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# Meja\_from the Dolomites to Slovenia

Meja means border in Slovenian. The border is not just a line that marks a separation, but it is a place, a landscape that intertwines history and culture. There's no better place to be explored by bike to understand that than the Eastern Alps. From the Dolomites to the multiculturalism of Friuli Venezia Giulia, from the Giulian Alps of Slovenia to the city of Trieste. Cycle along a border where today different pasts, languages, local culture and rural architecture chase each other in a surprising way. Meja is an amazing gravel cycling tour deep on the European history. Enjoy thousands of mountains, buy artisanal cheese at shepherds' huts, have a glass of wine and chat with the elders of the villages, tackle some of the most iconic cycling climbs of the Alps, explore the Soca River and the Triglav National Park ending in the beautiful city of Trieste. Have the freedom to cycle anywhere you like: it is priceless.

**8 days - 570km/354mi - 16.200mt+/53.200ft+ - demanding**



**Meja** gravel bike journey starts from **Dobbiaco** in Val Pusteria (South Tyrol). The route begins immediately being extraordinary with the riding on an amazing ridge right in the border in between Italy and Austria, with outstanding views over tens of Dolomites's peaks. Explore the lonely and dense forested territory of the **Comelico, Cadore** and once in **Friuli-Venezia Giulia region**, the **Carnia**: from one pasture to another, from one mountain to the next, the bell sounds of livestock farming and the shout of the shepherds together with the wind will be the soundtrack till your beautiful. At the end of your day, a steep and super fast downhill will take you to the village of **Sauris** where you will overnight in a nice wooden house, a dispersed hotel that belongs to a project to save traditional old buildings by offering them as touristic accommodations. In the village can't miss a visit to the local artisanal beer shop before to go enjoying your dinner: try local smoked ham "speck di Sauris" as an aperitif together with another beer!



Enjoy the amazing long off-road riding along the **Via delle Malghe** (Farm's way) : left Sauris you will climb to get to this panoramic grassy ridge home for centuries of the seasonal work of shepherds. Once at the town of **Ovaro** the magnetic call of one of the most famous cycling climbs of the Alps will pervade you. Have lunch in town, refuel and get ready to tackle the **Zoncolan** climb on tarmac, home of countless **Giro d'Italia's** fights: 9,8km/6,1mi long, 1206mt/3960ft of elevation gain with a 12,3% of average gradient. Do you think that once at the pass it will be finish? Not at all! Enter again on the Via delle Malghe and cycle on dirt admiring, to the East, the first shapes of the Giulian Alps. Those big mountains will be part of your destiny on your next day! The end of your (cycling) day has come and you will be in **Sutrio**: get ready to put your legs under table of our favourite trattoria: a true food lovers paradise!

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After a great breakfast you will start cycling north along the **Romea Strata**, a road dated back to the Roman Empire that, from the borders of north-eastern Italy, converged in Emilia Romagna to reach the Francigena and continue towards Rome. The main ascent for today is near: climb at the feet of **Monte Paularo** and enter to one of the most beautiful alpine sectors of the whole journey. You will cross a beautiful and lonely territory in the border with the **Austrian Alps**, cycling along a network of well kepted gravel roads till to get to a mountain refugio, right in time for lunch. Get fully energized, the day ahead will still be long. Keep exploring one of the less inhabited - and beautiful - area of Italy, the mountain region of **Carnia**. At the end of this glorious stage you will be hosted in a unique setting, a farm placed on a sea of green pastures spotted by cows. When you will see the animals get back in an ordered row to the farm to be milked, it will be time for you to go dinner. Taste the best local products, enjoy cheese with red wine. A night full of stars will be the best reward for such an amazing day of cycling.



Warm-up on the **Alpe-Adria** cycling path and be ready to tackle the longest and loneliest climb of your journey. During the ascent, take a rest and try very good local food at the farm: long day ahead still, better always to have the batteries charged! Climb on a panoramic **I°WW military road**, crossing several villages abandoned after an earthquake on the 1976. Along the way, many occasions to stop to read on information panels the history of soldiers and their struggles. Keep cycling under the mighty shape of the **Jof di Montasio** mountain, stop at the next farm to try their flower scented cheese and get to your mountain refugio where you will overnight. Welcome to the heart of the **Giulian Alps**!

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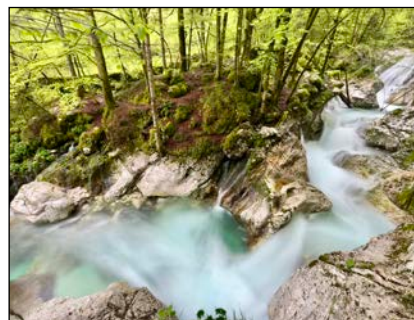
Today it will be a stage of devotion for (steep) climbs, for whom who enjoy the challenge: don't get scared about the signs you'll meet at the beginning of **Monte Lussari's** climb, it will be not that bad!;). The ascent is 7,2km/4,5mi long with 874mt/2870ft of elevation gain and an average gradient of 12,1%: enjoy those concrete killer ramps! Once at the top, have a stop at Monte Santo di Lussari, a pilgrimage destination and iconic spot right in between of the Giulian Alps and the Carnics Alps. Take care while descending on loose gravel along a steep ski slope and enjoy an easy ride along the beautiful **Alpe-Adria cycling path**, getting to the town of **Tarvisio** well hungry for lunch. After the stop, a brief detour from the Alpe-Adria will takes you to get to know the beautiful **Val Fusine's lakes** with the north face of **Mangart mountain** reflected on their placid green waters.



