

# Guide to the hinterland of the Municipality of Koper



Evropski kmetijski sklad  
za razvoj podeželja:  
Evropa investira v področje



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MESTNA OBČINA KOPER  
COMUNE CITTÀ DI CAPODISTRIA

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## Legend

 TOURIST INFORMATION	 MOUNTAIN LODGE	 CHURCH
 WALKING PATH	 AGRITOURISM	 POST OFFICE
 CYCLING PATH	 LODGING	 STORE
 DIDACTIC PATH	 GASTRONOMIC OFFER	 PETROL STATION
 VIEWPOINT	 MUSEUM	 PHARMACY
 NATURAL MONUMENT	 CASTLE	 MEDICAL HELP
 WINE PRODUCTION	 RUINS	

# 1. Bertoki, Pobegi - Čezarji, Sv. Anton

## Bertoki

The earliest references to and information on Roman sites in the area of Bertoki, Lazaret, Prade and Pobegi - Čezarji originate from the scholar Gian Rinaldo Carli of Koper, whose 18<sup>th</sup> century work "Delle antichità di Capodistria" (1743, reprinted in 1861) was one of the first to include details and critical analyses of the Roman inscriptions and other findings known at the time in Koper and the local area. In his works, Carli mentions the remains of Roman buildings and mosaics, as well as some smaller findings, particularly Roman tegulae (roofing tiles) with stamps, inscriptions, coins, etc., which Carli found on his tours of the area (the Cerej area, Arjol, etc.). In addition to the proximity of the sea coast, which enabled a number of trade routes, the area also benefited from the vicinity of important land routes, particularly the *Via Flavia*, which linked the Roman colonies of Trieste and Pula. Discovered during archaeological excavations of the site for a new motorway, the remains of an antique road at the Ankaran intersection are probably part of the ancient *Via Flavia*.

The area of Bertoki and Pobegi is also described by the Bishop of Koper, P. Naldini, in his *Ecclesiastical Chorography* (1700): "The left edge of the Rižana parish is surrounded by the fertile hills of Pobegi and Bertoki, with as many as five churches at their feet. The first is the church of St. John the Baptist in Prade, built in 1556 under the patrimonial right of the Gravisi family. Following their noble example, three other churches were built: the church of St. Michael the Archangel in Arjol, St. Thomas the Apostle in Sv. Ubald and St. Sebastian in Triban.

Built in the graveyard where plague victims were buried during the great plague of 1630–1631, the original graveyard church of the Assumption of Mary in Bertoki was made a parish church in 1635 and consecrated by Bishop Francesco Zeno in 1676. As evidenced by the memorial plaque in the sacristy, the church was renovated in the time of Bishop Antonio Maria Borromeo. The original church with a spindle bell tower was considerably smaller than the church that stands here today, which was expanded and renovated extensively between 1926 and 1928 to commemorate the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the horrific plague.

## Pobegi - Čezarji

As the earliest references to Pobegi on old geographical maps do not appear until after 1620, most researchers believe that the village name originates from one of the colonate or Uskok families that settled here in the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The village of Čezarji was probably named after the Cesare family of Koper, whose estate was located in the area. Several other noble families of Koper built their villas here too, giving the land the typical appearance of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Istrian countryside.

### Did you know?

That there is a painting of St. Anthony of the Desert by Carpaccio in the church in Sv. Anton?



Thanks to the proximity of Trieste and the development of agricultural and other activities, the population in the area grew rapidly between 1869 and 1910. In 1895, the Lending and Consumer Society was formed in Pobegi, growing into the main driving force of the village and doing excellent business. Late January 1904 saw the opening of the Pobegi National Hall, which housed the Agricultural Savings and Loans Bank from 1907.

A Consumer Society was also established in Čezarji in 1905, boasting its own inn. Until World War I, Pobegi and Čezarji enjoyed an economic and social boom, but the war brought with it great difficulties and stagnation. The fascist rule in the post-war period led to the abolition and ruin of the cooperatives, loan banks and cultural societies.

## ***Sv. Anton***

Sv. Anton, a village that grew by the road from Pobegi and Čezarji to Gračiče and Sočerga, developed in a different direction. In the Antique period, the site of today's village was a part of the immediate Koper territory (*agro municipale*). The remains of Roman settlements and graves have been found in Kortina and Pečka, while foundations of an Antique building have been discovered in Kavaliči, all testifying to the fact that the area has long been populated. 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century remains found in Kortina testify to the presence of a Slavic population. By the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Koper countryside was almost entirely Slavic, as evidenced by the agricultural act for the Koper countryside that was issued by the Venetian Republic around the year 1300. In it, the colonate inhabitants of the Koper territory, which included Sv. Aton, are consistently described as Slavic (*Sclavus vel Rusticus*). The growing numbers of Slavic immigrants arrived here mainly due to wars and plague epidemics that devastated the rural areas and left them uninhabited until they were populated mostly by people from the Balkans.

The original inhabitants of Sv. Anton are believed to have been Slavicised Vlachs, known as Morlachs, who arrived here from Bosnia and Dalmatia. Indirect evidence of the systematic settlement of Morlachs can be found in many of the documents kept in the Sv. Anton parish archive; the documents indicate that Morlach descendants with the family name Turco were highly influential members of the village community. Dealing mainly with animal husbandry, these were the families that established the settlements of Turki, Gregoriči and Kavaliči. In the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, there were some 60 houses in Sv. Anton; the settlement was known as "dvor" (court) or "kurija" (curia), since it served as the venue for colonate meetings when they wanted to discuss their common needs. It was not until later that the settlement was given the more general label of village (*villa*). Describing the village in his *Ecclesiastical Chorography* (1700), Bishop P. Naldini mentions that this was where the families of Petronio and Tacco, two of the most influential noble families of Koper, had their estates. In 1567, the parish church of St. Anthony was built on the foundations of an old oratory. The church housed the valuable painting "Mother of God with Child and Saints" (1600) by the Koper artist Zorzi Ventura Brajkovič, and Carpaccio's painting of St. Anthony of the Desert. The church was expanded again in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century; major adaptations were carried out in 1842 and in the years from 1845 to 1847, when a bell tower was built next to the church.



Čezarji



Bertoki

## ★ TOP 5:

## *Bertoki, Pobegi - Čezarji, Sv. Anton*



### Church of the Assumption of Mary with bell tower, Bertoki

Depicting the Crucifixion, the oldest and most important painting in the church was created by an unknown local artist in 1601.



### Church of St. Anthony, Sv. Anton

The main altar in the church is decorated with richly carved pillars. There is a 1567 Glagolitic inscription in the sacristy.



### Monument to Istria, Sv. Anton

Situated near the school in Sv. Anton is the monument to Istria by the academy-educated Slovenian sculptor Jože Pohlen. The monument is surrounded by cypress trees planted in honour of Tito's 88<sup>th</sup> birthday.



### Škocjanski zatok Nature Reserve

Stretching out over 122 ha, this is the largest brackish wetland in Slovenia. The area is home to countless birds and other animal species, such as Istrian cattle (boškarin) and Camargue horses.



### Wine cellars and oil sellers

Slovenian Istria is known far and wide for its excellent wines (particularly the white Malvasia and red Refosco) and superb extra virgin olive oil.



## 2. Boršt, Glem, Labor

### Boršt

Boršt is situated on the highest slope of the Bošteranski hrib hill by the Marezige–Labor road. According to oral tradition, Boršt – known as *Elpidium* in Roman times – was the birthplace of the first Bishop and patron saint of Koper, St. Nazarius or Lazarus (around 524). In the nearby settlement of Škarljevec, the locals built the church of St. Nazarius in his memory, holding annual liturgical events on 19 June, his feast day. Originally built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the succursal church of St. Roch and St. Sebastian was renovated in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. According to Bishop P. Naldini, St. Roch was the patron saint of the church, consecrated in 1534 by the Bishop of Koper, Defendo de' Valvassori. Fragments of Medieval frescoes and Glagolitic inscriptions were discovered in the church when it was renovated again in 1996.

### Glem

The settlement of *Villa Geme* was first mentioned in written sources as long ago as in 1028, namely in a deed of donation issued by the Emperor Conrad II of the Salian dynasty, who granted it to the Patriarchs of Aquileia. They in turn passed it on to various secular owners. Around the year 1300, this was the site of the Verzi estate, a noble Koper family; in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the local estate was owned by the Gravisi family. Situated at the entrance to the village, the pilgrimage church of the Assumption of Mary was expanded in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Nearby are some surviving remains of a former Venetian defence tower (*Torre di Geme*) surrounding a newer building. The tower in Glem was probably abandoned in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Two wings featuring an observation window in the top part have been preserved and incorporated into the newer building.

### Labor

Like Glem, Labor (*Laura*) is first referenced in writing in 1028, when Emperor Conrad II granted the feudal rights to the village, along with several other settlements north of the Dragonja, to the Patriarchs of Aquileia, who later passed it on to the Koper Bishopric. Under Venetian rule, this was the site of feudal estates owned by the Koper families of Verzi, Bratti, Tarsia and Gravisi, as well as Gavardo in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the graveyard church of St. Martin stands outside the village. It was renovated in 1892 and more recently in 1983. Many of the old village architectural features – balconies, vaulted passages, chimneys and stone fireplaces – have survived until the present day.

Below the village, in Hrpeljci, is the remains of a bunker that housed the Koper command from 26 November 1944 until 8 February 1945, when it was attacked by the Germans.

### Did you know?

That Boršt was the birthplace of the patron saint of Koper, St. Nazarius, who was the first Bishop of Koper according to a legend?



