am-3.30pm & 4-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) ATM outside.
Tourist Information Centre Bohinj (☎ 574 60 10; www.bohinj.si; Ribčev Laz 48; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-3pm Sun Sep-Jun; 8am-8pm daily Jul & Aug) Sells Bohinj Guest Card (€10) with discounts to museums, activities, accommodation and restaurants.

Sights

CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST

The **church** (Cerkev Sv Janeza Krstnika; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-6pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep, by appointment mid-Sep-mid-Jun),



on the northern side of the Sava Bohinjka just across the stone bridge, is what every medieval church should be: small, on a reflective lake and full of exquisite frescoes. It is the most beautiful and evocative church in all of Slovenia, with the possible exception of the Church of the Holy Trinity at Hrastovlje in Primorska. Unfortunately it was under renovation at the time of research.

The nave of the church is Romanesque, but the Gothic presbytery dates from about 1440. A large portion of the latter's walls, ceilings and arches are covered with 15th- and 16th-century frescoes. As you face the arch from the nave, look for the frescoes on either side depicting the beheading of the church's patron saint. On the opposite side of the arch, to the left, is Abel making his offering to God and, to the right, Cain with his inferior one. Upon the shoulder of history's first murderer sits a white devil – a very rare symbol. Behind you on the lower walls of the presbytery are rows of angels with vampire-like teeth; look for the three men above them singing. They have goitres, once a common affliction in mountainous regions due to the lack of iodine in the diet. The carved wooden head of St John the Baptist on one of the side altars dates from 1380. The poet Valentin Vodnik (1758–1819), who lived and worked in nearby Gorjuše, left his name in pencil on the back of the high altar.

Several paintings on the outside southern wall, one dating back to the early 14th century, depict St Christopher. In the Middle Ages

people believed they would not die on the day they had gazed upon an icon of the patron saint of travellers. No fools, our ancestors – they painted them on churches near roads and villages – but apparently they forgot to look at least once in their lives. They're all now dead, of course.

MUSEUMS

The **Alpine Dairy Museum** (Planšarski Muzej; ☎ 577 01 56; Stara Fužina 181; adult/child €1.85/1.50; ☎ 11am–7pm Tue–Sun Jul & Aug; 10am–noon & 4–6pm Tue–Sun Jan–Jun, Sep & Oct) in Stara Fužina, about 1.5km north of Ribčev Laz, has a small collection related to alpine dairy farming in the Bohinj Valley, once the most important such centre in Slovenia. Until the late 1950s large quantities of cheese were still being made on 28 highland pastures, but a modern dairy in nearby Srednja Vas does it all now. The four rooms of the museum – a cheese dairy itself once upon a time – contain a mock-up of a mid-19th-century herder's cottage, fascinating old photographs, cheese presses, wooden butter moulds, copper rennet vats, enormous snowshoes and sledges, and wonderful hand-carved crooks.

While you're in Stara Fužina, take a walk over to the village of **Studor**, just 2km to the east. **Oplen House** (Oplenova Hiša; ☎ 572 35 22; Studor 16; adult/child €1.85/1.50), which keeps the same hours as the Alpine Dairy Museum, is a typical old peasant's cottage with a chimneyless 'smoke kitchen' that has been turned into a museum focusing on the domestic life of peasants in the Bohinj area at the turn of the 20th century.

But Studor's real claim to fame is its many **toplarji**, the double-linked hayracks with barns or storage areas at the top. Look for the ones at the entrance to the village; they date from the 18th and 19th centuries.

SAVICA WATERFALL

One of the reasons people come to Bohinj is to hike to the magnificent **Savica Waterfall** (Slap Savica; adult/child €2/1, parking €2.50; ☎ 9am–6pm Jul & Aug; 9am–5pm Apr–Jun, Sep & Oct), which cuts deep into a gorge 60m below.

The waterfall, the source of Slovenia's longest and mightiest river, is 4km from the Hotel Zlatorog in Ukanc and can be reached by footpath from there. Cars (and the bus in summer) continue via a paved road to a car park beside the Savica restaurant, from which it's a 20-minute walk up 510 steps and over rapids and streams to the falls.

The falls are among the most impressive sights in the Julian Alps, especially after a heavy rain, but bring something waterproof or you may be soaked by the spray. Two Category I huts with accommodation and food to the west are **Dom na Komni** (☎ 572 14 75, 040-695 783; info.pdljmatca@siol.net; ☎ year-round) with 84 beds at 1520m and **Koča pod Bogatinom** (☎ 572 3213, 040-645 865; planinsko-drustvo-srednja-vas@siol.net; ☎ late Jun–Sep) with 53 beds at 1513m. Both can be reached in about 2½ hours.

Activities

ADVENTURE SPORTS

Alpingsport (p119) and PAC Sports (p119) offer a wide range of activities, including **canyoning** (€37 to €55), **rafting** (€23 to €30) on the lake and Sava Bohinjka River, **hydrospeed** (€30), and **tandem paraglider flights** (€75 to €98) – even from the top of Vogel! PAC Sports can arrange visits to **Bohinj Adrenalin Park** (Adrenalinski Park Bohinj; adult/child/student €29/23/25; ☎ 10am & 5pm Jul & Aug, by appointment Jun & Sep), featuring high rope courses and walkways, giant swings and so on behind the Hotel Pod Voglom (under renovation).

BOATING

PAC Sports and Alpingsport rent **kayaks** (1hr/3hr/day €4/9.20/14.20) and **canoes** (1hr/3hr/day €5/11.70/20.50).

In season, the cunningly named **Tourist Boat** (Turistična Ladja; ☎ 041-434 986; one-way €6.25/4.60, return €7.50/5.50; ☎ hourly 10am–6pm early Jun–mid-Sep; 10am, 11.30am, 1pm, 2.30pm, 4pm & 5.30pm mid-Apr–early Jun;

11.30am, 1pm, 2.30pm & 4pm mid-Sep–Oct) sails between Ribčev Laz and Kamp Zlatorog at Ukanc. You can buy tickets at the tourist office.

FISHING

Lake Bohinj is home to lake trout and char, and the jade-coloured Sava Bohinjka River is rich in brown trout and grayling. You can buy **fishing licences** (lake €25, river as far as Bitnje catch/catch & release €80/33.50) valid for a day from the tourist office and hotels. The season runs from March to late October.

HIKING

A circular walk around the lake (12km) from Ribčev Laz should take between three and four hours. Otherwise you could just do parts of it by following the hunters' trail in the forest above the south shore of the lake to the Hotel Zlatorog and taking the bus back, or walking along the more tranquil northern shore under the cliffs of Pršivec (1761m). Much more strenuous is the hike up to **Vogel** (1922m) from the cable car's upper station. Take a map and compass, and don't set out if it looks stormy; Vogel is prone to lightning strikes. The whole trip should take about four hours. Another excellent hike, readers tell us, is the two-hour one north from Stara Fužina through the Motnica Gorge to the **Mostnica Falls** (Motniški Slapovci), which rival Savica Waterfall after a heavy rain.

