



# Slovenia

## Flyfishing Paradise

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Last year we were in Slovenia for the first time. We fished mainly Trebuscica and the upper parts of Idrijca because other rivers were flooded and discolored. Despite challenging conditions, it was the best fishing trip of our lives. Slovenia conquered our hearts and so we were forced to return.

**S**UR TRIP BEGAN on Friday 13th of May at Helsinki-Vantaa airport. Our plane landed in Ljubljana 11:45 am. The weather was cloudy but warm. This year we decided to take a guide with us and so the excellent Slovenian guide Matevž Jus was waiting for us at the airport.

We talked over our plans with Matevž and were excited to hear that the water conditions were good in Soča. Last year Soča had such poor conditions that we weren't able to fish there. Now that we had a chance to fish in Soča, we decided to go there at once.

As we got closer to our destination, the views were

magnificent. We climbed up to 1400 meters, driving on narrow and curvy roads down to the valley.

We arrived at the junction of the rivers Lepenja and Soca. The water was crystal clear and we were soon able to spot the first marble trout. This sight got us so excited that we immediately started to tackle up; our hands shaking in anticipation. After few minutes we had the first fish on but, as is so often the case, the fish was cleverer than we were.

Lepenja is a nice small river full of enticing pools and lots of fish and is Matevž's favorite river in Slovenia. We walked up the river for a while until we found a nice spot to fish. After a few casts we had a fish on. It turned out to be a big grayling, but

after a short fight the fish got off.

We split up into two groups and started to fish in different places. I spent some time walking and admiring the views. I found a nice pool, where I spotted a rainbow trout feeding from the surface; after few casts the fish accepted my fly. It was a nice small rainbow, but an important one because it was the first one of the trip.

Ville also succeeded in getting a beautiful rainbow trout from Lepenja. That first day was a nice way to start our trip: perfect views, six rainbows and a lot of fun.



**Fishing team from Finland.**

## Day 2 Towards Soca...

Last year we really enjoyed the village and apartment where we stayed, and so chose the same apartment again. Our apartment was in Most na SoDi, which is a comfortable little village.

After morning breakfast we called to Matevz to come and pick us up from our apartment. The weather looked very promising; there were

some clouds but it was otherwise clear.

Cheerful as ever, Matevz arrived at our apartment and we decided to drive to Tolmin to buy a fishing license. In Slovenia fishing licenses are easy to obtain because they are sold in many places, even in small villages. We bought our licenses from a hotel in Tolmin and there we found a mummy of a dead Marble trout that

came from a bank in Soca River and which was over 120cm long.

We continued our trip on the Soca River and I was very excited to see what the middle parts of the river looked like. We parked our car and ran to the river.

'Wow, perfect,' I said, as I gazed at the turquoise colored water and saw several big fish moving around.

Matevz said that the water level was quite low and added that the fishing would be very difficult as the fish were easily scared and were very fussy. Sure enough, the fish spotted us before we spotted them. It is challenging but rewarding fishing, if you are lucky to hook some fish. Aleksi had the first try at the marble trout that we spotted.

We continued our trip higher up the Soca River where the fishing became very challenging. Ville and I found a nice pool that held lots of fish. We tied little size 16 PT-nymphs into our leaders. Ville had the first try and sneaked behind a bush to cast. After a few casts a fish took the PT-nymph and the line was soon running off the

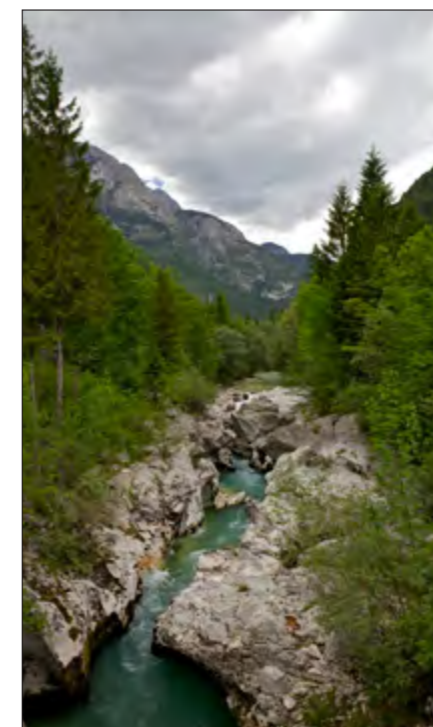
reel. Not a big fish, but its strength was impressive.