## ★ TOP 5:

*Boršt, Glem, Labor*  

### Church of St. Roch and St. Sebastian, Boršt

According to some sources, the church dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It is decorated with fragments of Medieval frescoes and inscriptions in the Glagolitic alphabet.



### Former partisan bunker, Boršt

In World War II, there were multiple bunkers built in Slovenian Istria. The bunker in Boršt housed the State Security Army command. It was discovered by Collotti's police and the German SS on 11 January 1944.



### Glem Castle, Glem

Known to the locals as Glem Castle, the fort was built by the Venetians in the 14<sup>th</sup> century to defend the area against Ottoman invasions.



### Church of St. Nazarius, Glem

Built in the rustic Istrian style, this is one of the few surviving churches in Slovenian Istria with a roof covered with flat stones (škrle).



### Church of St. Martin, Labor

The first written mention of the church dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It features a beautiful stone holy water font and a 21 m plastered bell tower with a preserved clock mechanism.



### 3. Črni Kal, Gabrovica

#### Črni Kal

This village is situated on a sunny slope below the edge of a Karst plain by the Koper–Ljubljana regional road. This clustered Istrian Karst village grew at the side of an important trade route from the Rižana valley into the interior of the country, particularly to Carniola. The village was famous for its vine, as reported by no less than Janez Vajkard Valvasor in his work *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*.

Above the village, on a steep rock separate from the Karst Rim, there are the remains of a former defence tower commissioned in the 11<sup>th</sup> century by the Istrian margrave Ulrich I of Weimar to protect his Istrian estates and the trade route between the Rižana valley and the Karst Plateau. An important stronghold, the village initially belonged to the Bishops of Trieste, until it passed into the hands of the Venetian Republic in 1370 when they conquered Istria. During the Austro–Venetian war (1508–1516), Črni Kal belonged to the Socerb nobility until it was annexed to Carniola in 1521. The village mainly consists of storied stone houses from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, indicating a rich tradition of stonecutting. Built in 1489 by Andrej and Benko of Sočerga, the Benko house is one of the oldest farmer's houses in Slovenia. The village centre is dominated by the succursal church of St. Valentine, renovated in the Baroque style in 1680. Situated next to the church is a freestanding bell tower built in 1802, which leans to the west by more than a metre due to the loose terrain and is a unique attraction in the area.

The village was burnt down during a German offensive in October 1943. Below the village, by the Koper–Ljubljana regional road, there is a monument to the fallen in the National Liberation War; on a bend in the road just before the turning for Osp, there is a stone sculpture in the shape of three prows, commemorating the Overseas Brigades.

The appearance of the area was altered considerably when the Črni Kal viaduct was built and opened in 2004; at 1065 m long, it is the largest and longest bridge on the Ljubljana–Koper motorway.

#### Did you know?

That the Benko house in Črni Kal is the oldest farmer's house in Slovenia?



Črni Kal



Črni Kal



## Gabrovica

Situated at the end of the Osp valley, Gabrovica comprises the settlements of Stara Gabrovica and Nova Gabrovica. The village can be found on the list of villages in the wider Koper territory as early as the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century and in the city statute of Koper dating back to 1423 and 1647 (*Gabrouiza*).

The village (*Villa Gabruiza*) belonged to the hinterland territory of Koper; after the war with Trieste in 1254, the area served as a defence strip and was a part of the Koper commune. Under Venetian rule, after the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Gabrovica and Osp belonged to the feudal estate of the noble Bratti family of Koper.

After the war between Emperor Maximilian and the Venetian Republic and the War of the League of Cambrai (1508–1516), the village, situated as it was on the border of the Koper commune, found itself at the heart of constant conflicts and disputes between the owners and subjects of the Venetian and imperial side. In the Uskok War (1615–1617), imperial forces backed by the Uskoks invaded the Venetian Istria in November 1615; among the many Venetian villages plundered and burnt to the ground were Osp, Gabrovica and Loka. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Gabrovica was designated a sub-municipality and annexed to Muggia along with Osp; later, Gabrovica was incorporated into the Dolina municipality.

The village enjoyed a lively cultural atmosphere, particularly thanks to the Slovenian Reading Society, established on 28 July 1897. The village Consumer Society was established in 1906.

Soon after the Italian occupation and the establishment of the Rapallo border, the locals began to resist the new authorities. As early as April 1919, locals from the wider area met up in Gabrovica to reach an agreement on a unified approach against the Italian authorities. In the years from 1929 to 1932, Gabrovica grew to become a hub of revolutionary and anti-Fascist activity spearheaded by Natal Kolarič and a veritable capital of the partisan movement during the National Liberation War. The village was the seat of multiple district institutions, particularly those that needed fast courier links or were required to perform their functions publicly. Gabrovica also served as a meeting point for volunteers joining the partisan army. However, the resistance activities in the village eventually came to the attention of the German occupying forces. On 8 May 1944, Gabrovica was attacked by the Germans in conjunction with the Fascist police and the Home Guard; the village was burnt down and nine villagers killed, while many others were transported to Risiera di San Sabba in Trieste or other concentration camps. Thanks to the firm, nationally conscious character of the people of Gabrovica, none of the bunkers were betrayed to the enemy, testifying to the political maturity of the village. In total, the Fascist and Nazi terror from 1921 to 1945 took the lives of 38 people. After the war, a new settlement gradually grew on the site, boasting large cooperative stables and a cooperative hall; eventually, life returned to normal in the old settlement as well.



Črni Kal



Gabrovica

## ★ TOP 5:

## Črni Kal, Gabrovica

### Church of St. Valentine, Črni Kal

Situated next to the church of St. Valentine is a 23 m bell tower built in 1802. As the terrain settled where the layered sedimentary rocks meet limestone, the tower started to lean by over a metre until it was eventually secured with steel ropes.



### The Benko house, Črni Kal

The Benko house is believed to be the oldest farmer's house in Slovenia. It was built in 1489 by the masters Andrej and Benko of Sočerga.



### Fort and wall above the village of Črni Kal

The fort above the village was built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century by the Istrian border count Ulrich I of Weimar. For many centuries, the fort protected the road that led from Istria through the Rižana valley into the interior.



### Monument to the Overseas Brigades, Črni Kal

The monument in the shape of three ship's prows symbolises the lives of the many inhabitants of Primorje and Istria who fought in the Overseas Brigades in World War II.



### Church of St. Nicholas, Gabrovica

The medieval church of St. Nicholas and the old graveyard overlook the old part of the village. The church was renovated in 1659; today, the only surviving part of the old church is the barrel vault that separates the nave and the chancel.



## 4. Dekani, Rižana

### Dekani

Dekani has the structure of a nucleated village with some characteristics of a linear settlement. Situated on the right bank of the Rižana, it is the largest village in the river valley by size and number of inhabitants.

Dekani and other nearby settlements developed thanks to the open valley and the Rižana River, which led to the building of countless mills, sawmills, forges and oil presses. Other beneficial factors include exposure to the sun, plenty of fertile arable land and fresh spring water.

The wider area was settled as early as the beginning of the Iron Age, as evidenced by the fortification above Dekani (after the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE); architectural sites with remains of Roman bricks, pottery, mosaics and clay pipes show that after the arrival of Romans in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, the population moved down into the Rižana valley (Grublja, Grubeljce).

In the Middle Ages, most of the settlements were built on the left (east) bank of the Potok on the abandoned ruins of Roman buildings. The nearby monasteries planted the valley with plantations and vineyards, while a Gothic church dedicated to the Virgin Mary was built in the graveyard on the right bank of the Potok. The church was consecrated in 1493 by the Bishop of Koper, Giacomo Valaresso. The name Dekani is linked to the noble Cani family, also known as de' Cani, believed to originate from the town of Sulmone in Abruzzi, Italy. According to some sources, the family already owned the village around the year 1300, but definitely in the 15<sup>th</sup> century because one family member, Damianus Canis, is known to have been a member of the Great Council of Koper in 1431.

On older maps and documents, the village is named *Villa Decani*. According to C. De Francesci, the Slovenian translation of the name, *Pasjvas* (Dogvillage), appeared when the area was settled by Slavs; however, the name is more closely linked to the period of national awakening in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when national consciousness and resistance against Italian assimilation came through in Slovenian derivatives and translations of old Venetian place names.

National awakening and a growing national consciousness were evident in Dekani from 1869, when the local reading society was established, while 1899 saw the founding of the Zrinjski Slovenian Choral and Reading Society, dedicated to cultivating Slovenian folk and church singing and music. As long ago as 1884, the first rural loan bank in Slovenian Istria was established in Dekani, leading to an improved economic situation for its members. In 1912, an agricultural committee for the political district of Koper was founded; the Dekani Firefighting Society was established in the same year.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw several adaptations of the parish church of the Assumption of Mary, described in Bishop P. Naldini in his *Ecclesiastical Chorography* (1700).

### Did you know?

That one of the first reading societies in Slovenia was founded in Dekani?



