

HOW AND WHERE

TRIESTE'S KARST

A borderland, a land of emotions

FRUILI VENEZIA GIULIA



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Trieste's Karst

A BORDERLAND, A LAND OF EMOTIONS

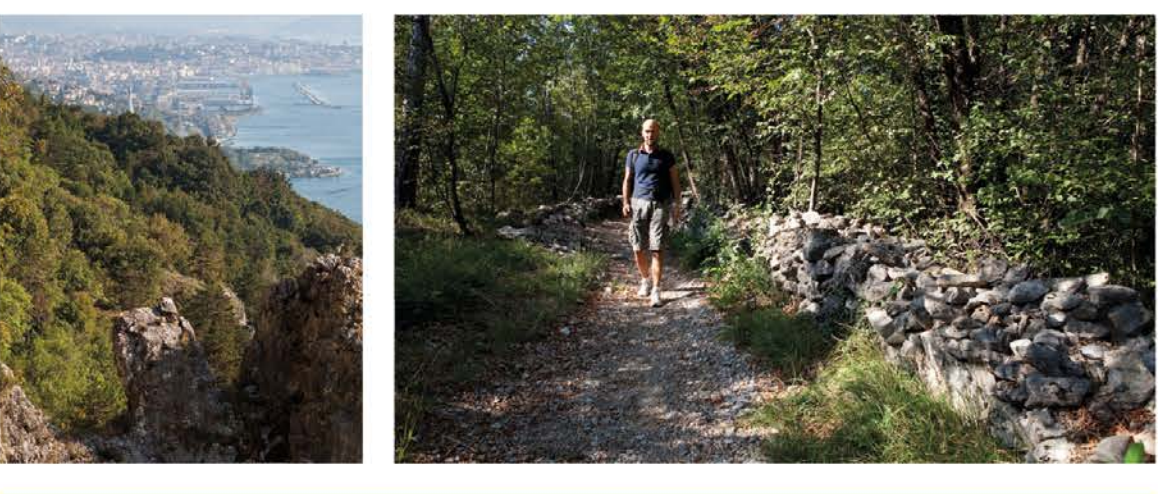
The Karst is a plateau situated on the border between Italy and Slovenia (where it has its natural extension). Its particular geographical position, a zone of passage between the Mediterranean and the continental climate, and its peculiar geological structure made of calcareous rock, make it a spectacular and unique area of great natural importance. The white of the calcareous rock creates spectacular contrasts with the blue of the sea and the colours of the vegetation: the bright red of the smoke tree in autumn, the brilliant green of the vegetation in spring and in summer. A land that is still strongly based on agriculture, scattered with characteristic small villages, where you will meet the culture of the strong Slovenian minority that is expressed in the traditions and in the customs. A territory that still generates typical products of high quality: cheese, wine, honey, hams, olive oil and where it is easy to see a branch that indicates an open rural house, with two tables and four benches where you can drink a glass of wine in company tasting typical cold cuts. Many are the points of interest to be visited, starting from the spectacular tramway that from the city of Trieste leads to the plateau. And, once on the Karst, you will just have to choose from the many possible destinations: the Karst caves, from the Grotta Gigante (Giant Cave), the largest tourist cave in the world, to the complexity of an underground world to be explored; the nature reserves where you can enjoy the peace of nature; the botanical garden that provides a synthesis of the rich local flora; the charming rocky, wild shores or equipped beaches; the rural villages, which provide evidence of an old tradition a few steps away from the city.



Many are the paths to be followed on the territory of Trieste's Karst, the main ones are shown on the map. The two most significant and certainly best known are the Strada Napoleonica and the Rikie path.

The **Strada Napoleonica** extends for four kilometres and a half, from Opicina to Prosecco. It is a panoramic walk, suitable for everyone, exposed to the sun and protected from the bora cold wind by the bushes of smoke tree, which in autumn turn red, yellow and violet. In the last part of the road, on a spectacular cliff, it is possible to do sports climbing; on clear days it is easy to see climbers who put their skills to the test. The Strada Napoleonica was born in the Middle Ages as a connection road but it is called in this way because people believe that the path according to the present track was opened by Napoleon's troops.

The **Rikie path** is one of the most beautiful and charming walks overlooking the gulf of Trieste. The path is named after the German poet Reiner Maria Rilke who stayed at the Castle of Duino at the beginning of the last century, just as Dante had done before him, and composed here his famous "Duino Elegies". The walk is about 1.8 km long, not very hard, but is situated in a unique and spectacular setting. Be careful not to lean out of the reef.