For the next few hours we were able to hook fish, but our leaders just couldn't take the pressure and we lost fight after fight; it was starting to get hopeless. Eventually I was able to land a rainbow trout. What a relief.

Although the day was difficult, we manage to land three rainbows and two grayling.

## Day 3 Baca / Idričja

We rose at 8:00 a.m. to the sound of heavy rain, which is what we had prayed for. Usually, if it's raining heavily, Soca discolors quickly, so we



**Some parts of Soca flow through canyons.**

decided to go and check if the water would be clear in Baca or Idričja.

Baca River was pretty clear in the morning and we spotted some feeding fish. After only thirty minutes of fishing, the first fish was in the net.

The weather deteriorated and the rain became heavy; at which point we decided go for some food. Then we drove to Idričja. The water was muddy and I wasn't able to spot any fish. Anyway, I decided to show Wiljami how to catch a fish. I made my first cast and a fish was on. It turned out to be a Barbel (or Barbel trout as we laughingly called it). It was an extremely beautiful fish with a nice mustache!

After fishing we decided to go



**First fish of the trip.**



**Ville photographing the lake in our backyard.**

Stunning view from our Apartment in Villa Labod.



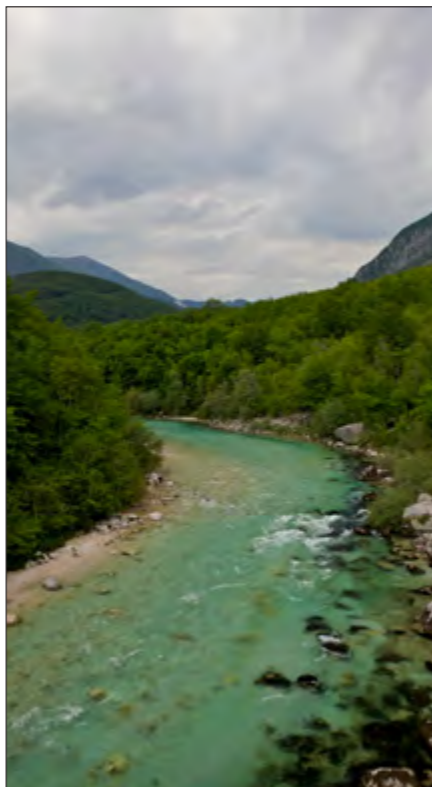
**Over 120cm long Marble trout trophy. !**

to a familiar and safe location, the restaurant Slap, where we enjoyed pizza and just a ‘few’ krappas. We deserved them after a wet fishing day.

When the krappa bottle was empty, Matevz drove us to our apartment, where we watched the hockey final, Finland VS Sweden. And what a match it was. Finland won the World Championship 6-1!

#### Day 4 Trebuscica

In the morning some of the boys had a bit of a hangover. After breakfast we waited for Matevz at the nearest cafe and we enjoyed the nice weather. It was twenty three degrees and there was some cloud in the sky. It didn't



**The Soca.**

rain during the night so the water would be clear.

Matevz arrived and promised to show us some new places on Trebuscica. We parked our car near Trebuscica and walked through a forest to the river.

Ville and I immediately liked the first place Matevz showed us and we spent most of the day there. We spotted about ten fish and drew lots to decide who would have the first cast. Our spirits were dampened as the fish proved to be difficult to catch and hours passed without any fish being caught. Eventually Ville put on a 0.12mm leader and a size #20 Hares ear nymph. A few casts later and a fish was hooked. The fish, a nice big rainbow, jumped four times and fought well.

I decided to try something different and put a three centimeter long streamer on my leader and started to short strip in the front of the fish. And it worked. After some follows I hooked a nice rainbow trout.

It was an enjoyable, but challenging day. Conditions were excellent, but the fishing wasn't easy; each of the five fish we landed required hard work and persistence.

#### Day 5 Lepenja Soca

The weather looked promising as Aleksi and Jani went to Lepenja and Ville, Matevz and I went to the upper reaches of Lepenja.

I took a few pictures in the Lepenja and Ville started fishing while I was photographing. After the photo sessions we packed our gear



**Spotting a Marble.**

and headed to the Soca River. We spent a nice day in Soca. We climbed the high rocks and spot fished mainly using dry flies and nymphs. Ville and I caught ten rainbows and I also experienced the thrill of having a sixty centimeter fish on.