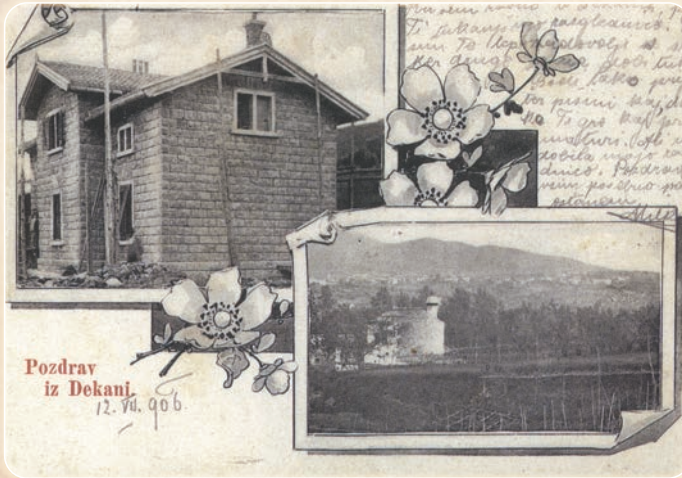
In 1841, the church was expanded and a large bell tower built to its left. A tympanum was added above the portal. The church interior as we know it today was painted by Primorje artist Tone Kralj in 1944–1945.

## Rižana

Rižana is a linear roadside village situated by the river of the same name.

Historically, Rižana is known for the Rižana council or placitum, a meeting held here in 804 between representatives (*missi dominici*) of Emperor Charlemagne, Patriarch Fortunatus of Grado, Istrian Bishops, Duke Iohannes of Istria and chiefs of Istrian towns. Evidence of the placitum held in Rižana can be found in a historical document that includes the phrase “*in loco qui dicitur Riziano*” (the settlement was known as Risano).

The remains of an older settlement can still be seen in Rižana today. In the yard of the group of buildings owned by the Zarjul family, you will find a building believed to be some 600 years old. It is connected to the former mill purchased by the Kozlovič family of Truške in 1902. Other erstwhile mills in the immediate Rižana and Cepki area are Pri Tonci, Mičev mlin, Trsjan, Pri Francu, Šikov mlin and Bašev mlin. Evidence in Rižana of a former mill and sawmill, as well as an oil press, can be seen in the form of a mill stream drawn through the village. For centuries, Rižana was a lively settlement on a route linking the interior with the coastal towns. Still in operation today, the famous Cah Inn was opened in 1918 to accommodate passing travellers. The Agricultural Society was established as early as 1907; the village also had a school for builders and, from 1927, a primary school with Italian as the language of instruction. The school was renovated in October 1946 and reopened with Slovenian as the language of instruction; today, the building houses a kindergarten. In keeping with the Paris Peace Treaty, a border between Zones A and B of the Free Territory of Trieste was established at Cepki in 1946. Until 1954, this was also the site of a border checkpoint.



Dekani



Rižana

## ★ TOP 5:

## *Dekani, Rižana*



### **Coat-of-arms of the De'Cani family, Dekani**

The name Dekani is linked to the noble Cani family, also known as De'Cani, which originates from the town of Sulmone in Abruzzi, Italy. According to some sources, the De'Cani family owned the village as long ago as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, as there is a coat-of-arms of the Cani family with the date 1479 on the building at no. 185.



### **Church of the Assumption of Mary, Dekani**

Consecrated in 1493, the church houses a holy water font with a stone statue of St. John the Baptist, a beautiful example of Baroque art.



### **Remains of the mill in Miši (Tourist farm Bordon), Dekani**

In the interwar period, there were four mills on the Rižana river. The largest mill was at Vanek, where the Tourist farm Bordon stands today. Boasting five wheels, the mill was in use until 1968, when a railway was built along the Rižana.



### **Vzroček, church of Our Lady of the Snows and maze, Bezovica**

According to some sources, the church was built as early as 1491; the master Benko of Sočerga is believed to have been involved in its construction and furnishing.



### **Church of St. George, Rožar**

The church boasts a gilded wooden altar with a 1655 oil painting by an unknown artist depicting the Glorification of Corpus Christi. The remains of a fortification built by the locals to defend themselves against Ottoman invasions can still be seen around the church.





Held on 7 August 1870, the Kubed People's Assembly was extremely important for the wider area of Istria, awakening Istrian Slovenians and Croats from political lethargy and highlighting the United Slovenia political programme.

Kubed is the birthplace of Alojz Kocjančič (born in 1913), a priest and the first Istrian poet to write in Slovenian; he went down in Slovenian literary history as the bard of Slovenian Istrian poetry. To mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the People's Assembly in 1970, a memorial plaque was built into the wall of the bell tower. On the eve of the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary (in 1989), a great celebration was held under the motto "This land is sacred – this land is ours!".

## Popetre

Popetre is a nucleated village situated on the ridge of Pičenca, overlooking the Dragonja valley to the east. The nearby settlements include Beli Kamen (White Stone), the erstwhile site of a large white monolith from the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, and Poletiči, a nucleated hamlet above the Dragonja headwaters.

Another village of old origin, Popetre was first mentioned in writing as long ago as 1028, when the German Emperor Conrad II granted the feudal rights to the village to the Patriarchs of Aquileia.

From the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, the village was owned by Andrea de Ciriago and his descendants; from 1505 to 1602, it belonged to the noble Bembo family of Koper, followed by the Moratto family. Built in 1490 and adapted in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the church of St. Andrew houses a Glagolitic missal dating back to 1661.



Gračišče



Kubed

## ★ TOP 5:

## *Gračičče, Kubed, Popetre*

### Church of St. Florian and pentagonal defence tower, Kubed

Formerly the main defence and watch tower in the fort, the pentagonal tower was expanded and converted into a bell tower in 1833.



### Church of St. Nicholas, Gračičče

Next to this late 18<sup>th</sup> century church, there is a 26 m white stone bell tower with a built-in stone plaque bearing an inscription in the Cyrillic and Glagolitic alphabet that reads: "I call the living, I mourn the dead."



### Pr Brnardća homestead, Popetre

An old homestead with a wooden balcony connecting the rooms on the first floor still stands in Popetre today.



### Church of St. Michael, Kubed

The church is situated in the village graveyard, which was built as early as the 11<sup>th</sup> century, predating any other graveyard in the area. The church front dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, while the spindle bell tower was built in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.



### Church of Sts. Andrew and Jacob, Popetre

Situated above the village square, the church features two bells on a spindle. The chancel is decorated with frescoes from 1490 depicting the Evangelists and Christ in heaven.



## 6. *Gradin, Abitanti, Hrvoji, Topolovec*

### *Gradin*

Situated above the Dragonja valley, Gradin was first mentioned in writing in 1028, when Emperor Conrad II granted the feudal rights to this area to the Patriarchs of Aquileia; they in turn later passed it on to the Novigrad Bishopric. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the village came into the hands of the Momjan lords, who kept it until 1420, when it was taken over by the Venetian Republic and the Koper commune. The earliest reference to the villages of Gradin (*Gradigna*) and Topolovec (*Topoloniza*) was made in the Koper statutes dating back to 1423, although both settlements are of earlier origin. In 1463, the feudal rights to the area were granted to the noble Verzi family of Koper; according to G. F. Tommasini, the Bishop of Novigrad, the feudal estate comprised 25 farmer's houses with fertile fields and vineyards, generating a decent income. In the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the area was fortified to defend it against the Ottoman invasions and Austro-Venetian wars. Two defence towers were built at the intersection for Hrvoje and Gradin; known as "Torri di Daber" or "Torri di Tabor", the towers are similar in shape and size to the Podpeč defence tower. Known as "castelli", these strongholds served as shelter for the local inhabitants in case of danger. Situated at the edge of Gradin, the church of the Holy Cross was consecrated by Giandomenico Stratico, the Bishop of Novigrad, in 1782 and was expanded and renovated in 1926.

### *Abitanti*

Abitanti is a nucleated village situated on a gentle, barely noticeable rise below the areas of Raven and Rešje, in the southeast part of the Šavrinsko gričevje hills on the ridge above the Malinska stream valley, close to the Croatian border.

In older documents dating back to between 1763 and 1787, Abitanti is spelt *Obitanti* but it is generally believed that the name Abitanti originates from the Italian noun *abitante* (inhabitant). The villagers dealt mainly with agriculture, selling hay and firewood, as well as chestnuts and mushrooms in autumn, to Trieste and other coastal towns. Boasting an excellent location for wine-growing, the village was known for producing good Refosco wine. Before World War II, the village still had some 130 inhabitants; however, most of them moved away after the war, leaving Abitanti virtually abandoned. Distinguished by a number of architecturally appealing buildings, some with arches, wells and other interesting details, in 1987 the whole village was declared a cultural monument of local importance and entered in the Cultural Heritage Register of the Republic of Slovenia.

### *Did you know?*

That there is a famous "bean tower" in Hrvoji, which the locals raised funds for by selling beans in the nearby Trieste?



## Hrvoji

Along with other fortified villages and settlements in the area of Momjan, Dragonja and Koper, the fort in Hrvoji (*turrem Capriacam*) is mentioned in a deed of donation issued in 1035 by Emperor Conrad II to the town of Koper. The old name of what is now the village of Hrvoji means "the Koper tower" or "the tower on the border with Koper". With this donation, the Koper commune expanded into the area of the Novigrad Bishopric, near Momjan and over the Dragonja.

Distinguished by a picturesque location, Hrvoji boasts the church of St. Zenon, built in 1791 and expanded in 1855. The small bell tower was originally attached to the church building, but a century later the villagers decided to build a freestanding tower in a dominant location close to the church. In 1886, the Construction Department of the vice-regency in Trieste prepared a detailed plan with a list of works and costs estimated at 4732 forints; however, lawsuits in the vice-regency district court in Motovun over the construction of the bell tower and the managing of church assets dragged on for a number of years, delaying the start of construction until 1896. The master builders Piciga started construction, building the tower to a height of 24 m, but they stopped working when the money ran out. By selling large quantities of beans to Trieste, the locals saved enough money for the builders to resume their work. The pride of the village, the tower was finished in 1898, reaching a height of 37.40 m and offering magnificent views of North Istria, the Gulf of Trieste and even Venice. From then on, the Hrvoji bell tower was renowned as the tallest tower far and wide, even serving as a navigational aid for many travellers in Istria heading off the main roads into less populated areas. The bell tower in Hrvoji remains a centuries-old sight renowned across Slovenian Istria.

