



ADVENTURE
EDELWEISS TOURS

BALKAN ADVENTURE

Through the wildest parts of Europe in two weeks – true
adventure can be so close!

RIDING DAY 1 : ZAGREB - PLITVICE LAKES

Standard Route (181 km / 112 miles)

We start this adventurous journey across the Western Balkans leaving Zagreb - capital of Croatia - behind us. We ride first towards the Slovenian border in Bregana, climbing afterwards a small and twisty road across the Žumberak and Samobor Mountains. After some photos in this remote area we stop by a Greek-Catholic neo-Byzantine church. Later on, passing through Karlovac, one of the major cities in this region, we continue until the picturesque town of Slunj on the Korana river. Here we can rest and enjoy a local lunch. From here the ride to Plitvice is not too long. We are trying to get there early in the afternoon, allowing us enough time to hike around the lakes and waterfalls of this wonderful national park.

Highlights:

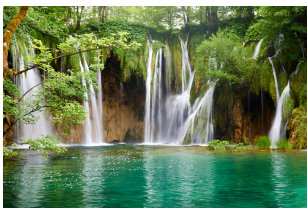
#1: Slunj



Slunj, a small town in the mountainous part of Central Croatia, is situated along the North-South route to the Adriatic Sea between Karlovac and Plitvice Lakes National Park, where the rivers Korana and Slunjčica meet. First mentioned in the 12th century, it was an old fortification built by the Frankopans during the war against the Turks. Rastoke, the historical center of Slunj, features several old

mills along the rapids of the river.

#2: Plitvice Lakes National Park



The National Park Plitvicka Jezera is 295 km², of which the 16 lakes cover 2.2 km². The lakes are situated in hilly forests and are all connected through waterfalls, cascades and small creeks. The clear, turquoise water is unique and breathtaking. In 1979 UNESCO declared the lakes a World Heritage nature site. This status helped save the beautiful area during the civil war in 1991-1995. The hotels around

the area were used as Serbian army bases and are now homes for various locals. The National Park has 900.000 visitors per year.

RIDING DAY 2 : PLITVICE LAKES - SARAJEVO

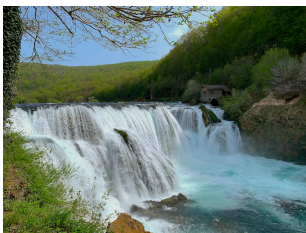
Standard Route (407 km / 253 miles)

After leaving the lush forest of Plitvice lakes behind us, in less than one hour we reach the first border crossing of our journey. As soon as we enter Bosnia, the transition from Christianity to Islam becomes clear: church bell towers are here replaced by elegant and slender minarets. In Bihac we can enjoy a coffee along the Una river. This beautiful river will accompany us for a while as we ride along its valley on a road full of sweeping curves.

In the afternoon we pass by two picturesque villages - Jajce and Travnik - before immersing ourselves in the urban landscape of Sarajevo, the vibrant Bosnian capital.

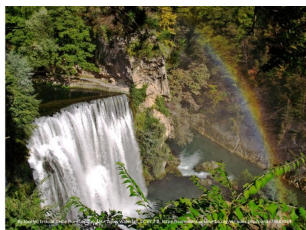
Highlights:

#1: Una National Park



Una National Park is the largest in Bosnia and Herzegovina and was established in 2008. It protects the pristine Una River and its tributaries Krka and Unac. The park, which covers an area of almost 200 square kilometers, impresses with its many waterfalls and rapids, and dense vegetation. It is a paradise for kayakers, hikers, anglers, and all others who enjoy nature.

#2: Jajce



The first thing you see once you get to Jajce is its magnificent 17-meter high waterfall in the very heart of the town, making Jajce one of the most unique towns in the world. The royal town was built on the confluence of two great rivers; the Pliva and the Vrbas. In the town you can visit a variety of monuments, museums, lakes, watermills, and enjoy the beautiful nature.