On Trieste's Karst you will find a well-structured network of paths; thanks to this and to the fact that the difference in height is never too hard, cycling is easy and very nice. The map shows two cycle tracks, marked on the territory and that extend partly on routes especially dedicated to cyclists, partly on normal roads where the traffic is limited. Other routes can be followed on this enchanting territory along asphalt roads, dirt roads and paths. The **Ponziana** - **Hrpelje - Ponziana cycle track** follows the route of the former railway and is in constant climb on the outward journey and in pleasant descent when going back. It is about 30 km long with a difference in height of about 600 m necessary to exit the city and climb to the plateau. This path allows to reach the Karst by bicycle. The other **cycle track** that we would like to point out links **Opicina** (start from the Obelisk) to **Trebbiano** (on the border with Slovenia).

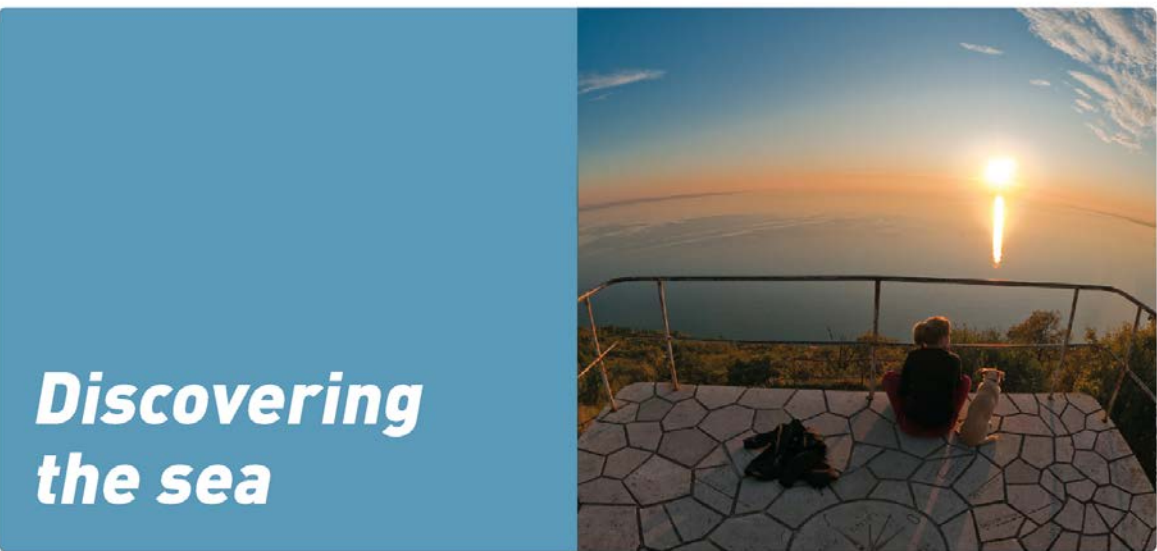
The path is always well marked and is about 6 km long with a difference in height of 80 metres. It is interesting to remember that the project of Italy-Slovenia cross-border cooperation includes the completion by 2013 of the Alpe Adria cycle track, which will link Kranjska Gora (Slo), already linked to Tarvisio via a cycle track, to Koper and then, across the border of Rabuiese (Muggia) to Trieste, up to Venice and Ravenna.







Austrian, Hungarian, Jewish, Slav and eastern suggestions and influences are harmoniously combined with the local products providing the Karst cuisine with interesting flavours and aromas. Among the typical dishes the **Jota**, a bean soup enriched with sauerkraut, the **bread gnocchi**, made with potatoes and a plum heart, are seasoned with melted butter and breadcrumbs; the **porzina con capuzi**, boiled pork served with sauerkraut, mustard and horseradish; the **goulash**, a very thick soup made with meat



There where the Karst ends, to the south, is the sea. A sea that is Mediterranean but also high Adriatic Sea and breaks against the sheer cliff. The coast reflects the hinterland and interrupts sheeily over the sea creating the fascinating contrast between the white of the rock and the blue of the sea.

Descending towards Trieste the historic seaside resort of **Sistiana**. A tourist resort open all year round will soon be made in the site that was the quarry of Sistiana. Along the whole coast of Trieste are charming bays and small beaches, where the water is clear and is surrounded by a rich Mediterranean vegetation. All the beaches are gravelly with a rocky sea bed: they are not easy to reach but the effort is worth it. Starting from Sistiana you will find the so-called **Costa dei Barbari**, a very clean natural beach jealously cared for by its



On Trieste's Karst the largest nature reserve delimits the territory to the south: the **Rosandra Valley**. The route starts in Bagnoli, at Italy's lowest CAI (Italian Alpine Club) Alpine hut (81 metres above sea level). The Reserve includes a beautiful valley crossed by the Rosandra stream, the only visible waterway on the Italian karst and the highest summit of Trieste's Karst, Mount Cocusso (670 m.). It is a particularly rich area from the floral point of view, with some endemisms and the presence of rare species. The area is of extraordinary interest because of amphibians, reptiles and because of the affluents in the forest areas. There are three other Nature Reserves on the territory, the most spectacular is certainly that of the **Duino Cliffs**. It comprises the only example of high cliffs in the Northern Adriatic Sea, a coastal area characterised by cliffs with relative inaccessibility to the sea and short stretches of Mediterranean calcareous debris heaps.