The 1:25,000 *Bohinjsko Jezero z Okolico* (Lake Bohinj & Surrounds; €6.30) map available at the tourist office lists a dozen excellent walks. Also useful is the 1:15,000 *Bohinj* (€5) map with as many walks outlined.

HORSE RIDING

The **Mrcina Ranč** (☎ 041-790 297; www.bombagroup.com; per hr/half-day/day €16/43/50) in Studor offers a range of guided tours lasting one hour to three days on sturdy Icelandic ponies.

SKIING

The main station at Bohinj is **Vogel ski centre** (☎ 572 97 12; www.vogel.si; half-day pass adult/child/senior & student €14.60/10.50/12.50, day pass €21/14.60/18), 1535m above the lake's southwestern corner and accessible by cable car. With skiing up to 1800m, the season can be long, sometimes from late November to early May. Vogel has 18km of ski slopes and 8km of cross-country runs served by four chairlifts and four T-bar tows.

The lower station of the **cable car** (adult/child €10/7; ⚙ every 30min 7am-7pm Jul & Aug, 8am-6pm Sep-Jun) is about 250m uphill south of the Hotel Zlatorog in Ukanc, about 5km west of Ribčev Laz.

The lower (up to 1480m) **Kobla ski centre** (☎ 574 71 00; www.bohinj.si/kobla; day pass adult/child/student €18.50/13.40/15.60) is about 1km east of Bohinj-ska Bistrica. It has 23km of slopes and 13km of cross-country runs served by three chairlifts and three T-bars.

STEAM TRAIN

The Old Timer Train (p114) passes through Bohinj-ska Bistrica on its way to and from Jesenice and Most na Soči several times in summer. Ask the tourist office for its current schedule.

SWIMMING

Some of the beaches on Lake Bohinj's northern shore are reserved for naturists in summer. Nonguests can use the indoor swimming pool at the **Hotel Zlatorog** (☎ 572 33 81; Ukanc 65; pool/pool & sauna Mon-Fri €6/7, Sat & Sun €8/9; ⚙ 4-10pm) should Bohinj's infamous early morning fog drive you inside.

Aqua Park Bohinj (☎ 577 02 10; www.vodni-park-bohinj.si; Triglavskva cesta 17; adult 3hr €7.50-8.40, day €9.70-10.60; child 3hr €4.90-5.30, day €7.10-7.50; ⚙ 9am-10pm Jan-Mar, Jul & Aug; 9am-9pm Apr-Jun & Sep-Dec), a new water park in Bohinj-ska Bistrica, has 380 sq metres of pools with slides as well as saunas and fitness and wellness centres. Entry fees vary according to the season.

Festivals & Events

The **Cows' Ball** (Krajevji Bal) is a wacky weekend of folk dance, music, eating and drinking to mark the return of the cows from their high pastures to the valleys. On **Bonfire Night** (Kresna Noč), celebrated on the weekend closest to the Feast of the Assumption (15 August), candle-lit flotillas go out on the lake, and there are fireworks. For details on both events, go to www.bohinj.si.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Camping Danica Bohinj (☎ 572 10 55, 572 17 02; www.bohinj.si/camping-danica; Triglavskva cesta 60; per person €5.70-8; ⚙ May-Sep) The Danica camping ground, which has space for 650 campers, is located in a small wood 200m west of the bus stop in Bohinj-ska Bistrica on the road to the lake.

Autokamp Zlatorog (☎ 572 34 82, 577 80 00; www.alpinum.net; Ukanc 2; per person €6-10; ⚙ May-Sep; ♿) This pine-shaded 2.5-hectare site accommo-

dating 500 guests is on the lake at its western end near the Hotel Zlatorog.

The tourist office can arrange **private rooms** (per person €9.20-13.20) and **apartments** (apt for 2 €29.30-38.70, apt for 4 €43.20-68.80) in Ribčev Laz, Stara Fužina and neighbouring villages

MIDRANGE

Pension Planšar (☎ 572 30 95, 041-767 254; www.planšar.com; per person €16-20) This welcoming place in Stara Fužina, better known for its fabulous cheeses (opposite), has two cosy rooms and an apartment for rent.

Penzion Rožič (☎ 572 91 00; www.penzion-rozic.com; Ribčev Laz 42; per person €20-25; ♿) This unpretentious chalet-style guesthouse with 20 rooms and a popular restaurant is just 200m east of the tourist office.

Penzion Kristal (☎ 577 82 00; www.hotel-kristal-slovenija.com; Ribčev Laz 4a; per person €20-30; ♿) This exceedingly friendly, family-run pension is about 500m south of the Pension Rožič. Its restaurant is very popular in the area.

Pri Andreju (☎ 572 35 09; info@priandreju-sp.si; Studor 31; per person apt for 2/4 people low season €28/47, high season €32/56) This farmhouse in picturesque Studor has three apartments for between two and five people.

Hotel Bellevue (☎ 572 33 31; www.alpinum.net; Ribčev Laz 65; s €30-48, d €40-76; ♿) The shabby, 59-room Bellevue has a beautiful (if somewhat isolated) location on a hill about 800m south of the Hotel Jezero. Whodunnit fans take note: Agatha Christie stayed here for three weeks in 1967. Thirty-eight of the rooms are in the unattractive Savica Annexe.

Hotel & Pension Stare (☎ 574 64 00; www.impel-bohinj.si; Ukanc 128; s €35-48, d €50-86; ♿) This isolated 10-room pension, north of the Hotel Zlatorog on the Sava Bohinjka River, is surrounded by lovely gardens. If you really want to get away from it all without having to climb mountains, this is your place. Prices depend on whether or not you want a balcony.

TOP END

Hotel Jezero (☎ 572 91 00; www.bohinj.si/alpinum/jezero; Ribčev Laz 51; s €52-86, d €69-141; ♿) This recently renovated 63-room place is the closest hotel to the lake, just opposite the stone bridge in Ribčev Laz. It has a lovely indoor swimming pool, two saunas and a fitness centre but no lift.

Hotel Bohinj (☎ 577 60 00; www.alpinum.net; Ribčev Laz 45; s €48-65, d €76-110; ♿) This 52-room

hotel overlooks the lake from a hill above the road to Bohinj-ska Bistrica 100m northeast of the post office. It has a couple of rooms adapted for disabled travellers.

Hotel Zlatorog (☎ 572 33 81; www.alpinum.net; Ukanc 65; s €50-75, d €72-122; ♿) Out of the way and pleasant for that reason, this lakeside hotel just under 5km west of Ribčev Laz has 43 rooms in its main hotel building and another 31 in a villa annexe. It's Slovenia's first official organic hotel; no synthetic pesticides or fertilizers were used to grow anything on offer here.

Hotel Ski (☎ 572 16 91; www.alpinum.net; Vogel Ski Centre; s €41-55, d €62-100) Rates at this recently renovated 29-room hotel at 1540m are at their highest during the skiing season.

Eating

Center Bohinj Pizzerija (☎ 572 31 70; Ribčev Laz 50; pizza €4.60-6.50, grills €5.70-10.50; ⚙ 9am-10pm Dec-Oct) This jack-of-all-trades just down from the tourist office is the only eatery in the centre of Ribčev Laz. It can satisfy all tastes (except very demanding ones).