Jajce was the capital of Bosnian Kingdom during the 14th century. It has significant historical importance but it's also one of the most visited tourist destination. The famous waterfall where Pliva River meets Vrbas River presents unique beauty of wild nature. Visiting the Royal Fortress, Mlincici complex, Pliva springs and Katakombe Museum will take your breath away. (www.musement.com)

#3: Travnik



Travnik is situated in the valley of the Lasva River and bordered by Vlasic Mountain to the north and Mount Vilenica to the south. The early Slav settlers gave little evidence of their presence until 500 years after their arrival to the area around Travnik.

The valley reappeared in 1244, in terms of primary historical records, when the Hungarian King Bela IV gave one of his notables a piece of land in Lasva. By that time,

the area was a feudal estate of the Bosnian state.

Although remains from these centuries do not show the wealth the valley had known in Roman times, the era did have its share of castles and mansions. The Travnik Fortress was the most impressive fortress at the time, and still stands out as the best preserved of them all. This era gave Travnik its name.

The Ottoman era renewed the glory of Travnik. It was the principal city and military centre of the Ottoman Empire. It was from here that the Ottomans planned their invasions further towards the southwest. They brought mosques, religious schools, roads and water systems. They fortified the medieval fortress and built a mini-city within its high stone walls. For over 150 years, the vizier – the Ottoman Sultan's representative in Bosnia - had his headquarters in this town, attracting both consulates and trade. Travelers visiting Travnik in this era were impressed by the town and called it the European Istanbul and the most oriental town in Bosnia. (www.bhtourism.ba)

RIDING DAY 3 : SARAJEVO

Standard Route (88 km / 55 miles)

After the very long ride we had yesterday - and considering all the next adventurous days across the Balkans waiting for us - we think that today a rest day without motorbike is the best choice. Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is a wonderful city that will enchant you with its charm. Situated in the greater Sarajevo valley and surrounded by the Dinaric Alps, Sarajevo can count on a 600 years old history of multiculturalism and the coexistence of several religions. It is often called the "Jerusalem of Europe" or the "Jerusalem of the Balkans". During the Balkan wars many of its architectural treasures have been damaged but nowadays it's in full swing after the renovation. The old center will surely blow your mind, with a unique mixture of European middle age and Moresque flair.

If you feel like riding today as well, we have prepared a short loop of a couple of hours along some backroads on the mountains surrounding the city.

Highlights:

#1: Sarajevo



Sarajevo's history dates back to the Middle Ages; at first it was a slavic settlement, later part of the Ottoman Empire and then part of Austria-Hungary. In Sarajevo Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated, an event that led to the first world war. After 1945 Sarajevo belonged to the socialist part of the world and hosted the 1984 Olympic winter games.

But the history of Bosnia's only real metropolis is still overshadowed by the Balkan War. The name conjures up pictures of burning houses, artillery fire, crying children and mourning people. The war ended in November 1995.

Since then Sarajevo has changed a lot. Today you can hear the muezzin and pop music at the same time, smell Čevapčići and water pipe. The old town is full of tourists, many from the Gulf Countries, most buildings have been restored - ottoman, royal or socialist and all the modern buildings that were added in recent years. It's not easy to distinguish between the Sarajevo of yesterday and today. (www.zeit.de)

One afternoon to discover Sarajevo is not much. It's best to take a local guide who can remember the days of the war.

RIDING DAY 4 : SARAJEVO - KOLAŠIN

Standard Route (262 km / 163 miles)

Today we cross another border: in the morning we ride across the mountains of southern Bosnia and then we enter Montenegro, one of the newest country in Europe. In the past, before becoming part of Yugoslavia after World War I, Montenegro has been a fiery independent kingdom. He fought for independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1697 and afterwards thanks to its mountainous territory it managed to protect its freedom.

Right after the border we enter the rough Durmitor National Park, climbing the pass Prevoj Sedlo at 1907 m, often closed for snow until May.

Descending towards the valley we reach the bridge over the Tara Canyon. Here it's possible to get an adrenaline kick with the zipline across the gorge. From here it's another hour and a half of curves until we arrive in Kolašin, where we can rest after this great ride.