The most characteristic honey of the Karst is the **marasca** honey, from the nectar of the St. Lucie cherry. Because of its high fructose content it remains liquid for a long time, it is characterized by its amber colour with reddish reflections and a slightly bitter taste that recalls the flavour of almonds: it is a rare honey, its production in sufficient amounts is not possible in all years because the blossom time of the bush is short. Then there is the **mixed-flower** honey produced in the Karst, from the nectar of many herbaceous plants to which one adds the nectar of some shrub and arboreal plants. If it is produced in the first part of the spring it is liquid, characterised



The **villages of the Karst**. The structure of the villages and the use of the territory have been determined over time by the social and economic structure. Since the prevailing occupation consisted of agriculture and cattle breeding, the Karst population had the hard task of modifying the land, characterised by particularly stony areas, which in the beginning were useless. For this reason, the territory was preferentially used for production purposes, rather than for residential settlements. The road that linked the various villages was larger in correspondence of the latter, thus becoming a square; we always find the two heads of the settlement, which are its entrance and exit.



The term Karst derives from the Indo-European root "kar", which means "rock". The "Karst phenomena" are the superficial and underground phenomena linked to the dissolution of carbonate rocks, such as limestones: the word derives from the name of the geographical region that extends among Italy, Slovenia and Croatia, where the large extension of calcareous rocks has allowed a large development of these processes. The Karst landscape features no superficial hydrographic network, it is characterised by large rocky surfaces and by a discontinuous vegetal cover.

But, besides the superficial aspect, there is an **underground Karst**: a world of caves, narrow tunnels, ponors in some cases crossed by underground rivers. In the caves, in addition to the erosion formations, it is possible to admire the so-called deposition formations, deriving from water dripping. The most characteristic structures are the stalactites, the stalagmites, the flowstones, the curtains and the various concretions that decorate the walls of the underground caves. The best known cave of the Karst is the **Grotta Gigante** (Giant Cave), the world's largest cave (117/127 m.), listed in the Guinness Book of World Records in 1975; it features a length of 147.60 metres, a maximum height of the vault of 98.50 metres and a width of 76.30 metres. The deepest point reached

### Typical products



The Karst proposes a variety of cheeses that ranges from the ricotta to the extra mature cheeses and from the varieties made with cow's milk to those obtained from sheep's and goat's milk. The best known is the **Tabor**, a latteria cheese with a delicate flavour and a light yellow texture. The **Tabor** cheese has been produced on Trieste's Karst since time immemorial, transforming raw milk by means of ancient traditional technologies. The **Miet** (which in Slovenian means minced), is made with Tabor cheeses of various aging, minced with the rind and mixed with pepper, then pressed in the moulds. And then there is a very peculiar cheese: the cheese of the **"Jamar"** cave. In Slovenian "Jamar" means cave, or rather that particular type of cave that characterizes the Karst, deep and flask-shaped, where the "Jamar" is refined. It is a cheese with an intense, almost spicy, taste, and with a particularly crumbly texture.



Karst phenomena are called epigeal when they affect the rocks that emerge on the surface. The Karst landforms, well represented on Trieste's Karst, are classified on the basis of the scale of the phenomenon in microforms and macroforms.

The most characteristic microforms are the **limestone pavements**: calcareous zones that have numerous furrows, more or less parallel and with a depth ranging from a few centimetres to some metres, separated by rounded or sharp crests; they originate by sliding and dissolution by meteoric waters on the surface of calcareous rocks. Among the most important macroforms one should remember