## Topolovec

The village of Topolovec is situated on the left bank of the Dragonja, at the end of the Veli vrh slope. Along with Kuberton, it was first owned by the noble Vergerio family of Koper; in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it belonged to the del Bello family and later to the Grisoni family of Koper. The old centre of Topolovec grew before 1750 around the church of St. Jerome (*Hieronymus*), but the later village developed in a more suitable location at a higher altitude, where it still stands today. According to oral tradition, the first house in the new village was built around 1780. The area did not see a boom in development until the 19<sup>th</sup> century under Austrian rule.

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Topolovec

## ★ TOP 5:

## *Gradin, Abitanti, Hrvoji, Topolovec*



### **Church of St. Zeno ("bean tower"), Hrvoji**

The church of St. Zeno featured one of the tallest bell towers in all of Istria (37.5 m), built from sandstone in 1887. The locals referred to it as the "bean tower", since it was built with money they made by selling beans.



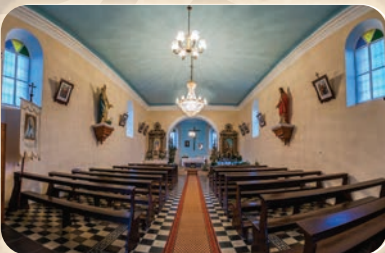
### **Remains of Venetian defence towers, Gradin**

Gradin changed hands a number of times over the centuries. Due to constant Ottoman and Uskok invasions, the village was soon fortified with a high wall. The remains of two Venetian defence towers can still be seen near the village.



### **Church of the Holy Cross, Gradin**

The church of the Holy Cross features two wooden altars dating back to 1861. The entrance to the church is through the bell tower at the front of the building.



### **Village architecture, Abitanti**

The fascinating architectural features of the protected buildings in Abitanti testify to the fact that this was once a very rich village.



### **Veli vir waterfall and waterfall in Trebeše**

Some 8 m high, the Veli vir waterfall at Sokoliči flows over a rocky cliff into a large emerald-green pool reminiscent of a small lake. At 17 m high, the Stranice waterfall under Trebeše is one of the highest waterfalls in Slovenian Istria.





## ★ TOP 5:

## *Hrastovlje, Dol, Zanigrad, Podpeč*



### Church of the Holy Trinity, Hrastovlje

The church boasts beautiful frescoes, an extraordinary achievement of Medieval iconography. The most famous is the depiction of the Dance of Death.



### Galleria di Jože Pohlen, Hrastovlje

Situated in the village centre, the gallery houses the works of an important Istrian artist, the academy-educated sculptor Jože Pohlen.



### Church of St. Stephen, Zanigrad

In keeping with an old custom, a blessing of horses is held every year on the day after Christmas at the Romanesque church of St. Stephen in Zanigrad.



### Defence tower, Podpeč

This 11<sup>th</sup> century, 17 m defence tower is a popular tourist sight and one of the most enchanting beauty spots in Slovenian Istria.



### Park of indigenous plants and animals, Hrastovlje

The park is the home of a range of indigenous Slovenian and Istrian animal species, as well as typical cultivated plants, trees and herbs.



## 8. Hrvatini, Škofije

### Hrvatini

Situated on a ridge overlooking Ankaran at the top of the Muggia Peninsula, near the border with Italy, Hrvatini was considered a fertile village rich in vineyards and olive plantations even in the Antique period. The village still has some of the same characteristics today, with fields and orchards dominating the north part of the area, while vineyards and olive plantations are situated in the south. In the past, there were several quarries nearby, where stone was extracted and transported to Trieste for the construction of the harbour. The name Hrvatini originates from the surname Hrvatini. The village boasts beautiful views of the Gulf of Trieste and Koper.

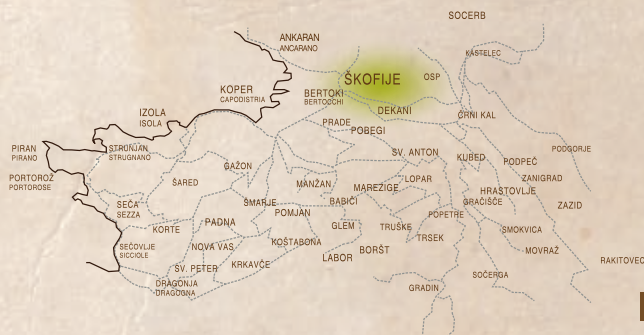
### Škofije

Škofije is the largest scattered and partly ribbon settlement on the ridge between the hills of Vršič (152 m) and Čuk (110 m). In the past, the area featured important transport routes, as the Škofije pass was the easiest way to travel from the Rižana valley to Aquilinia in the Gulf of Trieste. In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century (1776), this was the site of the road (*Via Delphinia*) that linked Koper under the Venetians and Trieste under the Habsburgs. The route was different to that of the modern-day road that was built in the interwar period and called *Via Flavia* after the erstwhile Roman road. From 1902 until 1935, the narrow-gauge railway known as *Parenzana* led through Škofije, connecting Trieste and Poreč. This attracted many people to come to Škofije and open inns, shops and forges or transport businesses. Many villagers worked as stonecutters in the nearby Elerji quarry. Others found employment in the docks of Muggia and Trieste or with the railway. The village was also the home of many craftspeople, especially painters, builders and carpenters, who commuted to Trieste.

Through history, the area belonged first to the Trieste Bishopric and later to the Koper Bishopric, giving rise to the place names *Villa degli Alberi* or *Albaro Vescovà*, as well as *Mondelvèscu*, as mentioned in multiple written sources. In his *Ecclesiastical Chorography* (1700), Bishop Paolo Naldini describes three villages built on the Bishopric estate and states that the villagers have cleared the slope of stones, transforming it into fertile fields. Naldini also mentions the church of the Apostle and Evangelist Matthew, built in 1673 by the inhabitants of the three villages and consecrated by Bishop Francesco Zeno. In the 1930s, the church of the Sacred Heart with a simple façade, tympanum and stone portal was built on the foundations of the church of St. Matthew.

### Did you know?

That the Morgan Line, set up after World War II, ran through Škofije?



## ★ TOP 5:

Hrvatini, Škofije  

### Via Delfinia, Škofije

As the route that connected the Rižana valley with Aquilinia in the Gulf of Trieste, the Škofije pass has always been very busy with traffic. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, this was the site of the Roman Via Flavia, followed by the Via Delfinia, the predecessor of the modern main road.



### Church of St. Michael, Tinjan

Positioned on the edge of the village, the church building has a Baroque front; the entrance is through the large bell tower. The stone plaque built into the portal shows Christ on the Cross and the date 1704.



### Church of the Sacred Heart, Škofije

Situated next to the church of the Sacred Heart in Spodnje Škofije, the 15 m bell tower differs from all other bell towers in Istria. Instead of simple openings for bells, it features wooden shutters (škure).



### Church of St. Lucy and St. Roch, Plavje

The old church was renovated in 1925. Built entirely of sandstone, the bell tower (24.87 m) of Aquileian type is positioned at the corner of the church. Before the tower was built, the bells hung from a branch of a nearby linden tree.



### Church of St. Bride, Kolomban

The church of St. Bride is known as a Medieval resting place for pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land.



## 9. Krkavče, Koštabona, Puče

### Krkavče

Krkavče is one of the oldest villages in Slovenian Istria, as testified by the many archaeological findings on Gradišče near Škrjavec, the site of the famous Krkavče monolith, also known as "the three-headed stone" in folk tradition. Remains from the Roman era, the foundations of a 9<sup>th</sup> century sacred building and an Old Slavic burial site were discovered near the graveyard above the village. In 1210, the feudal rights to the village known as *Carcase* or *Carcauze* were granted by Wolfger, the Patriarch of Aquileia, to Koper nobleman Gavardo Gavardo; in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, the village came under Venetian rule.

In 1450, the Venetian Republic granted the feudal rights to Krkavče and the neighbouring estates to the noble Vittori family of Koper. For close to two centuries, the villagers engaged in countless lawsuits against the family due to excessive taxes and violations of the Koper commune laws.

Even in the Venetian era, Krkavče served as the seat of the parish. On the foundations of an older church in the centre of the village, the church of St. Michael the Archangel was built in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and consecrated by Bishop Pietro Morari in 1633. The bell tower was built in 1741 on the site of a former defence tower.

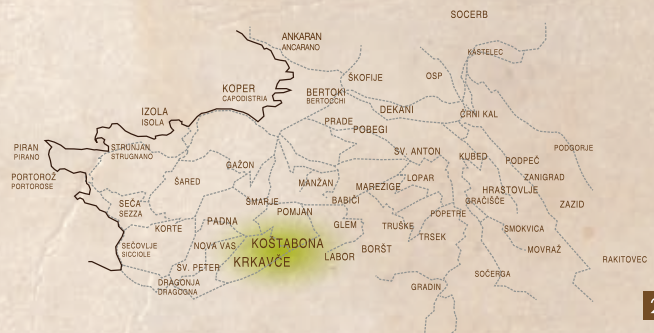
The use of Glagolitic left a unique mark on the village, since Glagolitic was used in the church until 1898.