Highlights:

#1: Durmitor National Park



Durmitor is a stunning limestone massif located in Northern Montenegro and belonging to the Dinaric Alps or Dinarides. It is also the name of Montenegro's largest protected area, the Durmitor National Park, which constitutes the heart of a landscape shaped by glaciers, numerous rivers and underground streams of which are embedded in the much larger Tara River Basin Biosphere Reserve. Some fifty peaks higher than 2,000 metres above sea level rise above

plateaus, alpine meadows and forests, including Bobotov Peak (2,525 metres above sea level). Numerous glacial lakes, locally known as "mountain eyes", cover the landscape.

Durmitor National Park's exceptional scenic beauty has been shaped by glaciers and rivers. The alpine meadows on plateaus and smooth hills are set against the stark backdrop of the numerous high and rugged peaks. The dense forests and the glacial lakes add to the scenic diversity and appeal. The most dramatic elements of the spectacular mountain landscape are the deep river canyons, most notably the famous Tara River Gorge, Europe's deepest gorge and one of very few unaffected by dams and roads. (whc.unesco.org)

#2: Tara Canyon



Tara River Canyon (known as well as Tara River Gorge) is an 82 km long canyon in Montenegro and along the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina. It's one of the deepest canyons in Europe with some of its walls as high as 1300 meters (4300 feet). The canyon is part of the Durmitor National Park and listed as UNESCO World Heritage Site.

RIDING DAY 5 : KOLAŠIN - BAJRAM CURRI

Standard Route (249 km / 155 miles)

On today's table we have quite a few things for you: two mountain passes, two border crossings, two valleys for side trips, over 300km of riding across three countries (one of them still disputed).

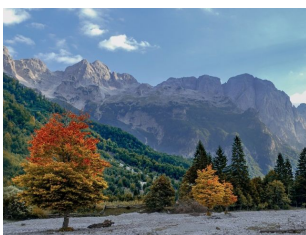
Soon after leaving Kolašin we climb Prevoj Trešnjevik for some mountain vistas. Then we proceed to the border with Kosovo.

Here the traffic is a bit crazier than in Montenegro, you better watch for anything that moves along the road. Kosovo, while still being officially part of Serbia, declared its independence in 2008. The territorial debate is still heated: some states recognise Kosovo as a country, while some others claim it's a province of Serbia. It's definitely a delicate matter and we will treat this as such.

Our final destination today is not in Kosovo, though, but in Albania - the fifth country of our tour. Once we arrive in Bajram Curri you have two options: if you are satisfied with the ride and want to enjoy some rest you can check-in at the hotel. Otherwise, if you prefer to ride more, Valbona Valley is out there, with a nice road towards the mountains of Albania.

Highlights:

#1: Valbona valley



The Valbona Valley National Park, covering 80 km², is located in the Albanian Alps, which are one of the most impressive and notable topographic features of Albania. Being the southernmost continuation of the Dinaric Alps, they form a section of the Alpine-Himalayan orogenic belt, which extends from the Atlantic Ocean to the Himalaya Mountains. The mountains are characterized by limestone and dolomite rocks and show major karst features.

RIDING DAY 6 : BAJRAM CURRI - PRIZREN

Standard Route (170 km / 106 miles)

Today we have a new highlight for you: the 100 km curves challenge. Soon after leaving Bajram Curri we reach the dam of the Fierza reservoir. From here it's an endless sequence of tight curves, until the end of the lake in Kolsch. At some point you might even dream for a straight road. Keep your concentration level high and your speed comfortable: you will truly enjoy this road safely.

We cross the border again, leaving Albania and entering Kosovo. We can have our lunch in Prizen, between the bridge near the mosque and an orthodox church.

In the afternoon we will have time to walk around the old town of Prizren, one of the most beautiful of entire Kosovo.

Highlights:

#1: The 100 km curves challenge



Between Fierzë and Kolsh there is an incredible dream road for us motorcyclists that follows the Drin reservoir. 100 km of very tight S-curves, one after another, endlessly. We will need at least 3 hours to cover this distance.