Penzion Rožič (starters €3.80-7.50, mains €5.80-11.70; ⚙ noon-10pm) The restaurant at this popular pension in Ribčev Laz has a lovely covered terrace, although the views of the main road are not very special.

Gostilna Mihovc (☎ 572 33 90; Stara Fužina 118; dishes €4-7; ⚙ 10am-midnight) This place in Stara Fužina is a popular place – not least for its homemade brandy. Try the *pasulj* (bean soup) with sausage (€5) or the beef *golač* (goulash; €4.40).

Planšar (☎ 572 30 95; Stara Fužina 179; ⚙ 10am-8pm Tue-Sun Jun-Oct, 10am-8pm Sat & Sun Dec-May) If you want something light and incredibly tasty, head for the 'Herder', just opposite the Alpine Dairy Museum – appropriately enough. It specialises in home-made dairy products: hard Bohinj cheese, a soft, strong-tasting cheese called *mohant* (not to everyone's taste), cottage cheese, curd pie, sour milk and so on. You and a friend can taste a variety of them for €5.50 or make a meal of cheese and different types of grain dishes such as *žganci* (buckwheat) and *ješprenj* (barley). Other dishes available include *struklji* (cheese dumplings) and *jota* (a thick soup of beans and salt pork).

Two country-style restaurants make a trip to Srednja Vas, the next village over from Studor and about 5km from Ribčev Laz,

worthwhile. The first restaurant is **Gostišče Rupa** (☎ 572 34 01; Srednja Vas 87; meals from €15; ⚙ 10am-midnight Jul & Aug, 10am-midnight Tue-Sun Sep-Jun), which serves excellent home-cooked food, including spectacular Bohinj trout and *ajdova krapi*, crescent-shaped dumplings made from buckwheat and cheese. The second is **Pri Hrvatu** (☎ 572 36 70; Srednja Vas 76; meals from €15; ⚙ noon-11pm late Jun-mid-Sep, noon-11pm Wed-Mon mid-Sep-late Jun), an equally popular place that can trace its pedigree back eight decades.

There's a **Mercator** (Ribčev Laz 49; ⚙ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7am-5pm Sat) supermarket next to the tourist office.

Shopping

The traditional craft of Bohinj is the *gorjuška čedra*, a small hand-carved wooden pipe with a silver cover for smoking tobacco or whatever. The tourist office sells the real thing and can tell you which masters are still making them in the area.

Getting There & Away

Bus routes run regularly from Ukanc to Ljubljana (€8.5, two hours, 91km, hourly) via Ribčev Laz, Bohinj-ska Bistrica and Bled (€4, one hour, 34km), with six extra buses daily between Ukanc and Bohinj-ska Bistrica (€2.20, 20 minutes, 12km) via Stara Fužina, Studor and Srednja Vas. Buses headed as far as Ukanc are marked 'Bohinj Zlatorog'. Note that three bus lines operate between Bled and Bohinj, and if you buy a return ticket from one bus line, you will not be able to make your return journey on either of the other buslines.

The lake itself is not on a train line. From Bohinj-ska Bistrica, passenger trains to Novo Gorica (€4.50, 1½ hours, 61km, up to seven a day) make use of a century-old, 6327m tunnel under the mountains that provides the only direct option for reaching the Soča Valley. In addition there are five daily auto trains (*avtovlaki*) to Podbrdo (€7.10, eight minutes, 7km) and three to Most na Soči (€10.85, 25 minutes, 28km).

Getting Around

From late June to late September, buses make the run daily from Bohinj-ska Bistrica train station to the Savica Waterfall car park (€2) via Hotel Jezero in Ribčev Laz. There are daily departures at 8.35am and 10.25am and on Saturday and Sunday an extra departure at 7.05am.

You can rent bicycles and mountain bikes from Alpinsport and PAC Sports for €4/8.80/13.40 per one hour/three hours/day.

KRANJSKA GORA

☎ 04 / pop 1420 / elev 803m

Forty kilometres northwest of Bled, in the Sava Dolinka Valley, is Kranjska Gora (Carniolan Mountain), the largest and best-equipped ski resort in the country. Somehow, though, it just doesn't seem Slovenian. The fact that the Italian *and* the Austrian borders are a half-dozen kilometres to the west and northwest might help explain that impression.

The Sava Dolinka Valley separates the Karavanke range from the Julian Alps. It has been an important commercial route between Gorenjska and Koroška for centuries; the 853m pass at Rateče is the lowest Alpine link between the Sava and Drava Valleys. The first railway in Gorenjska – from Ljubljana to Tarvisio (Trbiž) in Italy – made use of this pass when it opened in 1870.

Kranjska Gora was just a small valley village called Borovška Vas until the late 19th century, when skiing enthusiasts began to flock here. Planica (south of Rateče), the cradle of ski jumping, helped put the town on the world map earlier in the 20th century.

Kranjska Gora is at its best under a blanket of snow, but its surroundings are wonderful to explore in warmer months as well. The possibilities for hiking and mountaineering are endless in Triglav National Park on the town's southern outskirts, and there aren't many travellers who won't be impressed by a trip over the Vrščič Pass (1611m), the gateway to the Soča Valley and the province of Primorska.

Orientation

Kranjska Gora sits at the foot of Vitranc (1631m) and in the shadow of two higher peaks (Razor and Prisank) that rise above 2600m. Rateče and Planica, famous for ski-jumping championships, are 6km to the west, while Jasna Lake, Kranjska Gora's doorway to Triglav National Park, is 2km to the south.

Kranjska Gora is a very small town with some unattractive modern buildings around its periphery and a more atmospheric (and older) core along Borovška cesta. The chairlifts up to the ski slopes on Vitranc are at the western end of town off Smerinje ulica.

Buses stop along Koroška cesta about 250m west of the big TGC shopping centre at the main entrance to the town from the motorway.

Information

Globtour (☎ 582 02 00; www.globtour-kranjskagora.com; Borovška cesta 92; ☎ 9am-7pm Jul, Aug, Dec-Mar; 9am-7pm Mon-Sat Sep-Nov & Apr-Jun)

Gorenjska Banka (Borovška cesta 95; ☎ 9-11.30am & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 8-11am Sat)

Post office (Borovška cesta 92) Next to Mercator supermarket.

SKB Banka (Borovška cesta 99a; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri) Beside the ski school.