Jani and Aleksi also had a lot of ‘fun’. Jani dropped his new Canon d70 camera in the river. He was also broken playing a fifty centimeter fish. Aleksi also had an over fifty centimeter fish on, before Jani decided to hit the fish on the head with a net. The fish went crazy and decided to head downstream at breakneck speed, leaving Aleksi with a broken leader and an apologetic hug from Jani.

#### Day 6 Idricja / Trophy Zone

A warm day; 25 degrees and sunshine promised another difficult fishing day.

Last year Idricja saved our trip to Slovenia; it was here we enjoyed the best sport and we were naturally excited to go there again. When we arrived, we noticed that the water



**Ville in action.**

level was very low and clear. Also there was a lot of other fisherman, which wasn't ideal. Fishermen had gathered from several countries, including Italy, Austria and others from across Europe. Fortunately, Slovenia is big enough for all of us.

We started to spot fish and saw some big ones moving around near the surface. We allowed Aleksandra to go first on the 'hottest spot' we knew on the river. It was in this spot that Ville had caught ten fish the previous year. Matevz was watching while Alekski was putting his gear up and offered some tips and a dry fly from his box. It didn't take many casts before the first small rainbow was on.

After that the other boys went upstream with Matevz to check other parts of the river. Meanwhile, Alekski



**Aleksi with 60cm Rainbow.**

saw a big grayling feeding eagerly. On the first cast the grayling came for the fly, but the pressure was too much for Alekski and he pulled the fly before the take. On the third cast the fly was taken and the fish was landed and

measured an impressive 49 cm.

Twilight begins at seven o'clock In Slovenia. It is very dark by nine o'clock and you have to stop fishing as fishing in the dark is prohibited. Twilight is the most productive

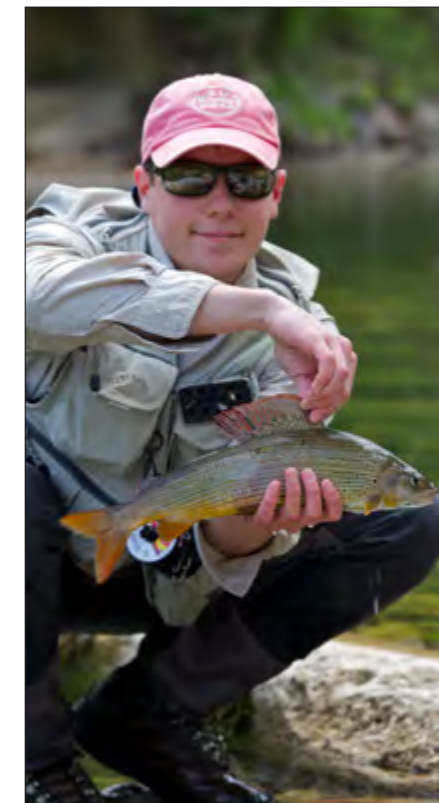


**Joni behind a big grayling.**



**Ville and Rainbow Trout.**

time as the fish start to feed from the surface and they aren't so easily scared. I put a dry fly on my leader and was aware of a lot of feeding activity. It seemed that there were fish everywhere. I tried everything but could not tempt a fish. Then I remembered a fly that worked well in Northern Sweden that is intended to imitate a fly that is causing a lot of disturbance on the surface. I tied the fly to my leader and started to strip the fly slowly. Almost immediately I felt a huge hit on the fly and a heavy fish rushed to the bottom of the river. Eventually I netted a big beautifully marked rainbow. It was the prettiest rainbow I have ever landed; it had large, perfectly shaped fins and a glorious spotting and coloration. This fish saved my day.



**Beautiful Grayling with a dry fly**

After this fish the evening had become quite dark, but I continued fishing. On the first cast I had another huge hit on my fly. Once again the line was running off the reel, but this big one was stronger than my leader, which snapped. You can't win them all, so I decided it was time to join the boys in the Slap restaurant to go over what had been a difficult but rewarding day.

## Day 7 Trebuscica Soca / Lepenja

Ville and I decided to spend our last day fishing in Trebuscica. The others drove to Soca and Lepenja. We spotted several feeding fish and so quickly tied dry flies onto our leaders. We

## Fact File

Soca River is renowned for its exceptional fly fishing for trout and grayling, and is widely regarded by fly fishers as one of the most beautiful streams in the world.