#2: Prizren



Situated in southern Kosovo and bordering Albania and Northern Macedonia, Prizren is a town with over two millennia of history. First controlled by the Romans, then occupied by Albanians, Slav, Bulgarians, and later on, became part of the Serbian Empire. In 1455 Prizren surrendered to the Ottoman Empire, which shaped his culture and architecture for many centuries. Nowadays the mixture of Albanian, Serbian, Bosnian, and Turkish (all official languages of the municipality) is a testament to its diverse and turbulent history.

RIDING DAY 7 : PRIZREN - OHRID

Standard Route (293 km / 182 miles)

Right after leaving Prizren behind us, we can stop for a photo at the old Serbian Orthodox Monastery of the Holy Archangels. Then we follow the road towards the Macedonian border: another curvy delight, twisty and narrow through the verdant forest. Before arriving at lake Mavrovo we stop for some interesting sights in the town of Tetovo, such as the colorful Painted Mosque (Šarena Džamija), originally built in 1438 and beautifully decorated in the interior.

After lunch, we soon reach Lake Mavrovo and the national park in which it is located. The deep blue reservoir can be circumnavigated on a narrow, winding road, which takes about an hour. You can also swim in the lake, but the water is not particularly warm.

Ohrid, our destination for the day, is located on the lake of the same name and is one of the most beautiful places in the Balkans. A photo of the iconic church of St. John of Kaneo with the lake in the background is an absolute must!

Highlights:

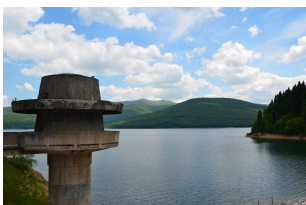
#1: Tetovo



Tetovo has been under the influence of many empires; from the Mycenae and Illyrians, to the Romans, Byzantines, and Ottomans, giving the town a variety of cultures. The main attractions of Tetovo are its historic structures. The Šarena Džamija (The Painted Mosque), built in 1438 and rebuilt in 1833, is located near the Pena River in the old part of town. It is one of the most important cultural and

historical structures of Tetovo and represents the style of early Ottoman architecture.

#2: Lake Mavrovo



Lake Mavrovo, abundant with trout, is a popular summer destination for boating, fishing and swimming. It is located within the Mavrovo National park, containing three Alpine mountain ranges: the Šar, Korab and Bistra mountains. These mountains are famous for snowy jagged peaks - exceptionally high for the region, reaching 2700 m - and green grassy plateaus.

RIDING DAY 8 : OHRID - SKOPJE

Standard Route (267 km / 166 miles)

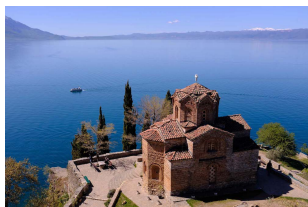
In the past days, we have unveiled roads in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania, and North Macedonia. Today we will stay in Northern Macedonia and tomorrow we will reach the seventh (and the easternmost) country of our journey across the Balkans: Serbia.

We start in Ohrid, a town that should not be left behind without taking some photos at the emblematic St. John the Theologian church with the deep blue lake in the background.

Later on, once we climb the sweepers between Lake Ohrid and Lake Prespa, plenty of other vistas will delight us. If the weather is sunny we can enjoy our lunch on a wonderful spot on the Lake Prespa, before hitting some highway to get faster towards Skopje, the capital of Northern Macedonia.

Highlights:

#1: Lake Ohrid



Being the largest and most beautiful out of Macedonia's three tectonic lakes, Lake Ohrid is about 30 kilometers (18 miles) long and round 288 meters (945 feet) deep. Its astonishingly clean and clear waters, together with the serene stillness of its mountain settings have captivated visitors since prehistoric times. While the lake is filled up by water from three rivers, most of Ohrid's water comes from

another lake - Prespa which is located on the other side of Mountain Galicica. Due to its higher elevation, Prespa spills its water down to Ohrid through mountain springs. With its unique flora and fauna characteristic of the tertiary period (2-4 million years ago), Ohrid is one of Europe's great biological reserves. Most of the lake's plant and animal species are endemic and unique to Ohrid. The most famous among these are two types of the Ohrid trout, named letnica and belvica.