Tourist Information Centre Kranjska Gora (☎ 588 17 68; www.kranjska-gora.si; Tičarjeva cesta 2; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-6pm Sun Jun-Sep & mid-Dec-Mar; 8am-3pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Apr, May, Oct-mid-Dec)

Sights

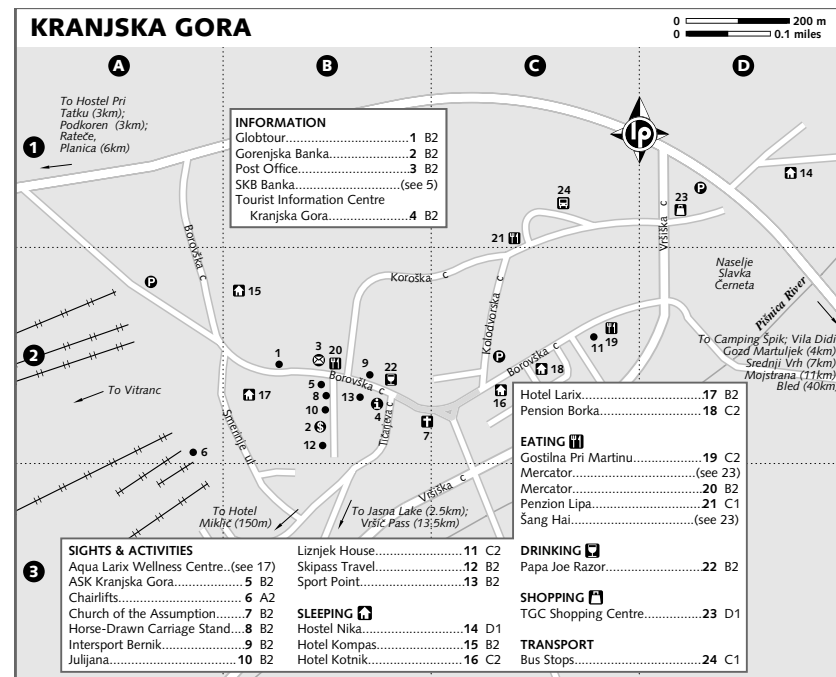
One of the very few sights in Kranjska Gora, the endearing late-18th-century **Liznjek House** (Liznjekova Hiša; ☎ 588 19 99; Borovška cesta 63; adult/child €2.30/1.70; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun May-Oct & Dec-Mar) contains quite a good collection of household objects and furnishings peculiar to this area of Gorenjska. Among the various exhibits here are some excellent examples of trousseau chests covered in folk paintings, some 19th-century icons painted on glass and a collection of linen tablecloths (the valley was famed for its flax and its weaving).

Antique carriages and a sledge are kept in the massive barn out the back, which once housed food stores as well as pigs and sheep. The stable reserved for cows below the main building now contains a **memorial room** dedicated to the life and work of Josip Vandot (1884-1944). Vandot was a writer born in Kranjska Gora who penned the saga of Kekec, the do-gooder shepherd boy who, together with his little playmate Mojca and his trusty dog Volkec, battles the evil poacher and kidnapper Bedanec. It's still a favourite story among Slovenian kids (and has been made into several popular films).

Activities

SKIING

The snow-covered slopes of the Sava Dolinka Valley, running for almost 11km from Gozd Martuljek all the way to Rateče and Planica, are effectively one big piste. However, the



main areas are the **Kranjska Gora ski centre** (☎ 580 94 00, 588 14 14; www.kr-gora.si; half-day pass adult/child/senior & student €21.30/14.60/18.40, day pass €28/17/23) and Podkoren, 6km to the west, with ski jumping concentrated at Planica. The season usually lasts from mid-December to early March.

Skiing in Kranjska Gora is on the eastern slopes of Vitranc, and some runs join up with those at Podkoren – site of the Men's World Cup Slalom and Giant Slalom Competition (Vitranc Cup) in late December – on Vitranc's northern face to an altitude of 1570m. Together Kranjska Gora and Podkoren have five chairlifts and 15 tows. Generally, skiing is easier at Kranjska Gora than at Podkoren, where two of the most difficult slopes – Ruteč (761m) and Zelenci (398m) – are located. In all, the two centres have 20km of pistes and 40km of cross-country courses.

The ski-jumping centre at **Planica** (www.planica.si), 6km to the west and across the motorway from Rateče, has six jumps with lengths of 25m, 120m and 180m. The short lift near the Dom Planica hut reaches an altitude of 900m. There are also some good possibilities at Planica for tobogganing and

for cross-country skiing in the Tamar Valley. The Ski Jumping World Championships are held here every year in March. The 100m mark was reached here by Austrian Josef Brall in 1934 and the 200m one by the Finn Toni Nieminen in 1994. Another Finn, Janne Ahonen, set a new world record here in 2005 by jumping 240m.

Needless to say, there are quite a few places offering ski tuition and renting equipment, but it's best to stick with the tried and true. **Intersport Bernik** (☎ 588 14 70; info@intersport-bernik.com; Borovška cesta 88a; ☎ 8am-8pm mid-Dec-mid-Mar; 8am-2pm mid-Mar-mid-Dec), **ASK Kranjska Gora** (☎ 588 53 02; www.ask-kg.com; Borovška cesta 99a; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun mid-Dec-mid-Mar; 9am-2pm Mon-Fri mid-Mar-mid-Dec), which shares the same building as SKB Banka, and **Skipass Travel** (☎ 582 10 00; www.skipasstravel.si; Borovška cesta 95; ☎ 7.30am-3pm Mon-Sat, 7.30am-noon Sun mid-Mar-mid-Dec; 7am-9pm mid-Dec-mid-Mar) all offer skiing and snowboarding instruction, with alpine and cross-country tuition in groups and individually. For one-on-one instruction, expect to pay from €25/40 for one/two hours (from €38/55 for two people). These establishments also rent equipment,

as does **Sport Point** (☎ 588 48 83; famatrend@siol.net; Borovška cesta 93a; ☞ 8am-8pm mid-Dec–mid-Mar, 7am-7pm mid-Mar–mid-Dec) next to the tourist office. Skis and poles should cost €13.50 to €19 a day or €62 to €90 per week, depending on the style and class. Snowboards cost from €13/63 a day/week.

HIKING

The area around Kranjska Gora and into Triglav National Park is excellent for hikes and walks ranging from the very easy to the difficult. One of the best references available is *Walking in the Julian Alps* (2005) by Justi Carey and Roy Clark, published by Cicerone Press in the UK; it includes some 50 walking routes and short treks. Another option is *A Guide to Walks and Scrambles in the Julian Alps* (2003) by Mike Newbury. Published by Zlatorog Publications in Perth, Scotland, it uses Kranjska Gora as a base for its suggested itineraries.

Between Podkoren and Planica is a beautiful nature reserve called **Zelenci** (837m), with a turquoise-coloured lake that is the source of the Sava River. You can easily walk here in about two hours, on a path from Kranjska Gora via Podkoren and on to **Rateče**. These attractive alpine villages are notable for their medieval churches, rustic wooden houses and traditional hayracks. Then, if you want to continue on your journey, there's a well-marked trail via Planica to the Category II 128-bed **Dom v Tamarju** (☎ 587 60 55, 041-448 830) at 1108m in the **Tamar Valley**, 6km to the south. The walk is spectacular, and lies in the shadow of **Mojstrovka** (2366m) to the east and **Jalovec** (2645m) to the south. From here, the **Vršič Pass** is less than three hours away on foot.