Until after the war, important celebrations in the village included two village feasts: the feast of St. Anne (and St. Joachim) on 26 July (the festival of *šagra*) with a festive Holy Mass and procession headed by a statue of St. Anne, and the feast of Michael the Archangel (29 September), the patron saint of the village. Another special event was the worship of the Krkavče stone, said to have been used as a pillory in the past. Sources mention the worshipping of the stone on St. Vitus' Day and at Christmas. The ceremony of blessing olive branches on Palm Sunday (*úlčenca*) also had a long tradition in the village and was attended by young and old alike, as well as people from other villages and even from abroad.

Today, the Vrešje House is a popular destination in the village, serving as a living museum in an authentic Istrian environment.

### Did you know?

That the Krkavče Stone is believed to be at least 3000 years old?



## Koštabona

Koštabona is a nucleated, densely populated village on a narrow protrusion on the southern edge of the ridge overlooking the Dragonja. The hamlet of Plešivica is situated above the village, while Hrvatini and Kapeli at Škrline lie on the slopes below.

According to tradition, the spot where the parish church of Sts. Cosmas and Damian stands today was once the site of an Antique temple dedicated to *Bona*, the goddess of health, fertility and motherhood. This is probably why the church was dedicated to the martyrs Cosmas and Damian, also known as the patron saints of health. The Late Antique fortified settlement of *Castrum Bonae* or *Costa Bona* was donated to the Patriarchs of Aquileia in 1028. In 1211, the feudal rights to the village were granted to the noble Verzi family of Koper. In his *Ecclesiastical Chorography* (1700), the Koper Bishop Paolo Naldini describes Koštabona as a compact village with over 30 houses and a defence tower that gives it the appearance of a hill fort (*kaštel*).

The village still has three churches today: the first and largest, once a pilgrimage church, is dedicated to Sts. Cosmas and Damian; the second is dedicated to the Beatified Deacon Elijah; the third is a graveyard church dedicated to St. Andrew. Many village holidays and customs in celebration of these churches and patron saints have been preserved until the present day and continue to attract numerous visitors. Today, the village is also known for its traditional architecture and invaluable cultural heritage (the old school, the Pr' Tabru house, the mayor's house) and many festivals and events. Istrian poet Alojz Kocjančič held the office of priest in the village for 28 years.

Koštabona is also popular with hikers and cyclists, as there are a number of hiking and cycling trails in the area.

## Puče

The village of Puče is situated by the trail where the Poljanski hrib hill starts to sweep down to the Dragonja river, at the intersection of the old roads to Koštabona and Krkavče and Nova vas. The old village name is Pr' malna. After the liberation in 1945, Puče got a primary school, an agricultural cooperative and an electric mill. However, the local population gradually moved away and the area vegetated until Slovenia gained independence (1990); in recent years, life has returned with new buildings and renovated old buildings, especially on the south slope of the Poljanski hrib hill. A great deal of credit for this goes to the Puče Tourism Society, which has revived the all-but-forgotten festival of *šagra* in the form of *Fjera Puče*, an annual village festival held in mid-July in honour of the patron saint of the village, Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

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Koštabona

## ★ TOP 5:

## *Krkavče, Koštabona, Puče*



### **The Krkavče Stone, Krkavče**

Believed by some to be 3000 years old, the stone is the oldest sight in the village. It is 1.5 m tall; on two sides, it features a carved image of what is probably a pagan deity.



### **The Vrešje House and the church of St. Michael, Krkavče**

The Vrešje House is a typical Istrian house where you can discover what life in the region was like in the past. The mistress of the house usually has a delicious Istrian speciality on the stove or in the oven. Unusually, the Krkavče church was built on living rock. The bell tower next to it originally served as a defence tower.



### **The Dragonja valley**

At 29 km long, the Dragonja is the longest river in Slovenian Istria. The river valley is well known for its diversity of plant and animal life. Today, it is a nature park popular with hikers, cyclists and nature enthusiasts.



### **Brič Wine Cellar**

In the heart of pristine nature in the Dragonja valley, you will find one of the region's most modern and beautiful wine cellars, built to French plans. Thanks to the proximity of the vineyards, grapes are pressed immediately after harvesting, thus ensuring the high quality of Brič wines.



### **Church of the Beatified Deacon Elijah, Koštabona**

Built in 1446, the original building was converted into a church in 1742. It is dedicated to the beatified Elijah, a student of St. Hermacora, believed to have been born in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.



## 10. *Marezige, Babiči, Truške, Montinjan, Trsek, Lopar*

In the heart of the land of Refosco wine, there is a special village, Marezige, where every visitor is moved by the spectacular view of the Bay of Koper. The village on the ridge is composed of several large and small hamlets, mostly situated along the main road. The form of the village is quite rare in Slovenian Istria. It was first pointed out by the Bishop of Koper, Paolo Naldini, in his *Ecclesiastical Chorography* from 1700. The houses used to be old and made of stone, while the roofs were covered with thatch or thin tiles – slates. They were turned away from the cold Bora wind while pergolas protected them from the summer heat with shade and grapevines. There was a black fireplace in the interior of the houses, adorned with simple Istrian embroideries.

Today, the image of the village is quite different. The progressive development has resulted in beautiful new houses, compatible with the Istrian architecture. They started to multiply when the village got water and a new road. Consequently, the inhabitants slowly began to abandon farming, and found jobs in Koper. The road to Marezige is very picturesque and its surroundings are perfect for walks and trips. There are the hamlets of Burji, Sabadini, Bržani, Škrgati, Krmci, Plahuti, Bečanci, Bernetiči and Rokavci, as well as the beautiful surrounding Istrian villages, such as Montinjan on the northern side, Lopar and Truške, a plateau above the Rokava river valley with the villages of Glem, Boršt, Labor, Babiči and the ancient Čentur.

Let's take a look at the history of the village. Its name probably derives from the Latin word "mara", meaning "stony, sandy soil" and bears witness to the early settlement of the area. Marezige used to be a parish and later an independent municipality. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the area witnessed a national awakening and Marezige became the stronghold of the Slovenian identity. When the area was occupied by Italy and fascism started to spread, a revolt against fascism flared up there on 15 May 1921. In memory of this event, the local elementary school has been named after the leader of the revolt, Ivan Babič – Jager, and the Municipality of Koper celebrates its holiday on this date.

### *Did you know?*

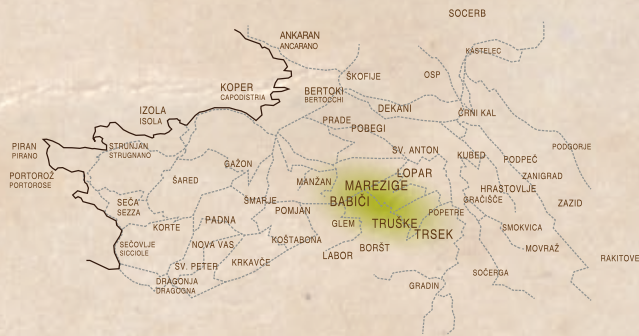
That Lopar boasts a beautifully preserved 19<sup>th</sup> century wooden wine press – the oldest in Slovenian Istria?



Marezige



Truške



## ★ TOP 5: *Marezige, Babiči, Truške, Montinjan, Trsek, Lopar*



### **Marežganska Kanava, Marezige**

A beautifully preserved stone farmer's house and the main venue of the Refosco Festival and St. Martin's Day celebrations. There are three vines growing outside Kanava: Refosco, Malvasia and Žametovka, a descendant of the world's oldest vine in Lent, Maribor.



### **The Bardinc House, Lopar**

The building houses a local ethnology and history exhibition with a preserved farmer's kitchen, fireplace and wine cellar.



### **Church of the Holy Cross, Marezige**

As evidenced by several architectural elements, the parish church of the Holy Cross was built in the 9th century. It was modified and given a Baroque appearance in 1756. The interior was painted in 1932 by the Koper painter Ermengildo de Troy.



### **The Mazurin mill, Trsek**

According to oral tradition, the mill is some 300 years old. It is the only mill on the Dragonja whose historical appearance has been preserved.



### **Views**

The enviable geographical location of Marezige, Montinjan and the neighbouring villages provides wonderful views of the Alps, the Gulf of Trieste, vineyards, olive groves and the surrounding hills.



## 11. *Movraž, Smokvica, Sočerga*

### *Movraž*

Movraž is a nucleated village in the northwest of the Movraška vala plain. The deed of donation issued by Emperor Conrad II in 1035 awarded the village, then known as *Vallem Mauriacam*, to the Koper commune. At the time of the Venetian Republic, Movraž was part of the feudal estate owned by the noble Koper families of Sabini, Verzi, Vida, Gravisi and Gavardo respectively. As the border zone of the Koper commune, the wider Movraž area (*Valmorasa*) played an important role during the Ottoman invasions in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Austro–Venetian wars in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the Uskok War (1615–1617).

Movraž was fortified with a defence tower (*Torre de Valmorasa*); situated above the village, no trace of it survives today. Bishop Paolo Naldini writes that the village commune of Movraž, along with the nearby hamlets of Dvori and Trebeše was part of the Sočerga parish. The village had as many as four churches, dedicated to St. Peter, St. George, St. Mary and St. Catherine respectively. Similar in shape, the churches featured simple exteriors and modest ornamentation. After 1947, the Movraž area was assigned to the district of Koper or Zone B of the Free Territory of Trieste. However, after the borders were finally determined in the London Memorandum (1954), the territory was returned to Slovenia.