Lake Ohrid straddles the mountainous border between southwestern Macedonia and eastern Albania. It is one of Europe's deepest and oldest lakes, preserving a unique aquatic ecosystem that is of worldwide importance, with more than 200 endemic species. The importance of the lake was further emphasized when it was declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1979 and when, in 2010, NASA decided to name one of Titan's lakes after Lake Ohrid. (www.exploringmacedonia.com)

RIDING DAY 9 : SKOPJE - NIŠ

Standard Route (272 km / 169 miles)

It's time to leave Northern Macedonia and to move forward in our Balkan adventure. Today we will enter Serbia, the last country on our tour and the former "core" of Yugoslavia, as Belgrade (Serbian capital) used to be capital of Yugoslavia as well.

We enter the country from south, using a secondary mountain border crossing, trying to avoid the queue of the main border down in the valley. Soon after entering Serbia we will visit one of its many old Orthodox monasteries: the Venerable Prohor Pčinjski in Starac, founded under the Bizantine emperor Romanus IV. It has been renovated in the early 14th century, and it was destroyed shortly after by the Ottomans. Eventually it was rebuilt some decades later.

We continue to ride until we reach Vlasina lake, where we can rest a bit and enjoy a Serbian lunch. Just a hint: not for vegetarians.

In the afternoon our ride takes us through hilly backroads at the feet of the mountain area called Stara Planina until we reach our destination for the night.

Highlights:

#1: Vlasina Lake



Vlasina lake is the largest and highest artificial lake in Serbia. It lies at about 1200 m on a plateau surrounded by the mountains of Čemernik, Vardenik, and Gramada. One of the lake's most famous features is the floating islands. The largest of such island has an area of 2 hectares and it is referred to as "Moby Dick" by the locals.

#2: Stara Planina



Stara Planina, located in southeast Serbia, is the westernmost part of the Balkan Mountain Range, which runs for 560 km across southern Serbia and northern Bulgaria, ending in the Black Sea. These mountains are the source of the name of the Balkan Peninsula.

RIDING DAY 10 : NIŠ - BELGRADE

Standard Route (362 km / 225 miles)

For today we have prepared a fantastic ride across East Serbia. There are so many highlights along the route that we must make some choices if we want to get to Belgrade before dinner.

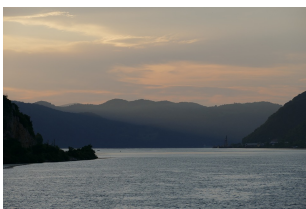
In the morning we explore the mountains of eastern Serbia along some backroads. Continuing our ride, we meet the Danube river in Donji Milanovac. Here we can have a traditional Vlach lunch in a wonderful setting, overlooking the Danube. If we want to extend our ride for another 80 km, we can take a side trip towards the so-called Danube's Iron Gate, a scenic gorge along the river.

If archeology interests you more, another option will be to visit Lepenski Vir, an archeological exhibition about the prehistoric settlement in this area, dating 7000 BC.

Our ride to Belgrade follows for a bit the Danube, stopping for a photo by Golubac fortress, before taking the highway and dribbling the city traffic to reach our hotel in the frenetic Belgrade.

Highlights:

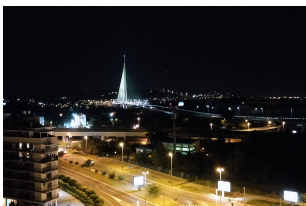
#1: Lower Danube



The Danube Gorge is special because, for 9 kilometers, the Danube narrows to about 230 meters. In this narrow place, the Danube flows much quicker and that's why it's also called the Danube Boilers since here you can see numerous vortices that give you the sensation that the water is boiling. Here, the maximum depth is about 75 meters! It's a show for tourists but a nightmare for navigators who have

to struggle with the changing water speed and the narrowness.