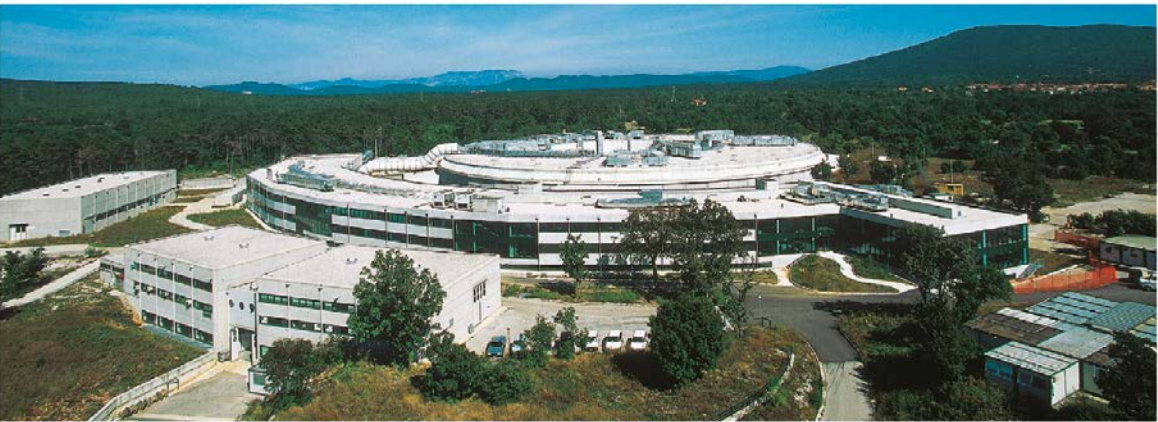


The Road of Terrano is a food and wine route opened in 1986, which extends on Trieste's Karst connecting the inns and the restaurants that take part in the initiative and that propose, in combination with their menus, the Terrano wine.

**Terrano** is a dry wine, obtained from the Refosco vines, which owes its unique and original taste to the **red earth of the Karst**, to the climate of these lands, to the sun and to the care of the local wine growers. It is of a ruby colour and has a characteristic intense perfume; the taste is dry, agreeable, acidulous, full-bodied. The wine is ancient, deeply rooted in the Karst territory: some documents of the Roman age already describe the qualities of an excellent wine produced in these areas, also remembered for its medicinal properties, indicated in particular for anaemic people because of its iron content. The road extends over the whole Karst and involves inns or restaurants where one can taste the most typical dishes of the local tradition together with this particular wine.



Trieste is the European city with the highest number of researchers per thousand inhabitants, 37.1 per thousand (data of 2005) and with one of the greatest concentrations of scientific institutions in Italy. The scientific and technological entities of Trieste and its province as a whole are named **Sistema Trieste**. The history of what in the last decades has become known as the Science City, begins at the end of the 19th century with the birth in Trieste of various scientific institutions, such as the **Astronomical observatory** (1898), and the establishment of associations that dealt with Karst phenomena, speleology, geophysics and marine biology. The real change in science occurred in 1961 thanks to the meeting between Professor Paolo Piccardi and Pakistani physicist Abul Salam, who proposed to the IAEA the establishment of an international centre for physics based in Trieste, which allowed the collaboration of scientists from countries of



The **Timavo** (Reka) is a **mysterious and fascinating river**, the underground course of which is still partly unknown. It springs on the slopes of Mount Snehnik, in Slovenia, and flows on the surface for about 50 km on impermeable grounds up to the Škocjan caves (Slo) where it sinks in the bowels of the earth to reappear, after 40 km of almost completely unknown course, in San Giovanni di Duino



In the province of Trieste lives the most numerous **Slovenian-speaking community** of the region; Slovenian is spoken almost all over the territory by those who belong to the minority. Therefore, the Slovenian culture is very strong and deep-rooted. Every two years on Trieste's Karst (Research Area) in 1981 and the **Academy of sciences for the developing world**, followed. The **Immaginario Scientifico** was opened in 1986 and the **Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Centre** in 1987. In the following year the **International Centre for Science and High Technology (ICHS)** was established in the city. In 1993 the **Elettra Synchrotron** in Basovizza was inaugurated in the presence of the highest authorities of the State. The Sistema Trieste is now reality.



To the south of the Karst, on the border with Slovenia, is the enchanting town of Muggia. The town provides evidence of first settlements that date back to the Bronze Age. From **931 A.D.** it was under the patriarchate of Aquileia and in 1420 it passed to the **Republic of Venice**, under which it remained until 1797, a fief of the Venetian possessions in Istria



with three sources. After less than two kilometres it flows in the **Adriatic sea**, in the Gulf of Panzano. However, the underground Timavo **river hides** other mysteries. The resurfacing points have changed over the centuries: this is also confirmed by the documents of the past centuries. Seven mouths and seven courses, wrote the Greek geographer Strabo in the 1st century B.C., while in the first book



of the Aeneid Virgil recalled that "through nine mouths pours the rushing tide amid the mountain's dreary moans, and covers the fields with hoarse waters". Seven mouths are mentioned again in 1556 when bishop Andrea Rupic wrote: "here are the pools of the Timavo; where it is nice to see the fresh and crystal-clear waters flow out of seven whirlpools".



hen parties, the serenade (podok-nuce) under the belle's balcony, the transport of the bride's goods to the new house on a cart. Obviously, everyone is dressed in the traditional costumes. The rite is celebrated in the Stronghold of Monrupino and is valid for civil and religious purposes. Ideal for those who want to understand the traditions of this territory is a visit to the museum of the **Karst House** in Rupingrande, which reconstructs the environments of a typical rustic house.

To the north Trieste's Karst contains many signs left by the First World War on its territory, is like an outdoor history museum.