### *Smokvica*

Smokvica is a nucleated village situated by the Gračičke–Movraž road in a dry valley between the plains of Gračiška vala and Movraška vala, overlooked by the hill of Krog (418 m). Even in ancient times, a freight route from Čičarija through Rakitovec, Movraž, Gračiče and Kubed to Koper led through the village. Smokvica is first mentioned in writing in 1028 under the name *Figaruola* in a deed of donation issued by Emperor Conrad II to the Patriarchs of Aquileia, who granted the feudal rights to the Reifenberg family in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the village belonged to the Koper commune until it passed into the hands of the noble Vida family of Koper in 1488, remaining part of their estate until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Taxes on some of the estates in the area were also collected by the Gravisi family, one of the most notable noble families of Koper. According to Bishop Naldini, the church of St. Mary Magdalene was consecrated in 1422 by Geremia Pola, Bishop of Koper, and again in 1665 by Bishop Francesco Zeno. The date 1795 on the entrance portal possibly refers to a renovation of the church. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Smokvica was famous as a wine-growing area, while the locals also grew plenty of fruit. Until 1907, when the pastures were divided, the village also had several thousand sheep and regularly sold

### *Did you know?*

That near Sočerga, nature has carved out unique features – a natural bridge and rock shelters known as "The Ears of Istria" or "Istrijska uha"?



large quantities of sheep's cheese to Koper and Trieste. In addition to inn keeping, the lively traffic through the village also facilitated the development of other non-agricultural industries, particularly blacksmithing.

The village was partially burnt down during the German offensive in October 1943, but the locals were nevertheless actively involved in the National Liberation movement. Villagers from Smokvica and Movraž took part in smuggling salt from the Sečovlje salt pans into the hinterland for the partisan army. From 1 August 1944, Smokvica also had a partisan school.

Agriculture, animal husbandry in particular, was the main economic activity in the village in the years immediately after World War II. The locals also worked at simple handicraft tasks to meet the needs of the village; many of the men took up masonry, some developing into true masters of the craft, as evidenced by the Bržan homestead and several other houses in the village. The renovated homestead "Pri Bržanih" is one of the main sights in Smokvica today.

## Sočerga

Sočerga is a dispersed settlement on the pass connecting the Karst plain of Sočerska vala in the north with Dolenjščina in the south; Dolenjščina is the upper, Slovenian part of the Reka valley.

Not far from Sočerga, in the cliffs under Veli Badin, nature has carved out majestic rock shelters, known as "The Ears of Istria", and a natural bridge. Southeast of Sočerga, a narrow trail leads to the hamlet of Mlini with a preserved three-wheel mill that operated until 1945. Sočerga (*S. Sirico*) was one of the villages granted by Emperor Conrad II to the Patriarchs of Aquileia in 1028; in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it came into the hands of the Counts of Momjan. Later, the village belonged to the Turini family of Čedad and the Sabini family of Koper, respectively. In 1440, Sočerga was incorporated into Petrapilos, a large feudal estate owned by the Marquis of Gravisi. In the Uskok War (1615–1617), the village was plundered and burnt down.

Local sights include the graveyard church of St. Quiricus, situated on a low rise outside the village, near an archaeological site where a number of Prehistoric objects and a Roman fort were found. Mentioned by Bishop Naldini in his *Ecclesiastical Chorography* (1700), the church was renovated in 1886 and adapted somewhat in 1940.



Movraž



Sočerga

## ★ TOP 5:

*Movraž, Smokvica, Sočerga*  

### Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Smokvica

Dating back to 1422, the church is paved with large stone plates. The wooden altar features a statue of St. Anthony and a painting depicting Madonna with child and saints.



### Rock shelters ("The Ears of Istria") and natural bridge, Sočerga

Above Sočerga, nature has carved out some beautiful rock shelters, also known as "The Ears of Istria". The panoramic trail leads past three 17 m rock shelters to a natural bridge with a 6 m stone arch.



### The Bržan homestead, Smokvica

Situated on the edge of the village by the village square and church, the Bržan homestead is one of the hundred most beautiful homesteads in Slovenia. It is a magnificent example of 16th century Istrian village architecture.



### Church of the Assumption of Mary, Movraž

The church was built in 1499 on the foundations of an older church. It stands next to a 16.5 m, three-story bell tower of white stone.



### Church of St. Quiricus, Sočerga

The church foundations probably date back to the 11th century. The church is situated in the graveyard outside the village, where a fort from Roman times was also discovered.



## 12. Podgorje, Zazid, Rakitovec

### Podgorje

Podgorje is a nucleated village situated at the foot of Slavnik (1028 m) above the Prešnica–Rakitovec railway. Passing through the hands of a number of feudal families, the village remained part of the Rašpor Captaincy until the Austro–Venetian War (1508–1516); from 1521, it belonged to the Socerb feudal nobility. Podgorje was first burnt down in the Ottoman invasions of 1499 and again in the Uskok War in 1616, when it belonged to the Counts Petazzi of Trieste. Recovering in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the village developed in the period to follow by selling local produce and products (wood, charcoal, milk, cheese) to Trieste, Koper and other coastal towns.

Dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the parish church is dedicated to St. Sabbas. The village centre consists of houses arranged in several rows and linked by streets that create a colourful environment of passages and enclosed yards. A beautiful example of an enclosed yard has been preserved at the Virb homestead, renovated and expanded in 1853. At the entrance to the village, there is a pillar which is one of the oldest memorial stones in Slovenia; a statue of St. Anthony stands in a deep niche, while fragments of frescoes depicting St. Peter and St. Paul can be seen on the walls.

### Zazid

Zazid is situated on the vast plain of Zazidsko polje in the southern part of Podgorski kras. In the Middle Ages, Zazid (*Xaxid*, *Sasseto*) was a fortified settlement surrounded by a wall. It can be found on the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century list of villages in the Koper territory and in the Koper statutes dating back to 1423. From the early 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, various noble families of Koper had their estates here. During the Ottoman invasions and the Austro–Venetian wars in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Zazid was included in a chain of fortified settlements but was plundered and burnt down in the Uskok War (1615–1617).

The graveyard church of St. Martin was built in the late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century; as evidenced by the Latin inscription above the portal, the church was probably renovated in 1697. Today, the village features a preserved traditional water well (*štirna*) and watering place (*na ščidenci*).

### Did you know?

That at the entrance to the village of Podgorje, there is a pillar which is one of the oldest memorial stones in Slovenia?



## Rakitovec

Rakitovec is situated at the foot of Kavčič (882 m) and Breg (595 m) in a dry valley by the Brest–Zazid road.

The area was settled as early as in the first Slavic colonisation of Istria between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. The village enjoyed a boom in the Late Middle Ages, when lively trading and smuggling of cattle and salt developed along the main road from Čičarija to Koper. Along with other Karst Rim villages, Rakitovec (*Rachitoui*, *Rachitovic*) became a part of the Koper commune in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century. Serving as a defence post for traffic from Čičarija, there was probably a defence tower somewhere in the area. As the last village in the Koper territory on the border between Brkini, Čičarija and Karst, the village maintained its defensive role until the fall of the Venetian Republic (1797).

The church of the Holy Cross (the Predloka parish) was built in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and renovated in 1870. The village boasts well-preserved architectural heritage with modest stonecutting details, distinguished by wall niches with depictions of Christ on the cross (*bogić*) that adorn almost every house.

In administrative terms, Rakitovec remained a part of the district of Koper until the fall of the Austro–Hungarian Empire in 1918. During this period, the Cyril and Methodius Society of Istria built a primary school in the village and in 1876, the railway administration installed a water distribution system from Brest to the Rakitovec railway station. Until World War II, Rakitovec was part of the Buzet municipality; after the war, it was part of the Sežana municipality until 1995, when it was incorporated into the Municipality of Koper.



Podgorje



Podgorje

## ★ TOP 5:

## Podgorje, Zazid, Rakitovec



### Slavnik, Podgorje

1028 m high, the hill of Slavnik is situated near the village of Podgorje. The summit of Slavnik offers beautiful views, with the Adriatic Sea, Italian Dolomites, Carnic and Julian Alps, Karavanks and even the Kamni-Savinja Alps visible in clear weather.



### Kojnik, Golič, Kavčič

Kojnik (802 m), Golič (890 m) and Kavčič (883 m) are popular destinations for cyclists and hikers alike, offering unique, memorable ways of discovering the beautiful nature of Slovenian Istria.



### Church of St. Martin and water source, Zazid

As evidenced by the inscription above the entrance, the church dates back to 1697. The main altar is decorated with wooden statues from the late 18th and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. A 15 m bell tower stands next to the church.



### Church of the Holy Cross, Rakitovec

The church of the Holy Cross is situated in the centre of the village. It was finished and consecrated in 1520 and renovated in 1870. After the bell tower was demolished in World War II, pillars carrying the church bell were built in its place.



### Pillar "Pr' Pilja", Rakitovec

Situated at the entrance to the village, the pillar is one of the oldest memorial stones in Slovenia.



## 13. Socerb, Osp

### Socerb

A nucleated village once known as Strmec, Socerb developed in a wide semicircle overlooked by a cliff dominated by Socerb Castle (*S. Serff, S. Servolo*). The village and castle are distinguished by a unique location on the edge of a Karst cliff, enjoying magnificent views of the sedimentary hills of Slovenian Istria, the coastal towns and the entire Gulf of Trieste.

In the immediate vicinity of the village and castle, there are rich archaeological sites from the Prehistoric and Roman era, as well as numerous caves and pits, including Sveta (Socerbska) jama or the Sacred Cave and the Jama pod Vrhom cave.