#2: Belgrade



Belgrade, capital of Serbia and before that capital of Yugoslavia, is the most populous city in the Balkans. For long time it was regarded as the gate point between the Eastern and the Western Europe, between Islam and Christianity. The natural divide were the Sava and the Danube rivers, which are merging in Belgrade.

RIDING DAY 11 : BELGRADE - SLAVONSKI BROD

Standard Route (315 km / 196 miles)

We continue our discovery of the Balkans leaving Serbia's capital behind us and moving north-west. The first part of the ride will be on the highway to get out of the urban area, reaching soon a quiet village for a photo stop. After Sremski Karlovci in Vojvodina we visit Petrovaradin Fortress, built at the feet of Fruška Gora and overlooking the town of Novi Sad.

We ride along the Danube until the border with Croatia and once we reach Ilok we enjoy our lunch in one of the oldest wine cellars of Croatia. A short tour of the winery is possible as well: too bad we can't savour their wines during our ride. You can still check the shop and take with you a bottle for the evening, though.

In the afternoon we pass through some areas where the houses still carry the sign of the recent Balkan war, reminding us the difficult time these regions have been facing. Before reaching Slavonski Brod, the destination for tonight, we stop by in Dakovo for a coffee and a photo of its impressive cathedral.

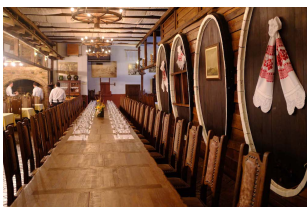
Highlights:

#1: Petrovaradin Fortress



Petrovaradin Fortress was built in the 16th century during the Austrian domination. The construction took 88 years, creating a structure extended over 110 hectares, with moats, steep walls, channels, control gates and movable bridges. In the mid-20th century it has been completely demilitarized and now it hosts the Museum and Archive of Novi Sad.

#2: Ilok



Situated on a hill overlooking the Danube river - forming the border with Serbia in this region - Ilok is a small Croatian town famous for its thousand-year long winemaking tradition. This area has ideal condition for vine cultivation and its wines have earned international awards and recognitions. The oldest wine cellar, Stari Podrum, offers guided visits and has a restaurant.

RIDING DAY 12 : SLAVONSKI BROD - ZAGREB

Standard Route (276 km / 171 miles)

Today is the last day of this Balkan adventure, and we have prepared another unforgettable ride for you. In the morning we will visit Lipik for a coffee break and its famous Lipizzaner horses.

Later on we reach Jasenovac at the confluence of the river Una into Sava. Here another tragic chapter of the World War II was written: this was the place of a large Croatian concentration camp, where prisoners were mostly Serbs. Now there is a Holocaust memorial, to remember the atrocities of the war. The wounds from the war (both World War and Balkan War) are in this region still vivid.

In the afternoon, before arriving again in Zagreb - where it all began - we follow the course of Sava river and we stop in Sisak to visit the well-preserved 16th century fortress, a symbol of the cooperation between Croats, Austrians and Slovenes to stop further expansion of the Ottoman Empire to the West.

Our final destination is not far anymore, and we are soon concluding this long trip across eight countries with a cold pivo or a rakija.

Our journey across the regions of the former Yugoslavia is not only a road trip: it is a meditative journey between past and present, between nostalgia for a bygone splendor and a strong initiative for constructing a brighter future.

Highlights:

#1: Lipizzaner horses




Lipik hosts a Lipizzan stable that had been built in 1843 under the Habsburg Monarchy. It had previously enjoyed state recognition in Yugoslavia between 1938 and the 1950s, when it was closed in favor of the stable in Lipica, Slovenia. It was reopened in 1981, but then during the Croatian War of Independence the horses were evacuated and taken to Novi Sad, Serbia, where they remained until

their negotiated return in 2007.

#2: Sisak Fortress



The fortress Sisak is located at the mouth of the Kupa in the Sava, and is therefore partially protected in a natural way by water. The triangular fortress was built in the 16th century and is well preserved to this day. The fortress was built because of the threat of Turkish conquests to protect Croatian territories, between 1544 and 1550.



We wish you a wonderful tour.

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