Left the lakes, with few pedal strokes you will cross the border with **Slovenia**, visiting the turquoise waters of the **Zelenci pools** and arriving in **Kranjska Gora** to our favourite patisserie. Get well refueled, the highest Slovenian mountain road awaits you. The **Passo Vrsic** is a beautiful climb, first part on gravel, the second on a mix of pavè and tarmac. The environment is beautiful, with dramatic mountain shapes and a dense beech forest underneath. A last climb on dirt and you will get to the most panoramic mountain hut of the area: the guys at the refugio will welcome you with tens of cold beers!.

Today you will ride across the beautiful **Triglav National Park** following the emerald waters of the **Soka River**, one the gems of this protected natural area. The long downhill will takes to the village of **Trenta**, and then to the impressive **Velika Korita gorges**. Many options for side trips, dives in the river, goat cheese tasting and gourmet stops to try the local trout served grilled with cold draft Lasko beers. A detour to the city of **Bovec** - European top destination for rafting - for a beer at the local bar is highly recommended.

Back to the Soka River you'll keep grinding fine gravel till the town of **Dreznika**, at the feet of the unmistakable shape of **Krn mountain**. Here you have **two options**: the easiest is to ride down, cross the famous **Napoleon's bridge** and overnight in the town of **Kobarid**, where you'll find the unmissable **IWW Museum** (and our favourite restaurant). The hard one offers you a steep and technical climb along a mule track and hike-a-bike sectors in a beautiful and wild loneliness to finally get to the beautiful mountain plateau where you'll find your **refugio** for the overnight.



A rugged mountain terrain awaits you: a mix of gravel roads and single tracks inside the woods, hike-a-bike sectors, steep climbs and bumpy descends... enjoy them all! The beautiful **Tolminka River valley** will end to the **Korita Zadlaščice gorge**, one of the highlights of the Soka River valley. If you opted for the overnight in Kobarid, you will follow the Soka River cycling path re-joining the tour in **Tolmin**: have a pizza and a couple of beers and then start to climb up to the ultra-panoramic top of the **Kolovrat mountain**, from where the view runs free on the full range of peaks of the Julian Alps till far South, towards the Italian lands stretched on the border of Slovenia. Cycle the **Collio/Brda** hills to get to the town of **San Floriano del Collio**, placed on a superb and panoramic balcony. This is one of the most precious cultural European landscapes, where gentle hills, vineyards, woodland and small settlements blend harmoniously together. Don't miss a glass of Malvasia wine in San Floriano before to end your day in **Gorizia** - 2025 European Culture Capital - where you'll overnight. Go for an aperitif on a busy bar on the central square to taste gorgeous red wines from the nearby **Collio/Brda** wine region: try it together with local finger food.

Your last day! No place could be better for celebrate than the **Vipava** wine region, home of some of the best white wines: plenty of opportunities to taste them by local producers. A **Ribolla** served chill is an elixir to escape the heat of the ride and get your mouth free from the dust of the local gravel roads! Visit the medieval town of **Stanjel** and keep going eastwards to embrace then the mediterranean scent of the **Carst/Carso region**, a dry landscape where some of the World's finest natural caves are founded.

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A stop to visit **Škocjan Cave - Unesco heritage site** - with its huge and impressive underground canyon is unmissable. After dirt and more dirt you will finally get at the end of this amazing journey on the beautiful Italian cost city of **Trieste**, with its mix of Mediterranean, Central European and Slavic influences, famous for its coffee shops and fish restaurants. Enjoy its main square - Piazza Unità d'Italia - litted by the best sunset light whit seagulls playing with the wind.

**Departure town:** Dobbiaco

**Arrival town:** Trieste

- Hotel overnight in Dobbiaco the day before the tour starts
- Day 1\_75km/46,6mi - 2500mt+ /8200ft+\_traditional wooden hut overnight
- Day 2\_52km/32,3mi - 2200mt+ /7217ft+\_guesthouse overnight
- Day 3\_55km/34,2mi - 2360mt+ /7742ft+\_farm overnight
- Day 4\_40km/24,8mi - 1860mt+ /6100ft+\_mountain refugio overnight
- Day 5\_56km/34,8mi - 2100mt+ /6890ft+\_mountain refugio overnight
- Day 6\_67km/41,6mi - 1300mt+ /4265ft+\_mountain refugio overnight
- Day 7\_76km / 47,2mi - 2100mt+ / 6890ft+\_ b&b or wine farm overnight
- Day 8\_100km / 62,1mi - 1760mt+ / 5774ft+\_hotel overnight in Trieste