The village developed in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Due to its strategically important location, the castle was a constant source of conflict between the Venetians, the Trieste commune and the Habsburgs until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the hands of the Venetian Republic from 1463 to 1511, it served as an extremely important defence post against the Ottoman invasions and in the Austro–Venetian wars. Trieste governor and Carniolan nobleman Nikolaj Ravbar was made lord of the castle in 1521. From the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the castle and the local area were designated a feudal estate with territorial rights, a regional court and two tollhouses that generated a decent income. In the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the economic focus of the village shifted from arable farming to wine-growing and, to a lesser extent, gardening. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, most of the income in the village was generated by cattle and sheep farming, which later went into decline.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the castle belonged to the noble Petazzi family of Trieste; they managed the Socerb estate until 1688, when they returned it to the archducal chamber in Graz and retreated to Aquilinia. The castle was visited by Janez Vajkard Valvasor, who described and depicted it in *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola* (1689). Stopping at the castle in 1694, Don Pietro Rossetti was impressed and delighted by the castle building and picturesque location. However, a fatal bolt of lightning struck the castle in 1780, causing a fire that damaged the building to such an extent that it was no longer habitable. The castle ruins and the nearby cave were described by Count Girolamo Agapito in 1823 and depicted by Avgust Tischbein in 1842.

In 1907, the dilapidated castle was finally purchased by Baron Demetrio Economo of Trieste, who partially restored it in 1923–1924.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, life in the village was closely linked with Trieste as the industrial and commercial hub of the Austrian littoral region. Before World War I, the village was part of the district captaincy and the judicial district of Koper. The succursal church of St. Servulus in the village was built in 1867.

In the post-war period, the castle was remodelled; today, it serves as a popular destination for day visitors, while its natural and cultural sights also make it suitable for diplomatic events, the hospitality industry and tourism.

### Did you know?

That Socerb has the only underground church in Slovenia and that Osp is one of the oldest villages in the country?



## Osp

The nearby Osp is one of the oldest villages in Slovenia – its beginnings date back to the Late Antique period and the Early Middle Ages. At the time, the wider area of the village (*Hospum*, *Villa hospes*, *Ospo*) was part of the Trieste Bishopric. In 1067, it passed into the hands of the Bishops of Freising. In 1254, all the Karst Rim villages came into the ownership of the Koper commune, where Osp played an important role as a Venetian border post until the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

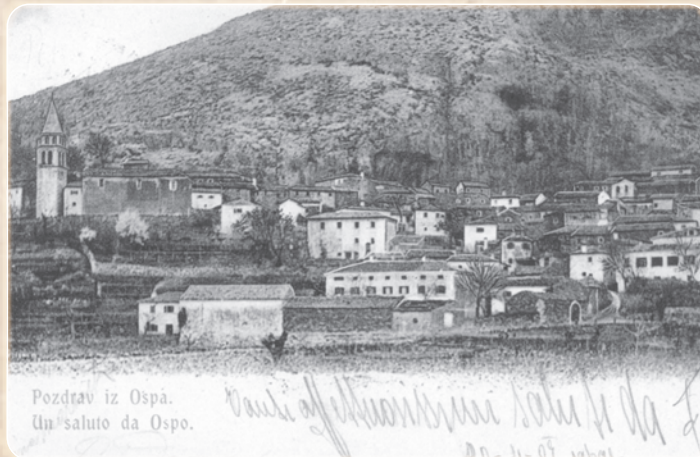
The rapid economic, cultural and educational development of the village was linked with the considerable political and administrative changes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but even more so with the successful, dynamic development enjoyed by Trieste. The first Slovenian primary school in Istria was established in Osp in 1819; 1897 saw the founding of the Domovina Choral and Reading Society, while the Loan and Consumer Society was founded three years later. The comprehensive economic and cultural progress of the village happened mostly thanks to the efforts of Josip Kompare, long-time priest and dean of Osp and a member of the provincial assembly.

The parish church of St. Thomas the Apostle was originally built around 1600, but was later remodelled in the Late Baroque style.

The natural sights in the Osp area include Osapska jama (Osp Cave), located on a steep Karst slope; featuring some surviving remains of a Medieval fort, the cave is also known as Grad (Castle). Numerous Prehistoric, Antique and Early Medieval objects have been found here, making the cave an important archaeological site. Since the late 1970s, the Osp cliffs have grown to become a popular attraction for countless Slovenian and foreign climbers, as well as other visitors interested in the sub-Mediterranean ornithofauna. The unique microclimatic conditions, south-facing location, bedrock and proximity of the sea make Osp the only major Mediterranean habitat in Slovenia; the cliffs above the village are the home of several rare species of plants, including Tommasini's sandwort (*Moehringia tommasinii*), which blooms in April.



Socerb



Osp

## ★ TOP 5:

*Socerb, Osp*  

### Sacred Cave, Socerb

According to a legend, the Sveta jama or Sacred Cave was the dwelling of St. Servulus, a Trieste martyr and saint who lived in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The front part of the cave with a natural stone altar still houses a church today – the only underground church in Slovenia.



### Strmec Castle, Socerb

The Strmec Castle is situated on top of a 440 m Karst cliff above the village. It was built in the 13th century on the foundations of an Illyrian settlement. Today, the castle is one of the most magnificent beauty spots in Slovenian Istria.



### Church of St. Servulus, Socerb

Surrounded by village houses, the church is dedicated to St. Servulus, a saint and martyr. As evidenced by the inscription carved above the entrance, the church was built in 1648.



### The Osp cliff and Mišja peč hollow, Osp

The cliffs above Osp are one of the top climbing destinations in the world. The semi-circular overhanging cliff poses a serious challenge to many climbers. A part of the wall is inhabited by Eurasian eagle-owls, an endangered species of owl.



### Church of St. Thomas, Osp

Built in 1600, the church was renovated between 1920 and 1923 and painted by the Koper painter Ermengildo de Troy. The 29.94 m bell tower next to the church was built with stones from the cliff above the village.



## 14. Šmarje, Gažon, Pomjan

### Šmarje

Šmarje is a dispersed settlement sprawling on the gently sloping ridge of the Šavrinsko gričevje hills between the tributaries of the Badaševica and the Drnica. Situated in the old village centre, the parish church of the Immaculate Mother of God was built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. According to the memorial plaque installed on the outside of the southern wall, the church was renovated in 1222 and consecrated by the Koper Bishop Absalon.

In the Roman era, the village was situated on the famous *Via Flavia*, the road from Trieste to Pula. As early as the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, this was the site of a Benedictine monastery; however, due to disease epidemics, devastating wars and the emergence of new parishes in the local villages, the monastery was abandoned around the year 1000. In 1152, with permission from the Aquileian Patriarch Pellegrino, the rights to the houses, church, village and territory of Šmarje were donated by Bernard, Bishop of Trieste and apostolic administrator of the Koper Bishopric, to Abbot Pasqual of the Venetian monastery of St. George, despite strong opposition from the Koper Chapter. In the centuries to follow, the dispute escalated until it came before the highest ecclesiastical court in Rome, where it was finally resolved in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the monastery of St. George in Venice surrendered its rights over Šmarje to the Koper Chapter.

In the Middle Ages, the village – usually called *Monte di Capodistria* on old maps, a name believed to originate from Sancta Maria in Monte – was a walled, fortified settlement with a defence tower. The tower was fortified further in 1559, a time of the Ottoman invasions and Austro-Venetian wars. It protected the strategically important valley along the road connecting Koper with the Sečovlje salt pans. In 1852, along with the cadastral communities of Šmarje and Gažon, Šmarje was designated the seat of a new municipality within the Koper district. As early as 1854, the village had a primary school as well as multiple educational and cultural societies that were dissolved in 1918 under Italian rule. Šmarje was burnt down twice in World War II. To commemorate the many victims of the National Liberation War, the villagers commissioned a monument, which was created by the academy-educated sculptor Jože Pohlen in 1969.

### Gažon

Gažon is a clustered village under the summit of Turn (266 m), situated on a ridge that continues northwest from Turn all the way over the hill of Sv. Marko (223 m) towards the coast. The northernmost settlement in the local community of Šmarje, Gažon comprises the hamlets of Gažon, Torklje and Pilje. According to tradition, the name of the village originates from the words *griza*, *grizon*, *gržon* (stone pile), while others believe that the name comes from the word *Casone*.

### Did you know?

That Pomjan is the home of the largest Istrian asparagus fritтата, made with over 2000 eggs by the Pomjan Istrian Cellar?



The area was settled as early as the Roman era, as evidenced by several Antique finds, such as a roof tile with the stamp P. Itur Sab(ini) and a Roman limestone weight.

In his *Ecclesiastical Chorography* (1700), the Koper Bishop Paolo Naldini writes that the village is situated on a beautiful hill covered in olive trees and vines that produce excellent Pinela grape and Muscat that is just as good. He also states that although it used to be a wealthy village with a higher population count, the total assets of Gažon at the time of writing did not exceed the assets of its church. The fact that the church of Sts. Peter and Paul was built by the village community sometime before the year 1478 is evident from the letters patent written by Bishop Gabriel Iacob De Gabrielli. The church was actually completed on 24 July 1468 and consecrated on the same day by Bishop Gabrielli. The monstrance with an inscription in the Glagolitic alphabet bears the date 1470. Fragments of frescoes have also been preserved. The whole church, but especially the nave, was frequently rebuilt in later centuries, with the last renovation carried out in the interwar period. Of the original elements, only part of the chancel has been preserved in its original form.