Another great walk from Kranjska Gora – and quite an easy one – takes you north and then east through meadows and pasture land to the traditional village of **Srednji Vrh** and **Gozd Martuljek** in a couple of hours. The views of the Velika Pisanica Valley and the Martuljek range of mountains to the south are breathtaking. From Gozd Martuljek, it's only 9km east to **Mojstrana**, the starting point for the northern approaches to Triglav. In Mojstrana, the **Triglav Museum Collection** (Triglavska Muzejska Zbirka; ☎ 589 10 35; Triglavska cesta 50; adult/child €1.25/0.85; ☞ 10am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Sun May-Oct), housed in an old inn, shows the history of mountaineering in Slovenia.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The **Aqua Larix Wellness Centre** (☎ 588 45 00; www.htp-gorenjska.si; Borovška cesta 99; nonguests pool €9-10, pool & sauna €13-16.50) in the Hotel Larix is an indoor water park with pools, saunas and treatment centres and a great place to relax after a day on the slopes.

Horse-drawn carriages (☎ 588 12 41; Borovška cesta) seating four people can be hired from a stand behind SKB Banka. Prices range from €10 for a trip to Jasna Lake to €30 for a jaunt to Planica.

Fishing is possible in the Sava Dolinka River and Jasna Lake. A day **fishing licence** (€17) for the river and available from the tourist office allows a total of three fish, the daily limit from the Sava.

Julijana (☎ 588 13 25, 041-623 701; www.sednjek.si), a small travel agency in a kiosk south of SKB Banka, can organise **rafting tips** on the Sava and Soča for €30 (minimum four people) between April and October.

Sleeping

Accommodation costs in Kranjska Gora peak from December to March and in midsummer. April is the cheapest time to visit, though some hotels close for renovations and redecorating at this time.

BUDGET

Camping Špik (☎ 587 71 00; recepcija.spik@hitholidays-kj.si; Jezerci 21; per person €6-9.60; ☞ Jun-Sep; ☎ ☎) The closest camping ground to Kranjska Gora is this 2.5-hectare site for 500 guests near the Hotel Špik in Gozd Martuljek, 4km east of Kranjska Gora. It's on the left bank of the Sava Dolinka below the peaks of the Martuljek range, and there's an outdoor swimming pool in the grounds.

Hostel Nika (☎ 588 10 00; zvone.oreskovic@s5.net; Čičare 2; dm/s/d €11/16/28; ☎ ☎ ☎) This somewhat institutional hostel with 66 beds on Čičare is about 800m northeast of the centre and just across the main road from the TGC Shopping Centre.

Hostel Pri Tatku (☎ 588 15 19; Podkoren 72; pritatku@gmail.com; per person 4-/6-bed dm €14/15) We've heard excellent things about this four-room, 15-bed hostel in a traditional old farmhouse in Podkoren, 3km to the west of Kranjska Gora. There's a decent-sized common kitchen.

Both the tourist office and Globtourt have **private rooms** (s €15.50-22.50, d €21-35) and **apartments** (apt for 2 €29-42, apt for 4 €48-78), with prices depend-

ing on the category and the time of year. There are a lot of houses with rooms available in the development called Naselje Slavka Černeta, south of the TGC shopping centre.

MIDRANGE

Pension Borka (☎ 587 91 00, 031-536 288; darinka.tasic@siol.net; Borovška cesta 71; per person €25) This central but very frayed property has some three-dozen rooms – mostly doubles and triples – in desperate need of upgrading. It has a large cellar restaurant and a TV room.

Vila Didi (☎ 588 08 54, 041-344 003; www.vila.didi-oiltz.si; Jezerci 10; s & d €37-60; ☎) The eight guestrooms at this very attractive pension at the foot of the mountains in Gozd Martuljek are furnished with antiques. Prices depend on the size of the room and whether it has a balcony.

Hotel Kotnik (☎ 588 15 64; www.hotel-kotnik.si; Borovška cesta 75; s €48-62, d €56-84; ☎) If you're not into the big high-rise hotels with hundreds of rooms, choose this charming, bright-yellow property. It has 15 cosy rooms, a great restaurant and pizzeria, and you couldn't be more central.

TOP END

Hotel Miklič (☎ 588 16 35; www.hotelmiklic.com; Vitranška ulica 13; s €45-66, d €70-112; ☎ ☎ ☎) This pristine 35-bed pension south of the centre is surrounded by luxurious lawns and flowerbeds and boasts an excellent restaurant and a small fitness room with sauna. It's definitely a cut above most other accommodation in Kranjska Gora.

Hotel Kompas (☎ 588 16 61; www.hitholidays-kj.si; Borovška cesta 100; s €63-80, d €96-128; ☎ ☎ ☎) With 149 rooms, the four-star Kompas is Kranjska Gora's biggest hotel. It's a pleasant enough place, recently renovated and set back in its own grounds. It boasts an indoor pool, tennis courts and the chairlifts are just over the road.

Hotel Larix (☎ 588 44 77; www.hitholidays-kj.si; Borovška cesta 99; s €63-80, d €96-128; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Even closer to the lifts, and now in the same stable as the Kompas, is the 118-room Larix. It boasts the wonderful Aqua Larix Wellness Centre, with sauna, steam and a pool that seems to go on forever.

Eating & Drinking

Gostilna Pri Martinu (☎ 582 03 00; Borovška cesta 61; starters €4.20-5.85, mains €5.85-10, ☞ 10am-11pm) This atmospheric tavern-restaurant in an old house

opposite the fire station is one of the best places in town to try local specialities such as venison, trout and *telečja obara* (veal stew; €3.75).

Sang Hai (☎ 588 13 46; Naselje Slavka Černeta 34; starters €2-3, mains €6.20-8.70; ☞ noon-midnight) If you fancy a change from local fare and pizza, try this Chinese restaurant, on the ground floor of the TGC Shopping Centre and facing the car park on the north side.

Hotel Kotnik (☎ 588 15 64; starters €5-8.80, mains €7.20-14; ☞ 11am-10pm) One of Kranjska Gora's better eateries, the restaurant in this stylish inn, with bits of painted dowry chests on the walls, serves grilled meats (pepper steak a speciality; €10) that should keep you going for a while. The adjoining pizzeria (pizza €4.80 to €6; open noon to 10pm) is for something quicker.

Pension Lipa (☎ 582 00 00; Koroška cesta 14; starters €4.20-7.80, mains €11.70-19.20; ☞ 11am-11pm) This pension has an attractive, family-style restaurant just across from where the buses stop. They also do decent pizzas and pasta dishes (€4.80 to €6).

Papa Joe Razor (☎ 588 15 26; Borovška cesta 86; ☞ 9am-1am) Based in the old Razor Hotel dating from 1902, Papa Joe's is Kranjska Gora's most popular late-night and *après ski* venue, with live music at the weekend. It also does fast food like hamburgers (€2 to €3.80) and pizza (€4.60 to €6.20).

There's a **Mercator** (Borovška cesta 92; ☞ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7am-7pm Sat, 8am-noon Sun) supermarket in the centre of the village and a **Mercator** (Naselje Slavka Černeta 33; ☞ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7am-5am Sat) branch on the 1st floor of the TGC shopping centre.