The quality of the fish is excellent and Soca is rightly famous for its marble trout population. Just a couple of years ago they caught a 22,5kg marble trout.

In addition to these, there are populations of trout, hybrid trout, grayling and rainbow trout. The grayling also grow big in the river, and hooking a 60cm grayling is entirely possible. Some of the rainbow trout grow to over 80cm long.

The water comes down from the mountains, so it is very cold throughout the year. The temperature doesn't rise over +8C even on hot days. When it's raining the water colors up and rises quickly. This is the best time to catch a big marble trout with a streamer.

### TREBUSCICA

Trebuscica is one of my favorite rivers in Slovenia. The water is similar to Soca; turquoise and crystal clear. It remains clear even after rain. On Trebuscica you need to walk moderate distances to reach the pools and the terrain is challenging at times. Even though the river is rather small there are lots of deep pools where you can find really big fish. On Trebuscica you will experience challenging, but very enjoyable fishing, free from crowds of fishermen.

### SIGHT FISHING

As you may have noticed, a lot of our fishing was sight fishing, which is a common method in Slovenia. The fish can be easily spotted in some places, but in others you need to concentrate on the likely holding areas. I particularly enjoy this type of fishing. Our guide Matevz told us that there are four key factors for successful sight fishing.

Ensure you have a stealthy approach. It is

very easy to scare fish before you are in position to make a cast.

It takes patience to spot the fish. When you first arrive at the river, you will struggle to spot the fish, even though there are many in the pool. Don't get frustrated, as your ability to spot fish will improve the more you focus.

Ensure you present the fly in the right way. In these circumstances thin leaders have major significance. The fly should move in the water the same way as the normal food of the fish.

Last but not least, you need to strike quickly to hook these fish. I didn't expect that this would be the hardest part of the job, but Slovenian fish spit the fly quickly. This is easier said than done of course, but practice makes perfect.

### GUIDE

I suggest you to hire a guide. Many people have gotten frustrated trying to learn the rivers on their own. Knowing the right places, techniques, flies and how to approach the fish cannot be learned overnight. A guide costs extra, but will add so much to your fishing that it is an important investment. A guide can also help plan your route so that you spend more time fishing and less time driving around in circles.

I like to fish with light tackle that is sufficient for the river and the size of the fish. I mainly fished with a three weight 7'9" rod. I also brought four and six weight rods. We mostly used 0.12-0.15mm fluorocarbon leaders. It is worth noting that in Slovenia you are allowed to use only one fly at time.

Food in Slovenia is good and cheap. A good meal can be purchased from local restaurants for less than €10 and cold Union beer with the food for €2. If you are accommodated near Most Na Soci, I warmly recommend the restaurant Slap. The restaurant is located by the river Idricja, so you can spot the fish while enjoying good food. ■

fished for a while but could not tempt any fish. I decided to try a lighter set up and changed to a 0.12mm leader and small dry fly. Within just a few casts I had a fish on. I was broken once again.

I put on a new leader and the same thing happened. This was something of a dilemma; only the lighter set up would attract a fish, yet at the same time wasn't strong enough to cope with a larger fish.

Ville laughed at my skill, or rather my lack of it. I stopped fishing and walked to the river bank where I opened an ice-cold lemon-flavored beer. I couldn't think of anything more relaxing!