The locals dealt mainly with arable farming. The village had an active agricultural cooperative and a consumer society (*Consorzio industriale*), as well as an olive press or *torklja*, which gave a part of the settlement its name. In 1910, the village got its own primary school, a branch of the Šmarje school, with Slovenian as the language of study.

## Pomjan

Pomjan (*Pomilianum*, *Paconius*), a village whose origins date back to Antiquity, is surrounded by a number of Ancient remains. On the hill of Poljane, also known as *Monte Romano*, the remains of a Roman settlement, a water distribution system, burial sites, gravestones, coins, ceramics and Roman bricks were found. Pomjan was situated on the *Via Flavia*, the Roman road from Trieste to Pula.

The village is first mentioned in writing in 1082 under the name *Paugnano* in a deed of donation issued by Emperor Conrad II of the Salian dynasty to the Bishops of Pula, who in turn granted the feudal rights to the Koper Bishopric. In 1211, the village was made a feudal estate of the noble Verzi family of Koper.

Called *Paugnan* or *Pavognano* on old maps, Pomjan is first described as a fortified settlement in 1202 and then in the Koper statutes dating back to 1423, 1647 and later.

In 1559, the walls were repaired and reinforced to protect the village from the Ottoman invasions and Austro–Venetian wars. Situated at the entrance to the village, the church of the Nativity of Mary was built in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century and still houses the remains of frescoes and Glagolitic inscriptions. The parish church of St. George stands on a slight rise in the centre of the village.

The Pomjan Loans and Savings Bank was founded in 1906. Three years later, an auxiliary school was established, with the teaching staff composed mainly of priests, while a true Slovenian primary school opened in 1912. Parts of the village were burnt down in the German offensive in October 1943; mostly restored in the post-war period, some elements of typical Istrian village architecture still survive today.



Pomjan

## ★ TOP 5:

Šmarje, Gažon, Pomjan



### Church of the Immaculate Mother of God, village square and stone window, Šmarje

The church was built in the village square in the 11th century. It was expanded and renovated in the 13th century. There is a bell tower next to the church with a built-in 9th century stone window, the remnant of an older church that once stood in the same spot.



### Santomas estate, Gažon

Near Šmarje, you will find one of the most modern wine cellars in Slovenia. It is built of genuine Istrian blue stone on three levels. 2400 m2 in size, the estate includes a grape processing plant, laboratory, tasting room, a room for barrique barrels and a wine bank.



### Church of Sts. Peter and Paul, Gažon

The church was built by the village community and consecrated in 1468 by the Bishop of Koper, Gabrielli. The monstrance with an inscription in the Glagolitic alphabet bears the date 1470. Fragments of frescoes have also been preserved.



### Church of St. George and church of the Nativity of Mary, Pomjan

The church of St. George was consecrated as early as 1222. There is a 26 m bell tower next to it with a built-in stone plaque depicting St. George fighting the dragon. At the entrance to the village, there is a church dedicated to the Nativity of Mary with fragments of 15th century frescoes and Glagolitic inscriptions.



### The Supot waterfall and views

The 10 m waterfall is at its fullest in the rainy season. The macadam road towards the Dragonja also leads past a smaller waterfall with a beautiful pool.



## 15. Vanganel, Škocjan, Manžan, Bonini, Triban

### Vanganel

Vanganel is a dispersed settlement at the foot of the Čentur ridge on the edge of the Vanganelška dolina valley (the river valley of the Badaševica).

The name of the village is believed to originate from the word "fango" or mud, as the valley saw frequent flooding in the past. In 1964, the Bavški potok stream was dammed above Vanganel, creating an artificial lake now used for irrigation and fish farming. The old part of Vaganel lies at the foot of the hill, opposite the cooperative hall, while the many new buildings are scattered on the slope. Situated at the turning off the main road, the small church dedicated to St. Mary of Health (*Madonna della Salute*) was built in 1925 and once belonged to the Marezige parish. The Badaševica river in the valley of Vanganel enabled the development of farming, particularly the cultivation of early fruit and vegetables, which the local farmers sold to shops and markets in Koper and Trieste.

The primary school was founded in December 1946; today, the building houses a kindergarten. The kindergarten is also home to a monument to the victims of the National Liberation War, created by academy-educated sculptor Jože Pohlen.

### Škocjan

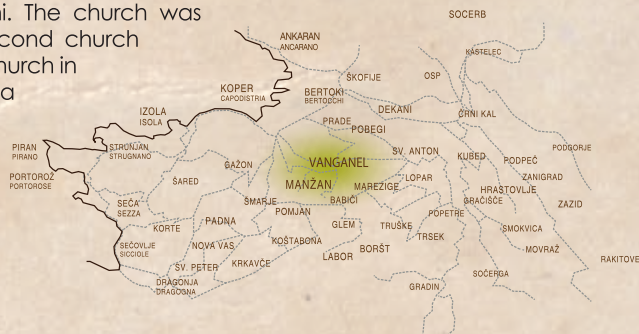
Škocjan (S. Canziano) is a dispersed village scattered on the slope between the alluvial plain of the Pradisio stream in the south and the Škocjanski zatok Nature Reserve in the north. Named after St. Cantianus, this part of the former Škocjan is now known as Škocjanska cesta, leading from Vinakoper to the turning for the Pobeška cesta road.

It is evident from the many archaeological findings that the area was settled even in the Antique period. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a convent of the Sisters of Mercy known as *S. Michele di Riolo* or *S. Michele d'Ariol* was founded in the area of St. Michael. This was also the location of the church dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel, referenced in the writings of Bishop P. Naldini. The church was consecrated in 1561 by Bishop Tomaso Stella. According to Naldini, a second church dedicated to St. Ubald stood on the hill also named after the saint, while the church in Triban was dedicated to St. Sebastian. Situated at the foot of Škocjan was a small church dedicated to St. Nazarius, the patron saint of Koper; it was consecrated in 1698 by Bishop Naldini. The new Koper graveyard was built here in 1811 and still occupies the same location today.

In the post-war period, the area underwent considerable urbanisation, with many new houses built here. Today, Škocjan has a garden centre, Vrtnarija Škocjan; Vinakoper, the largest wine cellar in Slovenian Istria; a veterinary station; an abandoned school of agriculture; and a former railway station on the Trieste–Poreč railway dating back to 1902.

### Did you know?

That there is an artificial lake in Vaganel where it is possible to go fishing?



## Manžan

Manžan is situated on a narrow ridge between the Žleb stream in the west and the Suhi Žleb stream in the east. An old settlement first mentioned in written sources in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the village name is presumed to originate from the surname *Mancius* or *Amandius*, indicating its Antique origins. In the past, the villagers dealt predominantly with animal husbandry, as well as arable farming, wine-growing and fruit cultivation.

## Bonini

Bonini comprises the hamlets and homesteads scattered on the hill between Prade and Vanganel and on the plain at the foot of the hill, along the Badaševica river.

In the years from 1759 to 1764, this was the site of a countryside villa with vineyards and a large wool spinning mill owned by the famous Koper scholar and polymath Gian Rinaldo Carli.

## Triban

Much like Bonini, Triban is a dispersed settlement situated on the southern slope of the hill of Triban (107 m) above the Koper–Vanganel road. On the top of a low hill surrounded by vineyards, you will find the oldest farmer's house in the area, built on an erstwhile Roman *villa rustica*, as evidenced by the many archaeological findings (mosaic fragments, roof tiles, stamped bricks, clay pipes, etc.).



Škocjan



Škocjan

## ★ TOP 5:

*Vanganel, Škocjan, Manžan, Bonini, Triban*



### The Vanganel lake, Vanganel

The Vanganel lake was created when the Bavški potok stream was dammed to prevent frequent flooding. Up to 18 m deep, the lake is used for irrigation and fish farming.



### Church of the Virgin Mary, Vanganel

Dedicated to the Virgin Mary, protector of Christians, the small church was probably built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It has a single bell on a spindle.



### Vinakoper Wine Cellar, Škocjan

The Vinakoper Wine Cellar is the largest producer of wines in Slovenia. Situated on the edge of the town, the cellar is housed in a beautiful Istrian building where you can also see the largest barrel in the country.



### Recreation – the Heart Trail, tennis

The Vanganel valley offers a number of opportunities for recreation. The Heart Trail was planned with the aim of creating a place for recreation for people suffering from medical conditions that limit their ability for physical activities. The tennis courts offer the perfect space for recreational and professional training.



### Mediterranean herb garden, Manžan

The Mediterranean herb garden at the Butul farm in Manžan is a unique experience. Walking through the garden is educational and relaxing at the same time. Cooking and herbal workshops can be organised by agreement.



# Notes



A large, light-colored rectangular area with rounded corners, containing 15 horizontal dotted lines for writing notes. The background of this area features a faint, stylized illustration of a sun with rays and a smiling face.

# Notes



A white notepad with rounded corners and a silver paperclip at the top. The notepad features 18 horizontal dotted lines for writing. The background of the page is a textured, light brown paper with a faint, large-scale floral pattern.

# Tourist information points of Slovenian Istria



## TIP ČRNI KAL

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## TIP DEKANI

Restavracija in vinoteka Brič  
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## TIP GRAČIŠČE

Domačija Ražman  
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[www.razman.si](http://www.razman.si)

## TIP KRKAVČE

Hiša Vrešje – Živi muzej Krkavče  
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## TIP LOPAR

Krajevno etnološka in domoznanska zbirka  
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of the Municipality of Koper*



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www.koper.si