Getting There & Around

Buses run hourly to Ljubljana (€8.5, two hours, 91km) via Jesenice (€3, 30 minutes, 23km), where you should change for Bled (€2.60, 20 minutes, 16km). There are just two direct departures to Bled (€4.90, one hour, 40km) on weekdays at 9.15am and 1.10pm. Daily in July and August and on Saturday and Sunday in June and September there's a service to Bovec (€5.50, two hours, 46km) via the spectacular Vršič Pass.

Intersport Bernik and Sport Point (opposite) and Julijana (opposite) all rent bicycles and mountain bikes (hour/half-day/day from €3.50/6.30/10). Julijana also rents motor scooters (half-day/day €18.80/27.30).

TRIGLAV NATIONAL PARK

☎ 04 & 05 / elev to 2864m

Triglav National Park (Triglavski Narodni Park), with an area of almost 84,000 hectares (4% of Slovenian territory), is one of the largest national reserves in Europe. It is a pristine, visually spectacular world of rocky mountains – the centrepiece of which is Triglav (2864m), the country's highest peak – as well as river gorges, ravines, canyons, caves, rivers, streams, forests and alpine meadows. It is a popular weekend destination for all manner of activity, from hiking and mountain biking to fishing and rafting. And there are approaches from Bohinj,

Kranjska Gora and, in Primorska, Trenta – to name just a few gateways.

Marked trails in the park lead to countless peaks and summits besides Triglav. Favourite climbs include **Mangart** (2679m) on the Italian border (the 12km road that descends to the Predel Pass is the highest road in Slovenia), the needlepoint of **Jalovec** (2645m) in the north, and the sharp ridge of **Razor** (2601m) southeast of Vršič. But Triglav National Park is not only about climbing mountains. There are easy hikes through beautiful valleys, forests and meadows, too. Two excellent maps are the PZS 1:50,000-scale *Triglavski Narodni Park* (Triglav National Park; €7.50) and

CLIMBING THE BIG ONE

The 2864m limestone peak called Triglav (Three Heads) has been a source of inspiration and an object of devotion for Slovenes for more than a millennium. The early Slavs believed the mountain to be the home of a three-headed deity who ruled the sky, the earth and the underworld. No one managed to reach the summit until 1778 when an Austrian mountaineer and his three Slovenian guides climbed it from Bohinj. Under the Habsburgs in the 19th century, the 'pilgrimage' to Triglav became, in effect, a confirmation of one's Slovenian identity, and this tradition continues to this day: a Slovene is expected to climb Triglav at least once in his or her life.

You can climb Slovenia's highest peak too, but despite the fact that on a good summer's day more than a hundred people will reach the summit, Triglav is not for the unfit or faint-hearted. In fact, its popularity is one of the main sources of danger. On the final approach to the top, there are often dozens of people clambering along a rocky, knife-edge ridge in both directions, trying to pass each other and kicking loose stones down on those below.

If you are fit and confident, and have a good head for heights, then by all means hire a guide and go for it. Guides can be hired through 3glav (p112) or Life Trek (p112) in Bled, Alpinsport (p119) or PAC Sports (p119) in Bohinj and the Triglav National Park Information Centre (p132) in Trenta, or book in advance through the Alpine Association of Slovenia (PZS; p43). Only experienced mountain walkers with full equipment – including good hiking boots, warm clothes and waterproofs, map and compass, whistle, head torch, first-aid kit, and emergency food and drink – should consider making the ascent without a guide. Take care – people die on Triglav every year.

Triglav is usually inaccessible to hikers from late October to early June. June and July are the rainiest (and sometimes snowiest) summer months, so August and particularly September and early and mid-October are the best times to make the climb. Patches of snow and ice can linger in the higher gullies until late July, and the weather can be very unpredictable at altitudes above 1500m, with temperatures varying by as much as 20°C and violent storms appearing out of nowhere.

Before you attempt the climb, see if you can find a copy of the dated but still useful *How to Climb Triglav* (Planinska Založba; €7), a superb, 63-page booklet that describes a dozen of the best routes, which may be available in bookshops and tourist offices in Slovenia. The most useful map for the ascent of Triglav is the PZS 1:25,000 *Triglav Planinska Karta* (€7.50), with all the trails and huts clearly marked. The PZS also publishes a two-sheet 1:50,000-scale map of the Julian Alps; for Triglav and the park you want the eastern part: *Julijske Alpe – Vzhodni Del* (€7.50).

It is park tradition in Slovenia to greet (or at least smile at) everyone you pass while climbing. And don't be surprised when you've reach the top and you find yourself being turned over and having your bottom beaten with a birch switch. It's a long-established tradition for Triglav 'virgins'. Once at the summit, you too can tell yourself with pride: 'Today I am a Slovene'.

ZLATOROG AND HIS GOLDEN HORNS

The oft-told tale of Zlatorog, the mythical chamois (*gams* in Slovene) with the golden horns who lived on Mt Triglav and guarded its treasure, almost always involves some superhuman (or, in this case, superantelope) feat that drastically changed the face of the mountain. But don't let Slovenes convince you that their ancient ancestors passed on the tale. The Zlatorog story first appeared in the *Laibacher Zeitung* (Ljubljana Gazette) in 1868 during a period of Romanticism and national awakening. This one tells of how the chamois created the Triglav Lakes Valley, a wilderness of tumbled rock almost in the centre of Triglav National Park.

Zlatorog roamed the valley (at that time a beautiful garden) with the White Ladies, good fairies who kept the mountain pastures green and helped humans whenever they found them in need.

Meanwhile, down in the Soča Valley near Trenta, a greedy plot was being hatched. It seemed that an innkeeper's daughter had been given jewels by a wealthy Venetian merchant. The girl's mother demanded that her daughter's suitor, a poor but skilled hunter, match the treasure with Zlatorog's gold hidden under Mt Bogatin and guarded by a multiheaded serpent. If not, he was at least to bring back a bunch of Triglav 'roses' (actually pink cinquefoils) in mid-winter to prove his fidelity – an impossible task.

The young hunter, seething with jealousy, climbed the mountain in search of the chamois, figuring that if he were to get even a piece of the golden horns, the treasure of Bogatin – and his beloved – would be his. At last the young man spotted Zlatorog, took aim and fired. It was a direct hit.

The blood gushing from Zlatorog's wound melted the snow, and up sprang a magical Triglav rose. The chamois nibbled on a few petals and – presto! – was instantly back on his feet. As the chamois leapt away, roses sprang up from under his hooves, luring the hunter onto higher and higher ground. But as they climbed, the sun caught Zlatorog's shiny horns. The hunter was blinded, lost his footing and plunged into a gorge.

The once kind and trusting chamois was enraged that a mere mortal would treat him in such a manner. In his fury he gored his way through the Triglav Lakes Valley, leaving it much as it looks today. He left the area with the White Ladies, never to return.

And the fate of the others? The innkeeper's daughter waited in vain for her lover to return home. As spring approached, the snow began to melt, swelling the Soča River. One day it brought her a sad gift: the body of her young swain, his lifeless hand still clutching a Triglav rose. As for the innkeeper's rapacious wife, we know nothing. Perhaps she learned Italian and moved to Venice.