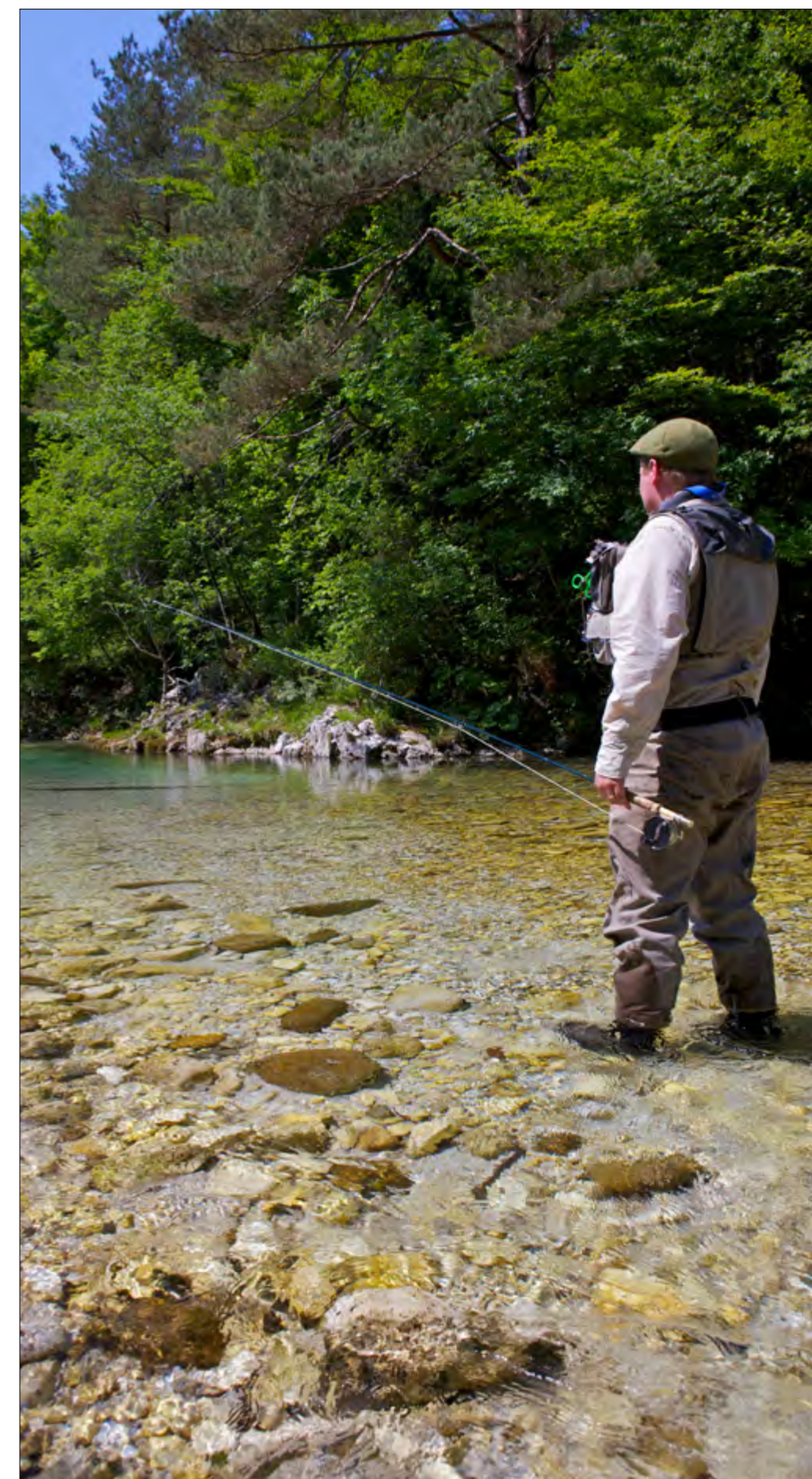
It was Ville's turn to cast to the fish. "Watch how it's done, Joni," said Wiljami. The result was three broken leaders, which made me laugh back. Dry fly fishing didn't produce for us, so we decided to try small nymphs and Ville soon hooked a big rainbow.

Meanwhile, Jani and Alekski had an unforgettable day. Alekski had a particularly memorable day, catching a sixty centimeter rainbow from Soca.

Matevz had told us that he knew a place on Soca that usually had a big marble or rainbow in it. Matevz spotted the big shadow moving in the pool and encouraged Alekski to fish from downstream to where the fish was patrolling. Alekski began making a few casts as Matevz gave directions. The first fly had no effect, so Alekski changed the fly to a size 12 brown nymph. On the second cast the fly was stopped completely, as if it were stuck on a rock. The rock started to move. After 10 minutes, Matevz was able to net the fish.

All good things come to an end and our trip to Slovenia was over for another year. We had a wonderful time and enjoyed an almost perfect holiday. We would have liked to have had a few larger fish, but that is the story for fishermen the world over.

But that's not the most important thing. For us, the company of friends and a spirit of togetherness are worth much more. Plans are now underway for next year. Slovenia will be waiting for us and new adventures will unfold. Matevz must plan new places for us to fish and tolerate the crazy Finns once again! ■



Back to the river...