Observant (and thirsty) travellers will see the face of Zlatorog everywhere they go in Slovenia. It's on the label of the country's best beer (p52).

Freytag & Berndt's 1:50 000 *Julische Alpen* €8.14. The English-language *Triglav National Park: The Two-in-One Guide* (Založba Mladinska Knjiga; €16.70), which comes as a 104-page booklet with a map, is also worth consideration.

Although Slovenia counts 44 country (or 'landscape') parks and three regional ones, this is the country's only gazetted national park, and it includes almost all of the Alps lying within Slovenia. The idea of a park was first mooted in 1908 and realised in 1924, when 14 hectares of the Triglav Lakes Valley were put under temporary protection. The area was renamed Triglav National Park in 1961 and expanded 20

years later to include most of the eastern Julian Alps. Today the park stretches from Kranjska Gora in the north to Tolmin in the south and from the Italian border in the west almost to Bled in the east. The bulk of the park lies in the Gorenjska province, but once you've crossed the awesome Vršič Pass – at 1611m Slovenia's highest – and begun the descent into the Soča Valley, you've entered Primorska.

Triglav National Park is especially rich in fauna and flora, including blossoms such as the pink Triglav rose, blue Clusi's gentian, yellow hawk's-beard, Julian poppy and purple Zois bellflower. For details on park behaviour and etiquette, see p42.

FOUR ROUTES TO THE TOP

There are about 20 different ways to reach the top of Triglav, with the main approaches being to the south (Bohinj and Pokljuka) and the north (Mojstrana and the Vrata Valley). They offer varying degrees of difficulty and have their pluses and minuses. Experienced hikers tend to go for the more forbidding northern approaches, descending via one of the gentle southern routes. Novices usually ascend and descend near Bohinj. The western route from Trenta in the Soča Valley is steep and less frequented due to its relatively remote start. Most treks require one or two overnight stays in the mountains.

Mojstrana is the easiest trailhead to get to from Ljubljana (€7.30, 1¼ hours, 77km) by public transport – hourly buses between Kranjska Gora and the capital stop here. The Savica Waterfall at Bohinj is also walkable from Ukanc, which is served by bus (p123). If you're driving, there are parking areas at Rudno Polje and at the head of the Vrata Valley near Aljažev Dom, though the latter can only be reached on an unsurfaced road with gradients up to 1:4.

From Pokljuka

The approach to Triglav from Rudno Polje (1347m) on the Pokljuka Plateau, 18km southwest of Bled, is the shortest way to reach the peak – a round trip of 25km, with 1500m of ascent. A very fit and experienced mountain walker could do this in around eight to 10 hours of continuous hiking, but most mortals stay overnight at a hut. The route follows a well-marked trail under Viševnik (2050m) and over the Studor Saddle (1892m), before contouring around the slopes of Tosc to the Category I **Vodnikov Dom na Velem Polju** (☎ 04-572 32 13, 051-607 211; planinskodrustvo-srednja-vas@siol.net; 🏠 late Jun-early Oct), with 58 beds at 1817m (three hours). Another two hours' climbing leads to Category I **Dom Planika pod Triglavom** (☎ 04-574 40 69, 051-614 773; 🏠 Jul-Sep) with 123 beds at 2401m, from which a further hour of steep climbing and scrambling along the summit ridge takes you to the top of Old Mr Three Heads.

From Bohinj

The approaches to Triglav from Bohinj (523m) are longer and involve more ascent than those in the north and the west but are more gently graded. They are more often used for descent. However, the following route would make a good three-day loop.

From the Savica Waterfall a path zigzags up the steep Komarča Crag (1340m), with an excellent view of the lake. Three to four hours hike north from the falls is the Category I **Koča pri Triglavskih Jezerih** (☎ 01-231 26 45, 040-620 783; info.pdljmatica@siol.net; 🏠 mid-Jun-mid-Oct) at 1685m, a 200-bed hut at the southern end of the fantastic Triglav Lakes Valley where you spend the first night. If you want a good view over the valley and its seven permanent lakes (the others fill up in spring only), you can climb to Tičarica (2091m) to the northeast in about an hour. An alternative – although longer – route from the waterfall to the Triglav Lakes Valley is via Category I **Dom na Komni** (☎ 572 14 75, 040-695 783; info.pdljmatica@siol.net; 🏠 year-round) and the Komna Plateau, a major battlefield in WWI.

On the second day you hike north along the valley, which the immortal chamois Zlatorog (p129) is said to have created, then northeast to the desert-like Hribarice Plateau (2358m). You then descend to the Dolič Saddle (2164m) and the Category I **Tržaška Koča na Doliču** (☎ 574 40 69, 051-614 780; 🏠 late Jun-Sep) with 144 beds at 2151m and about four hours from Koča pri Triglavskih

own transport – be it a car, motorbike or mountain bike.

The first stop from Kranjska Gora is **Jasna Lake** (Jezero Jasna), about 2km south of town. It's a beautiful, almost too-blue glacial lake with white sand around its rim and the little Pivnica River flowing alongside. Standing guard is a bronze statue of that irascible old

Jezerih. You could well carry on to **Dom Planika pod Triglavom** at 2401m and about 1½ hours to the northeast, but this hut is often packed. It's better to stay where you're sure there's a bed unless you've booked ahead. From Dom Planika it's just over an hour to the summit of Triglav.

You could return the way you came, but it's far more interesting to go back to Bohinj via Stara Fužina. This way passes the **Vodnikov Dom na Velem Polju** at 1817m – less than two hours from Dom Planika – where there are two routes to choose from: down the Voje Valley, or along the Uskovnica ridge, a highland pasture to the east. The former takes about four hours; the route via Uskovnica is a little longer but affords better views. The trail to Rudno Polje and the road to Bled branches off from the Uskovnica route.

From Mojstrana

This approach, which is dominated by the stupendous northern face of Triglav, is popular with experienced climbers, and is often combined with a leisurely descent along the Triglav Lakes Valley to Bohinj. From the village of Mojstrana, which has **Kamp Kamne** (☎ 589 11 05; http://campingkamne.com; Dobje 9; per person €5-6; 🏠 year-round) and a **Mercator** (Dunjaska cesta 10; 🏠 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7am-5pm Sat, 8am-noon Sun) supermarket, a mostly unsurfaced road leads in 11km to the Category II **Aljažev Dom v Vratih** (☎ 04-589 51 00, 031-384 013; pd.dobje-mojstrana@siol.net; 🏠 late Apr-late Oct) with 138 beds at 1015m. Walking here should take about three hours, including time for a look at Peričnik Waterfall on the way. You'll probably want to spend the night here, as it is among the most beautiful sites in the park, with a perfect view of Triglav's north face, the third largest rock wall in Europe. Nearby is a 10m boulder called Mali Triglav (Little Triglav), where you can practise your ascent of the Big One.

From here, the steep and exposed Tominšek Trail leads via the northwest flank of Cmir and below Begunjski Vrh to Begunjski Studenec, a spring with excellent drinking water at 2100m (three hours). Much of this trail is a *via ferrata* (iron way) protected with iron spikes and cables.

From the spring you can choose to walk to either Category I **Dom Valentina Staniča** (☎ 051-614 772; pd.jav.kor.bela@s5.net; 🏠 Jul-mid-Sep), 30 minutes to the southeast with 136 beds at 2332m, or to Category I **Triglavski Dom na Kredarici** (☎ 04-202 31 81; info.pdljmatica@siol.net; 🏠 mid-Jun-mid-Oct), an hour to the south. The latter is the main hut serving the northern routes and at 2515m is the highest accommodation in the land; the summit is two hours away. Although Triglavski Dom has 140 beds in 30 rooms and another 160 beds in eight dormitories, it is often full; the best idea is to spend the night at Dom Staniča and make the ascent in the morning (two hours from hut to summit).

From Trenta

Because Trenta is more difficult to reach from the population centres of Ljubljana and southern Austria, the western approach to Triglav is quieter than the other routes. It's a long climb, though, starting from an altitude of just over 600m.

From Trenta, an hour's hike eastward along the Zajdnica Valley leads to the foot of Triglav's massive western face, where you begin zigzagging monotonously up an easy but seemingly endless trail for four more hours to the Dolič Saddle and the **Tržaška Koča na Doliču** at 2151m. From here, you can follow the normal route to the summit via **Dom Planika pod Triglavom** at 2401m or take the slightly more difficult west ridge (2½ hours), passing the ruined Morbegna barracks built by the Italian army in WWII at 2500m.

goat **Zlatorog** (p129), the mythical chamois with the golden horns.

As you zigzag up to just over 1100m, you'll come to the **Russian Chapel** (Ruska Kapelica), a little wooden church erected on the site where hundreds of Russian prisoners of war were buried in an avalanche in March 1916 while building the road you are travelling on.

The climbing then begins in earnest as the road meanders past a couple of huts and corkscrews up the next few kilometres to **Vršič Pass** (1611m), about 13km from Kranjska Gora. The area was the scene of fierce fighting during WWI, and a high percentage of the dead lay where they fell (at 1525m there's a **military cemetery** to the east of the road). The Tičarjev

Dom mountain hut is also east of the road, just before it begins to drop down the far side. To the west is **Mojstrovka** (2366m), to the east **Prisank** (2547m) and to the south the valley of the Soča River points the way to Primorska. A hair-raising descent of about 10km ends just short of the **monument to Julius Kugy**, a pioneer climber and writer (1858–1944) whose books eulogise the beauty of the Julian Alps.

From here you can take a side trip along the **Soča Trail** (Soška Pot) of about 2.5km northwest to the **source of the Soča River** (Izvir Soče). Fed by an underground lake, the infant river bursts from a dark cave before dropping 15m to the rocky bed from where it begins its long journey to the Adriatic. The trail then continues for another 18km in 16 stages along the cobalt Soča as far as Bovec.

Not long after joining the main road again, you'll pass the entrance to the **Alpinum Juliana** (admission free; ☎ 8.30am–6.30pm May–Sep), a 2.5-hectare botanical garden established in 1926 that showcases the flora of all of Slovenia's Alps (Julian, Kamnik-Savinja and Karavanke) as well as the Karst. The elongated mountain village of **Trenta** (population 110; elevation 620m) is just south.

Trenta has a long tradition of mountain guides. Shepherds and woodsmen made the first ascents of the Julian Alps possible in the 19th century, and their bravery and skill are commemorated in a plaque just below the botanical garden. Na Logu, in the upper part of Trenta, is the gateway to the western approach to Triglav, a much less frequented and steeper climb than most of the others (p130).

In Spodnja Trenta (Lower Trenta) the **Dom Trenta** (☎ 05-388 93 30, 388 93 06; Trenta 31; ☎ 10am–6pm late Apr–Oct) contains the **Triglav National Park Information Centre** (www.tnp.si) and the **Trenta Museum** (Trentarski Muzej; adult/child/student €3.80/2.30/2.50), which focuses on the park's geology and natural history as well as the Trenta guides and pioneers of Slovenian alpinism.

The equally long village of **Soča** (population 145; elevation 480m) is another 8.5km down-river. The **Church of St Joseph** (Cerkev Sv Joža) from the early 18th century has paintings by Tone Kralj (1900–75). Completed in 1944 as war still raged in central Europe, one of the frescoes on the ceiling depicts Michael the Archangel struggling with Satan and the foes of humanity, Hitler and Mussolini.

Bovec (p134), the recreational centre of the Upper Soča Valley (Gornje Posočje), is 12km west of Soča.

SLEEPING

The staff at Dom Trenta (left) in Trenta can book private rooms (per person €14) and apartments (for four from €50) in summer.

There are several mountain huts on or near the Vršič road. All of them serve very basic dishes three times day. Category II **Koča na Gozdu** (☎ 041-682 704; info@prezlc.si; Vršiška cesta 86; ☎ daily late Apr–Sep, Sat & Sun Oct–late Apr) with 43 beds is at 1226m, whereas **Erjačeva Koča na Vršiču** (☎ 04-586 60 70, 051-399-226; plan.drustvo@siol.net; Vršiška cesta 90; ☎ year-round), also Category II with 99 beds, is at 1525m. Category II **Tičarjev Dom na Vršiču** (☎ 04-586 60 70, 051-634 571; plan.drustvo@siol.net; Trenta 85; ☎ May–mid-Oct) with 91 beds and berths sits right on the pass.

Above Tičarjev Dom is Category II **Poštarski Dom na Vršiču** (☎ 041-610 029; Vršiška cesta 91; ☎ mid-Jun–Sep) with 65 beds at 1688m. Near the source of the Soča River at 886m is the Category III **Koča pri Izviru Soče** (☎ 04-586 60 70, 041-603 190; plan.drustvo@siol.net; ☎ late Apr–late Oct) with 34 beds.

Camping grounds abound in the park. In Trenta there's 45-site **Kamp Trenta** (☎ 041-615 966; www.campingtrenta.o-f.com; Trenta 60a; per person €5.50–6.50; ☎ May–Sep) and the smaller **Kamp Triglav** (☎ 05-388 93 11; marija.kravanja@volja.net; Trenta 18; per person €5.50; ☎ Apr–Sep) with 40 sites. In Soča you'll find **Kamp Soča** (☎ 05-388 93 18; Soča 8; per person €5.50–6.50; ☎ Apr–Sep), with 170 sites, and **Kamp Korita** (☎ 05-388 93 38; Soča 38; per person €5; ☎ May–Oct).

The lovely **Kekečeva Domačija** (Kekec Homestead; ☎ 05-381 1088, 041-413 087; www.kekecva-domacija.si; Trenta 76; per person €40), about 2.5km off the main road heading for the source of the Soča, has four apartments named after characters in the Kekec tales (p124) as the eponymous movie (1951) was filmed nearby.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Two buses (6.30am and 3pm) a day in July and August and on Saturday and Sunday only in June and September link Ljubljana with Bovec (€12.50, 3¼ hours, 146km) in Primorska via Kranj, Lesce-Bled, Kranjska Gora, the Vršič Pass and Trenta. The afternoon bus then carries on to Kobarid, Tolmin and Nova Gorica.

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